

# **REDEEMED CONVERSATION: SELECTED MEDIEVAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO A THEOLOGY OF DISCOURSE**

by

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## Abstract

Contemporary approaches to systematic theology as a *theology of discourse* constitute a re-visioning of the theological task through critical reflection of ways in which language and relationality both inform and are formed by the Christian faith. This re-visioning requires an engagement with texts from the tradition. St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and *Confessions* manifest a foundational example of the Christian tradition's expression of the vertical and horizontal spiritual exercises that David Burrell has identified in Johannine reflections on friendship and its expression in the world. Two texts from the medieval tradition will be offered as both confirming and developing Augustine's contributions. The *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard constitute a twelfth-century correspondence that has received substantial scholarly attention from the work of medievalists, historians and literary critics, but now requires more intentional reflection from the work of systematic theologians inquiring about the relation between the truths of the Christian faith and the collaborative participation of men and women in God's work of the conversion of God's people. The *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas is a thirteenth-century scholastic text that has not yet been fully mined for its contribution to a theology of discourse, a contribution marked

especially by his discussion of *oratio* as the transformative discourse that arises from the authentic practice of loving shared among a people created for friendship with God.

## Acknowledgments

To the profoundly generous community of faculty, staff and students at and around Regis College, Toronto, for their support of my doctoral education on so many levels, I dedicate Chapter One of this dissertation on the foundations of discourse. In terms of foundations, it is Gilles Mongeau, S.J., to whom I am most indebted, for he recognized in me my reading of St. Thomas's *Summa* before I had truly begun to appropriate it for myself. His dedication to the vocation of teaching, which includes his commitment to sharing the life and work of St. Thomas, constantly inspires and challenges me to seek the *magis* in the service of *cura personalis*. I am deeply grateful to Gordon Rixon, S.J., Joseph Schner, S.J., and Gill Goulding, C.J., for their support of my work, especially in its early stages. Mechtilde O'Mara, C.S.J., Michael Vertin, Adrienne Pereira, Sean Mulrooney, Michael Stoeber, Jaroslav Skira, Michael Kolarcik, S.J., Wilma Scherloski, Bob Croken, S.J., Danny Monsour, Georgina Rooney, Claude Meurehg, Andy Martin, Elaine Chu, Kelly Bourke, Heejung Cho and Margaret Ou have each shared invaluable gifts of friendship with me at critical turning points along the doctoral path. The dynamic invitations for moving forward in this project offered by David Burrell, C.S.C. and Jill Ross at the doctoral defense constituted scholarly models of friendship to which I can only hope to worthily respond. The generous conversations shared with me in the last two years by Joseph Goering and Jim Olthuis in Toronto, and Kevin White in Kalamazoo, Michigan will never be forgotten for their profound depth of consolation and inspiration; they were invitations to me for deeper conversion.

In gratitude for the formative influence of earlier teachers at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology and Boston College, I dedicate the second chapter attending to contemporary

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The account of St. Augustine's deep regard for the prayerful support of family and friends in Chapter Three is dedicated first of all to the ever-mystifying, self-giving love of my parents, Claire and David Constantine, and secondly to the unwavering and good-humored support of each my siblings: Joseph, Rachel, Theresa, Karen, Angela, Mary, Erica, Susan, David and Paul, their spouses and their joy-bearing children (with special thanks to Rachel for the extravagant encouragement shared at long distances in the midst of her own sufferings, and to Theresa for her profound and steady gift of listening during the last months of writing). There have been friends from Toronto and beyond whose conversation and hospitality will not be forgotten: Barbara Geiger, Sami Helewa, S.J., Kathryn Jacinto, Eileen Kearney, Steven Emde, Elizabeth Lambert, Wayne Lott, Brett Salkeld, Peter Nguyen, S.J., Mark Fusco, S.J., Joy Carroll, and Rev. Philip Hamel. Without Mary Jo McDonald's spiritual and scholarly companionship throughout the entire journey of the dissertation, I would have been at a great loss indeed. Finally, for my husband, Timothy; through his faithful devotion, healing spirit, editorial prowess and love of libraries in all of their dimensions, he bore with me the burdens that could only be borne by the two of us together.

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trajectory marked by the foundations of the life of faith, its fruitfulness in the tradition of the *cura mulierum*, and its discerning reflections in contemporary philosophical and theological thought, has profoundly informed my own commitment to systematic theology. I will be forever in gratitude for Bob's witness of faithful perseverance in his vocation.

The summit chapter of this dissertation, through its attempt at a faithful accounting of the spiritual exercises of the *Summa Theologiae*, is offered up in thanksgiving to the Lord, through the humble intercession of George D. Constantine and St. Thomas Aquinas. May it truly be, as should all of our efforts in this world, for the glory of God.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Chapter One: Theology of Discourse: Revisioning and Retrieval.....</b>	<b>1-20</b>
1.1    Introduction	
1.1.1    Defining the revisioning project: <i>status quaestionis</i>	
1.1.2    Selected efforts at moving forward	
1.1.3    Attending to the complex task of retrieval	
1.2    Discourse and method	
1.2.1    Methodology: Lonergan’s functional specialty, “foundations”	
1.2.2    Etymological illumination: medieval <i>conversatio</i>	
1.3    Conclusion	
<b>Chapter Two: Contemporary Articulations of a Theology of Discourse.....</b>	<b>21-54</b>
2.1    Introduction	
2.1.1    A hermeneutical circle of discourse: Tracy, Burrell, Coakley	
2.1.2    Transposing Aristotelian modes of persuasion for a theology of discourse	
2.2    David Tracy: Semiotic mediations as transformative practice	
2.2.1    The nature and role of theological discourse	
2.2.2    A “New Hermeneutics” for theological reflection	
2.3    David Burrell: conversion in community	
2.3.1    Spiritual exercises: gifts of friends for mutual formation	
2.3.2    Created relationality	
2.4    Sarah Coakley: Making way for the language and relationality of gender	
2.4.1    The principal nature of gender discourse	
2.4.2    The way of “purgative contemplative practice”	
2.5    Conclusion	
<b>Chapter Three: Augustine’s Semiotics of Creation and Revelation as Primary Spiritual Exercises.....</b>	<b>55-95</b>
3.1    Retrieving Augustine for a theology of discourse	

3.2	<i>De doctrina christiana</i> and <i>Confessions</i> : complementary readings in the rhetoric of conversion	
3.2.1	Spiritual exercises in the <i>De doctrina christiana</i>	
3.2.2	Spiritual exercises in the <i>Confessions</i>	
3.3	A complexification of exercises in the narrative of the <i>Confessions</i>	
3.4	A Pseudo-Dionysian interlude: mining the language of prayer	
3.5	Invitations for further retrieval	
<b>Chapter Four: Exercises in Memory and Conversion in the Epistolary Discourse of</b>		
	<b>Heloise and Abelard</b> .....	96-156
4.1	Introduction	
4.2	Gender and conversion in theological reflection	
4.3	Ecclesial contexts for gender complementarity: <i>cura mulierum</i>	
4.3.1	The care of souls as the “art of arts”	
4.3.2	<i>Vita apostolica</i>	
4.3.3	<i>Imitatio Christi</i>	
4.3.4	<i>Ars dictaminis</i>	
4.4	The twelfth-century <i>Letters</i> of Heloise and Abelard	
4.4.1	Background to the correspondence of the <i>Letters</i>	
4.4.2	Memory of transgression in Letter 1 ( <i>Historia calamitatum</i> )	
4.4.3	Memory of friendship in Letters 2-4	
4.4.4	Meditation and discernment for the care of souls in Letters 5-8	
4.4.5	A ‘new <i>lectio</i> ’ for contemplation in the <i>Problemata Heloisae</i>	
4.5	Thirteenth-century Dominican contributions to the <i>cura mulierum</i>	
4.6	Conclusion	
<b>Chapter Five: Towards a Theology of Discourse in the <i>Summa Theologiae</i> of</b>		
	<b>Thomas Aquinas</b> .....	157-232
5.1	Introduction	
5.1.1	The status of prayer in thirteenth-century theological reflection	
5.1.2	Aquinas’s <i>Summa Theologiae</i> : beginning with discourse	
5.2	Memory and the <i>cura animarum</i>	
5.2.1	Memorial reflection: prudential memory as disposition to charity	



5.2.2	Memorial practice: introductory mnemonics in the <i>exordia</i> of the <i>Summa</i>	
5.3	<i>Prima pars</i> : Founding the vertical and horizontal exercises of the <i>Summa</i>	
5.3.1	God's love: source of friendship and discourse (I.20.2.ad3)	
5.3.2	Lives of the saints as exemplary mediatory practice (I.23.8)	
5.3.3	The Holy Spirit and the life of grace in creation (I.95)	
5.4	<i>Prima secundae</i> : The role of discourse in love and self-knowledge	
5.4.1	Fellowship as the context for happiness (I.II.4)	
5.4.2	Discourse as the central activity of friendship (I.II.26-28)	
5.4.3	Memorial sweetness revisited: <i>delectatio</i> (I.II.31-34) and dolor (I.II.35-39)	
5.4.4	The discourse of friendship and the Holy Spirit (I.II.65, 68)	
5.4.5	<i>Oratio</i> : premier discourse for self-knowledge (I.II.109-114)	
5.5	<i>Secunda secundae</i> : Prayer: remembering and growing in friendship	
5.5.1	Petitionary prayer: gauging the movement of hope (II.II.17)	
5.5.2	<i>Caritas</i> : call to divine friendship (II.II.23)	
5.5.3	<i>Oratio</i> : premier activity of friendship (II.II.83)	
5.6	<i>Tertia pars</i> : Christ, Mediator of the discourse of friendship	
5.6.1	The Incarnation: <i>communicatio</i> of God's love (III.1)	
5.6.2	Christ's prayer (III.21)	
5.6.2	Living friendship in the life of Christ (III.26)	
5.7	Conclusion	
<b>Conclusion.....</b>		233-234
<b>Bibliography.....</b>		235-249

# Chapter 1

## Theology of Discourse: Revisioning and Retrieval

### 1.1 Introduction

Contemporary approaches to systematic theology as a *theology of discourse* constitute a revisioning of the theological task through critical reflection of ways in which language and relationality both inform and are formed by the Christian faith. Such an approach, as embodied in such scholarly collaborations as *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology* (2003) and *Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology* (2009),<sup>1</sup> has deep roots in the Christian tradition, notably among philosophically minded thinkers like Origen, Augustine, and Aquinas, whose theological meditations on creation and revelation have rendered them spiritual masters to centuries of faithful readers. While the term, “theology of discourse,”<sup>2</sup> does not appear to have been coined explicitly by systematic theologians working in this focus area, it constitutes an effective way of identifying a body of theological reflection engaged with the exchange of speech and prayer as formative human practices of individuals and communities called to ever-deeper life in God. Most simply stated, the definition of discourse that will be working throughout this study is one in which the components of language and relationality

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<sup>1</sup> *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology*, ed. Jacques Haers and P. De Mey (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003); *Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Kimlyn J. Bender (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> My hypothesis is that a *theology of discourse* constitutes the natural systematic step following decades of work by theologians discerning the implications of hermeneutic philosophy for theological reflection. Stated otherwise, a *theology of discourse* emerges from theological reflection on *theology as discourse*. Examples of the groundwork that has been done, and is still being articulated for *theology as discourse* in general, and from particular perspectives, includes: David Tracy, “Theology as Public Discourse” *The Christian Century* (1975): 280-284, “Theology as a Living Discourse: The Future of Feminist Practical Theology” Boston University Panel Discussion, October 22, 2009 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWQFYikjxZI>), and the collection of essays, *Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology*, cited above. Attention is given in this dissertation to the collection, *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology* (also cited above) for its attempt at making this subsequent systematic step that is beginning to bear fruit as a *theology of discourse*.

are its basic constituents: discourse is an encounter with another person or persons as brought about through language.<sup>3</sup> As David Tracy has expressed more eloquently: “To discover discourse is to explore language as a reality beyond individual words in the dictionary, beyond both synchronic codes (*langue*) and individual use of words (*parole*); it is to rediscover society and history.”<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, in order to be true to the nature of theological orientation and teaching as discursive, one must acknowledge *both* how classic texts from the tradition still have much to tell us, *and* how other authors and texts from the tradition remain to be heard and adequately appropriated for theological reflection.<sup>5</sup> Following a sustained elucidation of selected important interlocutors for one interested in a theology of discourse, this dissertation attempts to identify two sources from the medieval tradition that serve to expand such theological reflection. Through such retrievals, the interpersonal dynamics of language and relationality being identified as the constitutive components of discourse may be more theologically appropriated within the greater context of a life of ongoing, interpersonal, Christian conversion. Four steps are required in order to introduce this project in Chapter One: a presentation of the *status quaestionis* for a theology of discourse; a justification for identifying the theological work of David Tracy, David Burrell and Sarah Coakley as leading contemporary interlocutors; a justification—both general and specific—for appealing to texts

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<sup>3</sup> See especially Chapter 3 (“Radical Plurality: The Question of Language”) of David Tracy’s *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): “In discourse, ‘someone says something about something to someone,’” 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>5</sup> In “The Renewal of Theology” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert Louis Benson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in assoc. with The Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 68-87, which will be cited more at length later in this introduction, Jean Leclercq, emphasizing the proliferation of scholarly understanding of the twelfth century over the last century, notes: “We have even begun to speak not only of monastic theology, but of a ‘plurality of monastic theologies,’ and the number of their representatives we are interested in grows continually—St. Hildegard has joined the once exclusively male company,” 71-72.

from the Christian tradition in light of such reflection; and an explanation of the methodology that will be employed in the service of these efforts.

### 1.1.1 Defining the revisioning project: *status quaestionis*

Rigorous scholarly attention has been devoted to the interrelated components of language and relationality that comprise the dynamics of theological reflection on discourse. This scholarship expands across religious and theological specialization and ministry, much of which is informed, in part, by social scientific, literary and philosophical research.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The following list spanning the last century of reflection in this area is not exhaustive: Ludwig Wittgenstein "Language of Everyday Life" in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922); Hans-Georg Gadamer's "Analysis of Historically Effected Consciousness" (367-369) and "Language as the Medium of Hermeneutic Experience" (383-388) in *Truth and Method* (1960), 2nd ed., rev., ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Boston: Crossroad, 1992); Herbert McCabe, *What is Ethics All About?* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Publications, 1969); Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986); Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, vol 2, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), *Language the Unknown: An Initiation into Linguistics*, trans. Anne M. Menke (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), "Narrative Identity," *Philosophy Today* 35 (1991): 73-81, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blarney (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), *Plurality And Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine's Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics" in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, ed. Walter Jost and Michael J. Hyde (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), *Dialogue With The Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1990), *On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), "Prophetic Rhetoric and Mystical Rhetoric" in *Rhetorical Invention and Religious Inquiry: New Perspectives*, ed. Walter Jost and Wendy Olmsted (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny and Empowerment?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988); Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Andrea Nye, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* (New York: Routledge, 1990); James Olthuis, *Knowing Otherwise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality*, ed. James Olthuis (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); *The Hermeneutics of Charity: Interpretation, Selfhood, and Postmodern Faith. Studies in Honor of James H. Olthuis*, ed. James K.A. Smith and Henry Isaac Venema (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004); Luce Irigaray, *To be Two* trans. Monique M. Rhodes and Marco F. Cocito-Monoc (The Athlone Press: London, 2000), *The Way of Love*, trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluhacek (Continuum: London, 2002); Miroslav Volf, "Theology for a Way of Life" in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf, Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). Frederick Lawrence, "Grace and Friendship: Postmodern Political Theology and God as Conversational" *Gregorianum* 85 (2004): 795-820; Allyson Jule, ed. *Language and Religious Identity: Women in Discourse*

Prominent contributions include those of Paul Ricoeur in the areas of structuralism, hermeneutics and a “poetics of the will,” which have elicited such publications as *Oneself as Another* (1992) and *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (1995). Such studies are notably rooted in his concern with the discursive phenomenon at the heart of human experience and identified in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (1981):

To say that discourse is an event is to say, first, that discourse is realised temporally and in the present, whereas the system of language is virtual and outside of time. . . . Moreover, whereas language has no subject insofar as the question ‘who speaks?’ does not apply at this level, discourse refers back to its speaker by means of a complex set of indicators. . . . Discourse is an event in yet a third way: the signs of language refer only to other signs in the interior of the same system so that language no more has a world than it has a time and a subject, whereas discourse is always about something. . . . The event, in this third sense, is the advent of a world in language [*langage*] by means of discourse. Finally, while language is only a prior condition of communication for which it provides the codes, it is in discourse that all messages are exchanged. So discourse not only has a world, but it has an other, another person, an interlocutor to whom it is addressed.<sup>7</sup>

The dual concerns of relationality (including the postmodern focus on “otherness”) and language are interactively constitutive of the nature of discourse. Ricoeur’s work in this context serves to distinguish discourse from one of its central components—language—in order to emphasize that the other equally crucial component of relationality must receive its critical due.

Both of these components of language and relationality may be found to be prominently reflected in two publications emerging from Benedict XVI’s papacy: the encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), and the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Verbum*

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(Palgrave 2007); John Dadosky, “Towards a Fundamental RE-Interpretation of Vat. II” *Heythrop Journal* 49 (2008): 742-763.

<sup>7</sup> Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, 133. See also “Pastoral Praxeology, Hermeneutics, and Identity” in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, 305.

*Domini* (2010), respectively.<sup>8</sup> In the fifth section of *Caritas in Veritate* entitled, “Cooperation of the Human Family,” Benedict XVI’s call for “a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation” arises from his reflection on the reality that “as a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, such work must be urgently and critically engaged for its implications for the entire human family<sup>10</sup> as reflected in and through the mystery of God:

The theme of development can be identified with the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built in solidarity on the basis of the fundamental values of justice and peace. This perspective is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity within the one divine Substance. The Trinity is absolute unity insofar as the three divine Persons are pure relationality. The reciprocal transparency among the divine Persons is total and the bond between each of them complete, since they constitute a unique and absolute unity. God desires to incorporate us into this reality of communion as well: “that they may be one even as we are one” (Jn 17:22). The Church is a sign and instrument of this unity.<sup>11</sup>

By identifying the connections intrinsic to discussions on love among human beings and their Creator, the encyclical constitutes an exhortation to be heeded by theologians: ethical, metaphysical and mystical reflections on relationality, while deserving the requisite distinctions, cannot be engaged or executed in isolation from each other. Moreover, as emphasized in *Verbum Domini*, the implications of such reflections in terms of language also begin with God, and in particular with God’s love for humanity manifested through the

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<sup>8</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, June 29, 2009, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html) (accessed October 10, 2011); *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (Verbum Domini)* [Sept. 30, 2010] (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 7, 22.

<sup>9</sup> “This is a task that cannot be undertaken by the social sciences alone, insofar as the contribution of disciplines such as metaphysics and theology is needed if man’s transcendent dignity is to be properly understood,” *Caritas in Veritate*, 53.

<sup>10</sup> “The Christian revelation of the unity of the human race presupposes a *metaphysical interpretation of the ‘humanum’ in which relationality is an essential element*,” *Caritas in Veritate*, 55.

<sup>11</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 54.

reality of the Incarnation: “In this vision, every man and woman appears as someone to whom the word speaks, challenges and calls to enter this dialogue of love through a free response.”<sup>12</sup>

Emphasizing these same principles as primary tasks for theological reflection today are the contributions to the 2001 Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology (LEST) conference, *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology*. Taken together, the work of these theologians supports the frame of reference identified herein as a theology of discourse. As Anne Hunt emphasizes in “Trinity and Paschal Mystery: Divine Communion and Human Conversation”:

human conversation, as human interpersonal event, is analogically related to and takes place within the divine communion, the divine interpersonal event. As Balthasar would express it, it is a case of our conversation within their ‘conversation’; our conversation takes place within the primordial inner-trinitarian ‘conversation’ between God and God. ...As we yield ourselves to the rhythm and movement of conversation, in an unceasing exploration of new possibilities in the search for truth, we enter the *dance* that is conversation, the conversation that is love, the love that is a participation in the divine communion, the divine conversation.<sup>13</sup>

Stated otherwise, a theology of language (i.e. of words as reflective of, and pointing to, the Word made flesh) can become statically devoid of the life of the Spirit if it fails to integrate dynamically an account of the rootedness of language in the multi-dimensional, ever deepening vocations of love which God’s people are called to share with one another in Christ. As Jacques Haers points out in his introduction to the LEST publication, such an entry into theological reflection about creation and Creator requires a rethinking about what is constitutive of the salvific signposts along the journey of faith, hope and love: “it is

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<sup>12</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 7, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Anne Hunt, “Trinity and Paschal Mystery: Divine Communion and Human Conversation” in *Theology and Conversation*, 69-98; here, 95. For a complementary essay gleaned from Bernard Lonergan’s thought, see also Frederick Lawrence, “Grace and Friendship: Postmodern Political Theology and God as Conversational,” *Gregorianum* 85 (2004): 795-820.

therefore impossible to disconnect God and our words about God, from the encounters and conversations that constitute reality and in which we are involved. . . . These relations are not merely instruments to communicate knowledge to us, they are operative in unveiling our existence and in empowering our commitments in the world.”<sup>14</sup>

### 1.1.2 Selected efforts at moving forward

The selected contributions of David Tracy and David Burrell in the areas of contemporary systematic and philosophical theology are worthy sources for a theology of discourse for two reasons. First, their work and research constitutes an integration of studies in the areas of language and relationality, with respective emphases that are complementary. That is, Tracy’s rigorous engagement with questions of theological method and discourse analysis reflects a point of entry that begins with language. To this end, his essay, “The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language” (1983)<sup>15</sup> and his most recent collection, *On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics and Church* (1994), have been selected for their dedication to examining the “public character” of theological language<sup>16</sup> that is at once “international, polycentric, [and] dialogic.”<sup>17</sup> Burrell’s emphasis on the communal and formative dimensions of “spiritual exercises” of religious traditions, medieval and modern, serves as a point of entry focused on relationality.<sup>18</sup> Two of his books, *Friendship and Ways to Truth* (2000) and *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish,*

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<sup>14</sup> Haers, “*Defensor vinculi et conversationis*: Connectedness and Conversation as a Challenge to Theology” in *Theology and Conversation*, 17-18. Although Haers focuses on the work of Origen and Karl Rahner as providing the theological groundwork for such reflections, he also directs his reader to Aquinas: “See A.D. Sertillanges, *L’idée de création et ses retentissements en philosophie*, Paris, Aubier, 1945,” 15.

<sup>15</sup> “The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language,” in David Tracy and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Talking About God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 1-16.

<sup>16</sup> Tracy, “The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language,” 2.

<sup>17</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, xi.

<sup>18</sup> Burrell’s discussion of “spiritual exercises” is an integral aspect of his two works cited here and to be discussed in Chapter Two.



*Christian and Muslim Traditions* (2010), provide an effective elucidation of the dynamics of friendship through which authentic discourse may thrive.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, both Tracy and Burrell appeal to the work of Augustine as a central voice from the tradition to whom we may—and will in this study—turn for theological reflection on discourse.

While friendship may be said to provide the context for all authentic discourse, friendship between men and women constitutes one universal instantiation of discursive practice worthy of exploration for the myriad ways in which it exemplifies both a radical attentiveness to the “otherness” of the other, and a call to mutual engagement with the other. In the service of this reflection, Sarah Coakley argues convincingly in “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology? On Gender, Contemplation, and the Systematic Task,” (2009) that current theological reflection focused on relationality in terms of creation, redemption and eschatology may be best served by attending to the relation between the genders.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, her work opens the way for what I hold to be a necessary retrieval of the ministry of the *cura mulierum* in the medieval period and the mutual spiritual discourse arising through this ministry.

### 1.1.3 Attending to the complex task of retrieval

Yet another critical component of a theology of discourse concerns the reception of texts from the tradition. To be true to the nature of theological orientation and teaching as discursive is to acknowledge how such classic texts still have much to tell us.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>19</sup> David Burrell, C.S.C., *Friendship and Ways to Truth* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions* (Chicago: University of Scranton Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology? On Gender, Contemplation, and the Systematic Task,” *Criterion* 47 (2009): 2-11.

<sup>21</sup> See David Tracy’s discussion of the “classic text” for theological reflection in *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). See also Haers’ concluding comments about the future tasks required for doing theology in this manner, including: “Resourcing ourselves in our classics and our history. We have to develop methods to read the gospels anew precisely from the

it is also to acknowledge how other authors and texts from the tradition remain to be heard and adequately appropriated for theological reflection. To justify the work of retrieval more fully, I will: present the relevance of historical models of theological discourse; identify the art of rhetoric as of central importance to theology as discourse; offer a general justification for employing texts from the tradition based on their contributions to rhetorical theology; and offer a more specific justification for employing the selected texts of Augustine, Heloise and Abelard, and Aquinas in light of the general justification.

In “The Renewal of Theology,” Jean LeClercq’s examination of twelfth-century theological reflection in the West provides a useful model for articulating how the very complexity of the nature of theological discourse from the tradition lends itself to the demand for retrieval. Several of LeClercq’s major insights will be noted here. First, “progress in [twelfth-century] theology came especially through diversification”<sup>22</sup> from within, and between, three “spheres”: that of the monasteries, the schools, and certain intellectual circles.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, Leclercq notes, “there were fruitful exchanges among these three representative groups of religious thought, without any of them renouncing its own identity, message, or method.”<sup>24</sup> It is precisely the fruitfulness of these “exchanges” that indicates how the different groups lent themselves to being *informed*—with all of the spiritual connotations that the word emits—by others’ charisms, without betraying their own.

A third, more subtle insight working throughout Leclercq’s essay is the way in which such a diversity of approaches reflected to a great extent the diverse commitments on the part

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perspective of empowering encounters. Feminist theology will be of great help in this endeavor.” Furthermore, “Paying a close look at the history of theology, to discover that there is a long tradition of theologians working from this relational perspective,” “*Defensor vinculi et conversationis*,” 39.

<sup>22</sup> Leclercq, “The Renewal of Theology,” 70.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 74.

of each individual or community to the language arts of the *trivium*. He notes that while for “the last quarter of the twelfth century, the word *theologia* could still be used simply for the ‘Word of God,’ transmitted by the Bible or the liturgy,” the work of Anselm and the appropriation of Abelard were already preparing the way for “a new meaning...by expressly associating it [theology] with intellectual research pursued according to a method calling more freely upon...dialectic.”<sup>25</sup> Leclercq proceeds with the reminder, however, that although scholasticism’s dialectical emphasis constituted an important, contributory step in the history of theology, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century shift in emphasis signaled an equally important reminder that rhetoric and grammar remain, perpetually calling theological reflection to task in their own respective modes.<sup>26</sup>

While the limits of this dissertation do not allow for a sustained analysis of theological reflection on the nature of language and the *trivium*,<sup>27</sup> the isomorphic relationship I have discerned between a theology of discourse and rhetorical theology needs to be accounted for here, precisely because my justification for retrieving selections from the Christian tradition appeals to this relationship. I offer a syllogism fortified by a brief discussion of the art of rhetoric: the discipline of theology is concerned with expressions of relationality: knowing, loving and serving God, and knowing, loving and serving human beings in God. The discipline of rhetoric is, at its most basic and authentic level, about discerning the most fitting language attendant upon the human other and/or the divine Other.

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<sup>25</sup> Leclercq, “The Renewal of Theology,” 68. Research attesting to Abelard’s contributions to rhetorical theology provide a worthy complement, however, and will be addressed more fully in this study.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>27</sup> Selected bibliographical resources in this area include: Edgar de Bruyne, *Études D’Esthétique Médiévale* (Geneve: Slatkine Reprints, 1975); Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Marshall McLuhan, *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of his Time*, ed. W. Terrence Gordon (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2006); *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1477*, ed. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Therefore, the discipline of theology is best served by the work of rhetoric. While constantly complementing and dynamically intertwined with the work of grammar and dialectic, rhetoric is, first and foremost, the practice of acknowledging and attending to another person or persons.<sup>28</sup> In rhetorical theory, questions of authority and audience are always at the forefront, whereas with grammar and logic, the leading questions are those of the internal measure and cohesiveness of language and argument. Whereas grammar and dialectic might begin with issues concerning the integrity of the integument or of the argument itself, rhetoric begins with a relationship—that between speaker and hearer, or writer and reader—a relationship that will, in turn, determine *which* narratives, *which* syllogisms should be used.<sup>29</sup> In this way, all theological reflection, to the degree that it is intentional about its task, is rhetorical.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, all theological reflection, to the degree that it is intentional about its task, is concerned with the nature of discourse. For, just as the “event” of any discourse—to use Ricoeur’s term—constitutes more than the particular arguments or stories employed

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<sup>28</sup> See Mark Jordan, “Rhetorical Form in the Historiography of Philosophy,” *New Literary History* 23 (1992): 483-504; here, 486: “Rhetorical form is a feature of all philosophical writing, and not just of highly polished, extroverted works. It is a feature of any deliberate address to another.” See also Stephen Happel, “Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations,” in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 191-203. I am here invoking Happel’s distinction, based in the work of Ricoeur and Lonergan, between “classicist rhetoric” which associates static, fixed meanings to words and is inattentive to “important nuances within Aristotelian and Platonic theory,” and “contemporary rhetoric” which refuses to view “ordinary language as a swamp to be traversed by means of technical expertise of science,” but rather views metaphor as “not so much a deviation from normally clear speech, as the ‘omnipresent principle of language’s free action’” because the “goal is encounter,” 192-195. The discussions of discourse and rhetoric to follow in this study are in line with Happel’s understanding of “contemporary rhetoric,” or “the new rhetoric,” as he also identifies it.

<sup>29</sup> Happel, “Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations,” 200: “Dialectic, the technique of controversy, is included as one part of this larger realm [of rhetoric].”

<sup>30</sup> See Gilles Mongeau for his study of the central role of rhetoric in patristic thought as “a theological method concerned with elemental meaning and exhibit[ing] a capacity to receive and mediate such meaning authentically,” “Classical Rhetoric and the Control of Elemental Meaning” in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 353-373.

within it, so theological reflection on discourse constitutes more than either of its dialectical or grammatical components.<sup>31</sup>

Given this relationship between the nature of rhetoric and of discourse for theological reflection, the fact that ancient and medieval Christian thinkers were formatively trained in the rhetorical arts and reflect such training should compel us to a retrieval of their writings in search of a theology of discourse. As Burrell has indicated, the works of Clement and Origen<sup>32</sup> readily identify “key similarities between dialogic encounter in response to the good and a set of spiritual exercises attuned to responding to the good news offered to human beings in Jesus.”<sup>33</sup> In his LEST essay, Haers devotes attention to the way in which Origen’s creation theology has been historically received, pointing out that “the emphasis on Origen’s systematical compendium, the *Peri Archôn*, rather than on his more exegetical and homiletical works” tended to restrict an understanding of Origen’s philosophical models to particular platonic emphases.<sup>34</sup> Instead, notes

Haers:

attention given by authors as Henri De Lubac and Henri Crouzel to Origen’s more spiritually oriented writings allows a different perspective....What is crucial to Origen and, therefore, also crucial to who wants to understand his concerns and his theology, is the dynamism of the relationship with God, a relationship which takes its form concretely in the reality in which we live. The various creations [identified in his theology]...are not, then, a sequence in a cosmological creation process, but rather do they represent different layers of reality indicating the discovery of the deeper relations of creation with its Creator and of the creatures within creation.<sup>35</sup>

In a further look across the historical spectrum, James Murphy has shown how influential

Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* was for many of the patristic writers. Murphy’s list includes:

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<sup>31</sup> I am grateful to Robert Sweetman for articulating this insight in conversation.

<sup>32</sup> Origen has received recent scholarly attention for his rhetorical mastery. See, for instance, K. J. Torjesen, “Influence of Rhetoric on Origen’s Old Testament Homilies” in *Origeniana Sexta* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995): 13-25.

<sup>33</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Haers, “*Defensor vinculi et conversationis*,” 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

“Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory of Caesarea, Eusebius of Caesarea, John of Antioch (Chrysostom), and Basil of Caesarea.”<sup>36</sup>

What of the specific authors [Augustine (Ch. 3), Heloise and Abelard (Ch.4), and Aquinas (Ch. 5)] and texts to be employed in this study? Each has been chosen for their contributions to a theology of discourse through their rigorous engagement with the discipline of rhetoric. While the focus of this study is on the distinct contributions offered by medieval thinkers, St. Augustine’s contributions will serve as a basis and turning point for examining these medieval texts. Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* (*DDC*) and *Confessions* are two works written simultaneously and addressing the nature of language in the context of basic questions of Christianity and culture.<sup>37</sup> Both works attend dynamically in method and content to the journey of conversion, the *Confessions* in the form of a narrative of conversion, and the *DDC* in the form of hermeneutical and rhetorical principles of conversion.<sup>38</sup> In the final movement of Book IV of the *DDC*, Augustine insists that the most urgent principle for anyone—and especially those lacking proficiency in rhetorical artistry—seeking to preach the Christian life is “that his way of life becomes, in a sense, an abundant source of eloquence” (IV.159). Read along with the *DDC*, the *Confessions* constitutes something of an *exemplum*: Augustine offers the journey of his own life as an invitation for the reader to participate in the movement from the realm of broken, distorted, and misunderstood speech to that of life in God’s Word.

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<sup>36</sup> James Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 22.n45.

<sup>37</sup> See Tracy, “Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine’s Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics,” 259.

<sup>38</sup> Tracy, “Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine’s Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics”: “*De doctrina christiana*...remains a quintessential Augustinian text, for the hermeneutical and rhetorical theories on the relation of theology and culture in *DDC* constitute a central clue for reading other Augustinian texts,” 257.

Just as Augustine's contributions to theological reflection on the art of rhetoric and discourse have received notable scholarly attention over recent decades,<sup>39</sup> so have the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard, including their elucidation of friendship and *conversatio* in the twelfth-century monastic tradition, issues of authenticity and continuity among their works and within the works themselves, the contributions of Heloise, including her education, responsibilities and philosophical and theological ingenuity, and re-examinations of Abelard's own participation in the work of rhetorical theology.<sup>40</sup> The *Letters* have been selected for offering several contributions to a theology of discourse. First, they provide a further development of Augustine's "rhetoric of conversion" by complementing Augustine's

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<sup>39</sup> See, for instance: James Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); John C. Cavadini, "The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," in *"De doctrina christiana": A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 164-181; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric: The Sermon on the Mount as Message and as Model in Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000); *The Rhetoric of Saint Augustine of Hippo: "De doctrina Christiana" and the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, ed. Richard Leo Enos and Roger C. Thompson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> See Etienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960); Jean Leclercq, "Modern Psychology and the Interpretation of Medieval Texts," *Speculum* 48 (July 1973): 476-90; Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Barbara Newman, "Authority, Authenticity and the Repression of Heloise," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (Spring 1992): 121-57; John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John Ward, "Women and Latin Rhetoric from Hrotsvit to Hildegard" in *The Changing Tradition: Women in the History of Rhetoric*, ed. Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Sutcliffe (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 121-32; *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Réka Forrai and Sylvain Piron, "The Debate on the *Epistolae duorum amantium*. Current status quaestionis and Further Research," March, 2007 (<http://www.tdte.unisi.it/digimed/files/Pironstatus%20quaestionis.pdf>., last accessed on October 10, 2009); *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100-1540: Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, Rodney M. Thomson (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003); Eileen C. Sweeney, "Speculative Theology and the Transformation of Separation and Longing" in *Psyche and Spirit-Dialectics of Transformation*, ed. Chris Schlauch and William Meissner (Washington DC: University of America Press, 2003); Constant J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Eileen C. Sweeney, "Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* and Letters: Self as Search and Struggle," *Poetics Today* 28 (2007): 303-36; Carmel Posa, "'Desire': The Language of Love in the Feminine in Heloise's Letters" in *Words of Love and Love of Words in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 347 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008). For more extensive bibliographical discussion, see Jennifer Constantine-Jackson, "'Sapienter amare poterimus': On Rhetoric and Friendship in the Letters of Heloise and Abelard" in *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse*, ed. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter Press, 2010), 247-280.

spiritual exercises focused on “vertical” relationality with a set of spiritual exercises focused on “horizontal” relationality.<sup>41</sup> Through Heloise’s early insistence for mutual reflection on the nature of their own friendship and its implications for their lives and the life of the church, the *Letters* constitute a crucial contribution to a theology of discourse. Second, they provide a concrete instantiation from medieval Christianity of the profound fruitfulness that discourse between the genders can offer to the history of theology. Third, as an early example of the mutually enriching collaboration between women and men that arose through the church’s developing and discerning cultivation of the ministry of the *cura mulierum* in the medieval period, the *Letters* elicit a deeper examination of the authentically ecclesiastical and authentically human dynamics and implications of this ministry for theological reflection.

The life and work of St. Thomas have also received renewed attention in contemporary scholarship in terms of Thomas’s formation and writing in the discipline of rhetoric, as well as for his contributions to integrative theological reflection on *amicitia* and *communicatio*, especially through his work in the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>42</sup> As it has been noted

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<sup>41</sup> See David Burrell’s discussion of such exercises beginning in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.1) of this study.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance, Guy-H. Allard, “Le *Contre Gentiles* et le Modèle Rhétorique,” *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 30 (1974): 237-50; Joseph Bobik, “Aquinas on *Communicatio*, the Foundation of Friendship and *Caritas*” *The Modern Schoolman* 64 (1986): 1-18; Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Thomas S. Hibbs, *Dialectic and Narrative in Aquinas: An Interpretation of the “Summa Contra Gentiles”* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Mark D. Jordan, *The care of souls and the rhetoric of moral teaching in Bonaventure and Thomas* (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1993), “The Competition of Authoritative Languages and Aquinas’s Theological Rhetoric” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994): 71-90; Fergus Kerr, O.P. “Charity as Friendship,” in *Language, Meaning and God: Essays in Honour of Herbert McCabe O.P.*, ed. Brian Davies, O.P. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 1-23; James McEvoy, “The Other as Oneself: Friendship and Love in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas” in *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, ed. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 16-37; Olivier-Thomas Venard, *Littérature et Théologie: Une saison en enfer* (Genève: Ad Solem, 2002); Paul Waddell, *Friends of God: Virtues and Gifts in Aquinas* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); Kevin White, “Friendship Degree Zero: Aquinas on Good Will” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 9 (2011): 479-518, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Prologues,” *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 98 (2005): 803-813.



in the scholarship, Thomas himself is engaged in writing the *Summa Theologiae* as a profoundly formative set of reflections on the truths of the Christian faith.<sup>43</sup> Although several aspects from Thomas's writings, including the *Summa*, have been gleaned for their contributions to a theology of discourse<sup>44</sup> the treatise on *oratio* still awaits sustained attention by systematic theologians with such a focus.<sup>45</sup> In this treatise, which constitutes the longest set of *quaestiones* in the *Summa*, *oratio* is identified along a vast trajectory of human and divine speech; *oratio* is "spoken reason," "petition" ("like the interpreter of desire"), and the "raising of the mind to God" (*ST* II.II.83.1). Furthermore, Thomas's treatment of *oratio* will be presented in the greater context of his work on God's love (including friendship), communicated in the Person of Christ, cultivated through the communion of saints, sustained and nurtured by the Holy Spirit. While such a thirteenth-century retrieval constitutes a critical contribution to a theology of discourse in its own right, I hope to show that it also serves to elucidate most strikingly the dynamics of fruitful discourse working throughout the twelfth-century *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard.

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<sup>43</sup> While an exhaustive list simply cannot be accounted for here, see note 42 above. See also Thomas S. Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion: Metaphysics and Practice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), Gilles Mongeau, S.J., *Embracing Wisdom: the Spiritual Pedagogy of the Summa Theologiae* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies), forthcoming, and Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> See for instance the three essays engaged with Thomas's writings in *Theology and Conversation*: Pim Valkenberg, "Interreligious Dialogue as Polemical Conversation," 475-486, William J. Hoye, "The Conversation of Love as Unfulfilling Union," 755-760, and Denys Turner, "Atheism, Apophaticism and 'Différance,'" 689-708. Turner's essay, as well as Tracy's and Burrell's respective engagements with Thomas's work, will be addressed in Chapter 2 of this study. See also John A. Cuddeback, "Truth and Friendship: The Importance of the Conversation of Friends" in *Truth Matters: Essays in Honor of Jacques Maritain*, ed. John Trapani, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: American Maritain Association, 2004), as well as the citation for Lawrence, "Grace and Friendship: Postmodern Political Theology and God as Conversational."

<sup>45</sup> Simon Tugwell's invaluable contribution to the progress of this work may be found in *Albert & Thomas: Selected Writings*. Ed. Simon Tugwell (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), especially 273-279, and 476ff.

## 1.2 Discourse and method

### 1.2.1 Methodology: Lonergan's functional specialty, "foundations"

An appropriate methodological approach to a theology of discourse is Bernard Lonergan's functional specialty, "foundations."<sup>46</sup> "Foundations" constitutes a method conducive to the work of retrieval, since it is a discipline "concerned largely with the origins, the genesis, the present state, the possible developments and adaptations of the categories in which Christians understand themselves, communicate with one another, and preach the gospel to all nations."<sup>47</sup> More specifically, "foundations" is appropriate methodologically for the fact that it constitutes a discursive practice with the tradition and with fellow interdisciplinary collaborators, and it is a formative practice that must be appropriated as responsibly as are the theological doctrines it seeks more deeply to understand.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the method of "foundations" is a distinctly rhetorical one, for it is an "audience-implying discourse . . . reflect[ing] the interaction of subjects in community as well as intend[ing] God's presence."<sup>49</sup> On a general level, then, the "first language" of "foundations" is "image, symbol and story." On a specific level, the primary language of "foundations" is prayer.<sup>50</sup> From these basic accounts of story and prayer may be discerned "interlocking vocabularies and grammars which describe the multiple facets of individual and communal experience" from which "general" and "special" categories will be found to emerge and to reflect the life of ongoing conversion to which God's people are called.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972), 281.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>48</sup> As David Tracy himself has noted of this method: "the foundational theologian attempts to objectify authentically Christian conversion as it emerges from dialectical discussion," "Method as Foundation for Theology: Bernard Lonergan's Option" *The Journal of Religion* 50 (1970): 292-318, here 316.

<sup>49</sup> Happel, "Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations," 197.

<sup>50</sup> Happel, "Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations," 197.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*: "General categories which focus experiences, conceptualizations, judgments and decisions common among theology and other disciplines will be examined. General categories will offer clarity about what counts

To this end, what is required is the theologian's articulation of his or her particular vision as one received through the narratives and faithful accounts of the tradition and proclaimed before God in the service of the church and the world. The particular vision proposed in this study is the way in which all authentic discourse is in the service of interpersonal conversion. This is the task of retrieval through interdisciplinary collaboration with the work of medievalists, historians, philosophers and theologians: "There have to be worked out the techniques for reconstructing the diverging contexts presupposed by different persons, peoples, places, times."<sup>52</sup> Given this methodology, my work begins not primarily from the standpoint of trinitarian theology, but of narratives of theological anthropology. From this standpoint, the human person is understood to have been given life (*imago dei*) through the work of Divine love and moreover, through God's "renewal" of this love in human experience through the mystery of the Incarnation. How seriously do we take this renewal of humanity through the Incarnation in terms of encounter with the other? Can we conceive of the systematic theology that comes out of this question to be a theology of discourse?

### 1.2.2 Etymological illumination: medieval *conversatio*

The first words of the title of this dissertation are best introduced in this section on methodology. For while the English word *conversation* properly denotes a discussion between two or more persons in a particular place and time, the Latin term *conversatio* denotes also an existential orientation of one's life,<sup>53</sup> thereby connoting something of its

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in one's wider world; special categories will speak of the specific religious tradition from which one comes and in which one studies and will issue in explicit commitment to that tradition. Foundations makes clear the claims, as well as the truth of the claims, of those conversions which occur as the basis for authentic dialectics."

<sup>52</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 281.

<sup>53</sup> "Conversatio, onis, f., (1) social intercourse, association . . . (2) conduct, way of life," *A Latin-English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1960), 240.

related term, *conversio* as an ever-present invitation of orienting that life to God as working in and through the social engagement of discourse.<sup>54</sup> While a more extensive discussion of *conversatio* will follow in the chapter on Aquinas, it serves well the methodological practice of this project to point out how the theologian's engagement with the method of "foundations" constitutes a double invitation for herself as well as for her reader. More specifically, the goal of this project is to offer an objective account of interpersonal conversion for theological reflection, while the means for achieving it aim at reflecting the account of conversion in and through a progressively deepening series of formative inquiries and insights.<sup>55</sup>

### 1.3 Conclusion

Systematic theology has yet to fully articulate a body of theological reflection engaged with the exchange of speech and prayer as formative human practices of individuals and communities called to ever-deeper life in God. The introduction to the first chapter of this study provided the *status quaestionis* for a contemporary theology of discourse that is distinguished by its critical examination of ways in which language and relationality both inform and are formed by the Christian faith. Following this presentation, justification was offered, first, for the selection of the works of three contemporary theologians as providing keynotes to a theology of discourse, and second, for the task of general as well as specific

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<sup>54</sup> See Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992): "as we try to understand portrayals of conversions in the twelfth century, we are really studying twelfth-century words and linguistic constructions," xiv.

<sup>55</sup> The general definition of conversion to be employed in this study is taken from the work of David Burrell: conversion identifies something that happens to us, such that we desire to "change our ways" in order to be better disposed to trust others/Other in freedom. See Chapter 2 (section 2.3.2) of this study. As Morrison has noted in *Understanding Conversion*, even a study of conversion limited to twelfth-century texts reveals "an intricate ebb and flow of several, conflicting traditions. When we read those texts, we are aware that the doctrine of conversion set forth is not uniform. . . . Each, we know has its own history. . . . The doctrine of the imitation of Christ consists of numerous striations," 15.

retrievals of works from the Christian tradition. Following the introduction, I identified the methodology being employed throughout this project.

Chapter Two begins with an in-depth examination of selected works of David Tracy and David Burrell as providing an entryway to a theology of discourse through their engagement with discourse analysis and friendship studies respectively, as well as for their focus on Augustine, whose semiotics of creation and revelation are offered in Chapter Three as providing a critical reflection on discourse from the tradition through a set of spiritual exercises in the service of conversion. Sarah Coakley's work on gender is also offered in Chapter Two as complementing that of Tracy and Burrell, as well as opening the way for the selected medieval retrievals.

As an early example of the ministry of the *cura mulierum*, the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard serve to confirm and develop the work of Augustine on conversion in Chapter Four by providing a narrative set of "horizontal" spiritual exercises complementing Augustine's "vertical" exercises leading the narrative of the *Confessions*. Chapter Five is an examination of Aquinas's treatise on *oratio*, offered as a systematic reflection on the exercise of interpersonal conversion within the greater project identified as the discourse of friendship in the *Summa Theologiae*.

## Chapter 2

### Contemporary Articulations of a Theology of Discourse

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter attested to the need to focus on discourse in theological reflection, as well as the accompanying methodology to be followed in this study. Discourse is the encounter with another person or persons as brought about through language. A theology of discourse constitutes a rich convergence of Christian reflection on the linguistic and relational practices by which a theological anthropology and doctrine of God is meaningfully appropriated, communicated, and lived.<sup>56</sup> A methodology most suited to such a study is one that executes a theology of discourse in accordance with the dynamics of interpersonal conversation that constitute it. As a method marked by its discursive and formative features, Lonergan's functional specialty, "foundations," is best suited for this study precisely because it seeks to identify "the transformative character of language for the establishment of the grounds, values, and bases of community."<sup>57</sup> The LEST conference's admittedly preliminary attempt at identifying the nature of discourse in its contemporary and traditional expressions included a broad agenda for moving forward, an agenda mainly characterized by: critical engagement with issues of postmodernity and globalization; deeper reflection on the nature of persons in dialogue and in community; further inquiry concerning the many and diverse resources given in the Christian tradition; and integral collaboration,

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<sup>56</sup> Both Tracy and Burrell pursue this insight in their respective work. In "The Christocentric Community: An Essay toward a Relational Ecclesiology," Timothy J. Crutcher identifies such reflection on discourse to be "a proto-theology, a tool for crafting better theological concepts by realizing and appreciating the relational underpinnings of those conceptualizations," in *Theology and Conversation*, 547-556; here 548.

<sup>57</sup> Happel, "Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations," 195. As noted in Chapter 1 of this study, Happel's discussion identifies both functional specialties, dialectics and foundations, as constituting "a new rhetoric" that addresses the difficulties working in a "post-classicist rhetoric." While the full details of his discussion and the ways in which my approach differs cannot be outlined here, the important point is in our agreement that the work of foundations is in the service of theology as rhetorical.

especially with persons whose suffering status in the world arena has traditionally marked them as ineligible on the discursive stage.

#### 2.1.1 A hermeneutical circle of discourse: Tracy, Burrell, Coakley

David Tracy, David Burrell, and Sarah Coakley provide three complementary contributions forwarding the work of the conference and anticipating the medieval retrievals offered in this study. More specifically, their combined studies may be understood as providing a hermeneutical circle of discourse. This circle may be traced through Tracy's attention to the nature of discourse itself, followed by Burrell's focus on the intersubjective nature of discourse, and complemented by Coakley's attention to the subjects working within this intersubjective framework. For Tracy, this constitutes a prioritizing of discursive studies as "The New Hermeneutics."<sup>58</sup> For Burrell, it constitutes a "phenomenology of agency" informed by a more intentionally examined account of intersubjectivity. Finally, Sarah Coakley's attention to gender serves to further Burrell's work along these lines; she insists on more intentional reflection by systematic theologians considering the mutual participation of women and men in the task of faithful discipleship.

#### 2.1.2 Transposing Aristotelian modes of persuasion for a theology of discourse

The work of all three theologians will be presented throughout this chapter as exhibiting a heightened awareness of the role of power in discourse, especially in terms of the relationship between the theologian and the particular and diverse audiences addressed by the theologian. Consequently, my presentation of these scholars will be attendant upon their engagement with the rhetorical categories of authority and audience, categories that will be shown herein to involve a transposition of *ēthos* and *pathos*, two modes of persuasion in the Aristotelian tradition of rhetoric.

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<sup>58</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 133.

As noted in Chapter One, the work of rhetoric is principally the work of a relationship between speaker and hearer (or writer and reader) that will, in turn, determine the narratives and syllogisms employed in the discourse. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, this work is understood as being directed by the speaker. More specifically, the degree to which the speaker shows forth integrity of character (*ēthos*), elicits the appropriate emotions of the audience (*pathos*), and provides true or probable arguments (*logos*), corresponds with the degree to which the rhetoric is successful.<sup>59</sup> However what is central both literally and figuratively in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is the realization that true or probable arguments (*logos*) are effective only insofar as the speaker has a deep understanding of the psychological dimensions of character formation (*ēthos*) and the emotions (*pathē*) of the audience.<sup>60</sup> As Aristotle notes in the early lines of Book II of the *Rhetoric*, "there are three things we trust other than logical demonstrations. These are practical wisdom [*phronēsis*] and virtue [*aretē*] and good will [*eunoia*]," with the first two relegated to the realm of *ēthos* and the last to *pathos*.<sup>61</sup> Even when an extended discussion of the nature of argument (*logos*) appears, it is facilitated by a discussion of *epithymiai*, (II.19.7), which are not just emotions (*pathē*), but strong emotions, or longing.

What is important to note in this schema of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is that it is geared toward the persuasion [*pistis*]<sup>62</sup> of the audience through the speaker's projection of character

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<sup>59</sup> See Bk. I.2.1-6, Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans., introduction, notes by George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36-39.

<sup>60</sup> Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is divided into three Books; Book Two dedicates the first major sections to the treatment of the emotions (chapters 2-11) and character (12-17), including what Kennedy has noted is "the earliest systematic discussion of human psychology," 122. Chapters 18-26 proceed to focus on *logos*.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., II.1.5-7. Kennedy calls attention to this point, 121n2.

<sup>62</sup> For the complexity of Aristotle's understanding of *pistis*, see Kennedy's discussion: "*Pistis* (pl. *pisteis*) has a number of different meanings in different contexts: 'proof, means of persuasion, belief,' etc. In 1.2.2-3 Aristotle distinguishes between artistic and nonartistic *pisteis*, and divides the former into three means of persuasion based on character, logical argument, and arousing emotion. Here in chap. 1 readers familiar with dialectic have



and emotional formation. To this end, traditional readings of the *Rhetoric* naturally situate the authoritative voice in the role of the speaker, while situating the audience in the role of requiring formation in what is true. However, contemporary interpretations of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in light of his commitment to the philosophical life as itself formative, present an alternative reading for our consideration.<sup>63</sup> By accounting for the fact that *both* speakers *and* hearers are in the practice of formation through discourse, this alternative reading “redescribe[s] the interaction of speaker and audience as mutual, rather than as the conviction of the masses by a single orator.”<sup>64</sup> In this way, the categories of *ēthos* and *pathos* that constitute the motive force in the Aristotelian tradition are transposed and resituated as the primary modes by which *both* speakers (as authorities) *and* hearers (as audience) *in-form* one another through discourse.

This rereading of the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition that resituates the principle formative categories of rhetoric has several functions in this study. First, it provides a conceptual lens through which contemporary contributions to discourse will be examined, in part, throughout this chapter. Second, it anticipates Augustine's seminal contributions to rhetorical theology (Chapter Three). Third, it depicts the setting through which the medieval contributions offered in this study were appropriated. This includes the correspondence of Heloise and Abelard in the twelfth century (Chapter Four), and Thomas Aquinas's appropriation of Aristotle's works in the thirteenth century (Chapter Five).

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no knowledge yet of persuasion by character or emotion and will assume that *pistis* means ‘logical proof,’” 30n9.

<sup>63</sup> Pierre Hadot's work is an exemplary text in this area. See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995). See also the discussion of David Burrell's engagement with Hadot's work in section 2.3.1 of this chapter.

<sup>64</sup> Happel, “Religious Rhetoric and the Language of Theological Foundations,” 195.

## 2.2 David Tracy: Semiotic mediations as transformative practice

Tracy's earlier essay, "The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language" (1983), argues for a more intentional account of the nature and role of theological language itself (theology *as* discourse). His more recent collection, *On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics and Church* (1994), promotes theological reflection in the service of the redemption of all human communicative expressions (theology *of* discourse). In both selections, Tracy's audience is primarily theologians themselves. As such, he seeks to cultivate a profound awareness among theologians of their role as mediating authorities serving the "personal, social, political, ethical, cultural [and] religious" transformation of God's people, in a world more notably pluralistic than ever before.<sup>65</sup> In this light, theologians are obliged to attend more devotedly, and therefore more critically to the dialogue partners who constitute their audiences. Furthermore, they must be equally vigilant in attending to their own discursive formation in the Christian faith.

### 2.2.1 The nature and role of theological discourse

Tracy's essay, "The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language" constitutes the introductory chapter to a book co-written with John B. Cobb, Jr., entitled, *Talking About God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism*. I have selected it for the reflective thread that seems to be working throughout the chapter: theological discourse is in the service of conversion—the conversion of theologians, of their formal collaborators, and of their informal collaborators, God's people. Tracy's ultimate goal in the essay is "to articulate the general character of all good theological language as fully public language" in order to arrive at the work of the later chapters of the book, which is a faithful

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<sup>65</sup> Tracy, "The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language," 2.

articulation of a “Christian doctrine of God.”<sup>66</sup> In pursuing this goal, he offers several general rubrics that have served the work of systematic theology specifically, and all of theological reflection in general. What I wish to focus on here, however, are two of Tracy’s overarching points that bear most directly to this thesis. The first point concerns the way in which theologians are called to appropriate the dynamic role of public discourse for theological reflection. The second concerns the way in which theologians, by virtue of such a vocation, are, themselves, called to ongoing, discursive, formation in the tradition and in the community appropriating the tradition.

The most basic task of any systematic theology *as* discourse is the cultivation of an explicit awareness on the part of the theologian to questions of audience. As Tracy notes, “the distinct but related crises of meaning of both Christianity in the modern period and of the Enlightenment model of modernity intensify the need for clarification of the character of any claims to public truth.”<sup>67</sup> Two steps are required for the cultivation of the theologian’s awareness. The first is an understanding of the general definition of “public discourse” (or discourse attentive “to social realities”) as that which “discloses meanings and truths that can in principle transform all human lives in some recognizable personal, social, political, ethical, cultural, or religious manner.”<sup>68</sup> The second is the more specific way in which “Christian theological discourse—here understood as a second-order, reflective discourse upon the originating Christian religious discourse—serves an authentically public function precisely when it renders explicit the public character of the meaning and truth for our actual existence that is embedded in the Christian classic texts.”<sup>69</sup> These exercises in theological awareness of

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<sup>66</sup> Tracy, “The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language,” 1-2.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

audience closely resemble those that Tracy will later identify of Augustine in the *De doctrina christiana*, wherein “the rhetoric of instruction (and thereby invention) remains his [Augustine’s] central rhetorical concern.”<sup>70</sup>

For further discussions of the “social realities” to which the theologian attends, we will turn to Tracy’s later work. However in the essay at hand, Tracy insists on an integrally related, ontologically prior step for the theologian: “the theologian in risking her or his faith in a particular religious tradition, has the right and responsibility to be ‘formed’ by that tradition and community so that a communal taste, a faith-ful tact, a reverential judgment may be expressed through the interpretations of the tradition.”<sup>71</sup> At this point in Tracy’s work, the central mediating point of contact for such formation is an engagement with the “classics” of the Christian tradition, “those texts which form communities of interpretation and are assumed to disclose permanent possibilities of meaning and truth.”<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the extent to which a theologian is committed and faithful to such formation, and therefore to be valued as an authentic contributor to public discourse, may in fact be discerned, according to Tracy, according to a two-fold rubric:

first, that it [their “commitment and fidelity”] reach a proper depth of personal experience in and understanding of (*fides quaerens intellectum*) that very tradition that “carries one along”; second, that appropriate forms of expression (genre, codification, systematic exigency) have been developed to represent that tradition’s basic experience and self-understanding in an appropriately academic manner.<sup>73</sup>

The specific nature of such formation, or the direction that it should take, is not identified here. Still, this essay has emphasized the humble stance with which the theologian must regard his or her place as an authoritative voice on the world stage. Furthermore, Tracy’s

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<sup>70</sup> Tracy, “Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine’s Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics,” 271. This essay will be addressed more fully in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>71</sup> Tracy, “The Context: The Public Character of Theological Language,” 10-11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

reflections here prepare us for the greater attention to audience—and especially to “the poor and oppressed in all cultures”<sup>74</sup>—that motivates his work in *On Naming the Present*.

### 2.2.2 A “New Hermeneutics” for theological reflection

*On Naming the Present* is a collection of essays written by Tracy between 1978 and 1994 for a forum of international theologians in the journal *Concilium*. The main focus of my analysis will be based in his 1990s essays. The collection, organized in five parts (“On Naming the Present,” “On God,” “Contemporary Theological Issues,” “Catholic Concerns,” and “Hermeneutical Issues and Theology”), may be fruitfully understood as: beginning with questions of audience in Part One; providing an extensive account of the justification for attending to the formation of contemporary theologians’ authoritative voices in Parts Two to Four; and concluding with a call for a more sophisticated understanding of the formation of authoritative voices that requires a reconsideration of distinctions of authority and audience in the service of “a shared vision”<sup>75</sup> in theological reflection in Part Five.

For Tracy, to best engage in Christian theological reflection in the service of public discourse is to identify theology as “mystical-prophetic.”<sup>76</sup> In so doing, the theologian is acknowledging a basic philosophical insight working throughout religious traditions and reflecting basic anthropological “interpretations of God-language as perfection language [of human beings]”: “Burke’s properly general analysis of the rhetoric of religion as a drive to perfection needs, however, further specificity. For religious languages arrive in two basic forms: the rhetoric of the prophet and the rhetoric of the mystic.”<sup>77</sup> Stated otherwise, to

<sup>74</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>77</sup> See Tracy’s philosophical development of his reading of Kenneth Burke’s work on language, “Mystics, Prophets, Rhetorics: Religion and Psychoanalysis” in *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 9-26; here, 17. See also *On Naming the Present*, 24n11 for his theological context for this in works of Claude Geffre, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Edward Schillebeeckx.

discern theology as “mystical-prophetic” is to discern theology as attentive to the most basic human desires for transformation.

Such attentiveness, however, must be based in the reality of the experience of the people of God. Consequently, theologians “of privilege and power,” must be mindful of our postmodern and globalized contexts, recognizing that:

our deepest need, as philosophy and theology in our period show, is the drive to face otherness and difference. Those others must include all the subjugated others within Western European and North American culture, the others outside that culture, especially the poor and the oppressed now speaking clearly and forcefully, the terrifying otherness lurking in our own psyches and cultures, the other great religions and civilizations, the differences disseminating in all the words and structures of our own Indo-European languages.<sup>78</sup>

To pursue such a practice authentically requires a realization of “other” voices as having an integrity of their own, not to be regarded as “projections of our fears and desires.”<sup>79</sup> This realization must be constantly *in*-formed by “the repressed histories of the oppressed in every culture” in light of “the memory of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>80</sup> For only in this way, “with hope in the God who gave promises to overcome oppression, alienation, guilt, and death itself, can we learn together to name the present by joining in conversation and solidarity with the historical struggles of all the centers in a polycentric world and church.”<sup>81</sup>

Theologians must work “in conversation and solidarity” with the persons and communities for whom their theology is in service. Such a commitment requires an informed consciousness on the part of theologians themselves, developed through a critical awareness of the implications of modern and postmodern influences in thought and practices. These

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<sup>78</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

influences should receive our commendation as well as our suspicion. Indeed, modern theology has contributed to our understandings “that the intrinsically relational character of all reality, including, indeed especially, the divine reality, could be understood with the kind of conceptual clarity lacking in ancient and medieval ‘God-talk.’”<sup>82</sup> At the same time, however, by means of an elevation of the power of reason through an engagement with the “central categories” of “history and language,” modern theological reflection faced a crisis of its own: “In both Hegel and Whitehead, and in many forms of modern relational thought (including several forms of feminist relational thought on God) the question that recurs is: is God rendered a conceptual prisoner of a new intellectual system of totality with no real moment of infinity allowing God to be God.”<sup>83</sup>

Honoring the ineffable reality of God is at the heart of the contribution of postmodern theology and its emphasis on the “radical interruption” of divinity throughout our every conceptualization and system. Its associated emphasis on the radical otherness and difference of humanity also includes associative shifts of detachment and apophaticism in understanding received language patterns.<sup>84</sup> Still, the postmodern emphasis on transgression and excess, on “otherness and difference . . . needs above all to learn to listen and learn from others.”<sup>85</sup> Such attentiveness, adds Tracy, may only be found among the postmodern exceptions, including Emmanuel Levinas and Julia Kristeva.<sup>86</sup> In such “notable exceptions,” are the beginning accounts of

a reality beyond the illusions of the modern ego and beyond postmodern reflections on otherness: the voices and actions of concrete others. Those others, especially the poor and oppressed in all cultures, now speak, unlike the postmoderns, as historical

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<sup>82</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 17. Tracy also acknowledges exceptions to the failures of modern theology.

subjects of both resistance and hope. They insist that the future as both promise and judgment must interrupt all presentness.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, such accounts will need to reject a theology with “anthropocentric” strictures fostering a ‘closed’ reading of the Gospel: “the incarnation itself can only be properly interpreted in the light of the ministry, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>88</sup> It is precisely an informed consciousness and conscientiousness concerning these realities that is required of theologians engaged in a theology of discourse. Such formation for conversation is required.

In the service of such formation, Tracy introduces a step beyond his hermeneutical discussion of the “classic text.” In the concluding chapter, “Beyond Foundationalism and Relativism: Hermeneutics and the New Ecumenism,” Tracy proposes that hermeneutical reflection centered in discourse analysis should be appropriated for systematic theology.<sup>89</sup> Emphasizing the value of hermeneutics for theological reflection by virtue of its non-foundationalist—through a serious engagement with historical consciousness—and non-relativist—through universal appeals to justice issues—commitments, Tracy identifies “The New Hermeneutics as Discourse Analysis” as a further development in hermeneutics studies: “the move . . . past a hermeneutical overconcern with ‘text’ and ‘historical context’ into a new hermeneutical concern with “social location” and “discourse” can be construed as a self-critical move within the non-foundationalist and non-relativist horizon.”<sup>90</sup> His explanation of this shift should be quoted at length:

The focus on text in modern hermeneutics has become dangerous not only for its privileging of literate over preliterate cultures (the latter often revealingly labeled “prehistorical”), but also for the idealist and purely culturalist assumptions of the

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<sup>87</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 17.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.



category “text.” “Discourse,” on the other hand, always demands attention to explicit or implicit power realities in the emergence of meaning and knowledge. For discourse not only means (as in Benveniste) “someone says something to someone” but also demands attention to forms of power operative in the someone, the something, the “to someone.” Discourse analysis should not reduce meaning and knowledge to power relations. But discourse analysis also will not allow (as earlier forms of historical consciousness and hermeneutics could allow) an abstraction from the specific realities of power, especially the relationships of gender, class, and race: in all texts, all traditions, all interpretations, and all knowledge—and thereby in all theology.<sup>91</sup>

By appropriating discourse analysis in this way, theological reflection moves from an identification of itself as “public discourse” to an intentional study of the nature of that discourse for the transformation of audiences and authorities.

Tracy acknowledges that the matrix of formative steps required for such a development to bear fruit constitutes a theological project in itself, and so he concludes his final essay with some suggestions for moving forward. At this point in his book, the previous, explicit indications that his audience is theologians seem to fall away:

Anyone who undertakes this journey must try to hold together three virtues ordinarily kept apart: the virtue of self-respect and self-dignity maintained by all those who never leave their tradition; the virtue of a radical openness to other and different traditions; the virtue of ethical universality with a sense of justice by all who insist upon the communality of the human.<sup>92</sup>

In responding to such a challenge, Tracy states his hope that wayfarers will dispose themselves in the direction of “a ‘second naïveté’ toward one’s tradition (enter critical philosophy and revisionary theology)” rather than seek “retrenchment (enter fundamentalism)” or “flight (enter relativism).”<sup>93</sup> But even to allow oneself to be disposed in

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<sup>91</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 135-136.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 138. The medieval texts examined in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study will serve to elucidate these virtues through their sustained reflections on friendship.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. “Second naïveté” is Paul Ricoeur’s phrase, given as a hermeneutical term to identify a critical encounter with the sacred; it is “the second immediacy aimed at by hermeneutics,” or “the postcritical equivalent of the precritical hierophany,” *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 352.

the first manner is not yet to be able to answer the question, “How?” How should such virtues be held together? Tracy leaves us with this question.

### 2.3 David Burrell: conversion in community

The selected texts by David Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth* (2000) and *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian and Muslim Traditions* (2010), provide an effective elucidation of the dynamics of intersubjectivity through which authentic discourse may thrive. In this way, his work both complements and expands Tracy’s proposed appropriation of discourse analysis for theological reflection. Tracy’s proposal is concerned primarily with cultivating the authentic religious language patterns (i.e. “mystical-prophetic”) informing and challenging discourse, and concludes with an appeal for work on the authentic theological anthropology and formative practices that such discourse will serve. The selected publications by Burrell answer this call. In *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, Burrell illuminates the predominantly intersubjective nature of the historically charted philosophical and theological practice of “spiritual exercises,” a practice strikingly marked by the profound possibilities and limitations of language.<sup>94</sup> *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions* provides the corresponding theological anthropology out of which such formative practices arise. It should be noted here that Burrell’s audience is less ostensibly theologians themselves. In fact, the tenor of his rhetoric reflects that of Tracy’s closing reflections in *On Naming the Present*; the addressees are wayfarers—joined by Burrell himself, who speaks from the Christian tradition—on the philosophical and theological path to transformative living. In this way, a theology of discourse is presupposed

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<sup>94</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 21. Burrell’s discussion later in this chapter will attend to this feature of language arising from its formative nature, such that “discourse [is] constantly reaching beyond itself.” The discussion of Augustine’s work in Chapter 3 of this study will further illuminate this feature of spiritual exercises.

rhetorically in the text; questions of authority and audience converge throughout the conversation being offered within the text.

### 2.3.1 Spiritual exercises: gifts of friends for mutual formation

Burrell identifies the project of *Friendship and Ways to Truth* as an exploration of “the role friends play in our coming to truth.”<sup>95</sup> He fulfills this through what may be considered a narrative of accounts of friendship. The first chapter (“Grieving the Death of a Friend”) begins with a personal experience of friendship. Chapters Two and Three (“Friends in Conversation: The Language and Practice of Faith,” “The Role of Dialogue and Friendship in Cross-Cultural Understanding”) highlight the pathways and fruits of conversations shared between friends, and the fourth and fifth chapters (“Friendship with God in al-Ghazali and Aquinas,” “Friendship and Discourse about Divinity: Lest God be god”) address the question of friendship before the face of God. The two central features that will be highlighted here as working throughout the book are faithfulness in friendship as the basic practice of truth-knowing, and spiritual exercises as formative discursive practices.

Burrell’s sustained focus on friendship allows him to explore the dynamics of relationality—what he will more precisely name “intersubjectivity”—in the context of religious faith. Recognizing as Tracy has that such a project requires justification beyond its affinities with the work of Augustine, Burrell attends, as did Tracy, to the matter of relativism, “contend[ing] that our current situation favors a reading of ‘objectivity’ as ‘intersubjectivity,’ a proposal anticipated in midcentury by the Canadian philosophical theologian, Bernard Lonergan.”<sup>96</sup> This contention involves three steps: identifying rationality as a “functional notion displayed in practices which cut across traditional boundaries, rather

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<sup>95</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 292: “genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.”

than a set of substantive beliefs”; acknowledging perennial associations of “*faith* with *tradition*” to be constitutive of rather than peripheral to human experience; and positing discourse as “the shape which reason takes in our pluralistic age.”<sup>97</sup> As Burrell points out: “Rationality will show itself in practices which can be followed and understood by persons operating in similar fashion from different grounding convictions. What they have in common is the need to talk about what they believe.”<sup>98</sup>

Because philosophical and theological reflection on friendship—especially as understood through the Aristotelian tradition, and as further transformed in the work of Aquinas<sup>99</sup>—constitutes an intensified study of intersubjectivity, Burrell is able to explore the deepest features of intersubjectivity by attending to friendship. Most notable among these features are: receptiveness, ‘spiritual longing,’ and formative connection with language practices. The receptive quality of friendship is one that will hold a central place in Burrell’s later study, *Learning to Trust in Freedom*. Ultimately, authentic friendship is understood as a gift to be cultivated in gratitude.<sup>100</sup> While this understanding is counter to modern notions of relationality as being “in control,” committed friendship, through the suffering that is associated with it, teaches something else, just as the experience of the death of a friend does: “grieving, like friendship and nearly everything significant in our lives, is not something we do; it is something we undergo.”<sup>101</sup> He continues to explain this “grammar” of friendship: “So the friendship that has been ours is something that neither of us did; it gradually insinuated itself into our lives, shaping them into what they have become. That process

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<sup>97</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 41-44.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-74.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

entailed us doing a number of things, of course, but the reality itself was none of our doing.”<sup>102</sup>

What I have identified as the spiritual longing associated with friendship, Burrell calls its “metaphysical lure.”<sup>103</sup> This longing is characterized by the “struggle to keep friendship authentic”; even though we may find it “increasingly difficult to speak the truth, as and when we see it, to someone with whom our life is intertwined, as spouses know so well. . . . the demand to do so, and to have our perspective corrected or enhanced, never ceases.”<sup>104</sup> In addition to this longing or desire that characterizes friendship, the “mutual trust” required for its growth constitutes its metaphysical or spiritual quality:

friendship requires mutual trust to unfold, yet even that mutuality demands more than two persons can muster; for no one is immune to those power games which erode trust. . . . There must be something (or someone) more in which (or in whom) we may put our trust, if the interpersonal friendship is to develop into what it promises. Here is where life pushes us beyond calculation to trust, beyond reason to faith. Yet that step beyond us, as we have seen, is precisely what the logic of love demands of us.<sup>105</sup>

It is only through this metaphysical or spiritual understanding of friendship that one recognizes that “as pervasive as power may be, it cannot be the last word.”<sup>106</sup>

More often than not, it is to language and language practices that persons turn along this journey. “This dynamic,” notes Burrell, is what

has fueled Dick Allen’s treatment of “the reasonableness of faith” from the beginning: language is crucial yet remains a vehicle for understanding, an understanding to which we are mysteriously called in our effort to negotiate a world which becomes ever more fascinating. The effort which that quest calls forth will be concentrated on accurate and fruitful expression—for oneself and for others—but what animates that expression always exceeds what we can say. This phenomenon

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<sup>102</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 10.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

reminds us how discourse is constantly reaching beyond itself, at the service of something else—hence the guiding image of conversation between friends.<sup>107</sup>

Burrell's insight here demands emphasis: sustained attention to the practice of discourse as the 'place' where language and relationality meet ultimately leads to the 'beyond' of discourse. Furthermore, both language practices and friendship practices require attentiveness and discipline.

These reflections point back to the focus of Burrell's book; having attended to friendship itself, we must consider "the ways to truth" as, in fact, "eminently personal yet correlatively cosmic."<sup>108</sup> "The way to truth will entail meeting others and journeying with them," notes Burrell, and further,

mimicking Wittgenstein, if truth is to be had, it will only be had in a tradition, within a community, in the company of friends. For each of these terms implies the other: tradition without a sustaining and connecting community is nothing but past history; and we are formed into communities by the cross-hatching of friendships, and especially of friends bound together by their shared faith in a communal goal. So the relation of student to teacher becomes one of fellow travelers on a journey, even when that encounter takes place across several centuries.<sup>109</sup>

In this way, the faithfulness among friends, practiced through conversation, reflects the continuum that includes communities and tradition. Such a continuum is most notably characterized not by an authoritative mastery of the relations making up the tradition, but rather by "a willingness to place our life and needs in the hands of another."<sup>110</sup> It is largely this disposition that Burrell focuses on in his discussion of spiritual exercises as formative practice.

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<sup>107</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 20-21: "For nothing but faith can provide a context rich enough to offset the inevitable tendency of relationships to serve an 'égoïsme à deux,' the tendency which Jews identify as the *yetzer ra*, Christians as 'original sin,' and Muslims as the state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*)."

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Ultimately, Burrell's discussion of spiritual exercises may be understood as a discussion of the gifts of friends as mutual formation for "life in God."<sup>111</sup> His treatment of these formative practices derives from Pierre Hadot's extensive study of the philosophical—and this means communal—practices of late antiquity. Hadot identifies these exercises as an invaluable "grammar of . . . practices" shared among the philosophical community.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, these exercises were not designed to demonstrate a "doctrinal exposition," but rather to dispose one to "practice a method" that would elicit a fruitful search for truth.<sup>113</sup> In this way, "discourse was decidedly at the service of forming persons of a particular sort, whose very way of life would testify to the truth of the discourse."<sup>114</sup> So just as "dialogue itself becomes a key spiritual exercise" in these communities, with language "leading" them to meditate on their way of life, so, alternately, did their experiences provide the analogies for the proper use of language.<sup>115</sup> The crucial point, observes Burrell, is that all language used "require[d] a mode of inquiry and of life which privileges certain paradigm instances over others: 'spiritual exercises,' if you will."<sup>116</sup> When such practices are informed by God's own Word, we have the very ground, if you will, for friendship's receptive nature, as "Christian prayer turns out to be more listening for the voice of the Lord than dialogic in character, though the speaker is also expressly an interlocutor: the Hebrew pattern of covenant and the cognate prayer pattern of *beraka* has informed Christian practice from the

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<sup>111</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 30.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-36: "the reason we will be asked to undertake the requisite exercises lies with the very character of the language used to probe such dimensions of existence....And analogous terms need to be anchored to a primary analogate....It is that 'leading' function of language, dubbed *manuductio* ['taking by the hand and leading'] by Aquinas, which analogous terms exhibit so powerfully when they are properly used," 27.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

beginning.”<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, as “a prayer suffused with thanksgiving,” the celebration of the eucharist recalls “a specific action of God on our behalf” that evokes our receptivity: “Formation in such a mode of prayer is designed to work against our penchant to begin with our own capacities and desires and implore divine help to fulfill *them*.”<sup>118</sup>

And yet, since Christian practices of prayer happen, as spiritual exercises must, in the context of relationship, Burrell points out that the pray-er is not even in control of the receptivity itself. That is, the “step from many words to fewer and even to wordlessness becomes natural enough, yet the initiative remains with the Word of God.”<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, Christian practices of prayer are even better understood in the context of *many* relationships. As Burrell also emphasizes, the “‘vertical’ set of spiritual exercises” practiced in each believer’s relationship with God “is complemented by conversation between persons formed in its patterns, conversation allowing them to seek to clarify together the truth revealed in the scriptures and appropriated by each of them personally.”<sup>120</sup> In fact, the call of the Scriptures “to love God and one’s neighbor, demands that a ‘horizontal’ set of exercises complement the ‘vertical’ one.”<sup>121</sup>

Burrell identifies the fruits of this dual set of exercises to be illuminated in Book Nine of Augustine’s *Confessions*, as Augustine relates his “purely celebratory” encounter with his mother, Monica.<sup>122</sup> And while this point is made strongly enough by Burrell, he is equally insistent about another aspect of the *Confessions* highlighting Augustine’s clear participation in this practice of spiritual exercises. As he notes, Augustine’s spiritual conflict in Book

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<sup>117</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 30.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* See Denys Turner’s contribution to this discussion in Chapter 3 of this study (section 3.4).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* This discussion will be even further developed in Chapter 3 of this study (section 3.1).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.



Seven of the *Confessions* is not between Platonism and Christianity as two “‘philosophical positions’ (or in Hadot’s terms, ‘doctrinal expositions’).” Rather, it was for Augustine, as for his readers, between “communities of discourse with specified exercises of membership, designed to bring out the existential consequences of philosophical thought and conversation.”<sup>123</sup>

What Augustine came to understand through his conversion was that “without those spiritual exercises which link friends embarked on an intellectual journey, the crucial distinction between creator and creatures will inevitably be obscured by philosophers striving to accommodate divinity to their established categories.”<sup>124</sup> This understanding is precisely what faithful thinkers such as al-Ghazali and Thomas Aquinas sought to convey:

What seems crucial is that neither thinker had to secure human dignity in the face of the creator by pure initiative. Both see human action at its best as a response to the divine initiative, and this response-character of human activity as a corollary of the originating creature-creator relationship. Given that structure, and the opening to an interpersonal relationship at the divine initiative, it becomes possible to dare to think that creatures might...stand in the same relationship to God as to themselves, and that God, the partner, would stand in the same relationship to a creature as to God’s own self! This is indeed the most acceptable formula for an intimacy which not only allows but demands that each be itself, while acknowledging and celebrating that each lives by the life of the other.<sup>125</sup>

Such receptivity “to the divine initiative” reflects the “vertical” spiritual exercises to which Burrell refers. And when the practice of these exercises ultimately reveals the “formal features” of God to be “simpleness and eternity,” these “distinctions are “found first in the practice of a faith community and only subsequently articulated by philosophical theologians.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 23-24.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105: “A ‘formal feature’ by contrast with an ordinary feature, does not pretend to describe the thing in question but rather attempts to locate it ontologically.”

### 2.3.2 Created relationality

In his second book to be discussed, *Learning to Trust in Freedom*, Burrell focuses more explicitly on retrieving an authentic anthropology that will elucidate the corresponding “horizontal” exercises for spiritual formation. Whereas *Friendship and Ways to Truth* focused on introducing the function of spiritual exercises in the service of a theology of discourse, *Learning to Trust in Freedom* goes further. The book’s six chapters, constituting a “deliberately cross-cultural” approach,<sup>127</sup> provide the retrieval of a theological anthropology as well as the critical components for spiritual exercises in the service of such an anthropology. This work is necessary, insists Burrell, because:

currently standard accounts of freedom (focused on libertarian freedom) will prove radically inadequate to parsing the nuances and complexities of human freedom and will lead to anti-theological conclusions, precisely because the analytic categories such accounts presume have been developed in an intellectual atmosphere inattentive to the presence of a creator—or indeed of any significant finality to the *humanum*.<sup>128</sup>

To this end, he proposes to offer “a phenomenology of agency which seems at once more faithful to our experience and may even allow a glimpse of the expressly ineffable relation between the universe and its creator—that is, offer some way for us to be able to perceive things as created.”<sup>129</sup> The three contributions of Burrell that will receive attention here are: an explanation for the current inadequacies in our understanding of the *humanum*, the retrieval of an authentic anthropology, and the critical components needed in the service of this authentic anthropology—both for its restoration and for its flourishing.

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<sup>127</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, x. The chapters proceed as follows: “Introduction: Freedom as Response; 1. Learning from Traditions to Overcome the Pastness of the Past: From Modernity to Postmodernity; 2. Contrasting Acting as Initiating with Acting as Responding: A Classical View of Will; 3. Creation and Cosmic Trust in Abrahamic Faith Traditions; 4. Philosophical Presumptions and Strategies Clarified by Theology; 5. How Narrative Contextualizes and Articulates Freedom: Augustine and Etty Hillesum; 6. Beyond Optimism to Hope: John of the Cross and Edith Stein Responding to Charles Taylor.”

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., xv-xvi.

Both modern and postmodern philosophy must be taken to task for reinforcing an inauthentic understanding of the human person. Modern philosophers are at fault for losing the creator in creation: “as neo-Thomistic philosophy was unwittingly truncated by regarding the natural/supernatural distinction more like a divide, so modern and contemporary philosophy felt compelled to account for humanity without reference to a transcendent goal, by attempting to speak of creatures without reference to a creator.”<sup>130</sup> Postmodern philosophers, while bearing a closer resemblance to medieval thinkers in terms of being “more at ease with Gadamer’s contention that every inquiry rests on fiduciary premises,” have nevertheless inculcated the destructive argument “that ‘all is power,’ since the way in which they identify freedom with choosing, so as to eschew any *telos* inherent to free actions....[means that] gratification and domination quickly fill the void in an account which had neglected the dynamics of desire from the outset.”<sup>131</sup>

The retrieval of a classical<sup>132</sup> anthropology is necessary to rectify a false notion of freedom as reflected through the “cultural construct” of the “autonomous individual.”<sup>133</sup> This retrieved anthropology is more authentic because it “begin[s] with freedom as response to ‘the good’ rather than as assertive initiative.” Furthermore, this truer understanding of freedom is based in the human experience of trust: “For without a native trust, we could never initiate anything.” Burrell crucially identifies this trust as an analogue for religious faith, for the “faith-assertion” of the Abrahamic traditions that “the universe is freely created

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<sup>130</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, 1-2: “if we can say, schematically, that the presence of a free creator divides medieval from ancient philosophy.....modern philosophy wanted to distinguish itself by eliminating theological overtones present in ‘scholastics,’ so proceeded by avoiding reference to a creator.”

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 3,4.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., xvii: “from both Aristotle and Plato...with overtly anti-Hegelian overtones.”

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., ix-x.

by the One.”<sup>134</sup> But trust is bound up with desire, not desire that is divorced from the will, but that is ultimately oriented *for* trust, and *to* freedom, though not without participating in an ongoing dialectic involving competing, inauthentic desires.<sup>135</sup>

A “phenomenology of agency” that is meant to highlight the basic orientation of the created being to the creator, and to explain this orientation according to a capacity for freedom that is based in trust and does not “presume acting to be initiating,”<sup>136</sup> must strenuously work to retrieve the classical notion of desire for the good. Here, Burrell returns again to the tradition of spiritual exercises by which they could “allow the homing instinct of desire itself for the good to overcome its distracting multiplicity so that an overriding (or underlying) desire for the good can prevail over multiple desires for contrary goods.”<sup>137</sup> Burrell is careful not to label such exercises “*ascetical*,” since the connotative emphasis on “*control*” rather than “*attraction*” is counter-productive in light of the goals of this project: ““spiritual exercises for the ancients were more like the strategies of astute parents (or *au-pères*) who have learned to wean children from risky attractions by offering something yet more attractive to them.”<sup>138</sup> Moreover, it was precisely through such exercises that neo-Platonists could “articulate the creator as ‘cause of being.’”<sup>139</sup>

Burrell further identifies two central mechanisms by which these spiritual exercises were carried out and often experienced: “*discernment*” and “*conversion*.” While discernment describes “the way we have discriminated among the various ends which took over our lives at different times,” conversion identifies something that happens to us, such that we desire to

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<sup>134</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, xv.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-18, xv-xvi.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii-xviii. To push this analogy further in light of Burrell’s earlier discussion of spiritual exercises as first and foremost based in trust in a community of friends, let’s recall Aristotle’s observation from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that friendship is best found in nature in the form of a mother for her offspring.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

“change our ways” in order to be better disposed to trust others/Other in freedom.<sup>140</sup> Such a disposition does not, however, ensure that resulting experiences of trust in others will be constituted by the “kind of cosmic trust which enlivens all of our inquiry and each of our relationships.”<sup>141</sup> And if such experiences are not so constituted, they inevitably remain vulnerable to shifting priorities among their participants, to say nothing of fatigue engendered by keeping them going.”<sup>142</sup>

Another set of spiritual exercises are then required, for “how and why hope or trust emerges...can escape us.”<sup>143</sup> Here Burrell suggests a shift from the basic practices concerning “the dialectic of desire” to broader engagements with the narratives of a religious tradition, narratives within which the practitioner engages in—by remembering—the exemplary discourses of a tradition, in order that such discourses may “lead us to the cusp of an interpersonal encounter with the origin of hope and trust.”<sup>144</sup> For Christians, the Gospels host the discourses *par excellence*.<sup>145</sup> In the book of Job, also, are we able to witness “a dramatic shift from freedom as initiating to freedom as responding.”

For Job’s “friends” had sought to divert his torment by offering explanations, while he retained his dignity and displayed his freedom by appealing directly to the source of his torment—and of his freedom. They spoke about God while Job spoke to his God, thereby unveiling the object of their discourse to be an idol—in stark contrast to the subject to whom Job directly addresses his plaintive pleas, and from whom he receives an equally direct response.<sup>146</sup>

As with Augustine’s *Confessions*, the book of Job disposes us to know that “it is the orientation to the creator built into our very existing which empowers this activity of

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<sup>140</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, viii, xix-xx.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> See Burrell’s reading of Mark 14-16, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, 28-30.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

responding, so that, far from being a hindrance, a proper appreciation of the creator/creature relationship actually enables created freedom—now positively characterized as a return to one’s source.”<sup>147</sup> In this way, as Burrell attests in the penultimate chapter of his book, “narrative contextualizes and articulates freedom.”<sup>148</sup> In so doing, narrative reorients the reader’s memory—as necessary—for the reception of God and others in right relationship. Without this authentic receptivity, the crucial mechanisms of discernment and conversion cannot take root.<sup>149</sup>

#### 2.4 Sarah Coakley: Making way for the language and relationality of gender

Tracy has argued for systematic theology’s more intentional reflection on the nature of discourse, most especially for its critical attitude toward power relations in all aspects of theological reflection, particularly as regards “relationships of gender, class and race.” He emphasizes that such reflection should “not reduce meaning and knowledge to [these] power relations,” and he acknowledges that formative steps are required for theologians—and ultimately for anyone—called to this task. Burrell attends to these formative steps through his charting of the philosophical and theological practice of “spiritual exercises.” When closely examined, these spiritual exercises reveal an underlying anthropology that is intersubjective and desire-oriented. Moreover, the orientation of this anthropology is to trust and receptive freedom. As such, it is opened to the Creator-creature relationship, and therefore existentially disposed for practices of discernment and conversion in the service of this relationship. Through such practices, both the possibilities, as well as the limits, of discourse are revealed.

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<sup>147</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, 16-17.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-58.

<sup>149</sup> These categories of receptivity, discernment and conversion will be used beginning in Chapter 3 of this study through an analysis of Augustine’s texts.

Sarah Coakley's work serves to further these lines of theological reflection. As Tracy has argued for systematic theology's more intentional reflection on the nature of discourse, Coakley argues for systematic theology's more intentional reflection on the nature of gender as it has evolved from within feminist discourse. Furthermore, as Burrell has emphasized the importance of spiritual exercises for an understanding of, and further reflection upon, the role of discernment and conversion in terms of the matrices of relationality, Coakley insists upon the practice of such formative exercises for systematic theologians dedicated to this task. Given the challenges for systematic theology today, if theologians do not commit themselves to "contemplative" practices, neither will they recognize the importance of engaging gender reflection, nor will they be working faithfully in accordance with life in the Spirit.

#### 2.4.1 The principal nature of gender discourse

In "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology? On Gender, Contemplation, and the Systematic Task," Coakley argues that sustained theological reflection on gender is required of contemporary systematic theologians who are concerned to address "some of the most troubling personal and political issues of our day" by confronting what will otherwise be an "arid and disembodied" view of humanity.<sup>150</sup> Reflection on gender is an urgent task of systematic theology because such reflection constitutes "a crucial dimension of its *theological* analysis of the human." Moreover, "gender. . . is about *differentiated, embodied relationship*—first and foremost to God, but also, and from there, to others: and its meaning is therefore fundamentally given in relation to the human's role as made in the image of God (Gen: 1.26-7)."<sup>151</sup> Such reflection must address the static dualism depicting gender that "re-

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<sup>150</sup> Sarah Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?" 11.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 9.

consigns the feminine to an eternal marginalization” in many philosophical accounts.<sup>152</sup>

Equally tragic about such accounts is their failure to address the “diachronic complication” at the heart of shifting personal and communal attitudes toward gender throughout the history of philosophical and theological reflection: “gender is characteristically viewed differently at different periods of personal maturation, and even more at different phases of spiritual maturation.”<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, on the exceptional occasions when men have taken up this task for systematic theology, they have often appropriated aspects of this messy inheritance “without a sufficiently critical *theological* assessment of it.”<sup>154</sup>

It is important to emphasize here that Coakley does not present a study of gender as the exclusive entry point for all systematic theology at all times. As noted above, however, such an approach should be integral to any systematic theology that takes creation seriously, including the perennial need to revisit our understandings of gender relations and the practices reflecting these understandings. While both Tracy and Burrell advert to the importance of such an approach, their main entry point is not with gender discourse but with interreligious discourse.<sup>155</sup> For the purposes of this study, then, I wish to affirm Coakley’s approach while holding further that spiritual exercises attending to gender discourse are

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<sup>152</sup> Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?” 7.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 11n10.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: “(consider von Balthasar and Moltmann).”

<sup>155</sup> See for instance, Tracy’s entire work dedicated to *Dialogue With The Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Publishing, 1990), but see also his reminders of the contributions of “political, liberation and feminist theologies” to recovering the unity “not only [of] theory and praxis but [of] theology and spirituality,” *On Naming the Present*, 93. Burrell calls attention to the salvific necessity of the mutual regard of men and women for their respective witness to the good news: “The very ones who had failed to accept the women’s witness were themselves sent to give witness to a death they had avoided and a resurrection which they could not accept, which they could only preach ‘with broken and contrite hearts’ (Psalm 51). There is no triumph here. But is not that what makes the news good—for them and for all who would hear the message so transmitted over multiple generations?” in *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, 30.



more basic, even, than those attending to interreligious discourse.<sup>156</sup> The Genesis narrative of men and women created in God's image is a fundamental text nourishing and challenging all of the Abrahamic faiths. In fact, the respective existential roles and interactions of women and men arguably constitute a basic anthropological underpinning to be reckoned with in any religious tradition. What Chapter Four will attempt to illustrate, in part, is that the virtues celebrated by Tracy earlier as constituting the essential formation of persons engaged in interreligious dialogue (i.e., the maintenance of "self-respect and self-dignity," "radical openness to other," and "ethical universality") are the same virtues learned through the faithful discourse between men and women.

#### 2.4.2 The way of "purgative contemplative practice"

In order to arrive at a more integrally authentic account of gender, theologians must be able to engage the key insight working throughout all feminist appeals, and that is "the embodied nature of all theological thinking."<sup>157</sup> In order to fulfill this task, three steps are necessary on the part of systematic theologians: a commitment to "purgative contemplative practice," deep awareness of the contemporary challenges to systematic thought, and a thoroughly integrated understanding of "the interruptive work of the trinitarian God."<sup>158</sup> In terms of the first step, it is the "purgative contemplative practice of silence" which must serve as the "undergirding point of reference" for systematic theology.<sup>159</sup> By cultivating an "apophatic sensibility," theologians open themselves to the "interruptive activity of the Holy Spirit" that both challenges and transforms views of gender falsely understood as primarily

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<sup>156</sup> Though not always appropriated as such, relationships of gender are among the first that we encounter and by which we learn. *The Confessions* highlight this reality; while Augustine was more engaged with the discourse between Platonists and Christians, he was only vaguely beginning to identify Monica as a mediating force in his early life.

<sup>157</sup> Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?" 7.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

oppressive and dualistic.<sup>160</sup> At the same time, such a sensibility enables the work of theology to reflect more authentically and rigorously on gender in the context of both trinitarian and incarnational theology. Such attention to the nature and fruitfulness of the contemplative practice of theologians cannot be overemphasized, for as Coakley points out, “there is much talk about the problem of attending to the otherness of the other in contemporary ethics and theory, but little about intentional and embodied practices that might enable such attention.”<sup>161</sup> For Coakley, it is *only* contemplative practice, “by virtue of its very practices of unmastery, [that] is alone capable of addressing the deeper issues.”<sup>162</sup>

Such “practices of unmastery” are necessary in conjunction with the second step for theologians, which is a deep awareness of the three major critiques of systematics today: the “onto-theological” critique, the “hegemonic” critique, and the “feminist” critique. For each critique “presumes that the systematician idolatrously *desires* mastery: a complete understanding of God, a regnant position in society, or a domination of the gendered other....The deeper issues, then, involve the insidious entanglement of knowledge, power and gender. But their shared root is the yet deeper problem of *desire*.”<sup>163</sup>

For a responsible theological discourse on gender, then, a third step is required. Theologians must bring to light that “not only is divine desire more fundamental than human sexual desire, because it is its ultimate incubus, source, and refiner; but also, and by the same token, that same divine *desire is more fundamental than gender*. The key...can lie only in its

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<sup>160</sup> Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?” 5, 9.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. I will hold that Aquinas’s treatment of *oratio* in relation to *contemplatio* reflects a more nuanced treatment of contemplation than one which associates it primarily with apophatic practice. See Chapter 5 of this study.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

[gender's] connection precisely to the doctrine of a desiring, trinitarian God." At the heart of this doctrine must be a sustained reflection on how Christ,

in the Spirit, has effected that interruptive transfiguration of twoness. He has done so by crossing the boundary between another twoness more fundamental even than the twoness of gender: the ontological twoness of God and the world. In crossing that boundary in the incarnation, Christ does not re-establish the boundary as before, but nor does he destroy it; rather, we might say that he transgresses it in the Spirit, infusing the created world anew with divinity. Just as, in the Spirit, he crosses that ontological twoness transformatively, but without obliteration of otherness, so the interruptive work of the trinitarian God does not obliterate the twoness of human gender, either, but precisely renders it subject to the labile transformations of divine desire. Whatever this redeemed twoness is (and there are remaining mysterious dimensions to this question), it cannot be the stuck, fixed, twoness of the fallen gender binary.<sup>164</sup>

This reflection is careful to avoid two "temptations" that present themselves to any discussion on gender and Trinity. The first temptation to be avoided is one that has expressed itself on several occasions in the history of Christian thought, and that is the correlation of the "difference of gender" with the "difference between God and the world," thereby "align[ing] masculinity with God and femininity with the world (and so to subordinate women to men, whilst tacitly undermining their status as fully redeemed)."<sup>165</sup> A second temptation to be avoided is the correlation of gender relations with "a trinitarian equality-in-difference."<sup>166</sup> Coakley's approach differs by acknowledging "a subtle transformation of both models caused by their intersection: the 'fixed' fallen differences of worldly gender are transfigured precisely by the interruptive activity of the Holy Spirit, drawing gender into trinitarian purgation and transformation."<sup>167</sup> As well as attending to the redemptive understanding that gender is open to transformation, this analysis includes the eschatological

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<sup>164</sup> Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?" 10.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

meditation based in “creation, fall and redemption” that understands gender to be “ineradicable.”<sup>168</sup>

Such an approach insists on an account of the integral work of the Holy Spirit, for it is precisely the Holy Spirit who “interrupts the fallen worldly order and infuses it with the divine question, the *divine lure*, the divine life.”<sup>169</sup> Coakley’s reflection here provides a deeper account of the “metaphysical lure” that Burrell identified in all human desire. Coakley emphasizes the crucial nature of this reflection:

it is the Holy Spirit who interrupts my human monologue to a (supposedly) monadic God; it is the Holy Spirit who finally thereby causes me to see God no longer as patriarchal threat but as infinite tenderness; and it is also the Holy Spirit who first painfully darkens my prior certainties, enflames and checks my own desires, and so invites me ever more deeply into the life of redeemed Sonship.<sup>170</sup>

By attending to the Holy Spirit’s activity in human desire in this way, Coakley introduces rich opportunities for considering both the possibilities and the limits of the discourse of women and men in the vocation of faithful discipleship. In this way, also, her reflection constitutes an invitation for theologians to retrieve such accounts of the Spirit’s work in the tradition.

However if the ultimate goal is a full consideration of the gifts and fruits of discipleship among women and men, the task at hand is prayerful appropriation of a “*théologie totale*” that “attends contemplatively to every level of a doctrine’s instantiation and outworking, and every manifestation of that doctrine’s range in the realm of human expressions and the academic disciplines.”<sup>171</sup> Only a faithful commitment to the vertical

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<sup>168</sup> Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?” 9, 10.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, emphasis added. The selected medieval texts offered in this study will be shown to provide respective narrative and scholastic accounts of this integral work of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

exercises of “prayer of a non-discursive sort” can facilitate this project.<sup>172</sup> Through such an approach to spiritual practice and gender, Coakley’s work brings the focus back to Tracy’s audience of theologians, exhorting them to attend to the issue of gender in an integral fashion such that the transformative nature of divine desire may be more fully realized in an anthropology charting human desire. As she has pointed out, perhaps the central starting point for this approach is an “exegesis of complex scriptural texts in full relation to tradition, philosophical analysis, and ascetic practice,” beginning with the narrative of Gen 1.26-27.<sup>173</sup> Employing this reflection in light of Burrell’s insight that “narrative contextualizes and articulates freedom,” I will offer in Chapters Three and Four two historical expressions of the vertical and horizontal spiritual exercises that constitute central meditations on the narrative of creation in the history of Christian thought, thereby providing a rich resource for a theology of discourse.<sup>174</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

The hermeneutical circle I have traced throughout this chapter began with Tracy’s reflections on the nature of discourse itself. For Tracy, all language is existentially oriented—though not determinately so—to the transformation of subjects and communities. Such an orientation requires, on the part of both authorities and audiences, a humble disposition towards one’s tradition, as well as the cultivation of virtues towards others. For theologians who perform the role of mediating authorities of a religious tradition, maintaining this orientation to language requires a critical awareness of modern and postmodern attitudes

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<sup>172</sup> Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?” 10.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>174</sup> Augustine’s *Confessions* will be addressed in Chapter 3. The narrative of Heloise and Abelard’s epistolary discourse will be addressed in Chapter 4.

toward discourse, as well as a ministerial commitment to cultivating the necessary dispositions and virtues required.

Burrell takes up the discursive project by attending to the intersubjective framework of discourse. This requires a critical awareness of modern and postmodern understandings of relationality and freedom, and the various degrees in which such understandings are inauthentically closed in on themselves in accordance with their openness to the Creator-creature relationship. Furthermore, the philosophical and theological practice of spiritual exercises facilitates this openness, through the communal discernment required by them, discernment that has at its basis the formative nature of all language practice. Such exercises, with an emphasis on those forming desire and framed through narrative, have been theologically discerned as either horizontal or vertical, and further have been characterized as exercises in the service of conversion, in order that all persons may know themselves as called to give authoritative witness as attentive listeners of their religious tradition's ongoing discourse.

Finally, Coakley completes the turn back to the nature of discourse through her focus on the gendered subjects who have been entrusted with facilitating discourse, and all that this entails. Exercises in gender constitute elementary, ongoing exercises in human relationality. Emphasizing the nature of all discourse as reflective of embodied thought—including the disordered effects of manipulating desires on such thought—she points crucially to the apophatic orientation of theological discourse if it is to be radically open to the “divine lure” of the Holy Spirit leading women and men to be transformed in Christ. By attending to the apophatic dimension toward which all embodied thought should ultimately be oriented, Coakley echoes Tracy's emphasis on the formation of theologians, for it is only through an

openness to *Divine* mastery that theologians can discern a systematic theology that witnesses authentically to the perennial encounter of men and women created in and through Divine desire. By focusing on the purgative path by which theologians come to know both the possibilities as well as the limits of discourse as fruitful, Coakley's vision for theological reflection mirrors Augustine's narrative of conversion in the *Confessions*.

## Chapter 3

### Augustine's Semiotics of Creation and Revelation as Primary Spiritual Exercises

#### 3.1 Retrieving Augustine for a theology of discourse

Taken together, the contemporary contributions to a theology of discourse examined in Chapter Two emphasize an intersubjective anthropology marked by practices of spiritual exercise. Furthermore, these contemporary reflections indicate the need for further attention to the way in which spiritual exercise arises through the work of the Holy Spirit leading all people—through the fundamental collaboration of men and women—to fullness of life in God. While the ultimate focus of this study is with the contributions offered by selected medieval thinkers, St. Augustine's work serves as a basis and turning point for further examination of these medieval texts. Either explicitly or implicitly, it is to St. Augustine that Tracy, Burrell, and Coakley turn in retrieving a Christian thinker whose accounts of spiritual doctrine and practice constitute not only a rigorous basis for a theology of discourse but also an invitation to develop such a theology of discourse. For Tracy and Burrell, this retrieval of Augustine concerns the transformative nature of his texts. Reflection on Augustine's work only reinforces Coakley's discussion of the formative role of prayer in all theological reflection. As such, the scholarly contributions—as discussed in Chapter Two—of these three scholars form the interpretive background for my reading of Augustine in Chapter Three.

To this end, the remaining chapters of this study will identify Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* (*On Christian Teaching*) and *Confessions* as offering a primary set of spiritual exercises in the service of a theology of discourse. The *Letters* of Heloise and



Abelard will be shown to constitute a secondary set of exercises. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, and its treatise on *oratio* will be presented as offering a deepening of Augustine's work. Burrell's discussion of "vertical" and "horizontal" exercises grounded in the Johannine tradition's account of friendship in Christ provides a general framework for the overall approach to spiritual exercises in this study.

As Burrell has noted, the twofold New Testament commandment of love "demands" a corresponding twofold awareness of the complementary exercises required in following the call to discipleship.<sup>175</sup> The fundamental call to love God with one's whole being requires a commitment to being formed in God's Word. This commitment, in turn, demands "vertical" exercises that structure participation in that formation. The related call to love one's neighbor requires a commitment to being formed in the very "patterns" of discourse that have been discerned in attentiveness to the Word of God; the articulation of these patterns constitutes the "horizontal" exercises forming persons to love each other in God.<sup>176</sup> The complementary nature of these vertical and horizontal practices deserves to be a central point of reflection in a theology of discourse, for, as Burrell emphasizes, these "horizontal" exercises are constituted by "conversation allowing them [practitioners] to seek to clarify together the truth revealed in the scriptures *and* appropriated by each of them personally."<sup>177</sup> The Johannine tradition notably facilitates this distinction among, and cultivation of, complementary exercises in the practice of love. In Jn. 15.15, "Jesus invites his listeners to follow him if they are to understand what he is saying, and enjoins his followers, on the threshold of his passion and death, no longer to think of themselves as his servants but as his friends." The second, complementary part of the invitation highlighted in 1 Jn. 4.21 includes the reminder "that we

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<sup>175</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 31

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

can only be his friends as we learn how to befriend one another.”<sup>178</sup> The fact that the Johannine tradition employs the term *philia* in Jn. 15 and *agape* in 1 Jn. 4 serves to further emphasize how God’s transforming love is at once the source of both spiritual acts.<sup>179</sup> As such, the true test of any horizontal or vertical exercises as *spiritual* consists precisely in the radical openness of these exercises to the fullness of relationships implicated in the relation between Creator and creation.

By identifying Augustine’s works as primary exercises in a theology of discourse, I am not simply equating *primary* with *vertical*, since Augustine’s works are distinguished by a sophisticated attention to the call to love as profoundly revelatory, and therefore profoundly twofold, in nature. Rather, through the *De doctrina christiana* and *Confessions*, Augustine outlines both the vertical and horizontal exercises necessary for living faithfully (*De doctrina christiana*) by locating the existential source of these exercises in the vertical practices gleaned through a life of conversion (*Confessions*). Stated otherwise, Augustine’s works constitute primary exercises in two ways: by identifying the call to love as a manifestly twofold love, and by emphasizing that all discourse ultimately originates in the context of the relationship between Creator and creation, known to humankind through God’s incarnate Word. Following a general introduction to the *De doctrina christiana* (DDC) and *Confessions* as distinct, yet complementary genres of Christian reflection on discourse, this chapter will: provide specific examples of the horizontal and vertical exercises constituting Augustine’s rhetoric of conversion in these texts; call for further reflection on the cataphatic and apophatic elements of prayer working at the height of discourse and its rhetorical

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<sup>178</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 49.

<sup>179</sup> "The operative words in 1 John are ever forms of *agapé*, and not of *philia*, which appears in John 15, yet the sense of transforming ordinary relationships and self-perceptions remains the same," Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 64n13.

reflection; and propose the retrieval of medieval contributions in the service of deeper reflection in these areas.

### 3.2 *De doctrina christiana* and *Confessions*: complementary readings in the rhetoric of conversion<sup>180</sup>

Augustine's reflections on the meaning of language and love in relation to creation's deepest reality constitute some of his most prominent contributions to the history of Christian thought.<sup>181</sup> Perhaps the most striking feature of Augustine's approach in the *De doctrina*

<sup>180</sup> Due to the length restrictions for this study as well as its more sustained focus on medieval contributions, I regret that the Latin text for Augustine's works will not be provided in this chapter.

<sup>181</sup> The relevant literature attending to Augustine's philosophy and theology of language and love includes: Peter Hart Baker, "Liberal Arts as Philosophic Liberation: St. Augustine's *De Magistro*," *Aux libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1969); M.F. Burnyeat, "Wittgenstein and Augustine *De Magistro*," *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth Matthews (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 286-303; Virginia Burrus, Mark D. Jordan, Karmen MacKendrick, *Seducing Augustine: Bodies, Desires, Confessions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); John C. Cavadini, "The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," "De doctrina christiana": *A Classic of Western Culture*, ed. Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 164-181; Francis J. Chivers, "Wordsworth's 'Real Language of Men' and Augustine's Theory of Language," *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 11-25; Marcia Colish, "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence Revisited," *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1978): 15-24, *The Mirror of Nature: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), "The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification and the Problem of Lies and False Statements from Antiquity to St. Anselm," *L'archéologie du signe*, ed. L. Brind'Amour and E. Vance (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1982), 26-36; Donald E. Daniels, "The Argument of the *De trinitate* and Augustine's Theory of Signs," *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977): 33-54; Margaret, W. Ferguson, "Saint Augustine's Region of Unlikeness: The Crossing of Exile and Language," *The Georgia Review* 29 (1975): 842-862; Ralph Flores, "Reading and Speech in St. Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustinian Studies* 6 (1975): 1-13; Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); B. Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 93-150; Douglas W. Johnson, "Verbum in Early Augustine," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 8 (1972): 25-53; Mark D. Jordan, "Words and Word: Incarnation and Signification in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980): 177-196; Louis Mackey, *Faith, Order, Understanding: Natural Theology in the Augustinian Tradition* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2011), *Peregrinations of the Word: Essays in Medieval Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); William Mallard, *Language and Love: Introducing Augustine's Religious thought through The Confessions Story* (College Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); Simone Marchesi, *Dante and Augustine: Linguistics, Poetics, Hermeneutics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); R. A. Markus, "St. Augustine on Signs," *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 61-91, *Signs and Meanings: World and Text in Ancient Christianity* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1996); Gareth B. Matthews, "Augustine on Speaking from Memory," *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 168-175; Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962): 175-196; Edward Morgan, *The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Divine Rhetoric: The Sermon on the Mount as Message and as Model in Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000); *The Rhetoric of Saint Augustine of Hippo: "De doctrina Christiana" and the Search for a Distinctly Christian Rhetoric*, ed. Richard Leo Enos and Roger C. Thompson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008); Brian

*christiana* and *Confessions* is the fact that, in spite of their different genres, both are texts dedicated to accounting for the life of conversion as it unfolds through encounters with others and with God by means of language—through discourse. While the narrative genre of the *Confessions* invites a phenomenological approach to discourse, the manual style of the *DDC* is conducive to more theoretical reflection on the principles of discourse. In both works, Augustine's reflections involve a convergence of the categories of authority and audience in the service of the conversion of persons in community. He manifests this convergence by noting how public practitioners of the art of discourse—most formally identified as preachers or rhetoricians, but less formally as any person intent on appropriating (and thereby articulating) the journey of faith—wield authoritative power bearing spiritual consequences for their own lives as well as for the lives of the people of God.<sup>182</sup>

Augustine develops both works by calling attention to the power of language in the context of relationality. In the *DDC*, Augustine calls attention to the power of language and relationality by offering guidelines for cultivating right relationship with God and neighbor through exercises focused on the proper reception of discourse that employs scriptural language in Books I-III, as well as the proper delivery of discourse that employs pastoral language in Book IV. As such, the genre of this text is appropriately deemed an exercise

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Stock, *Augustine The Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1998); Dave Tell, "Augustine and the 'Chair of Lies': Rhetoric in the *Confessions*," *Rhetorica* 28 (2010): 384-407; David Tracy, "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine's Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics," *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, ed. Walter Jost and Michael J. Hyde (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 254-274; Eugene Vance, "Language as Temporality," *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982), 20-35; David E. Zoolalian, "Augustine and Wittgenstein," *Augustinian Studies* 9 (1978): 28-40. For several of these references, I am grateful to Yana Filipenko, whose unpublished thesis, "Speech as Metaphor of Human Becoming to St. Augustine of Hippo" (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 2000), was a helpful resource.

<sup>182</sup> Encapsulating the core of this concern, Louis Mackey notes: "the power of society, Augustine knew, is the power of language," thereby addressing the redemptive as well as the destructive potential of language, *Peregrinations of the Word: Essays in Medieval Philosophy*, 8-9.

manual in the art of faithful discourse. As a study of the rules for interpreting Scripture,<sup>183</sup> Books I-III of the *DDC* constitute a study of right reception of—or faithful listening to—the words of the scripture writers, words signifying “the thoughts and wishes of those by whom it was written down and through them the will of God which we believe these men followed as they spoke.”<sup>184</sup> Such language rules are not to be learned separately from the rules for loving, which receive critical attention in Book I: “so anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.”<sup>185</sup> Such an integrated approach takes into account every relationship of the reader of Scripture—relationship with God, the patriarchs and prophets, the scripture writers, the saints, the faithful assembly, the pagan writers, the assembly of the faithful, preachers, etc. It does so to a two-fold end: while the immediate goal is to study hermeneutics (Books I-III) and the rhetorical arts (Book IV) in service of right reception and delivery of scriptural *signa* [signs] and *res* [things], the overarching goal is to love God and one another.

In the *Confessions*, too, Augustine seeks out a genre in the service of the transformation of human language through relationality. However, whereas the *DDC* attends principally to the potential of all discourse to dispose one to God’s Word, the *Confessions* attends principally to the inadequacy of all discourse to convey intimate knowledge of God. In the *DDC*, Augustine seeks to bridge the gap between divine and human speech through a Christian reflection on the rules of rhetoric in the service of neighbor, while the pressing project begun in Book I of the *Confessions* is to highlight the tension that exists between

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<sup>183</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans., introduction, notes, R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Preface, 1.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., II.9.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., I.86.

human and divine speech in order to bridge the gap between the sinful self and the Divine Other. Such tension presents itself in the form of obstacles to faithful knowledge and praise of God; following the opening meditation of Psalm 95:4, Augustine asks, “But how can I call unto my God, my God and Lord? For in calling unto Him, I am calling Him to me: and what room is there in me for my God, the God who made heaven and earth?”<sup>186</sup> In the predominantly theoretical project of the *DDC*, Augustine presents the linguistic relationship to be discerned (i.e., *signa et res*) among horizontal relations—between preachers and assemblies, and between readers and writers of Scripture. His first concern in the narrative journey of the *Confessions* is primarily focused on the vertical relation between creature and Creator, for the purpose of rightly discerning the wayfarer’s linguistic relationship with God. In the *Confessions*, the tension between human and divine speech is offered in the context of the brokenness of human relationality in light of the salvific work of Divine relationality: “My God...see patiently with what anxious care the sons of men observe the rules of letters and syllables taught by the speakers of our tongue before us, while they neglect the eternal rules of everlasting salvation taught by You.”<sup>187</sup> The rules of language have been poisoned by rhetoricians just as the “stream of friendship” has been “polluted” through transgressions against God and neighbor.<sup>188</sup>

### 3.2.1 Spiritual exercises in the *De doctrina christiana*

Both the *DDC* and *Confessions* attend dynamically in method and content to the journey of conversion: the *DDC* in the form of hermeneutical and rhetorical principles of

<sup>186</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), I.2.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, I.18.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, III.1-2.

conversion, and the *Confessions* in the form of a narrative of conversion.<sup>189</sup> They achieve this through the employment of vertical and horizontal spiritual exercises. In the *DDC*, horizontal exercises are at the forefront, whereas in the *Confessions*, vertical exercises are at the forefront. While the narrative of the *Confessions* will be shown to reflect a more existentially transformative character, both texts reveal formative qualities in accordance with Augustine's leading focus on transforming desire in these works. The following discussion identifies three main categories of spiritual exercises working throughout both of these texts.<sup>190</sup> The first category is constituted by exercises in receptivity, the second by exercises in discernment, and the third by commitment to the spiritual life. These exercises serve to dispose the reader: for receptivity through reflection on the nature of the Creator-creature relationship; for discernment through a prudent ordering of the various ends of desire; and for a contemplative synthesis of practices of receptivity and discernment as constitutive of a commitment to the life of ongoing conversion in the Lord.

Immediately in the Preface of the *DDC*, Augustine attends to the cultivation of right relationship with God and others through horizontal exercises in receptivity that anticipate Thomas Aquinas's systematic emphasis on the mediatory participation of created beings in

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<sup>189</sup> The idea for identifying these two works in this way derives from Tracy's discussion of the *Confessions* as offering "the rhetoric of conversion" and the *DDC* as offering a "rhetoric of *inventio*," "Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine's Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics," 273. See also his estimation of the "fruitful" judgment of scholars who "have even suggested that in the course of writing *DDC*, Augustine discovered that he needed a rhetoric of conversion in order to complete his Christian rhetorical theory—hence the *Confessions*," 260.

<sup>190</sup> In so doing, I am employing the terms employed by Burrell (receptivity, discernment, conversion) as reflective of Augustine's own terms of memory, intellect and will, and as better serving contemporary consciousness than those of a faculty psychology. However, I will return to such a psychology as a point of reference when examining the medieval texts. Furthermore, both the limits of the study, as well as the magnitude of Augustine's vision, mean that only a limited selection of spiritual exercises working throughout the *DDC* and *Confessions* can be accounted for here. For instance, while Burrell's account of Augustine's struggle to discern between the communities of Platonists and Christians constitutes an exercise in itself, it will not be related again here.

the *Summa*. He does this by first affirming human relationality and mediation as divinely sanctioned:

the human condition would be really forlorn if God appeared unwilling to minister his word to human beings through human agency. It has been said, ‘For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are’: how could that be true if God did not make divine utterances from his human temple but broadcast direct from heaven or through angels the learning that he wished to be passed on to mankind? Moreover, there would be no way for love, which ties people together in the bonds of unity, to make souls overflow and as it were intermingle with each other, if human beings learned nothing from other humans.<sup>191</sup>

By promoting an anthropology distinguished by reception (“‘For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are’”) and marked by divine discourse, Augustine seeks to dispose his reader for an understanding of human freedom marked by receptivity. Moreover, through this early affirmation that intersubjectivity is in the service of divine discourse, Augustine validates the horizontal exercises in receptivity that will govern the first three Books of the *DDC*. He does this in a pronounced way by employing the rhetoric of desire, that is, of language aimed at cultivating the reader’s longing to be formed in the art of reception: “What do we possess that we have not received from another? And if we have received it from another, why give ourselves airs, as if we had not received it?”<sup>192</sup> Horizontal exercises in receptivity continue throughout Books I-III and are dominated herein not by the rhetoric of desire, but of the understanding. Book I is constituted by practices honoring the other who is the receptacle and purveyor of discourse. In Books II and III, these exercises develop into the rules for receiving this discourse.

Book I is constituted by exercises honoring the other who is the receptacle and purveyor of discourse. Augustine offers himself as a worthy exemplar for these practices, since it is only through the act of giving and receiving that God’s work, already begun in

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<sup>191</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, Preface, 13.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, 9.



Augustine, will move toward completion: “But since in fact my hope of completing the work is based on God, from whom I already have much relevant material through meditation, I have no need to worry that he will fail to supply the remainder when I begin to share what has been given to me.”<sup>193</sup> This exercise, exemplified in the Matthean account of the distribution of the loaves and the fish, will be similarly exemplified in the *DDC* through Augustine’s discourse: “So just like the bread, which increased as it was broken, the material which God has already supplied to me for starting this work will be multiplied, through his own provision, when discussion of it begins.”<sup>194</sup> By introducing Book I in this way, Augustine disposes the reader to receive his discourse such that God’s work may be furthered through Augustine’s mediating teaching and through the reader’s enthusiastic reception of this teaching. The entire movement of the *DDC* commends both an attentiveness to, and engagement with, the mediating discourse of human agents, identifying such discourse as: the divinely “sanctioned homage of the human voice,”<sup>195</sup> the truth that may be spoken even among pagans,<sup>196</sup> the mediation of the faithful Israelites,<sup>197</sup> and the daily conversations of ordinary people.<sup>198</sup>

An understanding of the rules of discourse requires an understanding of the integrity of the other who may be pagan, Israelite, or ordinary believer. In the remaining lessons of Book I, Augustine thereby institutes a study of things and signs in the context of the principles for loving others in God. The Incarnation provides the ultimate context for reflecting on love as the deepest mediating reality for all language. As Augustine points out,

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<sup>193</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, I.1-2.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, I.3.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, I.14.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, II.72.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, III.31.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.16.

it is through the Incarnation that God has in fact “offered us a pattern of living”<sup>199</sup> by way of an intimate discourse that has been divinely imaged in humanity itself:

what was the manner of his coming if not this: “The word was made flesh and lived among us” [John I:10]? When we speak, the word which we hold in our mind becomes a sound in order that what we have in our mind may pass through ears of flesh into the listener’s mind: this is called speech. Our thought, however, is not converted into the same sound, but remains intact in its own home, suffering no diminution from its change as it takes on the form of a word in order to make its way into the ears. In the same way the word of God became flesh in order to live in us but was unchanged.<sup>200</sup>

The love of God, restored in humanity through the Person of Christ, is the source and end of all discourse shared among God’s creatures. As Tracy points out, this “fundamental discovery (and ‘method of discovery’) informing Augustine’s entire thought” is “the reality of love (*caritas*) intended to function as a kind of foreknowing.”<sup>201</sup> When love is affirmed in this way—as divinely reflected in all creatures and as a sort of foreknowledge—practitioners of love are disposed for a reception of others that is not closed in upon itself,<sup>202</sup> but rather, is open to the eternal discourse that is our source: “No sinner, *qua* sinner, should be loved; every human being, *qua* human being, should be loved on God’s account.”<sup>203</sup> Moreover, such practitioners recognize their own motivations and formation as ever imperfect and therefore as ever in need of discerning between enjoyment and use (*frui et uti*), for “the idea of enjoying someone or something is very close to that of using someone or something together with love.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, I.23.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, I.26.

<sup>201</sup> David Tracy, “Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine’s Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics,” 263.

<sup>202</sup> “For if we enjoy one another in ourselves, we remain as it were on the road and put our hopes of happiness on a human being or an angel. This is something that arrogant people and arrogant angels pride themselves on; they rejoice when the hopes of others are placed on them” (I.77).

<sup>203</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, I.59. See Thomas’s frequent emphasis on this point beginning with his discussion in *ST* I.20.2.ad4 as noted in Chapter 5 of this study.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, I.79.

In the scriptural hermeneutics of Books II and III, spiritual exercises in discernment overlap with those in receptivity. After all, the person imperfectly disposed to receive the other through discourse must learn how to regularly discern truth working in the discourse. Readers of the scriptural text carry out a heightened form of this practice, since their “aim...is simply to find out the thoughts and wishes of those by whom it was written down and, through them, the will of God, which we believe these men followed as they spoke.”<sup>205</sup> Augustine continues to emphasize here the point with which he concluded Book I: the goal of all scriptural reflection is the transformation of persons in the divine virtues,<sup>206</sup> the conversion of persons in the Lord. In a faithful attempt to be in the service of this goal—and while recognizing that his own treatment of semiotics is limited in scope, for there are many diverse types of signs<sup>207</sup>—Augustine commits himself to elucidating the signs of language, since words “have gained an altogether dominant role among humans in signifying the ideas conceived by the mind that person wants to reveal.”<sup>208</sup> As such, the basic rules of discerning truth in discourse must begin with recognition of the Holy Spirit as the source of all discernment.<sup>209</sup> As the One by whom all persons are enabled to love God and others,<sup>210</sup> the Holy Spirit is the grand architect of the holy scriptures by whom its writers were called to appeal to the spiritual longing of all people.<sup>211</sup>

After succinctly identifying the gifts of the Holy Spirit as constituting the seven essential formational dispositions by which readers may, in turn, wisely receive the words of

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<sup>205</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, II.9.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., I.93: “Therefore a person strengthened by faith, hope, and love, and who steadfastly holds on to them, has no need of the scriptures except to instruct others.”

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., II.2-6.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., II.6.

<sup>209</sup> See Simone Marchesi’s discussion of Dante’s similar appropriation of Augustine’s schema here in Simone Marchesi, *Dante and Augustine: Linguistics, Poetics, Hermeneutics*, 149.

<sup>210</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, II.11.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., II.15.

the scripture writers,<sup>212</sup> Augustine devotes his central attention to the third disposition, which is “knowledge,”<sup>213</sup> because all genuine striving for knowledge is ultimately governed by a call to love God and to love another as oneself. Augustine does not waver in reinforcing his teaching of the love of God and neighbor “as a transformational principle, [which] transforms both *ethos* and *logos*,”<sup>214</sup> for even the deployment of logic, which is “of paramount importance in understanding and resolving all kinds of problems in the sacred texts” is in the service of love, for in the practice of logic “one must beware of indulging a passion for wrangling and making a puerile show of skill in trapping an opponent.”<sup>215</sup>

Once the twofold call to love as the hermeneutical key to all attentive reception of discourse is understood, Augustine can move forward with the three basic rules for discerning discourse:

The first rule in this laborious task is, as I have said, to know these books; not necessarily to understand them but to read them so as to commit them to memory or at least make them not totally unfamiliar. Then the matters which are clearly stated in them, whether ethical precepts or articles of belief should be examined carefully and intelligently. The greater a person’s intellectual capacity, the more of these he finds. In clearly expressed passages of scripture one can find all the things that concern faith and the moral life (namely hope and love, treated in my previous book). Then, after gaining a familiarity with the language of the divine scriptures, one should proceed to explore and analyse the obscure passages, by taking examples from the more obvious parts to illuminate obscure expressions and by using the evidence of indisputable passages to remove the uncertainty of ambiguous ones. Here memory is extremely valuable; and it cannot be supplied by these instructions if it is lacking.<sup>216</sup>

Faithful reception of scriptural discourse is difficult. Three basic requirements are necessary for discerning the truth of the discourse: a sound familiarity with the body of discourses comprising the scriptural canon; a careful and intelligent examination of ethical and fiduciary

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<sup>212</sup> Green translates these as “fear, holiness, knowledge, fortitude, resolve of compassion, purification, wisdom” (II.16-23).

<sup>213</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, II.18-20, 24.

<sup>214</sup> Tracy, “Charity, Obscurity, Clarity: Augustine’s Search for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics,” 266.

<sup>215</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, II.117.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, II.30-31.

statements; and an acquired awareness of the languages employed throughout these discourses. By enforcing an understanding of these rules through such strategies as repetition and example, Augustine is further disposing the reader to a faithful reception of scriptural discourse. Such strategies also help to reinforce Augustine's emphasis on the foundational role of memory<sup>217</sup> and on the danger of misreadings of literal signs.<sup>218</sup>

While Book II attends most generally to these basic exercises in discernment, Book III employs them in light of the more challenging ambiguities that characterize the depths of scriptural discourse. Augustine's emphasis on the proper reception of literal and figurative signs continues:

A person who follows the letter understands metaphorical words as literal, and does not relate what the literal word signifies to any other meaning. On hearing the word "sabbath," for example, he interprets it simply as one of the seven days which repeat themselves in a continuous cycle; and on hearing the word "sacrifice" his thoughts do not pass beyond the rituals performed with sacrificial beasts or fruits of the earth. It is, then, a miserable kind of spiritual slavery to interpret signs as things, and to be incapable of raising the mind's eye above the physical creation so as to absorb the eternal light.<sup>219</sup>

Augustine extends these exercises to include more diverse and complex examples of figurative language in scriptural discourse. His discussion moves to identify tropes such as "'allegory,' 'enigma,' and 'parable'" that are working throughout the scriptures to be the same tropes learned through the "'liberal' arts" and "found in the utterances of those who have had no formal teaching in grammar."<sup>220</sup> Through these exercises in discerning truth in discourse, Augustine disposes his reader for: proper attentiveness to the complexity of figurative language; versatile identification of such language use as it arises in popular

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<sup>217</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, II.30-31.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., II.34, 41.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., III.20-21.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., III.88-89.

discourse; and foremost concern for resolving such ambiguities in scriptural discourse since “this is how most hidden meanings have been discovered.”<sup>221</sup>

Book IV includes a third category of exercises found in the *DDC* focused on commitment to the spiritual life. Stated otherwise, these exercises constitute a profound expansion of the earlier ones focused on receptivity and discernment. Here, Augustine seeks to facilitate the reader’s deep awareness of the ways in which God’s transforming love is working through all authentically mediated discourse. The degree to which his facilitation succeeds is the degree to which the reader recognizes how all authentic discourse lends itself to the life of conversion, to being transformed unto the Lord such that one commits herself to a life of holiness. Augustine offers these exercises by resuming the rhetoric of the Preface distinguished by instilling desire. In Book IV however, the desire that he seeks to facilitate is no longer simply for the reception of another person or persons, but rather for the conversion of one’s life in the service of the fruitfulness of this receptivity:

Since rhetoric is used to give conviction to both truth and falsehood, who could dare to maintain that truth, which depends on us for its defence, should stand unarmed in the fight against falsehood? This would mean that those who are trying to give conviction to their falsehoods would know how to use an introduction to make their listeners favorable, interested, and receptive, while we would not; that they would expound falsehoods in descriptions that are succinct, lucid, and convincing, while we would expound the truth in such a way as to bore our listeners, cloud their understanding, and stifle their desire to believe; that they would assail the truth and advocate falsehood with fallacious arguments, while we would be too feeble either to defend what is true or refute what is false . . . Who could be so senseless as to find this sensible? No; oratorical ability, so effective a resource to commend either right or wrong, is available to both sides; why then is it not acquired by good and zealous Christians to fight for the truth . . . ?<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, III.91. These exercises anticipate the height of practice in scriptural mediation that will be explored in the *Problemata* of Heloise.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.4-5.

In these early lines of Book IV, Augustine employs the grand style of rhetoric<sup>223</sup> in calling upon the Christian rhetor to be a faithful witness to truth. What is at stake in the Christian's witness to truth is the salvation of souls; at this point in Book IV, it is the life of "conviction" of the rhetor's "listeners," of *their* "desire to believe." Through this introduction to the final book of the *DDC*, the previous exercises in scriptural discursive receptivity and discernment culminate in the reader's preparation to imitate such faithful discourse in his respective community.

What should be clear by this point is that Augustine's rhetoric *about* conversion in the *DDC* is at once a rhetoric *of* conversion. In Book IV, the reader is disposed to the life of conversion through three critical turning points in the text: the Christian speaker's commitment to the conversion of the listener;<sup>224</sup> a consideration of prayer as transformatively prior to all discourse;<sup>225</sup> and the convergence of all exercises of receiving and giving through a closing vertical exercise.<sup>226</sup>

Approximately the first third of Book IV is dedicated exclusively to the rhetorical preparation required for a faithful presentation of God's Word. Moreover, as illustrated above,<sup>227</sup> this preparation is marked by a rigorous attentiveness on the part of the speaker to the life of faith of his listeners. The best rhetorical training for this work, insists Augustine, is the imitation of eloquent speakers,<sup>228</sup> both in the Christian scriptures<sup>229</sup> and beyond: "There is no shortage of Christian literature, even outside the canon which has been raised to its position of authority for our benefit; and by reading this an able person, even one who is not

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<sup>223</sup> Augustine redefines Cicero's naming of the three styles of rhetoric (restrained, mixed, grand) later in the Book (IV.96f).

<sup>224</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV. 66.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., IV.87-95.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., IV.151-166.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., IV.4-5.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., IV.8ff.

<sup>229</sup> Augustine devotes much attention to St. Paul's Epistles (IV.33f).

seeking to become eloquent but just concentrating on the matters being discussed, can become steeped in eloquence.”<sup>230</sup> Even among non-Christian authors, Cicero is credited with insights into truth that Christians can, and should, incorporate and transpose. Such insights include Cicero’s recognition of the relation between wisdom and eloquence<sup>231</sup> from the beginning of the *De inventione*, as well as his distinction among three styles to be employed in accordance with the dispositions of the audience.<sup>232</sup>

As Augustine continues to show with more pronounced emphasis, these rhetorical exercises all point to the person or persons being addressed, including the importance of coming to know their character<sup>233</sup> and maintaining a presumption of their basic longing for the truth:

we should not shirk the duty of making plain to the minds of others the truths which we have ourselves perceived, however hard they may be to comprehend, with as much effort and argument as may be necessary; always assuming that our listener or disputant has the will to learn and does not lack the mental capacity to absorb such things. . . .<sup>234</sup>

This presumption of the basic integrity of the listener should constitute a crucial element motivating the speaker’s preparation and training for delivery. In fact, the culminating moment of these early teachings in Book IV indicate that the Christian communication of truth is simultaneously an ultimate regard for the other or it is not a communication of truth at all:

What is the use of correct speech if it does not meet with the listener’s understanding? There is no point in speaking at all if our words are not understood by the people to whose understanding our words are directed. The teacher, then, will avoid all words that do not communicate; if, in their place, he can use other words which are

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<sup>230</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV.9

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., IV.18.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., IV.96. These references do not, by any means, exhaust Augustine’s engagement with Cicero’s work. See introduction and notes by Green.

<sup>233</sup> “But the effect of eloquence on a person of good character is not so much to instruct when painstakingly discussed as to inspire when passionately delivered” (IV.59).

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., IV.63.



intelligible in their correct forms, he will choose to do that, but if he cannot—either because they do not exist or because they do not occur to him at the time—he will use words that are less correct, provided that the subject-matter itself is communicated and learnt correctly.<sup>235</sup>

The transformative principle of love from the early books of the *DDC* implies itself again in these lines. True rhetorical practice must honor the other in discourse or withhold discourse altogether. This also implies a deep awareness of the other's character, desires, and language practices for the truth to be communicated meaningfully, one which will be insisted upon in the epistolary discourse of Heloise and Abelard. Given Augustine's earlier emphasis on the precision with which one must regard literal and figurative expressions, his final direction that even "words that are less correct" may need to be used seems striking. Still, such a direction only serves to accentuate this first turning point in the conversion exercises of Book IV: rhetoric is an art focused on the other.

How must a speaker proceed in light of such a responsibility? Augustine anticipates the reader here to be seeking further exercises in discernment. Rather than exercises focused on the reception of discourse, his focus is on the delivery of discourse. In both cases, prayer is involved. Augustine indicated briefly the crucial role of prayer in his discussion of the third stage toward wisdom of the scriptures, that of knowledge: "this knowledge makes a person with good reason to hope not boastful but remorseful; in this state he obtains by constant prayer the encouragement of divine assistance, so that he is not crushed by despair."<sup>236</sup> In Book II, prayer assists the reader in his quest to receive the divine discourse of the scriptures fruitfully. Here in Book IV, prayer plays a more prominent role; central teachings on prayer occur at the center and at the end of Book IV.

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<sup>235</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV.66.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, II.20.

Augustine's teaching on prayer in the center of Book IV constitutes a lengthy and dramatic shift from horizontal to vertical exercise in the *DDC*.<sup>237</sup> He begins this exhortation to the rhetor's prayer by identifying prayer in its cataphatic mode as transformatively prior to all discourse:

He should be in no doubt that any ability he has and however much he has derives more from his devotion to prayer than his dedication to oratory; *and so, by praying for himself and for those he is about to address, he must become a man of prayer before becoming a man of words.* . . . On any one of the subjects which must be treated in terms of faith and love there are many points to make, and many ways for those who know about these things to make them; *who can know* what it is expedient for us to say or our audience to hear at a particular moment but the one who sees the hearts of all? *And who can ensure* that we say what is right and say it the right way but the one "in whose hands we, and our sermons, exist" [Wisd. 7:16]? So let the person who wishes both to know and to teach learn everything that he needs to teach, and acquire the skill in speaking appropriate to a Christian orator; but nearer the time of his actual address let him consider that there is more suitable advice for a holy mind in what the Lord says: "Do not worry about what to say or how to say it; for you will be given words to speak when the time comes. *For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks within you*" [Matt. 10:19-20].<sup>238</sup>

The long trajectory of horizontal exercises (in reception and delivery) of the *DDC* faces a shift in these lines of Book IV. Here, Augustine returns to exercises of reception, though of a vertical nature. The Christian rhetor is directed first to cataphatic, petitionary prayer to God for himself and his listeners. Such practice constitutes a formation in prayer and moreover, a predisposition necessary for discourse altogether. Prayer sanctifies discourse; even cataphatic prayer which is discursive in nature, is identified for its prediscursive aspect. Immediately following this exhortation, however, the meditation deepens, even to the effect that Augustine's own teaching thus far in the *DDC* is rendered insignificant before the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The effect of this deepened meditation is an apophatic shift that serves to blur the distinction between prayer and faithful discourse. At this point in the passage where

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<sup>237</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV.87-95.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.87-89, emphasis added.

the Holy Spirit is prominent, the Spirit's teaching concerns *all* faithful speech; the apophatic shift dissolves the hierarchy of prayerful expression over all other discourse.

Although this apophatic shift is a temporary point of emphasis in the *DDC*, it is invaluable as a spiritual exercise in humility and detachment at this culminating point in the text. In its wake, Augustine engages in a dialectic on the nature of human and divine discourse.<sup>239</sup> Inquiring about the efficacy of Christian teachers in light of the ultimate authority of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he proceeds to cite the scriptures that witness to both mediated and unmediated discourse. Distinctions between prayer and faithful speech are not resumed here; the reflection is instead directed to God as the source of all things and signs of love in the world through the participation of human beings: "That is why even with the ministry of holy men, or indeed the co-operation of the holy angels, nobody properly learns the things that appertain to a life with God, unless, through God, he becomes responsive to God, to whom it is said in the Psalm: 'Teach me to do your will, since you are my God' [Ps. 142:10 (143:10)]."<sup>240</sup> This exercise constitutes a dialectic in desire, a deepening of the early exercise in desire expressed in the Preface to the work. Its effect is an affirmation of the horizontal relationships that have been promoted throughout the *DDC*, relationships that can only be fruitful according to the primary relationship that sustains all others: "So too the benefits of teaching, applied to the soul through human agency, are only beneficial when the benefit is effected by God, who could have given the gospel to man even without human writers or intermediaries [cf. Gal. 1:11-12]."<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV.93-95.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., IV.94.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., IV.95.

Horizontal exercises in rhetoric resume<sup>242</sup> until the concluding discussion of the *DDC*, when they culminate and converge through a closing vertical exercise in cataphatic prayer with an apophatic accent.<sup>243</sup> The horizontal exercises in reception (Books I-III) and delivery (Book IV)<sup>244</sup> converge in this closing discussion of prayer in Augustine's work, which should be quoted at length:

Whether they are going to speak before a congregation or any other body, or to dictate something to be spoken before a congregation or read by others who are able and willing to do so, speakers must pray that God will place a good sermon on their lips. If Queen Esther, when about to plead before the king for the temporal salvation of her people, prayed that God would place a suitable speech on her lips [Esth. 14:13], how much more important is it for those who work for people's eternal salvation "by teaching God's word" [1 Tim 5:17] to pray to receive such a gift? Those who are going to deliver something they have received from others should pray, before receiving it, that those from whom they will get it may be given what they, through them want to receive. They should also pray, after receiving it, that they themselves may present it effectively and that those to whom they present it may absorb it effectively. And they should also give thanks for a favourable outcome of their address to the one from whom they do not doubt that they received it, "so that anyone who boasts may boast" in the one "whose hands hold us and our sermons alike" [1Cor. 1:31; Wisd. 7:16].<sup>245</sup>

Anchored by the final sentence that recalls the apophatic exercise from the center of Book IV, this teaching on prayer remains heavily in the cataphatic mode. This mode of prayer, which arises as the longing of any heart seeking God's assistance in temporal and eternal matters, is vitally necessary for every possible reception and expression of faithful discourse. Regardless of audience, faithful practitioners of discourse should pray for themselves, for fellow mediators, for every dimension of both the delivery and reception of discourse. Prayers of petition should be complemented by prayers of thanksgiving, for the speech that

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<sup>242</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV.96-163.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.151-166.

<sup>244</sup> "There are two things on which all interpretation of scripture depends: the process of discovering what we need to learn, and the process of presenting what we have learnt. I shall discuss the process of discovery first [I-III], and then that of presentation" (I.1).

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.164-165.

petitionary prayers seek to effect is “a gift.” Moreover, it is precisely through such prayers of thanksgiving that practitioners of discourse are disposed for further apophatic exercises: “‘so that anyone who boasts may boast’ in the one ‘whose hands hold us and our sermons alike.’” Here, as in the central passage of Book IV, prayer sanctifies discourse, and yet the distinction is relaxed in this latter passage. The prayer that sanctifies discourse is itself more notably discursive, and the effect is that the reader is both exhorted and consoled in this rich confluence of discourse meant for anyone committed to it “on behalf of others as well as themselves.”<sup>246</sup>

### 3.2.2 Spiritual exercises in the *Confessions*

Whereas the manual style of the *DDC* employs principles for understanding discourse within a framework of exercises in desire, the narrative of the *Confessions* invites the reader to a more intimate participation in the life of conversion through an existential engagement with the life of a faithful seeker of truth. As Brian Stock has observed, this “*lectio spiritualis*” of the *Confessions*:

may have been read before a live audience in the manner of an ancient epic poem, in which the hearers were invited to envisage the parts in relation to the whole while trying to recreate the conditions of living praxis out of which it arose. Augustine’s philosophical goal, insofar as it related to the self, was not to construct a system but to give the individual some guidance in reorienting himself or herself in relation to others.<sup>247</sup>

This narrative approach is in the service of the conversion of the reader, that he or she may come to know the one resolution to all fragile and fleeting comforts of human relationality and its expressions. As such, rather than attending primarily to authentic mediating discourse as constituting the fruits of conversion, Augustine’s autobiographical meditation of the

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<sup>246</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, IV.166. Chapters 4 and 5 of this study will be shown to further this discussion of the nature of prayer in the context of discourse.

<sup>247</sup> Brian Stock, *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 104, 35-36.

*Confessions* concerns the purgative process of conversion. He engages the reader in unfolding a hermeneutics of suspicion with respect to language and relationality. To this end, exercises in desire dominate the movement of the *Confessions*, and furthermore, such exercises are reflected chiefly by vertical exercises that may be understood as resuming the movement with which Book IV of the *DDC* leaves off. The schema of exercises in receptivity, discernment and commitment to the spiritual life may be discovered in the *Confessions* as well. In the *Confessions*, however, these exercises are focused primarily in relationship and language with the Divine Other.

As with the *DDC*, exercises in receptivity, constituted by memory of one's created relationality, mark the beginning of the *Confessions*. Here, however, such exercises are profoundly vertical in orientation, focused on the One who is the source of all authentic discourse. Furthermore, while these exercises may be understood as pervading the entire narrative, they are most essentially marked in Books I-IV of the *Confessions* as exercises disposing the reader to honoring the Other (I.1-5) and revealing oneself in relation to the Other (I.6-IV).

Augustine's *Confessions* is a manifestation of discourse itself, discourse in its most intimate expression. In the relationship between Creator and creature, this expression is founded in the language of prayer that reflects the truest orientation of human desire: "*Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no number. And man desires to praise Thee.*"<sup>248</sup> As such, prayer is identified as transformative, but the first distinction is not between prayer and all other discourse, but concerns tensions within the nature of prayer itself: "For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee. Grant me O Lord, to know which is the soul's

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<sup>248</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, I.1.

first movement toward Thee—to implore Thy aid or to utter its praise of Thee; and whether it must know Thee before it can implore.”<sup>249</sup> Intimacy with God for which humans have been created is cultivated through prayer. Inquiring whether such prayer is founded primarily in petition or in prayers of praise, Augustine reflects more deeply about the nature of prayer itself, of its cataphatic/apophatic dialectic: “What can any one say when he speaks of Thee? Yet woe to them that speak not of Thee at all. . . .”<sup>250</sup> The tension in such ruptures of discourse with God, he continues, is not a tension residing in language itself but in human dishonor of the relationship that founds it: “The house of my soul is too small to receive Thee: let it be enlarged by Thee.”<sup>251</sup>

By appropriating this realization, the reader can move forward with Augustine in a discourse seeking to unveil this founding relationship. With God’s help, Augustine will proceed to reveal himself to God [“suffer me to speak”<sup>252</sup>] throughout the first four books of the *Confessions*. In this way, he may be more receptive of the empowering language of prayer that can so easily be misdirected through false desires:

Yet it was no wonder that I fell away into vanity and went so far from Thee, My God, seeing that men were held up as models for my imitation who were covered with shame if, in relating some act of theirs in no way evil, they fell into some barbarism or grammatical solecism: yet were praised, and delighted to be praised when they told of their lusts, provided they did so in correct words correctly arranged.<sup>253</sup>

Such a world in which human mediation has dangerously manipulated language according to false desires is one in need of conversion.

Recognizing human reception of divine love to be in need of redemption, Augustine proceeds through Books II-IV to facilitate a therapy for this relationality. He does this

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<sup>249</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, I.1.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, I.4.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, I.5.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, I.6.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, I.18.

through the *topos* of friendship,<sup>254</sup> such that the obstacles to human discourse with the divine are identified as obstacles to true friendship: “The bond of human friendship is admirable, holding many souls as one. Yet in the enjoyment of all such things we commit sin if through immoderate inclination to them . . . things higher and better are forgotten, even You, O Lord our God, and Your truth and Your law.”<sup>255</sup> In order to dispose his reader for friendship ordered rightly, Augustine facilitates exercises that will continue throughout the narrative and that are distinguished by a juxtaposition of states of relationality and language with states of awareness of creation in the image of God. In Book III, broken friendship<sup>256</sup> and prideful rhetoric<sup>257</sup> reveal ignorance about creation: “And I was further ignorant what is the principle in us by which we are; and what Scripture meant by saying that we are made to the image of God.”<sup>258</sup> In Book IV, the fragile, broken status of human friendship is redeemed only through the eternal nature of language and friendship.<sup>259</sup> This redemption is manifested through what may be considered the beatitude of the *Confessions*: “Blessed is the man that loves Thee, O God, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee. For he alone loses no one that is dear to him, if all are dear in God, who is never lost.”<sup>260</sup>

The discernment exercises in Books V-X of the *Confessions* manifest a subtle, yet crucial shift in emphasis from those of Books I-III of the *DDC*. Whereas in the *DDC* the emphasis is on hearing *others* in the Lord, the *Confessions* is focused on hearing *the Lord* even in spite of the weaknesses and failings of others. Because the goal is disposing the

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<sup>254</sup> A cursory study of the *topos* of friendship reveals it to be strikingly prominent in the history of rhetorical thought from Plato to Derrida. Chapters 4 and 5 of this study will attend to the employment of this *topos* by Heloise and Abelard, and by Thomas Aquinas respectively.

<sup>255</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, II.5.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, III.2.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, III.3.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, III.7.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.11.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.9.



reader to being conformed to Christ by whom the *imago dei* is restored, the nature of these discernment exercises is primarily purgative rather than cumulative. Furthermore, the narrative genre of the *Confessions* must be recalled again here. Whereas in the *DDC* general exercises in discernment (Book II) are followed by those attending to the more complex ambiguities of language (Book III), in the existential approach of the *Confessions*, the profound difficulties in discourse are in the forefront in Books V-VI, while such difficulties slowly find resolution as the exercises of Books VII-X progress. Book V opens with a call for this resolution:

Without ceasing Thy whole creation speaks Thy praise—the spirit of every man by the words that his mouth directs to Thee, animals and lifeless matter by the mouth of those who look upon them: that so our soul rises out of its mortal weariness unto Thee, helped upward by the things Thou has made and passing beyond them unto Thee who hast wonderfully made them: and there refreshment is and strength unailing. Let the wicked in their restlessness go from Thee and flee away.<sup>261</sup>

The central opening passage celebrates all of creation as made for God, only to contrast the transience of nature with the eternal faithfulness of God, and then to juxtapose the entire passage with a subsequent passage marking out human infidelity. The fact that creation itself has been ordered to God points to the speech/prayer continuum that also constituted a matter for reflection in the *DDC*. However, the frailty of human desire ruptures this continuum, leaving Augustine trapped among the disordered discourse of the Manicheans.<sup>262</sup> Only prayer can facilitate freedom here by disclosing the obstacles to discerning between human voices and that of the Holy Spirit.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, V.1, 2.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., V.3.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., V.5: “[Manes] tried to persuade men that the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and Enricher of Your faithful, was resident in himself personally, with plenary authority.”

By entering with Augustine into the realm of disordered discourse and fractured friendship, the reader of the *Confessions* has been exercised to discern the place of untruth as one of debilitating darkness and loneliness:

O God, my hope from my youth, where were You all this time, where had You gone? For was it not You who created me and distinguished me from the beasts of the field and made me wiser than the birds of the air? Yet I walked through dark and slippery places, and I went out of myself in the search for You and did not find the God of my heart. I had come into the depths of the sea and I had lost faith and all hope of discovering the truth.<sup>264</sup>

No ambiguity can find resolution in this place where the intimate practice of prayer is not sought and unaided logic is idealized in the search for truth: “Nor did I then groan in prayer for Your help. My mind was intent upon inquiry and unquiet for argumentation.”<sup>265</sup> By magnifying the despairing loneliness of this state where truth is sought in every place remote from the realm of the heart, Augustine disposes the reader for the next stage in the journey of illumination that will begin in Book VII. He prepares the reader for this stage by articulating the hermeneutical key to all discernment of truth—a transformatively interiorized awareness of the God who forms the heart for relationship: “Thus I was ignorant how this image of Yours could be; but I should have knocked at the door and proposed the question how it was to be believed.”<sup>266</sup> Deep awareness of oneself as created in the image of God is the key to understanding rightly ordered discursive practice. However, while articulating the key to discursive practice may constitute a surmounting of the greatest hurdle to discernment, it is not yet to know the truth. In fact, Books I-VI conclude with Augustine still struggling amidst disordered friendships<sup>267</sup> even as Monica and Ambrose live lives of well-ordered friendship

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<sup>264</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VI.1.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., VI.3.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., VI.4.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., VI.16.

before him: “For on account of my salvation she loved him dearly; and he loved her on account of her most religious way of life, for she was fervent in spirit and ever doing good. . . .”<sup>268</sup>

Augustine’s meditative turn toward identifying his own life as ordered to God initiates a further set of discernment exercises. Books VII-X reflect this turn, as his search to know God corresponds with a search to know himself: “Being admonished by all this to return to myself, I entered into my own depths, with You as guide; and I was able to do it because You were my helper.”<sup>269</sup> In these books, exercises are constituted by discernment among bodily and spiritual images.<sup>270</sup> Augustine reflects: “My mind was in search of such images as the forms my eye was accustomed to see; and I did not realize that the mental act by which I formed these images, was not itself a bodily image: yet it could not have formed them, unless it were something and something great.”<sup>271</sup> Through a series of such reflections, the reader is disposed for the first of two central conversion ‘moments’ in Books VII-X:

So I set about finding a way to gain the strength that was necessary for enjoying You. And I could not find it until I embraced the *Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is over all things, God blessed forever*, who was calling me and saying: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* . . .”<sup>272</sup>

Augustine’s prayerful inquiry through imagery exercises has led him to an invitation beyond his faculties, where the God known only as “helper”<sup>273</sup> is now known as “the man Christ Jesus” whose mediation is pervasive and ultimate. Through this transformative reflection, the reader is disposed with Augustine to begin to advert more intentionally to the witness of others on the journey of conversion. Book VIII is heavily marked by an account of such

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<sup>268</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VI.2.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., VI.10.

<sup>270</sup> Such exercises may be considered to correlate with those on literal and figurative language in the *DDC*.

<sup>271</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.1.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., VII.18.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., VII.10.

narratives, including those of Victorinus “preferring to give up his own school of words rather than Your word,”<sup>274</sup> and Ponticianus: “If I tried to turn my gaze from myself, there was Ponticianus telling what he was telling.”<sup>275</sup>

The second of the two conversion ‘moments’ of these books is marked by the conversation of authentic friendship in Book IX and by reflection on this conversation in Book X. In Book IX, Augustine’s proclamation to Christ—“I talked with You as friends talk, my glory and my riches and my salvation, my Lord God”<sup>276</sup>—reflects a newly liberating disposition to divine discourse. This disposition is characterized by: Augustine’s experience of being “set free from the teaching of Rhetoric”;<sup>277</sup> his newfound ability to hear and know clearly the voice of the Holy Spirit;<sup>278</sup> and his refreshed memory of the “loving and devout” conversation of his mother.<sup>279</sup>

In Book VI, Christ was identified as “Mediator between God and man.” In Book X, Christ is known more deeply as “the true Mediator” because of the fullness of his humanity as well as of his divinity. Only in this way can his Passion be our steady lesson in supreme humility: “For many and great are my infirmities, many and great; but Thy medicine is of more power. We might well have thought Thy Word remote from union with man and so have despaired of ourselves, if It had not been *made flesh and dwelt among us*.”<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, Augustine concludes, it is precisely as God’s Word that Christ, by becoming human, has redeemed the debilitating darkness and estrangement of human sinfulness and limitation. Throughout Books VII-X, the exercises in images that have led to an illumination

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<sup>274</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII.5.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., VIII.7.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., IX.1.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., IX.4.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., IX.12.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., X.43.

of true conversation and friendship find a resolution in God's Word "*among us*" as the source of all healing and redemption.

As the culminating books of the *Confessions*, Books XI-XIII reflect a transformed commitment to the promises of God's Truth. The opening meditation of Book XI attests to the fruits of all of the preceding exercises on receptivity and discernment:

why am I giving You an account of all these things? Not, obviously, that You should learn them from me; but I excite my own love for You and the love of those who read what I write, that we all may say: *The Lord is great, and exceedingly to be praised*. . . . We pray [for what we want], yet Truth Himself has said: *Your Father knows what is needful for you before you ask Him*. Thus we are laying bare our love for You in confessing to You our wretchedness and Your mercies toward us: that You may free us wholly as You have already freed us in part, so that we may cease to be miserable in ourselves and come to happiness in You.<sup>281</sup>

The whole work of the *Confessions* has been an exercise in transforming human desire—that of Augustine and of his readers—for a life of ever greater freedom and ever deepening happiness in the Lord. Both cataphatic praise and apophatic reverence characterize this life of commitment, as the Scriptures themselves attest. Moreover, Divine desire is the ultimate source of this commitment to a life of conversion: "Thus I have told You many things, with such power and will as I had, because You, O Lord my God, had first willed that I should confess to You."<sup>282</sup>

Now, rather than the disjunction between prayer and argument that distinguishes Book IV, it is prayer that mediates dialectic in Augustine's inquiry on time<sup>283</sup> in Book XI: "Suffer me, Lord, to push my inquiry further; O my Hope, let not my purpose go awry."<sup>284</sup> Through the practice of spiritual exercise, discernment is best discovered as the core of

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<sup>281</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.1.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., XI.14-30.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., XI.18.

intimate prayer, through which the dialectic on time leads back to a reflection on divine discourse by way of the measure of poetry,<sup>285</sup> of the Psalms,<sup>286</sup> of all of Scripture.<sup>287</sup>

In conforming himself to God's Word by confessing the narrative of his life, Augustine has opened himself to the promises of Divine desire, which are at once the pledge of God's Truth. The fruits of this transformation include a deep trust in the power of prayer to redeem all speech:

My heart is deeply wrought upon, Lord, when in the neediness of this my life the words of Your Holy Scripture strike upon it. Thus it is that so often the poverty of the human intellect uses an abundance of words: for seeking uses more words than finding, petitions take longer to utter than to obtain, and knocking means more work for the hand than receiving. But we have the promise: who shall destroy it? *If God be for us, who is against us? Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asks, receives: and he that seeks, finds: and to him that knocks, it shall be opened.* These are Your promises, and who need fear to be deceived when Truth gives the promise?<sup>288</sup>

Prayer, and especially cataphatic prayer, validates discourse. It is through God's Word that this is made possible, since the God who has oriented all desire to Him is the God who has founded every type of discourse in and through that same desire. Through this realization, the reader of the *Confessions* is disposed to more than hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit;<sup>289</sup> now the Holy Spirit is known precisely as the One by whom human beings are continually being formed in practices of receptivity, discernment and commitment to the spiritual life.<sup>290</sup>

This deep trust in the fundamental orientation of all discourse is reflected most emphatically in the celebration of creation (Genesis) and in being "conformed to the Image."<sup>291</sup> In Augustine's opening prayer of Book XIII, he proclaims that this commitment

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<sup>285</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.26.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, XI.28.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, XI.29-31.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, XII.1.

<sup>289</sup> As in Book IX.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, XII.9.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII.2.

to conversion has been God's desire from the beginning: "Thou hadst urged me over and over, in a great variety of ways, to hear Thee from afar off and be converted and call upon Thee who wert calling me."<sup>292</sup> Both "spiritual and corporeal nature" have their redemptive role in this vision of creation,<sup>293</sup> a vision that Augustine seeks for all of God's creatures. In the service of this hope, the concluding words of the *Confessions* vigorously reinforce the vertical exercises that have dominated the narrative all along: "What man will give another man the understanding of this, or what angel will give another angel, or what angel will give a man? Of You we must ask, in You we must seek, at You we must knock. Thus only shall we receive, thus shall we find, thus will it be opened to us."<sup>294</sup>

### 3.3 A complexification of exercises in the narrative of the *Confessions*

Whether mediated or unmediated, Augustine identifies all discourse to be in the service of the experience of conversion, that is, of an event received such that we desire to "change our ways" in order to be better disposed to trust others and God in freedom.<sup>295</sup> As such, Augustine anticipates many of the questions and gaps that contemporary theologians of discourse face. Moreover, transformed desire is at the heart of the experience of conversion, and it is through exercises of horizontal and vertical desire respectively that Augustine frames the *DDC*, and of vertical desire primarily that Augustine offers the journey of the *Confessions*. Throughout the *DDC*, Augustine points us to the crucial tenets of theological anthropology and doctrine of God that must be addressed in considering the human mediations and mutual conversations that seek to imitate and participate in the life of Christ, the Divine Mediator, God's Word. In the narrative of the *Confessions*, however, he

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<sup>292</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII.1.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., XIII.2.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., XIII.38.

<sup>295</sup> I am here repeating Burrell's basic understanding of conversion as noted earlier in Chapter 2 of this study.

complexifies our reflection, and it is to this complexification that we must turn in order to fully assess the spiritual exercises of the *Confessions* as a set of primary exercises in a theology of discourse.

As noted earlier in this chapter, I am identifying the *Confessions* as primary spiritual exercises in two ways: as revealing the call to love as a manifestly twofold love, and as emphasizing that all discourse ultimately originates in the context of the relationship between Creator and creation. The exegesis offered thus far has been greatly focused on the second feature of these exercises, their vertical aspect. Most simply and profoundly, the narrative of the *Confessions* “is an attempt to locate and return to that lost origin, the Word that spoke in the beginning and it was done.”<sup>296</sup> The crucial point of transition that I wish to make here is that it is precisely by way of this simple, profound, purgative journey of vertical exercises through the thirteen books of the *Confessions* that Augustine disposes the reader to recognize the horizontal exercises, constituting a secondary level of meaning of the text, that have been latently present all along. This complexification is at the heart of Augustine’s rhetoric of conversion. It is what Burrell has recognized in his reflections on intersubjectivity in the *Confessions* when, in his earlier study, he notes that the “finale of Augustine’s story invites us to reread it with an eye for friendship,”<sup>297</sup> and in his later study where he observes that “the propriety of the dialogic form of the narrative recollection which is the *Confessions* is corroborated as the reality of each partner comes more into evidence through exercises in dialogue—Augustine speaking, God working.”<sup>298</sup> Ultimately, through Augustine’s developing discourse with God, whose response “is reflected more in God’s interaction with creation than within divinity itself (as in his *de Trinitate*),” Augustine gradually realizes that

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<sup>296</sup> Mackey, *Peregrinations of the Word: Essays in Medieval Philosophy*, 20.

<sup>297</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 58.

<sup>298</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, 47.



his own loving attentiveness to those entrusted to his life “offers the most promising hope for attaining an ordered self.”<sup>299</sup> The contemplative conversation shared between Augustine and Monica in Book Nine serves as a foretaste of this realization, as Augustine recounts to the Lord the fruits of his conversion: “There we talked together, she and I alone, in deep joy; and forgetting the things that were behind and looking forward to those that were before, we were discussing in the presence of Truth, which You are, what the eternal life of the saints could be like.”<sup>300</sup> Following this foretaste of a divine communion of the faithful, the remaining books of the *Confessions* may be read as serving to dispose the reader to a *re*-membering of God’s creation according to the vision of the saints. In this way, the conclusion of the *Confessions* enables a *re*-visioning of all of God’s creatures, thereby inviting a rereading of the text in this light and anticipating Aquinas’s deepened reflection of this vision in the *Summa Theologiae*.

In *The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo*, Edward Morgan’s central project is to point to what I’ve identified as a secondary level of meaning in the *Confessions*.<sup>301</sup> He achieves this by highlighting the mediating dynamics of human relationality principally celebrated in the *DDC* and latently working throughout the *Confessions*. “Augustine’s experience of conversion in Book Eight,” notes Morgan, “is prompted largely by a set of auditory and social encounters that create within Augustine the desire and the motivation to accept the celibacy he had found so difficult in Ambrose.”<sup>302</sup> Morgan’s central project is to point to the horizontal exchange of human discourse working throughout the *Confessions*, and to bring it to the fore, thereby emphasizing:

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<sup>299</sup> Burrell, *Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions*, 47.

<sup>300</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, IX.9.

<sup>301</sup> I am here employing Morgan’s sustained study of Augustine as a fuller development of Burrell’s reading of Augustine in light of Burrell’s general insights concerning horizontal and vertical exercises.

<sup>302</sup> Morgan, *The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo*, 112.

that speech and external circumstance provide a key means through which Augustine's outcome of conversion in Bk. 8 of the work is finally reached. Through social circumstances, the speech that occurs in it, as well as through scripturally mediated speech, Augustine is led to a point at which he is able to identify and to accept the salvation he has striven for. From this, he develops a form of speech in which he is in direct conversation with God. In this, he claims his identity as a Christian both in the narrative and in the actual speech-act of confession. The narrative and the voice of the narrator thus work on each other to create a unified identity, which is inherently Christian and, as such, confessional.<sup>303</sup>

A significant implication of this reading of the *Confessions* is that it requires, according to Morgan, a rereading of the *de Trinitate* wherein:

the theme of language, thought and God was as doctrinal in its significance as it was purely interpretative. Augustine sees the figure of Christ as the Word who speaks and whose speech enables us verbally to fix our understanding of the Trinity. Such understanding, using words such as 'procession' and 'sending' concerning the Son and the Spirit's relationship to the Father and to each other, is primarily linguistic in character. Augustine's emptying language of any formal content when describing God, in his discussion of *persona* in Book 7, entailed that the act of speech is itself what enables us to interact with God. Such an act occurs invariably in a social context, such that sociality then becomes exemplified as the setting in which our relationship with God is played out.<sup>304</sup>

In Morgan's reading of Augustine, the Mediator who is the Divine Other, and the mediation of human others are integrally formative because divinely ordered as such. By shifting the focus of meaning from vertical to horizontal relations, he facilitates further readings through his identification of the human mediating dynamics working throughout the text. In this way, to recall what Burrell identifies as the "celebratory"<sup>305</sup> moment shared between Augustine and Monica in Book Nine becomes an invitation to revisit and meditate on their trials together throughout the narrative. Even the difficult nature of Augustine's "relation with his

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<sup>303</sup> Morgan, *The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo*, 125.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>305</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 32.

long-term mistress”<sup>306</sup> may now receive meditative attention in light of the vertical journey of the *Confessions*.

In the conclusion of his study, Morgan invites such further readings of the *Confessions*. That is, while his work identifies well the presence of human relational dynamics working throughout the *Confessions*, he does not evaluate these dynamics. We are thereby left with questions resembling those of David Tracy: what are our practices for disposing ourselves lovingly to each other? What are the horizontal exercises enabling love of others? Morgan concludes by identifying, within Augustine’s own work, the way forward:

There cannot be a context, given Augustine’s emphasis on the significance of human speech *per se* as that which enables access to God, in which God cannot be revealed. It is in the reflective process, however, as we enter and withdraw from our language and social settings that constitute it, that the passage or transformative *via* to God is opened up. It is, in short, through prayer seen as reflective engagement on ourselves as creatures of language, whose sociality is itself linguistic, that our lives are transformed in God’s image.<sup>307</sup>

Only through the life of prayer can we truly know ourselves as having been created in and for intimate relationship with God and others. Herein lies Augustine’s project in the *Confessions*: prayer constitutes a detachment unto God enabling persons to live the life of faith, hope and love in the spirit of authentic freedom with others.

### 3.4 A Pseudo-Dionysian interlude: mining the language of prayer

Through a participation in this complexification of exercises in the *Confessions*, the drive to discerning horizontal exercises for the practice of loving discourse authentically leads one back (and forward) to seeking out divine discourse and vertical exercises once again. Through such discerning practices, what emerges is a trajectory of speech acts

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<sup>306</sup> See Burrell’s footnote that Augustine’s “most inadvertent, and so most authentic, confession may be the indirect discourse he employs to relate how ‘the woman with whom I had been living was torn from my side as an obstacle to my marriage.’ Although he goes on to acknowledge that ‘this was a blow which crushed my heart to bleeding, because I loved her dearly’ (6.15), does the initial ‘was torn’ represent our usual ruse to avoid responsibility in the matter?” *Learning to Trust in Freedom*, 84n3.

<sup>307</sup> Morgan, *The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo* 173.

distinguished by the most basic statements and inquiries of human experience at one end, and by the height of mystical prayer at the other. However, such a trajectory is neither fixed nor static, and corresponds to the nature of our relations with others and with God, relations which, as Coakley reminds us, are “open to the future, and to change...set in an unfolding, diachronic narrative both of individual spiritual maturation and of societal transformation.”<sup>308</sup> It is therefore imperative that systematic theologians articulating a theology of discourse attend to the fullest disclosure of language practices available in the history of spirituality. Only in this way may we attend faithfully to a “*théologie totale*” that engages both the fullness of doctrine as well as the fullness of the expression of doctrine among God’s people.<sup>309</sup>

In the *Confessions*, Augustine accounts for the trajectory of speech that both distinguishes and unites creation and Creator through his prayer. This constitutes a discursive tracing of the longing for divine and human friendship.<sup>310</sup> In order to offer such an account, Augustine’s language of encounter with God has been shown to reflect both the cataphatic and apophatic dimensions of prayer. Before concluding this chapter, and in anticipation of the medieval contributions to be examined in Chapters 4 and 5, it is crucial to advert to these dimensions as the most basic modes of all speech, and as characteristic of the “unfolding diachronic narrative” of persons in community. Denys Turner’s contribution to the LEST conference provides the context for this discussion in his reflection on the *Mystical Theology* of pseudo-Dionysius.

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<sup>308</sup> Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?” 4.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>310</sup> This longing is what Burrell has named the “metaphysical lure” and Coakley the “divine lure” of the Holy Spirit, characterized by the longing to seek out friendship with God and others. See Chapter 2 of this study (sections 2.3.1 and 2.4.2).

In “Atheism, Apophaticism and ‘Différance,’” Denys Turner examines the connections between deconstruction’s major themes of radical otherness and apophaticism.<sup>311</sup> His concern is for authentic spirituality, and his conclusion is that contemporary theologies of relationality face a deeply subtle temptation: at the risk of dishonoring the integrity of “the other,” theology must beware of dishonoring the integrity of the most basic principles of language itself.<sup>312</sup> The two go hand in hand, and the balance is a delicate one.

By appealing to Pseudo-Dionysius’ classical reflection on language and Divine otherness, as well as to the medieval appropriations of Dionysius’ work by Aquinas and Eckhart, Turner identifies “a double movement of thought,” in the form of two ontologies—hierarchical and “democratic”—working throughout their theological reflection, though to differing degrees.<sup>313</sup> Dionysius’ insistence on maintaining both God’s transcendence and immanence—or distance and intimacy—is reflected in the very dynamics of language shared with God and about God: “there is a ‘grammar’ of talk about God which governs equally its cataphatic and apophatic phases.”<sup>314</sup> In this way,

negative theology is, essentially, a *surplus*, not a *deficit* of description, you talk your way into silence by way of an *excessus*, embarrassed at its increasing emptiness; hence, if we must also deny all that we affirm, this does not, for the pseudo-Denys, imply any privileging of the negative description or metaphor over the affirmative. For we must remember that those denials and negations are themselves forms of speech; hence, if the divine reality transcends all our speech, then, as he says in the concluding words of *Mystical Theology*, “the cause of all . . . is both beyond every assertion *and beyond every denial*.”<sup>315</sup>

The implications of this teaching are manifold. Apophatic expressions of relationality always presume and follow upon cataphatic expressions. It is therefore crucial—and Dionysius

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<sup>311</sup> Turner, “Atheism, Apophaticism and ‘Différance,’” 689.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 689ff.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 694.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 692.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 690.

illustrates this—that cataphatic expressions of relationality be exercised often and well. The “emptiness” that such expressions effect is not a consequence of cataphatic language gone bad or falsely construed. To the contrary, it is a consequence of the art of cataphatic language offered through its most authentic flourishes. Furthermore, the silence of apophaticism is not itself pure; just as with cataphatic speech, it can be tainted with our subtle failings in believing, hoping and loving. In this sense, too, we don’t control the move to apophaticism; God does.<sup>316</sup> The accounts of the saints and mystics attest repeatedly to this reality. And the fact that systematic theology is *in via* precisely because theologians themselves are *in via* means that our apophatic practices themselves are never static or permanent; they cyclically feed back into our cataphatic practices. Herein lies one of the central truths of liturgical practice, and one that will be shown to lie at the heart of Thomas’s work in the *Summa Theologiae*.

Through his discussion of cataphatic and apophatic language in the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, Turner contributes two major insights for this chapter. First, cataphatic and apophatic modes of prayer are such because they are the basic, interrelated modes of all speech in general. This means that both modes must be integrally accounted for as potentially transformative in any treatment of vertical, as well as in any treatment of horizontal spiritual exercises. Secondly, when understood as transformative, both cataphatic modes of discourse and apophatic modes of discourse are characterized as *received* ways of engaging with the human other or divine Other.

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<sup>316</sup> See Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 31: the “step from many words to fewer and even to wordlessness becomes natural enough, yet the initiative remains with the Word of God.”

### 3.5 Invitations for further retrieval

Even a cursory reading of the *DDC* and *Confessions* position Augustine to be explicitly addressing the key areas noted in contemporary theological reflection on discourse. He achieves this by providing the framework for a relational theology that acknowledges the roles of authors/speakers, texts, and readers/hearers, and that is informed, through prayer, by life in God, the Word spoken through the Holy Spirit. As two texts primarily concerned with the rhetoric of conversion through practices of receptivity, discernment, and commitment to the spiritual life, the *DDC* and *Confessions* constitute a set of primary spiritual exercises in a theology of discourse. The *DDC* provides the basis for vertical and horizontal exercises by employing the principle of love as the hermeneutical key to all discourse. The narrative of the *Confessions* principally employs the vertical exercises of cataphatic and apophatic prayer in order to point the reader to the horizontal exercises latent in the text. Taken together, these texts highlight both the possibilities and limits of language in relationship with God, while ultimately revealing how all discourse is in the service of conversion.

To complement Augustine's *Confessions* and the corresponding vertical exercises that direct the narrative, theologians are calling for retrievals from the tradition distinguished by horizontal exercises. While the *DDC* offers the framework for these exercises, it is limited by the theoretical nature of its manual-style genre. Narratives distinguished by horizontal exercises are in order, thereby bringing to the forefront the Johannine reminder (1 Jn. 4.21) "that we can only be his friends as we learn how to befriend one another."<sup>317</sup> David Burrell's works constitute an evolving attempt to facilitate such important retrievals; to this end, he has facilitated conversations across time periods, cultures, and religious traditions through his essays on al-Ghazali and Aquinas, Augustine and Etty Hillesum, and John of the Cross and

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<sup>317</sup> Burrell, *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 49.

Edith Stein, with the latter two instances of retrievals also attending to conversation between genders.<sup>318</sup> In the service of such contributions, I propose a discourse from the tradition that is distinguished by horizontal exercises and that is further distinguished by a narrative between the genders that more closely approximates the intimacy of discourse reflected in the *Confessions*.<sup>319</sup> To this end, the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard will be offered in Chapter Four as a secondary set of spiritual exercises in a theology of discourse. Functioning with the same transformative possibilities as the narrative form, the *Letters* will inform this study by offering to fill the gaps identified in contemporary contributions to a theology of discourse. More specifically, the twelfth-century correspondence between Heloise and Abelard will assist us in: discerning the formative horizontal exercises called for by Tracy; providing a context for the engagement between men and women that is the basis of Coakley's re-visioning of systematic theology; and exploring the nature of discourse with others who, as Burrell notes, may be perceived as threatening since not yet perceived as 'friends.'<sup>320</sup> In so doing, a study of the *Letters* elicits the question of how vertical discursive practices may be discerned through horizontal discursive practices, whose source is God's Word speaking in friendship.

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<sup>318</sup> See *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, 67-86, and *Learning to Trust in Freedom*, 45-58, 59-78.

<sup>319</sup> This distinguishes Heloise and Abelard's contribution from that of Burrell's discourse partners of different genders, who are separated by time and space.

<sup>320</sup> In *Friendship and Ways to Truth*, Burrell notes: "Since it is unlikely that we should engage in such conversations in an unthreatening way except with friends, I have focused on friendship as a prerequisite for the quality of intersubjectivity which can come to substitute for *objectivity* in a postmodern context," 62. The medieval texts examined in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study serve to probe further this "prerequisite" nature of friendship.



## Chapter 4

### Exercises in Memory and Conversion in the Epistolary Discourse of Heloise and Abelard

#### 4.1 Introduction

Augustine's *Confessions* is a text *par excellence* by which the Christian tradition contributes to a theology of discourse. Through this narrative of conversion, Augustine offers the vertical exercises by which human beings respond to the Lord and are thereby disposed with a loving receptivity to friendship with others. Memory, constituted by exercises in receptivity, is the founding dynamic of Augustine's rhetoric of conversion; human forgetfulness of the fact that we are created in and for divine love is at the root of the turning away from God's call that is human sinfulness. By the same token, remembering rightly the transgressions of one's life disposes one to remembering God, which is the basis for a life of conversion. However, the very act of remembering itself is an experience of grace wherein the intellect and will are disposed to the extravagant love of God, and come to be practiced in this love through formation in the discourse marked by prayer. In this way, lives previously distinguished by isolation, meaninglessness and confusion become those marked by connectedness, meaningfulness and gratitude.

The twelfth-century *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard provide a further development of Augustine's narrative of conversion by complementing Augustine's primary emphasis on "vertical" relationality with a set of spiritual exercises focused on "horizontal" relationality. Through their mutual reflection on the role of memory in friendship and its implications for the lives of individuals, communities and the life of the church, Heloise and Abelard provide a crucial contribution to a theology of discourse by adumbrating both Tracy's insight on language as oriented to the transformation of subjects and communities and Burrell's insight

on the intersubjective framework of this discourse. Moreover, their correspondence provides a concrete instantiation from medieval Christianity of the profound fruitfulness that discourse between the genders can offer to the history of theology. Just as Sarah Coakley's work provides a stimulus to scholars to look to the Christian tradition in order to better contextualize theological reflection on gender, the correspondence of Heloise and Abelard provides an illuminating instance of just such a context. As an early example of the mutually enriching collaboration between women and men that arose through the church's developing and discerning cultivation of the ministry of the *cura mulierum*, the *Letters* elicit a deeper examination of the authentically ecclesiastical and authentically human dynamics and implications of this ministry for theological reflection.

#### 4.2 Gender and conversion in theological reflection

The theological significance of the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard in terms of the collaborative discipleship of women and men has been highlighted in Prudence Allen's study of the "doctrine of complementarity" among the genders in the history of philosophical and Christian thought.<sup>321</sup> The study of "complementarity" is a study of men and women as equal in dignity, distinct biologically and psychologically, and oriented toward each other as part of the dynamic narrative of salvation history.<sup>322</sup> Moreover, Allen's work helps us identify that this particular twelfth-century medieval collaboration between Heloise and Abelard reflects a marked shift from the way in which philosophers and theologians before the twelfth century attended to the role of gender in theological reflection. This shift, manifested in a broad range

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<sup>321</sup> Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC-AD 1250* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1985), 271-292; here 292, 271.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

of spiritual writings and emphasized by scholars across disciplines,<sup>323</sup> is a shift from men's reflections on the *nature* of gender in general, to women's *and* men's reflections on the *relationality* of the genders, including detailed narrative depicting that relationality. As Allen notes, "Heloise's actual interaction with Abelard [in their work] appears to move towards the evolution of a more practical [gender] ... complementarity."<sup>324</sup> As Allen notes further, it is later in the twelfth century when Hildegard of Bingen—whose own radical engagement with both men and women of her time was profoundly marked by her correspondences<sup>325</sup>—contributes a fully articulated theory of gender complementarity for Christian theological reflection.<sup>326</sup>

As a broad survey such as Patricia Ranft's *Women and Spiritual Equality in Christian Tradition* makes clear, the practice of men and women honoring both the integrity and uniqueness of the other may be traced throughout the history of Christian thought with its basis in the life of Christ.<sup>327</sup> What marks the contribution of Heloise and Abelard is their collaborative intentional reflection on just this practice for the history of discourse in general, and for theological discourse in particular. The religious culture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which included sustained reflection upon and devotion to the relationship between the Virgin Mary and Christ, as well as Christ's commendation of Mary to John at the cross,

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<sup>323</sup> See for instance: Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)*, (New York: Crossroad, 1998), xiii, 17, 163; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 294-296; Patricia Ranft, *Women and Spiritual Equality in Christian Tradition* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

<sup>324</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC-AD 1250*, 271. In her second volume, *The Concept of Woman: Volume II: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), Allen revises her original identification of "sex complementarity" with that of "gender complementarity." I am employing her revised category in this study.

<sup>325</sup> See Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, eds., *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen, Volume I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), as well as subsequent volumes.

<sup>326</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC-AD 1250*: "this doctrine of complementarity, wherein the sexes are held to be of equal worth while biological and psychological differences are fully recognized and described, found comprehensive expression in work of Hildegard," 292.

<sup>327</sup> Ranft, *Women and Spiritual Equality in Christian Tradition*.

provided a fruitful ground for such a contribution.<sup>328</sup> Complementing such devotions was a heightened focus upon the nature and practice of friendship in the life of virtue and as illustrated in the history of Christian letters. To this end, the inestimable influence in the medieval period of Jerome's weighty correspondence with women has begun to be addressed.<sup>329</sup> It is to Jerome that both Abelard and Heloise turn as a primary authority; in his letters may be found an integration of the ethical contributions of Seneca and the ministry of St. Paul amidst a magisterial reading of the scriptures and a profound range of expressions communicating the intimate cooperation of women and men in the Lord. In this way, Jerome's correspondence provided for them the groundwork for medieval reflection on discourse between the genders as fruitful grounds for a mutual openness to the work of the Holy Spirit through the person of Christ.

#### 4.3 Ecclesial contexts for gender complementarity: *cura mulierum*

##### 4.3.1 The care of souls as the "art of arts"

Jerome's correspondence offers one example of the "sacramental and spiritual direction of women"<sup>330</sup> that became articulated in the medieval period as the *cura mulierum*, and which is a specific expression of the more general pastoral tradition of the *cura animarum* that Gregory the Great emphasized throughout his *Pastoral Rule* as the art of arts:

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<sup>328</sup> For the "commendation to John a powerful exemplar linking *cura monialium* with confession," see Fiona J. Griffiths, "The Cross and the *Cura monialium*. Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the pastoral care of women in the age of reform." *Speculum* 83 (2008): 303-330; here 322-324. See also Griffiths, "Men's duty to provide for women's needs": Abelard, Heloise, and their negotiation of the *cura monialium*," *Journal of Medieval History* 30(2004):1-24: "Abelard now argued that men's care for the practical needs of the women's community was not voluntary, but an obligation modelled on the care that Joseph had provided for Mary and the provision made for her by Christ as his crucifixion," 12; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

<sup>329</sup> See Constant J. Mews, "Un lecteur de Jérôme au XII siècle: Pierre Abélard," *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient: XVI centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1988): 429-444.

<sup>330</sup> Robert Sweetman, "Thomas of Cantimpré, *Mulieres Religiosae* and Purgatorial Piety: Hagiographical *Vitae* and the Beguine 'Voice,'" *In a Distinct Voice: Medieval Studies in Honor of Leonard E. Boyle O.P.*, ed. Jacqueline Brown and William Stoneman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1997), 606-626; here 607.

“*Ars est artium regimen animarum.*”<sup>331</sup> Gregory saw this practice equally distinguished by its attentiveness to the particular needs of the other as well as by the rigorous formative preparation on the part of the minister of such care. Stated otherwise, Gregory’s reflection on the *cura animarum*, reflection that was foundational to medieval spiritual thought,<sup>332</sup> was at its center reflection on the receptivity, discernment and conversion that Burrell has found to be at the heart of all spiritual exercises.<sup>333</sup> As such, the care of souls was implicitly distinguished by a radical engagement with the other. It is in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries that the *cura mulierum* became an explicitly formulated commitment of the church as the needs of this ministry and its institutional demands came to require more intentional discernment on the part of its members.<sup>334</sup> As McGinn has noted of this period, a profoundly influential “emergence of women” in religious formation was “characterized by new forms of cooperation between women and men, in terms of both a shared dedication to the *vita apostolica* and a joint concern for attaining the ‘loving knowledge of God’ often in a mutually enriching fashion.”<sup>335</sup> For example, attending to sibling relationships among

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<sup>331</sup> Jean Leclercq, Francois Vandenbroucke, and Louis Bouyer. *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* (New York: Seabury Press, 1961), 8n.15: “Reg. Past. I, 1. For the sources of this formula see I. Hausherr, *Direction spirituelle en Orient autrefois*, Rome, 1955, pp. 56-9.”

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-30.

<sup>333</sup> See James McEvoy, “The Theory of Friendship in the Latin Middle Ages: Hermeneutics, Contextualization and the Transmission and Reception of Ancient Texts and Ideas, from c. AD 350 to c. 1500,” *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Halsedine (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 3-43; here 10: “It has been argued that the assimilation of Christianity to a philosophy led directly to the introduction of philosophical spiritual exercises into Christianity, at least in those circles which were marked by the influences of the Apologists and Origen. The issue requires nuanced handling. The proto-monasticism of the Desert Fathers, which showed little or no evidence of philosophical influence, arrived by its own route at the practice of spiritual guidance, that is to say the direction of the inner life of disciples by a spiritual father who exercised prayerful counsel and pastoral care in their regard, and who was their guide in the discernment of spirits, that vital element in self-knowledge of a spiritual kind.”

<sup>334</sup> See Edward Brett, *Humbert of Romans, His Life and Views of Thirteenth-Century Society* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 57-79, for an account of Dominican contributions to such ecclesiastical formulations, particularly in the form of papal decrees.

<sup>335</sup> McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)*, 17. See also Bruce L. Venard, *Women’s Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) for his discussion concerning the high degree of “cooperation of lay and religious women and men” until the late twelfth century, 85.

accounts of “men embracing the care of women as part of a long tradition” in the church, Fiona Griffiths notes how “by the eleventh and twelfth centuries the idea was firmly in place that a male saint should have an intimate and exclusive relationship with one woman in particular: his sister.”<sup>336</sup> Emphasizing how in the twelfth century “any number of churches had women, probably lay women, associated with them as *familiares*, *conversae*, *devotae* or . . . *mulieres deicolae* or *licoisae*,” Giles Constable contends that “more perhaps than at any other time in Christian history...male religious leaders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were responsive to the needs of women and welcomed their presence and influence in religious institutions.”<sup>337</sup> True to the tradition of the *cura animarum* as communicated through Gregory, that of the medieval *cura mulierum*, when practiced authentically, was understood as a mutual collaboration of women and men in the service of the Lord. It is to such collaboration that Heloise and Abelard are of the first in the medieval period to give formal, joint expression as theological reflection.

#### 4.3.2 *Vita apostolica*

In the twelfth-century, several dynamics conspired to facilitate the dynamic collaboration between women and men that characterized the *cura mulierum*. Primary among

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<sup>336</sup> Fiona J. Griffiths, “Siblings and the Sexes within the Medieval Religious Life,” *Church History* 77:1 (2008): 26-53; here 39.

<sup>337</sup> Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65-66: The proportion of female saints rose from less than 1 per cent in the eleventh century to 18 per cent of all saints, and 45 per cent of lay saints, in the twelfth. . . . among the rules written for women in the twelfth and in the early thirteenth centuries were those of Abelard for nuns, of Aelred of Rievaulx for recluses, and the *Ancrene riwle (wisse)*, which may have been addressed to Augustinian canonesses.” In her study of the twelfth century *cura monialium*, Fiona Griffiths finds that rather than attending to the nature of “men’s attraction to religious women and the theological and spiritual underpinnings of their attraction” in order to highlight the “many productive relations that developed between monastic and mendicant men and the women for whom they provided care,” scholars have in the past focused rather on “the extent to which male orders accommodated women, the intensity of women’s attraction to the overarching male-centered reform movements, and the ultimate impact of legislation mandating the abandonment of the *cura*.” These models, she holds, “do little to challenge the overarching model of male opposition to the *cura* and attendant theories of decline for women during the reform period,” “Men’s duty to provide for women’s needs”: Abelard, Heloise, and their negotiation of the *cura monialium*,” 5.

these were: a renewed commitment to the apostolic life (*vita apostolica*); new forms of devotion to and reflection on the humanity of Christ; and a renewed attention to the liberal arts distinguished by study of the rhetorical elements working at the heart of Christian discourse and found in the respective traditions of the art of letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) and the art of preaching (*ars praedicandi*).<sup>338</sup> What emerged throughout this period marked by “gregorian reforms and new religious foundations” was a renewed commitment to the *vita apostolica* by lay and religious faithful alike. This was a devotional culture in which the “model of the primitive church” was engaged with great frequency and the works of Augustine, Jerome, Gregory and the desert fathers were primary authorities: “the *Life* of Anthony together with the works of Cassian and the lives of the fathers were second only to the Bible and the Rule of Benedict in their influence on monasticism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.”<sup>339</sup> Such reflection emphasized a spirituality marked by renewed commitments to the *simplicitas*, *humilitas* and *communitas* at the heart of the gospel, with the gospel understood as “the only norm or *regula* for a Christian.”<sup>340</sup> In this context, too, embracing the apostolic life often involved the appropriation or even merging of roles among monks and clerics.<sup>341</sup> In addition, the role of *magister*—with which Abelard began his career—was emerging as a potentially new pedagogical vocation in the church. Abelard’s own participation throughout his life in each of these three ways of life—cleric, master, monk—enabled him, in his own estimation, to offer a critique in the *Historia calamitatum* of

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<sup>338</sup> James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of the Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Tempe, Ariz: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).

<sup>339</sup> Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 160.

<sup>340</sup> Leclercq et al., *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, 257.

<sup>341</sup> Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 25. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1979).

those “new apostles” who presumed authority in the church.<sup>342</sup> In any case, the milieu was such that teaching by word and example (*docere verbo et exemplo*) and holding *actio* on a par with, and informing, *contemplatio* were signs of the times.<sup>343</sup>

#### 4.3.3 *Imitatio Christi*

Such teachings and practices were, after all, reflected in the person of Christ, whose humanity became a deep source of reflection in the twelfth century. In Christ, women and men found both their unity<sup>344</sup> as well as their particularity.<sup>345</sup> By devoutly following Christ’s life and passion, Christians could intimately know Christ by embodying his love in the world. As Karl Morrison explains in *Understanding Conversion*, “For Bernard [of Clairvaux] and his contemporaries, the career of Christ was the supreme ‘form of conversion’ . . . on which all authentic conversions, with countless variations, were patterned. It was essential that the

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<sup>342</sup> References to the English translations of the *Letters* are primarily from Mary Martin McLaughlin with Bonnie Wheeler, *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Collected Correspondence and Related Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); here 41. Alternately, William Levitan’s *Abelard and Heloise: The Letters and Other Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007) is used. Citations from the Latin correspondence of Heloise and Abelard are as follows: Ep. 1, ed. Jacques Monfrin, *Abelard: Historia calamitatum* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1978), 62–109; for the subsequent *Letters*, see Jacques Paul Migne’s numbering of the correspondence (<http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/resources/abelard/Epistolae.txt>, last accessed on March 23, 2012) which include editions by: Jacques Monfrin, *Abelard: Historia calamitatum* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1978), 62–109 [Ep. 1]; Joseph Thomas Muckle, “The Personal Letters Between Abelard and Heloise,” *Mediaeval Studies* 15 (1953): 68–94 [Ep. 2–5]; Joseph Thomas Muckle, “The Letter of Heloise on Religious Life and Abelard’s First Reply,” *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1955): 240–81 [Ep. 6–7]; and T. P. McLaughlin, “Abelard’s Rule for Religious Women,” *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956): 241–92 [Ep. 8].

<sup>343</sup> Leclercq et al., *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, 23: “In the sense of personal asceticism all men are committed to the active life, no one is at liberty to reject it. It is a “servitude” that must be undergone in order to attain to contemplation. Seen as devotion to one’s neighbour, especially in the form of pastoral work. . . . It is a moral question: the Christian must know how to practice virtue and to teach it to others.”

<sup>344</sup> See Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden, eds., *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c. 1100-c. 1500* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010) concerning a “confident belief that those mandated to make known God’s ‘goodness’ are obliged to obey ‘his will,’ irrespective of gender: ‘There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3.28),” 1.

<sup>345</sup> See Griffith’s discussion of the commendation motif above. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 147: “If anything, women drew from the traditional notion of the female as physical a special emphasis on their own redemption by a Christ who was supremely physical because supremely human. They sometimes even extrapolated from this to the notion that, in Christ, divinity is to humanity as male is to female.”



form or scenario be enacted, that one learn it by doing it.”<sup>346</sup> Such devotional practice was found to be well served by a more pronounced focus on the “literal meaning [of the Scriptures] and the historical aspect of salvation.”<sup>347</sup> As Hugh of St. Victor’s (c.1096-1141) *Didascalicon* clearly affirmed, “the religion of Christ was not based on logic but a series of facts arranged in a history, a history that one must read in the technical sense of the medieval *lectio*.”<sup>348</sup> In this sense, as Hugh’s work also shows, “to scorn the details is to miss the spiritual pattern.”<sup>349</sup>

In accordance with such devotional formation, the practice of imitation and the influence of the moralizing narratives of the *exempla* were of great theological significance for this period. For the imitation of Christ included the imitation of his saints,<sup>350</sup> and *exempla* were sought even among one’s contemporaries. In his own pastoral work, Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167) could be found repeating “not only Anselm’s concept of *exempla*, but his passionate language: ‘Where have you gone, o example by whom I lived, pattern of my morals? Where shall I turn? Whom shall I take for my guide? How are you torn from my embrace, snatched from my kisses, hidden from my eyes?’”<sup>351</sup> As Thomas Heffernan’s study points out, the devotion to the saints in this period constituted a striking emphasis on the

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<sup>346</sup> Karl Morrison, *Understanding Conversion*, 6-7.

<sup>347</sup> Leclercq et al., *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, 243.

<sup>348</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 165-166.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>350</sup> Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): “For actions (*res*) narrated in the lives of the saints to be binding for the community, they had to be imitation Christi,” 5.

<sup>351</sup> Sally N. Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens of God: A Study of Anselm’s Correspondence with Women* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 32. Vaughn is drawing from the work of Caroline Bynum here in *Jesus as Mother*, 96-97.

human side of the saint.<sup>352</sup> Further complementing this milieu was the twelfth-century model of the confessor as physician of souls as a model of greater intimacy.<sup>353</sup>

#### 4.3.4 *Ars dictaminis*

Working alongside the emphasis on literal readings of the scriptures was a revival attending to the narrative of *littera* and *historia* in the context of the liberal arts curriculum.<sup>354</sup> Both Augustine's *Confessions* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* proved to be texts intimate to readers of the period that were readily invoked as part of this revival<sup>355</sup> in which the arts of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic served as "the tools of conversion" working throughout such spiritual texts.<sup>356</sup> Such an understanding of the liberal arts contributed to the "christianization of the philosophy of art" from the ninth century on.<sup>357</sup> The results of this movement were cultivated and received by theological reflection in such profoundly pervasive ways, that in the twelfth century, neither grammar, nor rhetoric, nor dialectic escaped dynamic transformation.<sup>358</sup>

A growing discipline of the period that involved this creative integration of the literary, exegetical, philosophical and theological developments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was that of the *ars dictaminis*, or the art of letter writing. The *ars praedicandi* will be addressed in the final section of this chapter. The roots of the art of letter writing may be

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<sup>352</sup> Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages*: "Medieval sacred biographies are replete with the biographers' testimony to the variety of stories which surrounded their subjects during life," 33.

<sup>353</sup> Robert Sweetman, *Dominican Preaching in the Southern Low Countries, 1240-1260: Materiae Praedicabiles in the Liber De Natura Rerum and Bonum Universale De Apibus of Thomas of Cantimpré*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1988), 43. This shift will be discussed more at length later in this chapter.

<sup>354</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 165-166; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 228.

<sup>355</sup> John Marenbon, *Boethius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 164: "Only Aristotle and Augustine had so great a direct influence over so wide a range of intellectual life....Medieval scholars turned again and again to the *Opuscula sacra* and the *Consolation* because they are complex, difficult and remarkable works...."

<sup>356</sup> Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* 76.

<sup>357</sup> Edgar de Bruyne, *The Esthetics of the Middle Ages*, trans. Eileen B. Hennessy (New York: F. Ungar Publishing, 1969), 153.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

traced to Alberic of Monte Cassino, at whose Benedictine monastery St. Thomas Aquinas would later receive his early formative education.<sup>359</sup> This study brought together rhetorical analysis with reflection on the virtuous life, such that a careful, intimate study of the body of the letter was understood analogously for a careful, intimate study of the lives of persons in community. Reflected in such a discipline was the understanding that “more importantly than growth in knowledge, reading [and writing] produces growth in character through provisioning—in *memoria*—the virtue of prudence.”<sup>360</sup> Both Cicero’s *De inventione*, as well as the associative text attributed to him, the *Rhetorica ad herennium*, further informed and fortified this method of study, for prudence—first identified by Ambrose as one of the cardinal virtues and later by Aquinas as the ‘hinge’ of the ‘hinge’ virtues—is “the knowledge of what is good, what is bad and what is neither good nor bad.”<sup>361</sup> It consists of three parts: *memoria*, “the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened”; *intelligentia*, by which it ascertains what is”; and *providentia*, “by which it is seen that something is going to occur before it occurs.”<sup>362</sup> Just as the monastic model of *re-membering* the scriptural text (*lectio*) was the basis for the life of wisdom (*meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio*),<sup>363</sup> the arts model of *re-*

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<sup>359</sup> Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 202. Murphy emphasizes the influence Alberic had as a Benedictine steeped in that tradition, as a formative figure for a future pope, Gelasius II, and as a dynamic teacher integrating the work of Cicero through the Benedictine’s emphasis on the salutation and exordium, especially in “render[ing] the audience ‘attentive, docile, and well-disposed.’”<sup>359</sup> In the *Dictaminum radii*, Alberic “uses the term ‘reader’ (*lectorem*) instead of ‘audience’ (*auditores*),” and recalls often to his students “the three considerations in salutations: ‘subject, person, and intention.’”<sup>359</sup>

<sup>360</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 237.

<sup>361</sup> Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De inventione*, *De optimo genere oratorum*, *Topica*, trans. H.M. Hubbell (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1949), II.160; cf. *Rhetorica ad herennium* III.II.3.

<sup>362</sup> *De inventione* II.160; cf. *Ad Herennium* III.II.3.

<sup>363</sup> Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*: “The stages of *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio* were distinguished in technical treatises on monastic spirituality, as by Guigo of La Chartreuse, who compared them to the rungs on the ladder of humility, but they tended to overlap and flow one into the other,” 15.

*membering* the *littera* in an integrative fashion was the necessary basis for living the life of prudence (*intelligentia, providentia*).<sup>364</sup>

Perhaps the most profound expression of the life of virtue in twelfth-century medieval thought was the understanding and practice of friendship.<sup>365</sup> The pedagogical, and especially ethical emphasis of friendship pervaded cathedral education,<sup>366</sup> and this emphasis was cultivated by “a new conception of friendship between God and man, in which the humanity of God was predominant, and this contributed to making the whole natural and supernatural universe appear more benign, more friendly to man.”<sup>367</sup> The implications of such understanding and practice both inside and outside the monastery were what C. Stephen Jaeger has termed “charismatic friendship,” that is, friendship as “a subject of instruction and at the same time a medium, a modality of teaching.”<sup>368</sup> He notes further: “If the acquisition of virtue is a goal of education, then love and friendship cannot be absent. To teach or learn without love would amount to an admission of the absence of virtue . . . . The absence of love would discredit the relationship in one of its fundamental purposes.”<sup>369</sup>

Furthermore, just as friendship was the practice of sharing this life of virtue, *dictamen* constituted the discourse by which such virtue was formed and expressed. This called forth the study of Jerome’s letters to women as reflecting the Christian life of virtue. And these letters in turn had their model in St. Paul’s letters to the various communities to which he

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<sup>364</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 224.

<sup>365</sup> See Frederick J.E. Raby, “*Amor and Amicitia*: A Mediaeval Poem,” *Speculum* 40 (October 1965), 599-610; here, 601: “. . . At no other time, in the mediaeval west, did the subject of friendship receive such close and continuous attention.”

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 610.

<sup>367</sup> Gerhart Ladner, “Terms and Ideas of Renewal,” *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 1-33; here 16.

<sup>368</sup> C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 59.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

wrote. So it was to Paul and Jerome that Heloise and Abelard could turn for the pastoral implications of letter writing, while it was primarily in the moral epistles of Seneca where students of *dictamen* would discover the philosophical categories enabling them to appropriate the Christian epistolary tradition as their own, that is, in the service of the life of conversion for themselves and their communities. After all, Seneca was for the middle ages the “principal transmitter of the dialogue of friendship as exercises in self-knowledge via spiritual direction to an apprentice.”<sup>370</sup> In terms of the *ars dictaminis*, Seneca’s *Epistulae morales* “were a standard item in the...curriculum” of the twelfth century,<sup>371</sup> with letters 1-88 circulating most prominently as a unit.<sup>372</sup> As Étienne Gilson noted decades ago, and as Constant Mews has emphasized in more recent scholarship, Heloise and Abelard were indebted to Seneca whose “apocryphal correspondence” with St. Paul as appropriated by Jerome further validated Seneca’s authority as a master of the ascetic life, “the moralist par excellence.”<sup>373</sup>

One of the most well-known of Seneca’s letters (84) employs the classical trope of the bee, which associated its activities of honey-making with the process of remembering.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> McEvoy, “The Theory of Friendship in the Latin Middle Ages: Hermeneutics, Contextualization and the Transmission and Reception of Ancient Texts and Ideas, From c. AD 350 to C. 1500,” 10.

<sup>371</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 237

<sup>372</sup> Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 289n63: “Letters 1-88 always had a wider circulation than letters 89-124 and Reynolds comments that the early manuscript tradition of 89-124 is essentially a German affair.”

<sup>373</sup> Étienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, 22-26; here, 23, 25. Due to the profound influence that Jerome and Seneca had on Abelard’s thought, Gilson provides Jerome’s witness to Seneca as a valid authority: “‘Lucius Annaeus Seneca, of Cordova, disciple of Stoic Solon, paternal uncle of the poet Lucan, led a life of very great continence (*continentissimae vitae fuit*). I should not inscribe his name in the catalogue of sacred authors, if the letters, so widely read, from Paul to Seneca and Seneca to Paul did not invite me to do so. Although he was Nero’s instructor and a very powerful person in his day, Seneca states there that he would like to hold among the pagans the same place Paul held among the Christians. Two years before Peter and Paul received the martyr’s crown, he was put to death by Nero’” (*De viris illustribus*, cap. xii; PL 23:662), 22-23. See also Constant Mews, *Abelard and Heloise*, 279n24.

<sup>374</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 237; Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights*, 92; Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 74-77.

By further identifying memory with the work of composition, and moreover by associating the “process of mellification” with a “model of authorial transformation,”

Seneca’s extension of the bee’s traditional symbolic role in the gathering and organization of memory to the making of ideas marked a significant shift in conceptions of literary *imitatio* and composition. Although the apian metaphor had been common in the ancient world as a way to characterize the work of gathering that preceded composition . . . it was important for him to ask what, exactly, the bee *did* in order to make honey. The key question...was whether or not the bee “adds” a new element to her gathered nectar in the process of mellification . . . something original or “new”—the “single sweet substance” that Seneca described.<sup>375</sup>

Developing the implications of the bee metaphor in letter 84, Seneca offers a sophisticated discussion of the process of imitation and its intimately collaborative nature:

I think that sometimes it is impossible for it to be seen who is being imitated, if the copy is a true one; for a true copy stamps its own form upon all the features which it has drawn from what we may call the original, in such a way that they are combined into a unity. Do you not see how many voices there are in a chorus? Yet out of the many only one voice results.<sup>376</sup>

As Thomas Greene has emphasized in his discussion of this passage:

The word “imago,” which has just been dismissed as dead [earlier in the passage], is reanimated by the metaphor of the chorus, which will be developed at some length. It is with this analogy that the discussion of imitation proper ends. It deserves to be climactic because it offers, as no other ancient text explicitly does, support for what modern criticism calls polyvocality. For Seneca the mind and the text must blend many arts, many precepts, many models chosen from many periods of history: “multae . . . artes, multa precepta . . . , multarum aetatum exempla” . . . the epistle then closes with an apparent swerve away to familiar Stoic morality.<sup>377</sup>

Seneca’s complex reflection on the potential of the honey-bee is for a faithful attendance of the memory in a manner that is at once radically particular—relying on the single authorial voice—and radically universal—relying on that voice as being intrinsically ‘in concert’ with the voices of its community.

<sup>375</sup> Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights*, 93.

<sup>376</sup> Cited in Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 75.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

Such a reflection was not lost on twelfth-century thinkers for whom Christ's call as both radically personal and universal was a source of deep devotion through the *vita apostolica*. This well-known Senecan reflection was certainly not lost on Heloise's contemporary advocates, including Hugh Metel, Augustinian canon of Toul, who wrote to her: "your discourses are . . . sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, and are the mirror of your prudence," and Peter the Venerable, friend of both Heloise and Abelard. Peter, who advocated and cared for Abelard in his final days, wrote to Heloise during her service as abbess:

You will be a Deborah . . . a bee . . . for you will make honey, but not only for yourself, since all the goodness you have gathered here and there in different ways, by your example, word and every possible means, you will pour out for the sisters in your house and for all other women. In this brief span of our mortal life, you will satisfy yourself with the hidden sweetness of the holy scriptures, as also your fortunate sisters by your public instruction.<sup>378</sup>

Through these epistolary testaments to Heloise's gifts as a writer and to her vocation as abbess of the Paraclete, it is her virtue of prudence and her reliance upon the scriptures that are ultimately celebrated. In both cases, however, it is a memorial consolation and inspiration in the form of "sweetness" that is at the foundation of both the virtue and the sacred word. While, as Gilson has noted, Heloise joined Abelard in celebrating Seneca's ethics of austerity, I hope to show that in her mature writings, Heloise's leading appeals to Seneca are for an ethics of another sort: an ethics of memory.<sup>379</sup>

#### 4.4 The Twelfth-century *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard

##### 4.4.1 Background to the correspondence of the *Letters*

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<sup>378</sup> Cited in Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights*, 104.

<sup>379</sup> Donna Alfano Bussell has addressed the appeals of Heloise and Abelard to Seneca throughout the *Letters*, interpreting them rather as appeals to mutual exhortation and for friendship across both material and spiritual boundaries, "Heloise Redressed: Rhetorical Engagement and the Benedictine Rite of Initiation in Heloise's Third Letter," *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 233-254; here 238.

The following interpretation of the discourse of Heloise and Abelard is, in the most general sense, that of a discourse concerning the care of souls in which the life of conversion of writers and readers are integrally intertwined. More specifically, the correspondence is understood herein precisely as the foundational texts of the Paraclete.<sup>380</sup> As Étienne Gilson noted in his 1937 study of the *Letters*, from the early days of their love for one another, Heloise and Abelard “were in agreement about the ideal for both the philosopher and the cleric,” and this vision that was gradually shaped and formed through their discourse with one another should, in fact, be treated as “the hidden force which exalts and governs” their collaboration.<sup>381</sup>

Due to the relatively recent entry of critical contributions to the medieval discourse of Heloise and Abelard, some preliminary comments will be offered here as helpful context.<sup>382</sup> What is important to emphasize in this uniquely collaborative medieval narrative is first, that in its inception it was marked by the relationship between an established master (*magister*) of philosophy and an educated student of letters, which began around the year 1116 and elicited an early exchange of love letters (*epistulae duorum amantium*), a secret affair made public, a

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<sup>380</sup> The *Letters* have not always been read in this way; much of the early scholarship of the *Letters*, as well as some contemporary criticism, has presented the correspondence as based on a foundational hostility and/or ambiguous commitment to the religious life, rather than as a collaborative effort in the service of a community of religious women and men. Furthermore, although early criticism of Heloise’s first two Letters often excluded them from offering any serious pastoral teaching, I am drawing from the work of scholars, including Gilson, Leclercq, Mews, McLaughlin, Ward, Wheeler, et al., who have argued otherwise. For a collection of articles attending to these trends, see *Listening to Heloise*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler. See also Constant J. Mews, “Heloise,” in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c. 1100-c. 1500*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), 268-269.

<sup>381</sup> Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, 21-22. What I have termed their “collaboration,” Gilson identifies as their “conflict.” These terms should not be considered exclusionary one from the other. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin; their call to conversion involved both the conflict of struggle and the collaboration with grace.

<sup>382</sup> It may be tempting in a study comparing the *Confessions* of Augustine with the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard to offer the *Letters* as providing a genre for the type of discourse that Augustine might have considered had he narrated more fully his own relationship with the unnamed woman with whom he lived for many years and with whom he conceived his son, Adeodatus. Such a temptation can easily be dismissed on several counts, however, primary among them being the different nature of the relationships themselves (given the little we know from Augustine’s account), as well as the different nature of the respective narratives.



secret marriage ceremony, the delivery of a child entrusted to the care of relatives, and their respective vows to monastic life around 1118. The second point of emphasis is that over a decade after her entrance to the convent at Argenteuil and his to the monastery at Saint-Denis, Heloise and Abelard brought their entire narrative to bear upon their mature reflections for the foundation of the Paraclete, a monastic community established by Abelard for Heloise and her sister nuns when they were left without a convent in the year 1129. In this way, their commitment to the religious life brings together both the “intellectual renaissance” and the “evangelical awakening” that distinguished twelfth-century spiritual reflection.<sup>383</sup> Later in the same year when Innocent II granted the Paraclete its monastic charter (1131), Abelard composed the *Historia calamitatum*, generally regarded by scholars as the first of the *Letters*.

While the correspondence of their earlier years is not the focus of this study, growing scholarly witness attests to its authenticity, and a longstanding critical awareness has regarded it as an exemplary representative of the *ars dictaminis* of the age.<sup>384</sup> Given these facts, a brief reference to this early correspondence is a worthy starting point for introducing the central tenet of Heloise’s ethics of memory founding the later *Letters*. Comprising approximately 113 letters, this early correspondence constitutes a relatively private exchange that begins with their early studies and concludes with references to a growing crisis in their relationship. The high point of the correspondence has been observed by Constant Mews to be around letters 53 and 54. The subject of these two letters is marked by an integrated understanding of divine love reflected in and through the mutual love of authentic friendship

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<sup>383</sup> Mary Martin McLaughlin, “Heloise the Abbess: The Expansion of the Paraclete,” *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 1-18; here, 2.

<sup>384</sup> See especially the work of Constant J. Mews, beginning with his translation and commentary of the early letters in *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard: Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Neville Chiavaroli and Constant J. Mews (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

and as memorialized primarily in and through discourse. Following her salutation to Abelard in letter 53, Heloise employs the image of the honeycomb from the Song of Songs (4.11) in order to express through hyperbole the devoted love that she and Abelard have for one another:

De favo sapiencie si michi stillaret guttula scibilitatis, aliqua olenti nectare cum omni mentis conamine, alme dilectioni tue litterarum notulis conarer depingere. Ergo in omni latinitate non est sermo inventus qui aperte loquatur erga te quam sit animus meus intentus, quia deo este com sublimi et precipua dilectione te diligo. Unde non est nec erit res vel sors que tuo amore me separet nisi sola mors. Quapropter quotidianum michi inest desiderium et optio, ut presentie tue reficiar refrigerio. . . donec dulcissimus tue dilectionis appareat aspectus. . . .

[If a droplet of knowability trickled down to me from the honeycomb of wisdom, I would try with every effort of my mind to portray in the jottings of my letter various things with a fragrant nectar for your nourishing love. But throughout all Latinity, no phrase has yet been found that speaks clearly about how intent on you is my spirit, for God is my witness that I love you with a sublime and exceptional love. And so there is not nor ever will be any event or circumstance, except only death, that will separate me from your love. For this reason every day there is in me the desire and wish that I may be restored by your soothing presence . . . until that sweetest vision of your love appears. . . . ]<sup>385</sup>

Through the principal image of the honeycomb (*favo*) Heloise relates the profound experience of joy that has its source in God's wisdom (*sapiencie*), its mediation in Abelard's love (*dulcissimus tue dilectionis...aspectus*), and its response to that love (*olenti nectare*) on the part of Heloise. The experience of human love that is a participation in God's wisdom is marked by a delight in its sweetness, a call to communicate rightly its presence, and to be faithful to its eternal nature. Abelard's response on the nature of letters as reminders of the love of friends is one that will be echoed by Heloise in their *Letters* for the Paraclete. Following his salutation reflecting the eternal nature of their love ("Dilecte et semper diligende fidelissimus eius: ut amor noster finem non senciat et semper in melius

<sup>385</sup> Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, 234-235. According to Mews, none other than Heloise would have employed the term "*scibilitas*"—a term that Mews contests is coined by Abelard himself—in such a context.

convalescat” [To one loved and always to be loved, her most faithful: may our love not know an end and always recover for the better]),<sup>386</sup> he continues:

Si tu o omnium rerum dulcissima de fide singularis amici tui dubitares vel si ego de tua dilectione non essem certissimus, tunc ad commendacionem mutui amoris longiores littere querende, plura argumenta in patrocinium vocanda essent. Nunc quia sic amor invaluit, ut per se sine adiumento luceat, verbis minime opus est, quia in rebus abundantes sumus.

[If you, sweetest of all things, doubted the faith of your particular friend, or if I were not absolutely certain of your love, then a longer letter commending mutual love would be required, and more arguments in its defense called for. But now that our love has grown so strong that it shines forth by itself without help, there is little need for words because we are overflowing with what is real.]<sup>387</sup>

Invoking also the image of sweetness to describe the particularity of her person, Abelard’s response is an appeal to the epistolary tradition of discourse as that which commemorates the mutual love (*mutui amoris*) of faithful friends by recommending (*commendacionem*) that love through the defending arguments (*argumenta in patrocinium*) of a written discourse (*littere*). As did Heloise, Abelard also invokes God’s blessing upon this love (“*deus omnipotens te...conseruet*” [may almighty God keep you safe]).<sup>388</sup> When Heloise and Abelard resume their written discourse for the community of the Paraclete over a decade later, this early discussion of the practice of mutual love as well as the significance of its memorialization proves to be an illuminating point of reference.

The correspondence to be addressed in the following section of this chapter consists of an initial letter from Abelard, the *Historia calamitatum* (Letter 1, addressed to an anonymous recipient), followed by the subsequent exchange of letters between Heloise and Abelard (Letters 2-8), and concluding with their collaborative reflection on the scriptures in the *Problemata Heloisae*. This correspondence takes the form of horizontal spiritual

<sup>386</sup> Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, 236-237.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

exercises in the following manner: the *Historia calamitatum* (Letter 1) cultivates the disposition of compunction through the memory of transgression; Letters Two through Four offer an expansion of this portrayal of monastic memory by cultivating dispositions of wonder and gratitude through the memory of the good of friendship; Letters Five through Eight build upon this basis of memory through alternating meditations and guidelines for discerning the care of souls in communal life; finally, the *Problemata Heloisae* constitute a “new lectio” founding the contemplative life. When this proposed *ductus*, or pathway, of memory (Letters 1-4), meditation and discernment (Letters 5-8), and a “new lectio” (*Problemata*) is followed throughout the *Letters*, it reveals a rich convergence of several philosophical and theological spiritual patterns. More specifically, what was identified earlier in this study in more contemporary terms as exercises in receptivity, discernment, and commitment to the spiritual life in the *Confessions*, and which reflect Augustine’s own triad of memory, intellect and will as the three essential, interrelated aspects of the soul created in the image of God, may also be likened, through the twelfth-century revival of interest in the *De inventione* and *Rhetorica ad herennium*—with which Augustine was intimately familiar—to Cicero’s discussion of *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *providentia* which comprise prudence (*prudentia*) and which Cicero equated with wisdom or *sapientia*.

#### 4.4.2 Memory of transgression in Letter 1 (*Historia calamitatum*)

Abelard presents the *Historia calamitatum* as an autobiographical narrative written to console an anonymous friend. The *Historia* may be read as a three-part narrative: the first part records Abelard’s early life of study and teaching leading up to his encounter with Heloise and his confession of pride and incontinence; the second is an account of the trials and sufferings that followed upon his entrance into monastic life; the third is a dedicatory

narrative of the Paraclete and an apologia for his work there. The *Historia* most resembles Augustine's *Confessions* in terms of Abelard's admission of his sins of lust and pride,<sup>389</sup> as well as in his witness to God's mercy and steadfastness amidst Abelard's trials and tribulations. Both associations with the *Confessions* are likewise associations with the work of memory. The differences between the two texts are more substantial, however. The explicit rhetorical force which Abelard's narrative employs is not one of confession, but that of consolation.<sup>390</sup> These two spiritual practices are linked, of course, through Abelard's memory of the details of his history; the great gift of consolation that he received from the Holy Spirit and after which he names the Paraclete is the consolation that he was able to recognize only after acknowledging his sins and experiencing the desolation of suffering in isolation. A more striking difference between the two narratives is that while the Holy Spirit is the sole source of consolation in the *Historia*,<sup>391</sup> Abelard's compunction for his sins is not presented primarily in terms of his relationship with God, but in terms of his relationships with others. Following Abelard's deception of Heloise's uncle concerning Heloise's education, his disordered intentions toward Heloise, and the consequent disregard he manifested towards his other students and his lectures as a result of his incontinence, Abelard proclaims:

You can imagine how great was her uncle's sorrow when he found us out, how grievous was the pain of the lovers in their parting, how bitter was my shame and confusion, how deeply contrite I was to see the girl's affliction! What a storm of grief she suffered for my shame! Neither of us complained of his own fate, but only of the other's. Each of us lamented not his own, but the other's misfortunes....<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 23.

<sup>390</sup> In a similar fashion, Augustine's explicit and thoroughgoing focus on confession is also linked to the consolation provided through his narrative.

<sup>391</sup> Mews, *Abelard and Heloise*, 152.

<sup>392</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 25. See also Levitan, *The Letters*, 13.

It was the virtuous *conversatio*, or “way of life”<sup>393</sup> distinguishing both philosophy and the art of letters that was abandoned when Abelard and Heloise dishonored the integrity of their love for one another. In abandoning this *conversatio*, they were forsaking one another.

Furthermore, in forsaking one another, they were threatening the entire network of relations to which they were called—relations with family, benefactors, students, teachers, fellow religious and even (and perhaps especially) the whole host of authorities in the philosophical and theological traditions to which they had committed themselves in thought and practice.

Their *conversatio* was in need of redemption. And while it is to the monastic tradition that they will turn, Abelard’s emphasis here is upon the continuity between the tradition of the “noble philosophers” and the monastic community in terms of “some exceptional virtue of abstinence or continence” that reflected “their faith and their integrity of character.”<sup>394</sup> Seneca is the source bridging this continuity: “One of these philosophers, and one of the greatest of them, Seneca, says in a letter to Lucilius: ‘The time to study philosophy is not simply when you have a leisure moment; we must neglect everything else in order to devote ourselves assiduously to that study for which there is never time enough. . . .’”<sup>395</sup> While the spiritual life of the penitent may be found among “the monks who imitate either the common life of the apostles or that earlier and solitary life of St. John,” Abelard notes that it may also be found among the pagan philosophers: “For they gave the name of wisdom or philosophy not so much to the acquisition of knowledge as to holiness of life, as we deduce from the origin of this name itself, and also from the testimony of the Fathers.”<sup>396</sup> It should be noted further that the beginning of Seneca’s letter 72, which Abelard cites as his authority for a life

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<sup>393</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters* 26; Levitan, *The Letters*, 15.

<sup>394</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 27.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.; Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920). Ep. 72.3.

<sup>396</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 27.

of detachment from the world, begins with a confession of forgetfulness from Seneca himself:

The subject concerning which you question me was once clear to my mind. . . . But I have not tested my memory of it for some time....I feel that I have suffered the fate of a book whose rolls have stuck together by disuse; my mind needs to be unrolled, and whatever has been stored away there ought to be examined from time to time, so that it may be ready for use when occasion demands.<sup>397</sup>

By appealing to this particular letter at both the literal and figurative center of the *Historia calamitatum*, Abelard is not only appealing to the penitential life that begins with the dispositions of compunction and detachment. He is also aligning himself with two of the most reliable authorities in the twelfth century—and in the middle ages in general—for seeking a cure for forgetfulness of self, others and God: Augustine's *Confessions* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.<sup>398</sup>

Only after an account of the many physical and spiritual sufferings endured by Abelard following their respective vows to the monastic life,<sup>399</sup> the final third of the *Historia* culminates in a dedicatory narrative of the Paraclete and an apologia for his work there. The entire letter of consolation that is the *Historia* has been building up to this point. First known as a refuge in the wilderness dedicated to the Trinity, then as an oratory rededicated to the Holy Spirit, then as an abbey confirmed by Pope Innocent II as a gift to Heloise, the Paraclete reflects Abelard's growth in the spiritual life from lessons in *penitentia* to lessons

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<sup>397</sup> Seneca, *Ad Lucilium*, Ep. 72.1.

<sup>398</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* XI.20: "See how I have explored the vast field of my memory in search of you, O lord! And I have not found you outside it. For I have discovered nothing about you except what I remembered since the time I first learned about you. Ever since then I have not forgotten you. For I found my God, who is Truth itself, where I found truth, and ever since I learned the truth I have not forgotten it. So, since the time when I first learned of you, you have always been present in my memory, and it is there that I find you whenever I am reminded of you and find delight in you." In Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* I.vi.40, Lady Philosophy declares: "Now I know the further cause of your sickness, and it is a very serious one. You have forgotten your own identity. So I have now fully elicited the cause of your illness and the means of recovering your health. Forgetting who you are has made you confused, and this is why you are upset at being both exiled and stripped of your possessions."

<sup>399</sup> Abelard records nothing in the *Historia* about Heloise's time as a nun at Argenteuil.

in *caritas*. Furthermore, especially given the unnamed status of the *Historia*'s addressee, the narrative of consolation culminating in a religious community devoted to the Holy Spirit serves as an *exemplum*—a moral model that has its source in the past<sup>400</sup>—for anyone seeking divine consolation that is the life of redemption. Abelard concludes of his *Historia*: “Let it now serve you in the wrongs you have suffered and in your own desolation.”<sup>401</sup> Through his use of the *exemplum*, one that he will use again in correspondence with Heloise, Abelard is participating in a medieval tradition of moral instruction that had its roots in ancient and patristic writing and that employed “the pattern of ancient *paideia*” through which the lives of particular heroic individuals would invoke “wonder and a consequent longing to relive or imitate the hero in question.”<sup>402</sup> By employing this ancient practice in Christian spiritual discourse, patristic and medieval writers could seek to form their readers in the life of virtue, which, by God’s grace, was the life of God’s redeeming love.

Finally, it is to the Holy Spirit, Abelard relates, that he must turn for the strength and guidance to pursue his continued collaboration with Heloise and her community. For this is a collaboration which requires defending in terms of the *cura mulierum* since his early care for her formation was marked by a failure to fulfill that care and became the source of both of their physical and spiritual sufferings. Abelard proclaims that this new foundation of the Paraclete will serve not only as a reminder that the goods of the body are always to be in the service of the goods of the spiritual life, but it will also be an inspiring and nourishing source for the life of the sacraments and the call of the Spirit in the service of the church: “No

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<sup>400</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*: Chenu identifies *exempla* as “lessons furnished from the past” as a crucial component of an “historical awareness in a Christian society anxious to become acquainted, even more by the events of its existence than by abstract definitions, with the conduct of God towards itself, and with the internal laws of its life on earth,” 176.

<sup>401</sup> Levitan, *The Letters*, 45.

<sup>402</sup> Robert Sweetman, “Sin has its Place, but All Shall be Well: The Universalism of Hope in Julian of Norwich (c.1342-c.1416),” *“All Shall Be Well”: Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, From Origen to Moltmann*, ed. Gregory MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011): 66-94; here, pp. 86-87.



wonder, then, that we dedicate a material temple to that Person to whom the Apostle specially ascribes the spiritual temple! To which Person can a church be said more properly to belong than to him to whose operation are attributed all the benefits which are administered in the church?”<sup>403</sup>

Through their mutual dedication to the founding of an institution dedicated to the Holy Spirit, Abelard is now able to minister with Heloise in the service of the spiritual life of her community. Moreover, it is specifically through their mutually shared human weakness that they are thereby empowered in their ministry. This point cannot be overemphasized, for it constitutes the theme of the closing argument of the *Historia*. More specifically, the final movement of the narrative employs the strength-in-weakness *topos*.<sup>404</sup> As regards the women of the Paraclete, Abelard explains:

At first, these nuns lived in poverty there and endured the most extreme deprivation, but soon they were comforted by the protection of the divine mercy they devoutly served. He showed himself a true Paraclete to them and made their neighbors merciful and kind to them. I think they have enjoyed greater increase in worldly goods in one year than I would have achieved in a hundred, had I stayed there. As the female sex is certainly weaker, their wretched poverty is the more appealing to men's hearts, and their virtue is more pleasing to both God and man. God has granted such grace in the eyes of everyone to that sister of mine who rules over the others, that the bishops loved her as a daughter, the abbots as a sister, the laity as a mother, and all alike marveled at her piety, her prudence, and the incomparable sweetness of her patience in all things.<sup>405</sup>

The self-portrait of Abelard here differs drastically from the self-reliant and self-serving roaming philosopher described at the beginning of the *Historia*. Here, the nuns' faithful devotion to the Lord through their weakness serves as a mirror through which Abelard

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<sup>403</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 40.

<sup>404</sup> See Alcuin Blamires' discussion (as well as the additional reference shortly in this study) of this "enabling *topos*" which was especially employed by Abelard in Letter 7, "Caput a femina, membra a viris: Gender Polemic in Abelard's Letter 'On the Authority and Dignity of the Nun's Profession,'" *The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in the Twelfth-century Latin*, ed. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 55-79; here, 69.

<sup>405</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 43-44.

cultivates his own life of faithfulness; he shows himself to imitate or participate in their weakness through his acceptance of the humiliations placed upon him by the wayward monks of his community: “I had been of great service to my students, but now I could do nothing either for them or for my monks. I realized how impotent I had proved to be in everything I had undertaken and attempted.”<sup>406</sup> More profound, however, was Abelard’s sense of weakness in terms of his dedication to the work of the Paraclete amidst the criticism and censure of fellow religious concerning his work with women: “They claimed I was drawn there by carnal desire and that I could never really bear to be separated from the woman whom I had once loved.”<sup>407</sup> Through his appeals to the authority of Jerome (““No fault is found with me but my sex, and that only happens when Paula comes to Jerusalem””<sup>408</sup>) and of Augustine, who indicated in *Concerning the Works of Monks* “that women were associated with the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles as such inseparable companions that they accompanied them even in their preaching,” Abelard identifies himself with Christ’s “prophets and his apostles, or the other Holy Fathers [who] . . . joined in such familiar association with women.”<sup>409</sup> But the identification is one maintained through his weakness rather than his strength: “Although I had no success with my monks, I felt that I might at least do something for those nuns and that this would be as beneficial to me as it was to them in their weakness.”<sup>410</sup> Abelard has made it clear, from the beginning of their

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<sup>406</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 43.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.: “He [Jerome] also says, ‘Before I became acquainted with the family of holy Paula, my praises were sung throughout the city and almost everyone judged me worthy of the supreme pontificate. . . But I know that through good and evil report we attain to the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 47.

correspondence, that vulnerability in Christ is the appropriate basis of their collaborative, founding work for the Paraclete.<sup>411</sup>

The *Historia Calamitatum*, written “for a friend” introduces the mature correspondence of Heloise and Abelard. It begins with a focus on the ascetic life that connects his philosophical studies and his monastic practice through Seneca and concludes with a dedicatory narrative to the new community of the Paraclete led by Heloise. Through this narrative, Abelard provides both a history of the founders of the Paraclete as well the basis for an *apologia* for his continued collaboration with Heloise, a collaboration which required defending in terms of the *cura mulierum* since his early care for her formation was marked by a failure to fulfill that care and became the source of both of their physical and spiritual sufferings. His contribution to *memoria* as the foundation of the monastic and spiritual life is the memory of his sins through compunction. The narrative thereby appeals to the tradition of Augustine’s *Confessions*: remembering rightly one’s sins is remembering God’s love working in one’s life and sufferings through the consolation of the Holy Spirit. In this way, Abelard offers himself as an *exemplum* for his readers.

#### 4.4.3 Memory of friendship in Letters 2-4

As the first founding document of the Paraclete, the consolatory letter of the *Historia calamitatum* is based in an exercise of memory marked by Abelard’s compunction for his sins, sins that centered around his transgression of his relationship with Heloise and that were redeemed through God’s divine mercy. In the narrative of the *Historia*, the founding of the Paraclete is dedicated to the consolation that Abelard received as a result of God’s merciful

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<sup>411</sup> Only through such vulnerability, in fact, did they embrace the life of conversion in the Lord. See Karl Morrison’s more general reflections on conversion in twelfth-century texts: “at the deepest point reached by human understanding, the possibility of breaking out of the hermeneutical circle prescribed by one’s social habits depends on a single act: a risk,” *Understanding Conversion*, 153.

love through the Holy Spirit. Letter Two marks the beginning of Heloise's collaborative venture in these founding texts of the Paraclete, for in this letter she brings forward a memorial tradition distinct from that of compunction for sins, but one that is also working throughout the middle ages and that was, in fact, a critical component of their early correspondence. This is the memorial tradition focused not on the themes of sin and pain and suffering reminding the penitent to turn to God, but centered rather in the themes of love and gratitude reminding the penitent of God's goodness already present through creation, and most supremely, she will add, through created persons called to mediate God's love to one another in friendship.<sup>412</sup>

The monastic tradition memorializing pain was, by far, the stronger tradition.<sup>413</sup> In fact, the detailed attentiveness to the past came to be identified as "*compunctio cordis*, the emotion which is the beginning of prayer. A monk who had completely forgotten himself by obliterating his own past would not be able to pray."<sup>414</sup> In one of his sermons, Bernard of Clairvaux proclaims that "'only our own sins' can move us to shame and contrition."<sup>415</sup> Moreover, this "'*compunctio*' of the heart" was understood analogously with the "'*compunctio*,' the pricking or punctuation, of the written page. Pain, in other words, is a

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<sup>412</sup> I am deeply indebted to Linda Georgianna's study on many counts, for she emphasizes that "the difficulty of converting or dismissing one's memories lies at the heart of Heloise's argument throughout her work." The point I wish to emphasize through a very focused attention on memory, however, is that Heloise's exhortations in Letters 2 and 4 are only secondarily concerned with her own memories, and primarily concerned with the fact that Abelard's presentation of memory in the *Historia* is incomplete, and therefore poses a danger if employed in the care of souls, Heloise's, or that of anyone else. See Georgianna, "In Any Corner of Heaven': Heloise's Critique of Monastic Life," *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 187-216; here 189.

<sup>413</sup> In her expansive study of the understanding of memory in the middle ages (*The Book of Memory*), Mary Carruthers has emphasized the distinction between temporal and locational memory. I am suggesting that Heloise is promoting a more basic distinction between painful and joyful memory.

<sup>414</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 95-96.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

prerequisite not only of love, but also of memory—including, above all, memory of Christ.”<sup>416</sup>

Another tradition of memory exists alongside that of compunction, one which instead considered love as the prerequisite of pain. However, this reality required a more careful handling, and only by writers and preachers who were spiritually astute. This other memorial tradition is often marked by discussions of sweetness (*suavitas*) or its corresponding response of delight (*delectatio*) reminiscent of the early correspondence cited above between Heloise and Abelard.<sup>417</sup> It has as its focus the good of creation and of the divine source of creation. And even as it appealed to Augustine and Jerome, it was more emphatically identified by them as invoking a realm of spiritual ambiguity.<sup>418</sup> As Mary Carruthers points out, medieval treatments of “sweetness” are employed to address the realms of “knowledge. . .persuasion. . . [and] medicine.”<sup>419</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) demonstrates his mastery of the consoling effects of this term in his sermons on the Song of Songs, where an elaborate “meditation on the oil which is God’s name,” elicits a reflection that “Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, a jubilee in the heart.”<sup>420</sup> In a more spiritually challenging employment of the term, Venatius Fortunatus (c.530-c.603), whose poems and hymns

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<sup>416</sup> Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 166; see also Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 105.

<sup>417</sup> Refer to section 4.4.1 of this chapter.

<sup>418</sup> Mary Carruthers, “Sweetness,” *Speculum* 81:4 (2006): 999-1013; here, 1003: “Augustine, who was acutely aware of the ambiguity of *dulcedo/suavitas*, even counseling against using these words in translations of the Bible in favor of less morally troublesome words like *bonitas*, nonetheless called in rapture to his God, ‘*vera tu summa suavitas*’ (*Confessions* 9.1).”

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 1003. Although her work in this article is not specifically to retrieve a tradition of memory, I am emphasizing the connection here.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 1000.

Heloise would have likely studied,<sup>421</sup> put forth an identification of Christ's cross as "sweet tree sustaining a sweet burden with a sweet nail."<sup>422</sup>

It is not until Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* (ca. 1210) dedicated to Pope Innocent III, however, that a formal treatment of memory focused primarily on the good—and more specifically, on the good of creation itself—appears. Three points should be made about Geoffrey's treatment of memory, which he places near the conclusion of his work. The first is his critical association of memory and delight: "If you wish to remember all that reason invents, or order disposes, or adornment refines, keep in mind this counsel, valuable though brief: the little cell that remembers is a cell of delights, and it craves what is delightful. . . ."<sup>423</sup> The second point is his ethical understanding of the authentic nature of delight; it is that which feeds memory temperately in order that memory may be nurtured and serve knowledge: "Because memory is a slippery thing, and is not capable of dealing with a throng of objects, feed it in the following way."<sup>424</sup> By nurturing memory, delight participates in the experience of knowing, an experience which requires both delight as well as "the effort of acquiring knowledge."<sup>425</sup> Geoffrey's third point echoes that of Boethius and Heloise, among others, and that of Thomas after them. It is a doctrine at the heart of any fruitful pedagogy, a doctrine that must be fueled by an intimate understanding of the one being addressed, because it concerns knowledge gained according to the capacity of the knower.<sup>426</sup> Geoffrey distinguishes such pedagogy from that of Cicero: "Cicero relies on unusual images as a technique for training the memory; but he is teaching himself; and let the subtle teacher,

<sup>421</sup> Mews, *The Lost Love Letters*, 92.

<sup>422</sup> Carruthers, "Sweetness," 1012.

<sup>423</sup> *Poetria nova*, trans. and ed. Margaret Nims (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), 87.

<sup>424</sup> Nims, *Poetria nova*, 87.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>426</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, "the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower," *Summa Theologiae* (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964- ), I.12.4.

as it were in solitude, address his subtlety to himself alone. But my own subtlety may be pleasing to me and not to him. It is beneficial to one whom it suits, for enjoyment alone makes the power of memory strong.”<sup>427</sup>

Heloise’s participation, which predates Geoffrey’s in this memorial tradition, shares much of his spirit. Her own focus, however, will be marked not by the aesthetic response of the memory but rather by the source of that response: the love of friends for one another. Furthermore, because friendship reflects the practice of the virtuous life for her, she essentially dissipates any concerns of spiritual ambiguity by distinguishing friendship as the faithful, self-giving love of friends. Following her salutation to Abelard, Heloise opens her response to the *Historia* by appealing to the tradition of epistolary consolation as well as to the *topos* of friendship:

The letter you wrote to comfort a friend, my beloved, has recently chanced to come into my hands. Recognizing at once from the heading that it was yours, I began to read it with eagerness as great as my love for its writer. For I hoped that I might be refreshed by the words, as if by a picture, of one whom in reality I have lost. Instead, I found almost every part of this letter filled with the bitterness of gall and wormwood, as you told the pitiable story of our conversion to the religious life and the endless torments you have suffered, my only love.<sup>428</sup>

Since Heloise is already installed at the Paraclete by Abelard’s generosity and Innocent II’s blessing at the time of this writing, and she and Abelard have already begun their work for this new monastic community, Abelard must be “lost” to her in some more subtle way. Still, the hyperbole cultivated in her letter, which recalls that of their early correspondence,<sup>429</sup> serves as a testimony to her humility and her devotion.<sup>430</sup> The identification of his narrative

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<sup>427</sup> Nims, *Poetria nova*, 89.

<sup>428</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 51.

<sup>429</sup> See section 4.4.1 above.

<sup>430</sup> Hyperbole was frequently employed by medieval writers such as Mechthild of Magdeburg and Margaret Porete in the service of disposing the reader to receive revelation by way of the humility *topos*. See Michelle Voss Roberts, “Retrieving Humility: Rhetoric, Authority, and Divinization in Mechthild of Magedeburg,” *Feminist Theology* 18 (2009): 50-73. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas confirms this transformative potential

as marked by memory of pain and suffering is literally surrounded by terms recalling her faithful love for him (beloved, my love, my only love). The task of ‘finding’ Abelard is at once a personal and pastoral task for Heloise. If his *Historia* is to be truly a founding text for the Paraclete, it requires a true memory—a true *lectio*, or reading, if you will—of their past. As Heloise will proceed to indicate, this true memory includes more than an account of their pain and suffering, and a community of prayer attendant upon the *cura animarum* must be fortified by a full account of the spiritual potential of memory. Moreover, if the women of the Paraclete were like Heloise herself, and like many women choosing the monastic life as *conversae*—those entering the community as adults—Heloise’s efforts would fill an important spiritual need. The fact that some *conversae* seem to have been “preferred to *oblati*” for their experience of the world,<sup>431</sup> gives all the more reason why monastic officials like Heloise would be determined to provide the spiritual tools for their spiritual formation of that experience. As Carruthers has pointed out, “to attempt to obliterate one’s memories was analogous to making an attempt at ‘killing off the parchment’ in one’s composition. Both are essentially ineffective. Forgetting one’s past leads to false compunction and the master metaphor is writing.”<sup>432</sup>

Heloise’s strategy for supplementing Abelard’s memory of their past has already begun. The opening of her own letter, as cited above, constitutes a creative imitation of Seneca’s third letter to Lucilius (3.1). Seneca begins his letter: “You have sent a letter to me through the hand of a ‘friend’ of yours, as you call him,” and he proceeds to question the

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of hyperbole: “And we should not put the hyperbole and other figures of speech found in Sacred Scripture in the same category [as lies], because, as Augustine says, *Anything spoken or done figuratively is no lie. Every statement is to be related to what it is declaring, and everything done or spoken figuratively does declare what it means to those to whom it is tendered for their understanding*” (II.II.110.3.ad6).

<sup>431</sup> Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 77

<sup>432</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 97.



depth of Lucilius' friendship and to discuss the nature of true friendship which includes "discuss[ing] everything with a friend; but first of all discuss[ing] the man himself."<sup>433</sup> In this way, her own opening response to Abelard as cited above constitutes an implicit appeal to Senecan authority. However, rather than directing the reader to Seneca's teaching on detachment from the world as Abelard did in his early appeal to Seneca in the *Historia*, Heloise is appealing to Seneca's philosophical reflections on attachment to friends as reflective of the life of virtue. In fact, aside from Abelard himself—who is Heloise's chief authority in this letter—the first explicit *auctoritas* to whom Heloise appeals is Seneca: "Showing us by his own example how delightful are the letters of friends from whom we are separated, Seneca writes to his friend Lucilius:

‘Thank you for writing to me so often, because this is the only way in which you can give me back your presence. I never receive a letter from you without instantly feeling that we are together. If the pictures of our absent friends give us pleasure, refreshing our memory and relieving our longing for them by an unreal and lifeless solace, how much more satisfying are the letters bearing the true marks of the friend who is far away. . . .’<sup>434</sup>

The “delightful” nature of letters, the gratitude that they invoke, and the “presence” that they offer, are reflective of the gift of friendship received and held in memory.<sup>435</sup> In this way, just as the very act of ‘punctuating the page’ of a letter signifies the memorial tradition of the wounds of sin on the soul, there also may be found “true marks” signifying the memorial

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<sup>433</sup> Seneca, *Ad Lucilium*, Ep. 3. Neither the Wheeler nor the Levitan edition includes this reference; it is my own.

<sup>434</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 52

<sup>435</sup> For a discussion of patristic letters illustrating the long tradition of Christian epistolary discourse attending to “friendship in absence,” see Caroline White, “Friendship in Absence—Some Patristic Views,” *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Halsedine (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 68-87. Gregory of Nazianzus’ letter to Basil is illustrative of this tradition: “in a letter full of regret which he wrote to his friend in 361, after they had managed to spend some time together leading an ascetic life in a remote part of the province of Pontus, where Basil’s family had an estate. . . .Gregory writes, ‘Stand by me so that together we may breathe and cultivate virtue; whatever we harvest, may we preserve it through prayer, lest our friendship gradually fade away like a shadow as the day draws to its close. I breathe you more than I breathe the air; I live only when I am with you, either in person, or by means of memories when I am far away,’” 71.

tradition of the love of friends. So to be true to this full nature of the letter is at once to be true to the full potential of the role of memory for the spiritual life.

Another component of Heloise's response to the *Historia* should be emphasized here for the way in which it further cultivates her work to expand the role of memory for the spiritual life. Following her implicit and explicit appeals to Seneca and her declarations that Abelard's narrative has deepened the wounds of his "dearest friends" in Heloise's community,<sup>436</sup> she employs the scriptural metaphor of the *plantatio* (nursery) to describe the Paraclete:

This new plantation in the Lord's field is truly yours and yours alone, and it needs frequent watering to make its tender plants grow. Even if it were not new, it would be frail enough, simply because of the weakness of the female sex. So it needs more careful and more constant tending, as the Apostle says (1 Cor. 3:6): "It was for me to plant the seed, for Apollo to water it, but it was God who gave the increase." By his preaching the Apostle planted and established in the faith the Corinthians to whom he wrote. Afterward his disciple, Apollo, watered them with holy preaching and so their virtues were increased by divine grace bestowed on them.<sup>437</sup>

By employing this metaphor that Abelard would use in his Sermon 30 (*On alms for the nuns of the Paraclete*) to gain material and spiritual support for the Paraclete,<sup>438</sup> and that complemented well his own description in the *Historia* of the physical location of his oratory, Heloise is confirming in these foundational letters the place of their monastic community in salvation history. Just as St. Paul's ministry to the new community at Corinth prefigures that of Heloise and Abelard at the new community of the Paraclete, so Paul's letters, which established the record of his ministry in perpetuity, prefigure this medieval correspondence. Moreover, both the beginning of creation as well as the beginning of the scriptural book of prayer *par excellence* were marked by this same scriptural metaphor of the

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<sup>436</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 52.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 53

<sup>438</sup> Fiona J. Griffiths, "Brides and Dominae: Abelard's *Cura Monialium* at the Augustinian Monastery of Marbach," *Viator* 34 (2003): 57-85; here, 61.

*plantatio*.<sup>439</sup> Heloise's choice of this metaphor serves well her project in an additional way, for the *plantatio* as a memory image would serve both the locational and temporal memory of the community, and the dynamic nature of its character would be more fruitfully in the service of the contemplative life than the traditional architectural mnemonic of her contemporaries.<sup>440</sup>

Both the fragile and potentially fertile nature of the *plantatio* as a nursery, as well as the responsible nurturing it requires on the part of Abelard are important qualities that serve to highlight Abelard's role as mediating God's love to the community of the Paraclete.

Heloise's proclamation to Abelard: "After God, you are the sole founder of this place. . . ." <sup>441</sup> only reinforces Heloise's navigation of the exercises of the *Historia* into deeper horizontal waters. As Constant Mews has noted (albeit in a more confrontational portrait of their correspondence), Heloise's

claim that he alone can provide her with consolation rebukes his claim that comfort only comes from the consoling goodness of the Holy Spirit. Her letter moves from sympathy to. . . tackling Abelard on the weakest point in his narrative—his portrayal of their early relationship as one of fornication rather than of selfless love. It also highlights the weakest point in his theology, that. . . he ignores the complexity of human nature.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> This term appears at the beginning of the Psalms (*Et erit tanquam lignum quod plantatum est secus decursus aquarum, quod fructum suum dabit in tempore suo* (Ps. 1.3)) and in the beginning of Genesis (*Plantaverat autem Dominus Deus paradisum voluptatis a principio: in quo posuit hominem quem formaverat* (Gn 2.8)). Citations are from Aloisius Claudius Fillion, *Biblia sacra juxta vulgatae, exemplaria et correctoria Romana* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1887). A general survey of the *Patrologia Latina* will also show this term to be working in the prophets and Job. I am grateful to Robert Sweetman for the suggestion to search further for this scriptural reference.

<sup>440</sup> See Sweetman's discussion of Julian's "memory image" in her *Showings* in "Sin has its Place, but All Shall be Well: The Universalism of Hope in Julian of Norwich (c.1342-c.1416)": "Her vision is not a static one, and memory images needed to be static or unchanging as well as striking if they were to do their work. That is why the . . . Rhetorica Ad Herennium, takes architectural tableaux as its memory images of choice. While medieval memory images did not need to be restricted to architectural tableaux, they too were invariably static and unchanging. What Julian is given in her vision is, by contrast, a story. It is full of movement. In it, characters move in hyperbolically grandiose gestures; they leap, race and fall, writhe in agony or empathy, embrace and weep for joy," 72.

<sup>441</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 52.

<sup>442</sup> Mews, *Abelard and Heloise*, 152.

Stated otherwise, her focus is not on “trusting in the consoling power of the Holy Spirit but looking to Abelard”<sup>443</sup> to rightly mediate that consolation as befits a true spiritual director in the Christian tradition.

In order to reinforce this point, Heloise appeals to how female mediators from the philosophical tradition have accepted their healing vocations. One example is her presentation of the mediatory pedagogy of Aspasia as friend of Socrates and teacher of rhetoric.<sup>444</sup> As Cheryl Glenn has noted, Heloise’s presentation is a re-visioning of Cicero’s own portrait of Aspasia from the *De inventione* 1.31.52, offered by Cicero as a “lesson on induction as the centerpiece for his argument chapter.”<sup>445</sup> In Heloise’s version, Aspasia’s “argument aimed at reconciling the pair [Xenophon and his wife]” is focused on logic only insofar as it is in the service of cultivating friendship among men and women.<sup>446</sup> A more subtle example should also be considered: Heloise is essentially accepting the role of Lady Philosophy, whose overriding concern is with Boethius’s forgetfulness of himself. In Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, Lady Philosophy declares: “Now I know the further cause of your sickness, and it is a very serious one. You have forgotten your own identity. So I have now fully elicited the cause of your illness and the means of recovering your health. Forgetting who you are has made you confused, and this is why you are upset at being both exiled and stripped of your possessions.”<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Mews, *Abelard and Heloise*, 154.

<sup>444</sup> Levitan, *Abelard and Heloise*, 56-57.

<sup>445</sup> Cheryl Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 43, 56. Furthermore, as Levitan notes, Heloise’s engagement with Cicero’s text involves her omission of Socrates’ narration of Aspasia’s role; instead, Aspasia narrates for herself in Heloise’s account: “Heloise has bypassed the middleman and gone straight to the source, the original philosopher herself,” *Abelard and Heloise*, 57, n.10.

<sup>446</sup> Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold*, 43.

<sup>447</sup> Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S.J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), I.vi.40.

Heloise's point has not been to dismiss the crucial memory that sin, pain and suffering bring to the work of redemption; she confirms the work of compunction for her own life as well, and even its primary character, but not without also considering her complementary emphasis: "Although I am exceedingly guilty, you know that I am also most innocent." Through her use of hyperbole, Heloise again seeks to mark Abelard's memory with her humble acknowledgment of her sin as well as her virtue. She makes her point that memory of sin that lacks remembrance of the good to which it is a response constitutes a devastating forgetfulness threatening spiritual growth. The concluding movement of her letter is emphatic on this point, declaring that it is "not a personal, but a public opinion" that Abelard has "so neglected and forgotten" her that she is "not refreshed in spirit by [his] words. . . or comforted by a letter when...apart."<sup>448</sup> Abelard's *exemplum* is therefore at risk of failing for his readers unless he retrieves his memory rightly.

Abelard's response in Letter Three contributes to Heloise's commitment to the work of memory. By offering a *lectio* constituting a remembering of the mediating prayers of women in the Scriptures, he shows prayer to be the superlative mediating discourse available to women and men for lives of mutual, ongoing conversion in the Lord: "There are many proofs and examples showing the great influence the prayers of the faithful may have with God and his saints, especially the prayers of women for their dear ones and of wives of their husbands."<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, Abelard incorporates the requested prayers of the women of the Paraclete as radically participating in this tradition, associating such participation as reflective of Heloise's prudence as enabled by "divine grace."<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 55.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 47.

In the context of their discourse, Abelard's emphasis on prudence along with all other virtues enabled by God's love actually serves to advance his own treatment of memory as compunction, rather than to develop hers. Indicative of this is the fact that Abelard's implicit definition of prayer in this letter is that of petition or supplication, which predominantly reflects the petitioner's experience of lack, rather than excess, of God's love and mercy.<sup>451</sup> What is paramount is that a proper reading of their particular history must be brought to this scriptural meditation. In her response of Letter Four, Heloise emphasizes that she seeks a deeper integration of human beings' creative participation in God's love through her emphasis on the "natural order of things" as reflected by authentic rules of epistolary practice. Again she turns to Seneca as an initial authority in her letter. Whereas her first reply (Letter Two) had emphasized the qualities of faithfulness and mediation with which the self-giving love of friendship fortifies the memorial tradition, this reply exhorts the reader to rest in the gratitude of that friendship already present in the hearts of the faithful. Appealing to Seneca as an authority who serves to confirm the Gospel message, Heloise writes: "'What need is there,' says Seneca, 'to conjure future evils and throw away your life before your death?'"<sup>452</sup> Her choice of Seneca's letter 24 is at once an appeal to the fullness of his letter in which Seneca further exhorts his reader to a life of temperance by which "we need to be warned and strengthened in both directions,—neither to love nor to hate life overmuch."<sup>453</sup> Furthermore, this is a discussion which has been immediately preceded by the key to "the

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<sup>451</sup> A further point to consider, and one to which Heloise would seek to respond, is that in Abelard's reading of the scriptures in this letter, "none of his examples of friendship with God directly name women. Rather, women's prayers are in the service of the male friends of God [i.e. Moses, Jeremiah, Lazarus]," Constantine-Jackson, "*Sapienter amare poterimus*," 20.

<sup>452</sup> Levitan, *The Letters*, 72; Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, 24.1. An appeal to Matthew's Gospel precedes the Senecan citation: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Mt. 6.34) in Heloise's Letter.

<sup>453</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, 24.24.

foundation of a sound mind” as being gratitude in the joy already present in the depths of one’s spirit.<sup>454</sup>

It may also be helpful to note when considering this rich confluence of Senecan texts serving the *Letters*, that in the Senecan epistle (41) immediately following that cited by Heloise in Letter Two (40), petitionary prayer is identified as imprudent when the perceived need is already present, in part, to the petitioner: “it is foolish to pray for this (*bonam mentem*) when you can acquire it for yourself. . . .God is near you, he is with you, he is within you, this is what I mean, Lucilius: a holy spirit indwells within us (*Ita dico, Lucili: sacer intra nos spiritus sedet*), one who marks our good and bad deeds, and is our guardian.”<sup>455</sup> Abelard himself had already cited the superior text on this matter (1 Cor. 6:17, 19) in the *Historia* when discussing his choice for the naming of the Paraclete.<sup>456</sup> In effect, Heloise’s appeal to Seneca’s authority here constitutes an inquiry into the focus and nature of perceived lack at the heart of petitionary prayer. At the heart of this inquiry is her conviction that only a deeply existential awareness of the excess of God’s love can be the basis for an awareness of human beings’ need for this love. Thus her response in this Letter serves to repeat her emphasis that the memorial tradition of goodness not only accompanies, but precedes the memorial tradition of transgression. By illuminating the scriptural tradition of prayer in accordance with lack, need, and transgression in his previous letter, Abelard was not only dishonoring the fullness of the scriptural account. He was also revealing a still

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<sup>454</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, 23.1-2.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>456</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 40. The text of 1 Cor. 6:17,19 is as follows: “But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. . . . Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

lingering forgetfulness in his own spiritual life that revealed itself in his teaching on prayer.<sup>457</sup>

Letters 1-4 constitute the foundational texts, if you will, of the correspondence (Letters 1-8 and *Problemata*) that in turn constitutes the founding texts of the Paraclete. As a correspondence dedicated especially to the formation of memory in the service of the spiritual life, Letters 1-4 help to illuminate a major distinction working—at times more implicitly, at times more explicitly—throughout ancient and medieval philosophical and theological reflection and one which remains a source of inquiry for contemporary thought. This is the distinction between two basic movements (of the soul) in the intellect and/or the will variously identified, in accordance with disciplinary categories, as: rest and movement; wonder and imitation; *epideictic* and deliberative, prayers of thanksgiving and petition, etc.<sup>458</sup> A heightened awareness of this distinction may be found developing in the complex epistolary genre—of which consolation was a persistent component—which was working in dynamic relation with the rhetorical reflection and that of moral philosophy in the Greco-Roman tradition.<sup>459</sup> In this tradition, of which Seneca was a major transmitter, the categories were often articulated by a distinction between *paraenetic* and *protreptic* literature, with *paraenetic* pertaining to “confirmation literature” and constituted by “advice and exhortation

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<sup>457</sup> Heloise is here anticipating Thomas’s teaching on prayer in the *Summa Theologiae*. See Chapter 5 (section 5.1.1).

<sup>458</sup> For a contemporary reading of this distinction in light of Aquinas’s work, see Frederick Crowe’s distinction between *complacentia* and concern, *Three Thomist Studies*, ed. Michael Vertin (Boston: Lonergan Institute of Boston College, 2000). In addition to the studies by Oddo Lottin, Rene Gauthier and Zoltan Alszegehy cited by Crowe (157), several more recent studies have attended to this investigation. These include the work of Risto Saarinen calling attention to Albert the Great’s distinctions between demonstrative and cognitive knowledge in *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (Leiden: New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 105ff, as well as Simo Knuuttila’s study which attends to the influence on Bonaventure of the teaching of John of la Rochelle, as well as the contributions of Dominicus Gundissalinus in *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>459</sup> Stanley Kent Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 96.



to continue in a certain way of life,” and *protreptic* characteristic of “conversion literature” moving “the audience to a new and different way of life.”<sup>460</sup>

Just as the continuity exemplified in paraenetic literature may be understood as a major characteristic defining Heloise’s focus on memory,<sup>461</sup> a concern with protreptic literature’s need to change one’s way of life characterizes that of Abelard’s correspondence thus far. The point I am trying to make in this study is that through their friendship, and only through their friendship, understood as divine gift, are Heloise and Abelard able to offer a pastorally effective articulation of these two memorial traditions as forming an integral whole. In fact, the Fourth Letter illustrates that the basic elements enabling this integration are in place; following the initial movement of the Fourth Letter, Heloise begins to incorporate the tradition of compunction in her own recollection as dramatically as she had put forth the memory of faithful love: “Of all those who are wretched, I am the most wretched, of all the unhappy, the most unhappy, since the eminence I attained by your choice of me among all women is matched by the fall, so grievous for both of us, that has laid me low!”<sup>462</sup> It is important to note, however, first, that she only adopts the language of compunction after she has put forth her own attention to the memorial tradition before this point, and second, that she continues to emphasize that *both* of them must have this integration precisely because conversion is always at the same time conversion of a particular soul, *and* conversion in a community; their lives of ongoing conversion in the monastic life are intimately intertwined. Only in a community of lived friendship can one truly distinguish

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<sup>460</sup> Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 52, 92. Bussell identifies Letter 6 as “a work of medieval epistolography in the tradition of the *paraenetic* letter,” “Heloise Redressed,” 235.

<sup>461</sup> As Bynum and others have noted, accounts by medieval women are often distinguished by the feature of continuity. See Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 293, 295. See also Morgan Powell, “Listening to Heloise at the Paraclete: Of Scholarly Diversion and a Woman’s ‘Conversion,’” *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 255-286; here 268.

<sup>462</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 65.

between the authentic joy rooted in divine desire and the disordered gratification rooted in the desire that is fleeting and distracts one from the good. Only in a spirit of gratitude for the faithful, mediating love of friends can one truly begin to identify the experience of delight as one in which the love of the Holy Spirit is present; for, as Heloise can attest, “it is most difficult to uproot from the heart the desire for the most intense pleasures” associated with the life of sin.<sup>463</sup> Accordingly, if the Paraclete is to be a community of prayer based on the founding work of both Heloise and Abelard, it must then be a ministry of mutual love, fully participatory with the merciful love of the Holy Spirit. The “letter commending [this] mutual love” which Abelard noted in their early correspondence might be necessary at some future point in their relationship (54), was necessary now as an integrated sign of his commitment to their joint ministry for the Paraclete.

#### 4.4.4 Meditation and discernment for the care of souls in Letters 5-8

While Letters 1-4 demonstrate the practice of *lectio* in its most general/philosophical (as epistolary practice) and specific/theological (as scriptural reading) senses, Letters 5-8 mark a transition to the practice of monastic *meditatio* and its corresponding practice of scholastic *discretio*.<sup>464</sup> As already indicated in this study, both of these practices of meditation or discretion (with which Gregory the Great in his *Pastoral Rule* was greatly concerned and which incorporates the exercise of discernment)<sup>465</sup> are intimately based on the *memoria* constitutive of the practice of *lectio*. When read in the context of the project of the

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<sup>463</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 67.

<sup>464</sup> Leclercq notes that St. Columbanus’s chapter on *discretio* in his *Rule for Monks* was “a chapter not found in other Rules (for example, that of St. Benedict),” and that it is identified therein “as a ‘moderating science’ . . . a gift by which God gives to the soul the light of discernment: it avoids conceit and is a guarantee of humility,” *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, 38. While he observes a profound ambiguity associated with the term in medieval thought, I believe Heloise employs it in this way.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 24: “St. Gregory is above all concerned with purity of intention: he does not say much about fasting and abstinence, and other practices of mortification, his emphasis is rather on discretion and moderation; by it we learn what we are to do, and how we are to respond to the voice of God in our heart.”

first four letters, Letters 5-8 emerge as an ever-deepening reflection on the Scriptures and the pastoral life beginning with Abelard's meditation on the Song of Songs (Letter Five); Heloise's inquiry into the nature of *discretio* in composing a pastoral *regula* (Letter Six); Abelard's meditation on the dignity of women in the scriptures (Letter Seven); and his discerned Rule for the nuns of the Paraclete that is oriented to devotional practice of the Divine Office (*lectio divina*). The following discussion attends to the way in which Letters 5-8 build upon the collaborative project of *memoria* in Letters 1-4.

Meditative practice characterizes the two main parts of Abelard's response in Letter Five. The first part is a meditation on the Song of Solomon. The second is a rereading of the narrative of the *Historia calamitatum*—constituting a complementary meditation on the lives of the founders of the Paraclete—in light of an integrated understanding of memory as compunction and love of friendship. Reflecting some of the most creative exegetical commentaries on the Song of Songs from the twelfth century, Abelard offers a meditation for the Paraclete that functions as a “personal allegory of reintegration” based in his history with Heloise and his desire to cultivate their shared love in Christ.<sup>466</sup> In this way, Abelard's meditation reflects what Rachel Fulton has noted of the commentaries by Honorius (d.1140) and Rupert of Deutz (d.1129): concerns that are “at their root devotional, rather than primarily exegetical.”<sup>467</sup> For Honorius, such an orientation meant reading the Song of Songs “as a dialogue between a mother and her son” as a way of responding to his teacher's

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<sup>466</sup> Donna Bussell credits this cumulative feat primarily to Heloise in her subsequent Letter (Letter Six), as will be noted shortly in this study. While it is true that from their earliest correspondence, Heloise was already involved in appropriating this integration [see Constant Mews, “Heloise, the Paraclete Liturgy, and Mary Magdalene,” *The Poetical and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard: An Anthology of Essays by Various Authors*, ed. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa, Canada: The Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2003), 100-112; here 106], she relies heavily on Abelard's exegetical work in this letter.

<sup>467</sup> Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 251.

prayers.<sup>468</sup> Even more closely aligned with Abelard's project is that of Rupert, "who claimed to be laying a foundation for his mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs in 'history' (*historia*)."<sup>469</sup> Furthermore, Rupert's commentary was "not only of the history on which the salvation of the world depended, and, therefore, of the four mysteries that it was necessary to preach and to believe, but also of the history on which his own life depended, the 'deeds' surrounding his own work as an exegete."<sup>470</sup>

Abelard's meditation is a celebration of Heloise's dignity; she has now become the exemplary subject of the correspondence. Her faithful love of Abelard is only a reflection of her deeper call to faithfulness as the bride of Christ: "you should realize that you became superior to me when you became my lady and were made the bride of my Lord, in accordance with what St. Jerome writes to Eustochium, 'my lady Eustochium . . . for I should address the bride of my Lord as 'lady.'"<sup>471</sup> This meditation serves to incorporate Heloise's focus on the deep devotion and faithfulness of her friendship with Abelard in spite of her participation in their disordered expressions of that love.<sup>472</sup> Abelard fully situates her faithfulness in Christ's love and friendship: "the queen and bride of the great king is described in the words of the Psalm (44:10): 'At my right hand stands the queen,' as if to say plainly that, standing at her husband's side, she is intimately joined to him, and walks abreast with him."<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, 250.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 325: "[Ann] Matter contends that it is this claim to have discovered a 'historical' sense in a text hitherto read only 'allegorically' or 'tropologically' that sets Rupert's commentary on the Song apart from all others; indeed, in her view, this was Rupert's greatest contribution to the development of the tradition."

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 71.

<sup>472</sup> It is to the human experience of devotion that Aquinas will turn to identify the basis for the religious life. See Chapter 5 (section 5.5.3) of this study.

<sup>473</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 72.

Abelard's own mediating love for her is, in fact, integrated with, rather than sublated to, Christ's love for her.<sup>474</sup> He follows the meditation with a repeated emphasis that sorrowful "complaints" over the tribulations and loss of the past must end. For it is not through an experience of loss with which he now reflects upon their lives, but presence. He asks Heloise: "inseparable companion, who have shared both in guilt and in grace, join with me in an act of thanksgiving." Prayerful gratitude and "integration as opposed to renunciation"<sup>475</sup> mark the tone of this letter which may be said to point to the "*skopos* of their entire correspondence" through a careful merging of discussions on human and divine friendship.<sup>476</sup>

But you are more than the heavens, you are more than the world, whose price was the Creator of the world. What did he see in you, I ask, when he himself lacked nothing, that he would buy you with the agony of his death? What does he seek in you except yourself? He is a true friend who wants nothing of what you own, but you yourself, a true friend, who, when coming to his death for your sake, could say, "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends."<sup>477</sup>

Following his words of thanksgiving for God's merciful love in their shared narrative, Abelard concludes the letter first, by declaring how, through Christ, they are bound to each other "in spiritual love," and second, by offering a prayer of petition for both of them.<sup>478</sup>

In her response to Abelard's two-part meditation, Heloise offers a pastoral letter marked by hope for the future of the Paraclete.<sup>479</sup> Through the salutation and introduction of Letter 6, Heloise indicates that the vow of obedience that will identify her community will be an obedience in the service of an attentive conversion of hearts through a discerning

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<sup>474</sup> See Brian Patrick McGuire, "Heloise and the Consolation of Friendship," *Listening to Heloise*, 303-22; here 312.

<sup>475</sup> Powell, "Listening to Heloise at the Paraclete: Of Scholarly Diversion and a Woman's 'Conversion,'" 268.

<sup>476</sup> Constantine-Jackson, "'*Sapienter amare poterimus*,'" 268.

<sup>477</sup> Levitan, *The Letters*, 100.

<sup>478</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 83-84.

<sup>479</sup> See Powell's discussion of the correspondence, "Listening to Heloise at the Paraclete": "It begins with a narrative recapitulation of the past and ends with prescriptive instruction for the future," 257.

cultivation of the word: “As Matthew writes (12:34): ‘It is from the heart’s overflow that the mouth speaks.’”<sup>480</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that this letter marks the first time she does not appeal to Seneca in the correspondence as well as indicating her first specific pastoral appeals to Abelard concerning the future spiritual direction of the Paraclete. Following her acknowledgment that Abelard has an important, though not exclusive, part to play in directing Heloise and her community,<sup>481</sup> she makes two requests on their behalf: that he provide instruction concerning “the origins of women’s religious life and authority for [their] calling,” as well as a written rule that is fitting for them.<sup>482</sup>

Throughout the remainder of Letter Six, Heloise expresses her concern to adapt the Benedictine Rule to that which is necessary and useful for her community’s participation in the Divine Office.<sup>483</sup> At the inception of this discussion, and appealing at once to St. Benedict, the *Collationes* of John Cassian, Jerome’s letters and Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule*,<sup>484</sup> Heloise emphasizes that the spiritual direction of the Paraclete will be guided, as these worthy authorities were, by the practice of discretion: “But since ‘discretion is the mother of all virtues’ and reason the moderator of all good, who could regard that as virtuous or good which he sees at variance with discretion and reason? As Jerome declares, virtue itself, when it exceeds its mean and measure, may be regarded as vice.”<sup>485</sup> Furthermore, Heloise

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<sup>480</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 85.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.: “Yet you can give me some consolation in my sorrow, though you cannot altogether banish it.”

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 85-86. The shift identified in this letter is further supported by the absence of hyperbole that marked the earlier letters. Whereas hyperbole served to mark the memory in the earlier letters, this letter is directed toward the future of the Paraclete.

<sup>483</sup> See Eileen Kearney’s textual analysis of this letter in “Heloise: Inquiry and the Sacra Pagina,” *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987): “Heloise says that whatever is needed and beneficial is to be maintained . . . What she wants is an authorized concession to what is necessary, fitting, and salvific for her community at the Paraclete,” 75.

<sup>484</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 87n7-11.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 87. See also Kearney: “Heloise seems unafraid to overturn idols—with reason, with the needs of human nature, and with a realistic simplicity that understands the power of moderation in human endeavors,” 77.

continues by citing chapters 2 and 64 of the Benedictine Rule, wherein discretion begins in the person of the abbot, who must discern a rule that is attendant upon the dispositions of his flock, both to prevent their harm as well as to celebrate their progress. Humility is expected of the abbot always “for his own frailty,” and so that he may have “discretion and moderation” in order to practice the prudence necessary for his flock to flourish.<sup>486</sup> These dispositions on the part of the abbot himself presume a profound level of familiarity practiced among the members of the monastery. Heloise’s emphasis on the “‘conversatione morum suorum’ [through the frequent reconsideration of one’s way of life]” of the Rule on the part of both the abbot and his flock, “presents the means through which the ‘promittat de stabilitate’ [the promise of stability] and ‘obedientia’ [obedience] are achieved. The link between the *promissio* (knowing the Rule) and the *petitio* (binding oneself to the community) is a function of *conversatio*.”<sup>487</sup>

Through her closing discussion of Letter Six, Heloise provides what Donna Bussell has termed the culmination of an integrated discourse working throughout the language of her letter between “the marriage trope central to the Song of Songs imagery and the Benedictine initiation.”<sup>488</sup> Bussell explains:

Heloise speaks *suo specialiter* and *sua singulariter* throughout her. . . letter to suggest that Abelard’s model of allegorical marriage must invoke a *petitio* that realigns gendered and material claims of strength and weakness. . . .: “tam mares quam feminae...idem institutionis monasticae iugum imponitur infirmo sexui aequae ut forti.” Radice translates this passage as a more general admonition: “men and women alike to be received into the monasteries to profess the same Rule, and the same yoke of monastic ordinance is laid on the weaker sex as on the stronger.” Radice translates *mares* as men, but I think *mares* in the context of Heloise’s argument also connotes the allegorical. . . spousal relationship. The connotations of *maritus* that Heloise invokes are those related to the verb *maritare* in which the act of marriage abounds in

<sup>486</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 88.

<sup>487</sup> Bussell, “Heloise Redressed,” 251. See Bussell’s detailed discussion of these connections concerning Heloise’s engagement with Benedict’s Rule.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

rich horticultural imagery: the fertilization of plants and the binding, or “wedding,” of vines to increase the structural stability of two branches by uniting them. By weaving the request for a woman’s rule into the initiation rite and her position as spouse and mother, Heloise indicates the Song of Songs allegory can be used as their personal allegory of reintegration.<sup>489</sup>

It is through an appropriation of Abelard’s meditation on the Song of Songs that Heloise seeks an interpretation of the Benedictine Rule for the Paraclete in order that the Rule may facilitate more fully the religious life of women and men in faithful discipleship. In accordance with the ongoing (*conversatio morum*) conversion (*conversio*) of both women and men required of this project, both Heloise and Abelard continue to employ the Pauline strength-in-weakness *topos* for each of their genders throughout the correspondence. Confirming their commitment to Pauline humility, the dynamic image—also Pauline—of the *plantatio* with which Heloise began her part of the correspondence (Letter Two), and to which she alludes again in the conclusion of her final letter (Letter Six), has proved a most fitting image indeed. The fragile and potentially fertile though still passive characteristics evoked by the discussion of the Paraclete as *plantatio* in Letter Two are replaced by the active, intimate, and unitive attributes of the Paraclete in Letter Six. Here, Heloise employs only the verb form (*planto*), rather than the noun form, signifying Abelard’s mediatory commitment to their growing community, thereby offering an image of hope for a contemplative community whose vision is grounded in both their particular and universal needs because the garden of the Divine Bridegroom has become their *exemplum*.

In Letters Seven and Eight, Abelard fulfills Heloise’s two requests from Letter Six. His scriptural meditation on the dignity of women in Letter Seven only serves to deepen and expand his earlier meditation on the dignity of Heloise in the context of the Song of Songs. In part of the initial movement of the Letter, he identifies Christ as the fulfillment of the good of

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<sup>489</sup> Bussell, “Heloise Redressed,” 250-251.



creation as exemplified in the shared participation of men and women in the life of conversion:

Christ, the consummation of justice and the end of all good, came in the fullness of time to perfect the good already begun and to reveal what was hidden. As he had come to call both sexes and to redeem them, so he deigned to unite them in the true monkhood of his congregation. In this way, both men and women might be given authority for this calling and all might be shown the perfect way of life that they should imitate.<sup>490</sup>

The rest of his letter includes an appropriation of medieval discourse on women in the areas of “Parity, Priority, Exclusivity, and Supremacy,” but his meditations on “the Samaritan woman, the anointing of Christ, and Christ’s female followers at the time of the Passion” especially show Abelard to be moving beyond a simple appropriation of these texts.<sup>491</sup> For example, in his discussion of the Samaritan woman who anoints Christ, Abelard reflects: “‘Christus ipse a muliere, Christiani a viris inunguntur; caput ipsum, scilicet, a femina, membra a viris’ (Christ himself by a woman, Christians by men are anointed. The head by a woman, the limbs by men).”<sup>492</sup> As Alcuin Blamires notes, the effect of this entire letter is a thorough-going exercise in the Pauline-based (2 Cor. 12:9) “strength-in-weakness topos. . . [as] an enabling topos.” Throughout Abelard’s meditation, it is precisely through *infirmetas*, and that which constitutes women’s *infirmetas* in particular, that the perfection associated with salvation may come to fruition: “it is therefore precisely because she is a ‘weak member’ of the Christian body that she achieves the special dignity of consecrating the ‘head’ of that body.”<sup>493</sup>

As the final letter of the correspondence, the Eighth Letter is Abelard’s discerned adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict for the community of the Paraclete. Here, both the

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<sup>490</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 99.

<sup>491</sup> Blamires, “Gender Polemic,” 58, 62.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-69.

complexity of the scriptures as well as the complexity of human nature receive their due and appropriate reverence, a feature that is highlighted in Abelard's introduction in which he appeals to Cicero for an institution dedicated as an oratory to the Holy Spirit: "Hunc enim ut in *Rhetorica* sua Tullius meminit Crotoniatae ascuerunt ad quoddam templum quod religiosissime colebant excellentissimis picturis decorandum' (For, as Tully records in his *Rhetoric*, the people of Crotona appointed him to decorate with the best possible pictures a certain temple for which they had the highest veneration)." <sup>494</sup> In writing this Rule, however, Abelard will surpass Cicero, as is appropriate for a minister of the eternal Bridegroom: "Since you are joined to us in name and in your vows of continence, almost all of our institutions are suitable for you. Gathering from these, as I have said, many blossoms with which to adorn, so to speak, the lilies of your chastity, I should portray the virgin of Christ with greater care than Zeuxis used when he painted the likeness of an idol." <sup>495</sup> In so doing, Abelard is also alluding to the classical rhetorical tradition transmitted through Jerome which "link[ed] . . . studious reading and meditative composition based on flowers culled from reading [*florilegia*]." <sup>496</sup>

More striking is the fact that Abelard invokes the authority of Seneca for the first time since his appeal to him in the *Historia calamitatum*. In that context, Seneca was celebrated as a model for the contemplative life through the practice of detachment (*submouendae*) from worldly goods. In the context of Letter Eight, the contemplative life is still the goal, but the method takes on a more positive denotation in the form of the usefulness, honesty and simplicity associated with *frugalitas*. Just before his reminder of St. Gregory's teaching that

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<sup>494</sup> Constantine-Jackson, "'Sapienter amare poterimus'": Abelard also notes that his discernment of the Rule has relied "itaque partim consuetudinibus bonis, partim scripturarum testimoniis uel rationum nitentes fulcimentis" (in part on scripture, in part on reason, and in part on the best of our traditions)," 274.

<sup>495</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 134.

<sup>496</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 228.

“we must pay attention to the quality of our souls rather than the quality of our food,” Abelard cites Seneca, “the greatest proponent of poverty and continence and the chief teacher of ethics among all philosophers,” who teaches that: “Our aim is to live in accord with nature. If it is extravagant to yearn for luxuries, it is folly to reject ordinary food that is easily obtained. Philosophy demands simplicity, not penance, and this simplicity need not be excessive; the golden mean is what I like.”<sup>497</sup> The reflection that follows in Seneca’s Epistle 5 cited here by Abelard is also worth noting. Seneca writes: “This is the mean of which I approve . . . a happy medium between the ways of a sage and the ways of the world at large.”<sup>498</sup> Abelard’s shift in emphasis here demonstrates that the merging of memorial traditions has been fully incorporated into his discernment of the Rule; the life of compunction (*poena*) that marks the entrance to the life of prayer must itself be a response to the deepest desire to love which itself calls forth the practice of temperance.

The love reflected as the centerpiece of Abelard’s Rule for the Paraclete is friendship in word and example.<sup>499</sup> In addition to the offering of friendship that is embodied in his writing of the Rule, Abelard also identifies friendship as a fundamental sign of the life of the community, of its *conversatione*: “‘Tunc enim pro amico sponsonem facimus cum aliquem caritas nostra in nostrae congregationis conuersionem suscipit. Cui nostrae prouidentiae curam promittimus sicut et ille nobis obedientiam suam.’ (We become surety for a friend when our charity receives anyone into the society of our congregation, when we promise to care for him, as he also promises obedience to us).”<sup>500</sup> This friendship marks the lives of those who commit themselves to being living temples of the Holy Spirit; the portress, or

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<sup>497</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 176-177. Levitan translates *frugalitas* as “frugality,” but I think that “simplicity” is the more fitting translation here given the evolving context of their Senecan appeals.

<sup>498</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, 5.5.

<sup>499</sup> Constantine-Jackson, “‘*Sapienter amare poterimus*,’” 275.

<sup>500</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 148.

gatekeeper, of the community should embody this friendship through her hospitality (*de cura hospitalitatis*):

Ex qua maxime tamquam ex uestibulo Domini religionem monasterii decorari oportet cum ab ipsa eius notitia incipiat. Sit igitur blandis uerbis, mitis alloquio, ut in his quoque quos excluserit conuenienti reddita ratione caritatem studeat aedificare. Hinc enim scriptum est: Responsio mollis frangit iram; sermo durus suscitatur furorem. Et alibi: Verbum dulce multiplicat amicos et mitigat inimicos.

[By her especially, as by the vestibule of the Lord, the religious life of the monastery should be adorned, since knowledge of it begins with her. She should, therefore, be gentle in words and quiet in speech, so that she may try to strengthen the charity even of those she excludes by giving a proper reason for their exclusion. For it is written (Prov. 15:1): “A gentle answer is a quarrel averted; a word that gives pain does but fan the flame of resentment.” It is said everywhere (Ecclus. 6:5): “Gentleness of speech, how it wins friends everywhere, how it disarms its enemies.”]<sup>501</sup>

Discourse has the potential to cultivate the love that is *caritas* just as it has the potential to be an obstacle to that love. Friendship is the vehicle for such discourse; just as discourse can serve to cultivate friendship, friendship provides the ‘place’ for all authentic discourse. To this end, the superior of the community is called to reflect the love of Christ in order to facilitate the sacred discourse of her flock: “she is to accustom herself . . . as it is written of the Lord (Acts 1:1) [to]: ‘All that Jesus set out to do and teach,’ which means first doing and afterward teaching. For teaching by means of actions is better and more perfect than teaching by speech, by deed rather than by word.”<sup>502</sup>

#### 4.4.5 A ‘new *lectio*’ for contemplation in the *Problemata Heloisae*

The *Problemata* arises as one of many texts directed to the general prayer life of the Paraclete. It comprises an introductory letter by Heloise, followed by a series of questions gleaned from their scriptural study. The *Problemata* constitutes a worthy culmination of the correspondence for two reasons: first, by integrating the best of the monastic tradition with

<sup>501</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 158. Levitan translates “Verbum dulce” as “a sweet word,” 203.

<sup>502</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 145.

the new contributions of the scholastic tradition, it constitutes a new type of “scriptural *lectio*,” one that would develop in the thirteenth century and that was directed by the discipline of the *quaestio* rather than by the “*doctrina sacra*,” the sacred text itself.<sup>503</sup> Heloise confirms her community’s desire to practice this new discipline so that a deeper understanding of the sacred word may be known, not by “following the order of Scripture,” she writes, “but, rather, posing them [their questions] as they came up in our course of daily studies.”<sup>504</sup> It thereby reflects the religious renewal of vocation in the age by highlighting both the monastic *conversatio* that has fueled the *Problemata* as well as promoting the basic dynamic of its scholastic equivalent: the *quaestio*.

The *Problemata* serves this study well for a second reason; it truly reflects the mission of the Paraclete as cultivating the shared collaboration of men and women for lives of mutual love (*mutuus amor, amicitia, caritas*) in the Lord. The nature of this exchange highlights both the transformative nature of their correspondence, as well as their shared commitment to growing more fully in the life of conversion. Through this new form of prayerful discourse:

Heloise can once again take up her [early] commitment to letters, eloquence, friendship, love and wisdom in a new way. . . . now. . . in the company of a community that includes Abelard, [she] contemplates the sweetness of the Scriptures in search of deeper wisdom about human and divine friendship, thereby revisiting the classroom—“your students to their teacher”—with Abelard in a new and redemptive way.<sup>505</sup>

Heloise’s knowledge of the languages necessary for scriptural study ranks with that of Jerome’s Marcella, whose own astute sense of faithful learning and devotion to learning—Marcella is identified as a *magistra*—is praised by Heloise in her introduction. As such,

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<sup>503</sup> Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 146.

<sup>504</sup> McLaughlin and Wheeler, *The Letters*, 214.

<sup>505</sup> Constantine-Jackson, ““*Sapienter amare poterimus*,”” n159.

Heloise shows herself equipped to accompany Abelard in this ‘new *lectio*’ that will serve the life of prayer of the Paraclete.<sup>506</sup> Through their rigorous integration of disciplines in the service of the spiritual life, Heloise and Abelard are able to expand both the monastic category of *lectio*—on which is based the subsequent practices of *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*—as well as the general spiritual practice of the purgative way—on which is based the subsequent paths of illumination and union with God.

Through their emphasis on the role of friendship in the memorial tradition, highlighted by their employment of such devices and *topoi* as *exempla*, hyperbole, repetition and strength-in-weakness, and more particularly through their focus on the way through which women and men are called to a shared participation in the life of conversion, the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard offer a set of horizontal exercises through which the reader is invited to participate in the love of friendship that is ordained by the Holy Spirit and directed to divine friendship that is life in Christ. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* may be read as an entire work dedicated to providing the theological structure and vocabulary by which this practice of friendship that had discourse as its central activity could be best accessed by teachers and preachers for the care of souls. Before attending to this contribution of Aquinas, however, it is instructive to acknowledge the way in which the Dominican Order to which he belonged had both the *cura animarum* and the conversation of the genders as part of its founding components.

#### 4.5 Thirteenth-century Dominican contributions to the *cura mulierum*

The crucial role of discourse in the service of conversion was at the center of the Dominican way of life from its inception. What Dominic endeavored to do was “to found a

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<sup>506</sup> Recall the attention that Augustine devotes in the *DDC* to such formative learning for those committed to being teachers of the Word. See Chapter 3 (section 3.2.1) above.

society of preachers who, in place of and yet subject to diocesan authority, would take over by word and example religious instruction informed with apostolic simplicity.”<sup>507</sup> Both the role of preacher and that of confessor, ministries that lay at the heart of the Dominican vocation, would require a dedication to the art of discourse, which would in turn culminate in Dominican contributions to the *ars praedicandi*, as well as to the broader commitment of the order to the *cura animarum*.

The profound degree to which the Order of Preachers identified itself with the care for souls cannot be overestimated. This identity is unequivocally pronounced in the Prologue to the Dominican Constitutions of 1228, wherein the friars confirmed their Order “to have been founded initially precisely for the sake of preaching and the salvation of souls, and all our concern should be primarily and passionately directed to this all-important goal, [so] that we should be able to be useful to the souls of our neighbors.”<sup>508</sup> Moreover, in accordance with their founder’s charism, this Dominican identity was to be based in the Gospel message—they were to be “*virī evangelici*”—and therefore in the *vita apostolica*.<sup>509</sup> This meant that preaching in itself constituted “their true work of religious penance, for ‘*Gratiarum omnium*’ and the other bulls emanating from Rome had enjoined Dominic’s friars to pursue the active work of evangelization in remission of their own sins.”<sup>510</sup> The implications were clear: the vocation to care for souls was itself intimately bound up with the

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<sup>507</sup> As McDonnell notes further, the intention of Dominic was “to reform the cure of souls, not monasticism.” This distinction may be found to reflect back even on Heloise’s project for the Paraclete. See Ernest W. McDonnell, *Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, with Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 189.

<sup>508</sup> Simon Tugwell, O.P. *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 457. See M. Michèle Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study . . .*” *Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998): “the final great flurry of early constitutional activity within the order is best dated to 1228, the year in which a most-general chapter, a *capitulum generalissimum* made up of all the provincial priors plus two diffinitors elected by each province, met at St-Jacques under the presidency of Jordan of Saxony, who became the first to lead the order as master-general following the death of Dominic,” 45.

<sup>509</sup> Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study . . .*,” 42.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 42, 4-5.

friars' own salvation. According to this dynamic, the friars were to cultivate lives of repentance in the greater context of lives of holiness; after all, the great teacher of the art of arts of pastoral care, Gregory the Great, acknowledged such persons of the church to be “*sancti praedicatores*, men who were gifted with a degree of sanctity and contemplative knowledge so extraordinary that the very lives they lived authorized the care they gave.”<sup>511</sup>

Simultaneous with the formative years of the Dominican Order was the ongoing growth and development of both formal and informal practices of women religious. Dominic quickly discerned in this reality both the shared devotion of women to the *vita apostolica*, as well as the concrete way in which he and his confrères could provide assistance. This commitment would even predate Dominic's attempt to form the Order of Preachers (1216), for “the first institution he founded was a convent for women” in 1206 at Prouille.<sup>512</sup> Following Dominic's death, Jordan of Saxony (c. 1190-1237), who followed him as master-general, continued to hold the *cura mulierum* as a critical part of Dominican ministry.<sup>513</sup> As master-general from 1254-1263—years that were formative for Thomas Aquinas's (1224/5-1274) own ministry—Humbert of Romans' administrative efforts and ecclesial negotiations in the service of the *cura mulierum* represent a significant contribution both to the work of the order and to the life of the church.<sup>514</sup> It was during Humbert's service, too, that Aquinas's fellow student under the tutelage of Albert, Thomas of Cantimpré (c. 1200-c. 1270), dedicated much of his own ministry to providing a number of *vitae*, primarily constituting the

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<sup>511</sup> Sweetman, *Dominican Preaching in the Southern Low Countries, 1240-1260*, 19.

<sup>512</sup> Tugwell, *Early Dominicans*, 387; Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links Between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 92-93; Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 292-297.

<sup>513</sup> Jordan's correspondence with an Italian noblewoman, Diana d'Andalo, who became a Dominican nun, is reflective of this commitment. See Tugwell, *Early Dominicans*, 401-408. See also Edward Brett, who distinguished Jordan's pastoral care for his commitment to “case by case attention,” *Humbert of Romans*, 59-60.

<sup>514</sup> Brett, *Humbert of Romans*, 56-79.



lives of holy women, which served as an illuminating testament to a theological investment on the part of thirteenth-century spiritual writers to the discourse between religious men and women.<sup>515</sup>

In this way, the *cura mulierum* represented a specific instantiation of the broader commitment of the Dominicans to the care of souls, care that had as its root both the salvation of the friars as well as the salvation of the women to whom they ministered.<sup>516</sup> As this ministry expanded along with the matrix of needs of the women's communities, discernment was always in order. The role of spiritual guide and confessor to which the friars were called was increasingly adapting a model retrieved from the spiritual tradition based on that of the physician. Beginning in the twelfth century, such a model, which reflected the emerging sense among the faithful of their responsibility "as independent agents in their own spiritual welfare," involved a corresponding level of intimacy between confessor and penitent: "From the time of Peter Abelard . . . if not before, theologians had begun to conceive the sacrament of penance even more emphatically in terms of the individual penitent. Emphasis was placed upon the intentionality of the individual and its role in the moral nexus formed by sin, contrition and absolution."<sup>517</sup> This model of the physician of

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<sup>515</sup> The life and work of Thomas of Cantimpré offer an illuminating link between the particular features of the tradition of the *cura mulierum* and its practice in the Dominican tradition with the more generalized theological expression of the dynamics of the *cura animarum* as expressed in the work of Thomas Aquinas. A narrow selection of the most recent book studies in English attending to the *vitae* of Thomas of Cantimpré includes: *Thomas of Cantimpré: The Collected Saints' Lives: Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margaret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywieres*, ed. Barbara Newman and Margot H. King (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008); Jennifer Brown, *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d'Oignies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); *Devout Women and Demoniacs in the World of Thomas of Cantimpré*, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999); *Two Lives of Marie d'Oignies*, ed. Hugh Feiss, Margot H. King, Miriam Marsolais (Toronto: Peregrina, 1998).

<sup>516</sup> Even the papal orders of 1245 refer to such care in terms of this broader ministry: rather than referring to the *cura mulierum* specifically, it is to the "*sollicitudo et cura animarum* in the women's houses" to which both the provincial and minister general must attend. See Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, 119.

<sup>517</sup> Sweetman, *Dominican Preaching in the Southern Low Countries, 1240-1260*, 43, 41.

souls differed from the archetypal model that tended to dominate between the time of Gregory the Great and the eleventh-century Gregorian reform, and through which the faithful sought out “care-givers as *reges ecclesiarum*.”<sup>518</sup> Again and again, the friars ultimately turned to their foundational identity as their guide. More specifically, the measure of their discernment in this new climate of change was that of “protecting the honor of the order and of its religious proposition” with an awareness to guard against “spiritual danger to the order, to the friars and their female charges.”<sup>519</sup> The corollary, of course, was their dedication to promoting that which was conducive to the spiritual livelihood of the order, of the friars and of the religious women among whom they strove to live the *vita apostolica*.

One of the significant means by which the friars sought to cultivate the apostolic life in their preaching and ministry was through their engagement in the discursive dynamics of friendship that was characteristic of the emerging confluence of twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval thought.<sup>520</sup> Examples of this engagement were reflected through thirteenth-century Dominican preaching aids, as well as the *vitae* narrating the lives of women through meditative accounts of their shared collaboration in the life of faith.<sup>521</sup> Moreover, such genres may be regarded as constituting a reflective bridge between monastic and mendicant accounts of friendship.<sup>522</sup> Even as the correspondence of Heloise and Abelard was relatively unique for its time given their expression of cloistered conversation between the genders—and very unique in depicting their monastic discourse given their early history—its treatment

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<sup>518</sup> Sweetman, *Dominican Preaching in the Southern Low Countries, 1240-1260*, 38.

<sup>519</sup> Robert Sweetman, “*Nisi Causa Utili et Necessaria*: Catherine of Siena’s Dominican Confessors and the Principles of a Licit Pastoral ‘Irregularity,’” *Rule Makers and Rule Breakers: Proceedings of a St. Michael’s College Symposium (1-2 October, 2004)*, ed. Joseph Goering, Francesco Guardiani, Giulio Silano (New York: Legas, 2006), 199-210.

<sup>520</sup> See Chapter 4 (section 4.3.4) above.

<sup>521</sup> John Wayland Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>522</sup> Jennifer Carpenter, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Vitae of the Mulieres Religiosae of Liège* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1997), 112.

of friendship was at the same time representative of twelfth-century monastic accounts of the transformative role of friendship in the spiritual life. Such accounts included Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons and Aelred of Rievaulx's *Spiritual Friendship* (*De spirituali amicitia*). Considered together, both these monastic accounts and their mendicant counterparts provided the background for the more scholastic attention given to friendship in the thirteenth-century by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The medieval collaboration highlighted in this chapter reflects a marked shift from the way in which philosophers and theologians before the twelfth century attended to relations between the genders. This is a shift from men's reflections on the nature of gender in general, to women's and men's reflections on the relationality of the genders. The religious culture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which included sustained reflection upon and devotion to the relationship between the Virgin Mary and Christ, as well as Christ's commendation of Mary to John at the cross, provided a fruitful ground for such a contribution. Complementing such devotions was the renewed dedication on the part of men and women to the *vita apostolica*, as well as a heightened focus upon the nature and practice of friendship in the life of virtue, in growing conversion to the life of faith, and as illustrated in the history of Christian letters.

The twelfth-century epistolary exchange between Heloise and Abelard is best characterized as a discourse of friendship. Here, the horizontal exercises implicitly working throughout Augustine's *Confessions* take center stage. Whereas the central relationship being narrated in the *Confessions* is that between the human person and the Creator, the central relationship narrated in the *Letters* is that between two human persons, and more

specifically, between a man and a woman. This is not exclusionary of God; in fact, through Heloise's prompting, it is a deeper exploration of vocation to which all human persons are called as mediators of God's love, temples of the Holy Spirit and friends of Christ, who is the divine Mediator. While the *Letters* presume throughout the correspondence the equal dignity of both genders, this presumption becomes more explicit as the correspondence develops. What is more striking throughout the discourse, however, is the way in which Heloise, Abelard, and the community of the Paraclete are drawn into a life of deeper conversion in the Lord through the "complementarity"<sup>523</sup> that they achieve through a unified understanding of the memorial traditions of compunction and friendship that reflect two distinct memory traditions working in medieval thought. While Augustine's *Confessions* offers one example of the tradition of compunction, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova* highlights the tradition of delight. Moreover, by appealing to the philosophical tradition, and especially to Seneca's moral epistles, which function to mark key transitions in the discourse, Heloise and Abelard are able to make important distinctions concerning the interrelated practices of friendship, memory, and virtue. By attending to these distinctions in their discursive exchange, they are thereby better disposed to the related practices of *meditatio* and *discretio* through which fruitful engagement with the word of God and effective composition of a Rule for the Paraclete may emerge. The purpose of the Paraclete is the life of prayer (*oratio* and *contemplatio*), especially as expressed through daily liturgical practice. The foundation of the *Letters* is at once the foundation of the Paraclete, an institution based in the teaching that the *lectio* which roots contemplation is at once an exercise of memory itself—memory both of God's love, and of that love as mediated in creation.

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<sup>523</sup> "Complementarity" is the category used by Prudence Allen to identify the contribution of Heloise and Abelard to philosophical and theological reflection on the genders. See section 4.2 above.

It is to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, written approximately a century later, that we must turn for a sustained approach to this discourse of friendship that provides both an integration of medieval memorial practice as well as a theological structure and vocabulary for the *cura animarum* for times to come.

## Chapter 5 Towards a Theology of Discourse in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas

### 5.1 Introduction

Theological reflection on the language and relationality of discourse is best engaged within the greater context of a life of ongoing, interpersonal, Christian conversion. Critical components of such reflection include: the potentially transformative nature of discourse itself (Tracy), the spiritual exercises which cultivate its intersubjective framework (Burrell), and the dynamics integral to a shared vocation of women and men to life in God (Coakley). As two texts primarily concerned with the rhetoric of conversion, Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and *Confessions* constitute a set of primary spiritual exercises from the tradition. The *DDC* provides the basis for vertical and horizontal exercises by employing the principle of love as the hermeneutical key to all discourse. The narrative of the *Confessions* exemplifies vertical practices of cataphatic and apophatic prayer as primary, formative exercises in receptivity (memory), discernment (intellect) and the life of conversion (will). In the *Confessions*, these practices serve to point the reader to the horizontal exercises latent in the text.

Medieval retrievals from the Christian tradition offer a rich contribution to a theology of discourse. Beginning in the eleventh century, a growing renaissance in the liberal arts was nurtured by philosophical and theological reflections in light of the devotional practices constitutive of the apostolic life as a shared life in Christ. The twelfth- and thirteenth-century spiritual writings that emerged were attendant on the religious life and all that it entailed (*conversatio*), including pastoral attempts to model that life through *exempla* and reflection on the human experience of friendship (*amicitia*). The *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard offer

one such example. Through Heloise's efforts to integrate the memorial tradition of goodness—as a complement to that of compunction—the *Letters* provide a sustained reflection on the monastic practice of prayer that is based in *lectio*, or divine reading. Moreover, her focus on the goodness of the gift of human friendship initiates a set of horizontal exercises through emphasis—by way of repetition, hyperbole, and the selection of authorities—on God's love specifically as it is *mediated* in creation.

More than a century after the correspondence of Heloise and Abelard, in another part of Europe, and in a ministry that was to help inaugurate provincial theological education for intermediate students, Thomas Aquinas began work on the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>524</sup> This work provides the theological structure and vocabulary for the preaching and teaching of the Christian faith, and it does so without acknowledging any specific audience other than the students (*novitii*) who will give themselves to learning the text. As such, the theological approach of Thomas's *Summa* is a scholastic one in that it “makes explicit and systematic what the *Confessions* imply” about the principles of love and discourse informing all conversation to God and about God.<sup>525</sup> Although the types of discourse chosen by Augustine and Aquinas to craft their respective texts are indeed distinct, as Josef Pieper has pointed out, the general commitment to honor discourse itself is a theological stance: “Anyone who considers dialogue, disputation, debate, to be a fundamental method for arriving at truth must already have concluded and stated that arriving at truth is an affair that calls for more power than the autarchic individual possesses.”<sup>526</sup> Furthermore, Thomas is writing a Dominican text, written with the theological insight that to write for the salvation of God's people is at

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<sup>524</sup> Mulchahey, “*First the Bow is Bent in Study . . .*,” 278-80.

<sup>525</sup> Kevin White, “Friendship Degree Zero: Aquinas on Good Will,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 9 (2011): 479-518; here 512.

<sup>526</sup> Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 82:

once to write for one's own salvation. To this end, the *Summa Theologiae* is "not. . . theology in the service of the *cura animarum*, but theology as the *cura animarum: sacra doctrina* not in the abstract but in the concrete."<sup>527</sup>

This pedagogical orientation *as* theological orientation of the *Summa* cannot be overemphasized. It is a deeply intimate orientation in that its primary focus is always the formation of the reader and his or her dispositions and habits in light of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, lived ultimately through the Beatitudes. While Aquinas was not called to the ministry of the *cura mulierum* as was his confrère Thomas of Cantimpré, an illustration from the *Summa* reflecting this ministry as well as its person-centered focus will be offered here. In his questions concerning devotion—which, along with prayer, are the two primary and basic acts of religious life—Thomas asks whether "contemplation and meditation cause devotion" (II.II.82.3). His answer is that the "principal cause of devotion" is God; relationship with God, including a consideration of God's "goodness and kindness" is the main source of the devotion of the faithful. By focusing his answer on relationship rather than on traditional practices of prayer, Thomas is also able to attend to a misguided tendency among certain of the faithful—and most likely among ministers themselves—to identify the best trained male practitioners of contemplative practice as those who are the most devout in their faith. Thomas addresses this matter by shifting the focus from the worldly esteem associated with formal spiritual practices to the actual faith of the believer:

scientia et quidquid aliud ad magnitudinem pertinet, occasio est quod homo confidat de seipso; et ideo non totaliter se Deo tradat. Et inde est quod huiusmodi quandoque occasionaliter devotionem impediunt; et in simplicibus et mulieribus devotio abundat, elationem comprimendo. Si tamen scientiam et quamcumque aliam perfectionem homo perfecte Deo subdat, ex hoc ipso devotio augetur.

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<sup>527</sup> Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Third Millennium," *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, ed. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 38-52; here, 46.



[Knowledge and any other quality which belongs to greatness disposes a man to trust in himself rather than give himself wholly to God. In men of learning and greatness, therefore, devotion is sometimes weak, while it is strong in men of simplicity and in women because pride is restrained. If a man perfectly submits his learning and other powers to God, however, by this very fact his devotion is strengthened.]<sup>528</sup>

It is by virtue of the simplicity of the faithfulness of the believer, and not by virtue of their gender or formal training, that their devotion is received in God's love. This reflection is consonant with Thomas's understanding of human beings as created equally in the image of God.<sup>529</sup> Moreover, as Thomas will proceed to note, all believers are called to cultivate this devotional life, for without it, the manifold virtues that constitute the life of religion are without a foundation in the life of God.<sup>530</sup>

#### 5.1.1 The status of prayer in thirteenth-century theological reflection

The fact that Thomas incorporates a question concerning the two premier spiritual practices of the monastic life—*meditatio* and *contemplatio*—before inaugurating his treatise on prayer (*oratio*) in the *Summa* is worthy of note, as is the fact that he includes this question in a treatise on devotion (*devotio*) (II.II.82.1-4). These were not passing questions for Thomas and his contemporaries, and for him to have dedicated more articles to the treatise on *oratio* (II.II.83.1-17) than to any other treatise in the *Summa* indicates his conviction that some crucial reflections were in order in the service of the spiritual life.<sup>531</sup>

<sup>528</sup> *Summa Theologiae* [hereafter, *ST*] (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964- ), II.II.82.3.ad3. The Blackfriars translation is used throughout this paper except where another translation is used and indicated accordingly.

<sup>529</sup> *ST* I.93.6.ad2: "Scripture, having stated *After God's image he created him*, adds *male and female he created them*, not to present the image of God in terms of sexual distinctions, but because the image of God is common to both sexes, being in the mind which has no distinction of sex. And so in Colossians, after the Apostle has said *According to the image of him who created him*, he adds, *where there is neither male nor female.*"

<sup>530</sup> Questions II.II.82 and 83 concerning devotion and prayer will receive extensive attention later in this chapter.

<sup>531</sup> Simon Tugwell, O.P., *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 271-278, "Prayer, Humpty Dumpty and Thomas Aquinas," Brian Davies, ed., *Language, Meaning and God: Essays in Honour of Herbert McCabe O.P.* (London: Chapman, 1987), 24-50.

As Simon Tugwell points out, by the time the *Summa* was written, theological reflection on prayer included a whole range of views. On one side of the spectrum, *oratio*, understood as petitionary prayer and otherwise celebrated in such treatises as Hugh of St. Victor's *De virtute orandi*, carried an undignified status from its classical Latin tradition among the ancient elite, a tradition that also included an understanding of *oratio* as the discourse associated with rhetoric.<sup>532</sup> On the other side of the spectrum there was a merging of the categories of spiritual practice such that "the only object it was considered proper to pray for was God himself or union with him," and *oratio* and *contemplatio* "began to converge, and both came to be regarded as primarily affective activities or conditions" constituting the only authentic disposition of the faithful.<sup>533</sup> This convergence had implications for the memorial tradition which, as I've been broadly tracing, was necessarily an associated concern of theological writers:

Granted that love of God was generally regarded as something delightful ("sweet," in medieval parlance), the affective notion of prayer immediately posed a further problem. Prayer was traditionally regarded as one of the works of "satisfaction," a penance that could be enjoined on a penitent. But if it was an enjoyable work, how could it count as a penance? It was partly to deal with this problem that William of Auxerre, for instance, distinguished between two different kinds of prayer: that of the contemplative, which is pleasant and does not count as a penance, and that of other people, which is painful in some way or another and so does count as a penance.<sup>534</sup>

What would be required of a careful treatise on prayer, then, is an appropriation of such work as Heloise was pursuing in the correspondence—the relevant sorting out of the memorial traditions of goodness and sin in the spiritual life. Moreover, by seeking to develop Augustine's reflections on the relationality of creature to Creator by attending to the

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<sup>532</sup> Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, 273-274.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid.: "It is symptomatic of this that one of the commonest 'definitions' of prayer by the early thirteenth century identified prayer as 'a pious affection directed toward God.' Even St. Albert could say that 'prayer is the fulfillment of our affections.'"

<sup>534</sup> Ibid., 274-275. For the way in which Thomas himself changes his treatment of prayer from that attending to penance in his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* to that of the *Summa*, see Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the Ontology of Prayer," *Wisdom, Law, and Virtue: Essays in Thomistic Ethics*, 365-373; here 365-366.

“positive order between nature and grace,”<sup>535</sup> Thomas’s *Summa* will require not only a cultivation of the life of prayer. It will also need to attend to the nature of the discourse itself through which prayer arises, and in the *Summa Theologiae*, the best way of examining discourse itself is by reflecting on the nature of friendship through which authentic discourse emerges.

### 5.1.2 Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*: beginning with discourse

Through the remaining sections of this chapter, I will offer a reading of the *Summa Theologiae* as an integrated set of vertical and horizontal spiritual exercises<sup>536</sup> centered in the discourse of friendship. Through these exercises, Thomas provides a theological structure and vocabulary for the complementary vertical and horizontal narratives provided respectively in the *Confessions* of Augustine and the *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard. In an explicit manner that employs the scholastic mode of the *quaestio* anticipated in the *Heloisae Problemata*, Thomas reflects their commitment to spiritual formation as a shared discipline—one carried out in a community consisting of teachers, students, traditional authorities, experiential authorities, and before the witness of the Christian faithful. As such, it is a discipline that “must necessarily affect the mode of listening as well as the mode of speaking,” with the preliminary requirement of the *quaestio* format being: “Listen to the interlocutor, take note of . . . his contribution to the *recherche collective de la vérité*, in the

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<sup>535</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 655. See the questions on grace (*ST* I.II.109–114). See also *ST* III.9.2.ad3: “Beatific vision or knowledge is, in one way, above the nature of the rational soul, for the soul cannot reach it by its own power. But in another way it is in accordance with its nature, in so far as the soul by its very nature has a capacity for it, being made in the image of God, as has been stated earlier.”

<sup>536</sup> As Gilles Mongeau points out, “the text of the *Summa Theologiae* is not only **materially** a spiritual theology (as shown by Torrell). It is also a spiritual theology in its **form**, as a spiritual pedagogy, or a series of ‘spiritual exercises’ designed to engage the student and lead him or her to an encounter with divine truth in Christ,” *Embracing Wisdom: The Summa Theologiae as a Christoform Pedagogy of Spiritual Exercises*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, Regis College, 2003), 70. See Mongeau’s treatment of contemporary scholarship dedicated to this focus, 6. See also Anna Williams, who identifies the *Summa* as “a set of practices for receiving the gift of beatitude,” Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (London: Blackwell, 2002), 161.

same way that he himself understands his own argument.”<sup>537</sup> In this way, the most basic discursive tool of the *Summa* seeks to bring one face to face with the Creator’s mediators in the world—human beings created for lives marked by friendship in the search for truth.

Since a critical component of Thomas’s presentation of the discourse of friendship is his re-evaluation of the role of memory for the spiritual life, the first of the remaining sections of this chapter will begin with a brief summary of his discussion of memory and prudence. Although this particular discussion is found well into the second part of the *Summa*, it serves as a helpful starting point in two ways: it demonstrates Thomas’s shared concern with those before him of the role of memory in the spiritual life, and it constitutes a point of entry for examining his theology of discourse within a spiritual text, the full dynamics of which simply cannot be accounted for here.

While Heloise and Abelard offered a dialectic of sorts by which the memorial traditions of monastic practice was formed, Thomas establishes the good of friendship at the beginning of his work as the basis for the discourse that is the life of faith, hope and love.<sup>538</sup> It is not a dialectic of memorial traditions, then, that may be discerned in the *Summa*, but rather an ever-deepening dialectic between friendship and discourse that is based in friendship and that is working throughout the entire course of the text.<sup>539</sup> Accordingly, what follows an examination of Thomas’s treatment of memory is a sustained reflection on this dialectic of friendship and discourse through: his foundation for the vertical and horizontal

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<sup>537</sup> Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, 82.

<sup>538</sup> For a discussion of “the linking of memory arts to dialectic,” see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 190-194.

<sup>539</sup> The *Summa Theologiae* consists of three parts: the *Prima pars* is about God, the three Divine Persons in God, and creation; the *Secunda pars* is about men and women as created in God’s image, including a study of the passions, virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and the *Tertia pars* is about Christ, the Divine mediator. As noted in the prologue to the *Tertia pars*, Thomas intended to include a full treatment of the sacraments and of the life of beatitude, however his work on the *Summa* ended with his treatment of the sacrament of penance (III.90.1-4).

exercises in the *Prima pars*; the role of discourse in love and self-knowledge in the *Prima secundae*; an account of prayer as memorial and formative participation in the life of friendship in the *Secunda secundae*; leading up to a sustained meditation on the Person of Christ in whom all horizontal and vertical exercises of friendship and discourse are ultimately integrated and find fulfillment (*Tertia pars*). The *Secunda pars* receives heightened attention in this chapter in accordance with the attention given it by Thomas himself. It is in the *Secunda pars*, after all, where Thomas reflects most deeply upon the formative tools by which the gift of discourse may be most fruitfully engaged for the life of beatitude.

## 5.2 Memory and the *cura animarum*

Through his treatment of memory in relation to prudence in the *Summa* (II.II.49.1), Thomas provides a formative basis from which he can best reflect on the life of charity, which he expressly identifies as friendship with God (II.II.23.1). As did his ancient and medieval predecessors, Thomas recognized the crucial role of memory along the journey of conversion. In fact, just as Augustine appealed to Cicero's categories in order to effectively teach and move the faithful, and Heloise turned to Seneca in order to integrate the good of friendship as the background for *lectio divina*, Thomas found in Aristotle's thought a precise set of intellectual categories and tools by which to attend to the human person as a psychosomatic unity oriented to life in community. In fact, it is in the work of Albert the Great and to an even greater degree, of Thomas Aquinas, that the Christian tradition witnesses a profound development in theological reflection engaged with psychology—and in particular, memory—as a natural science in its own right, distinct from each branch of the

*trivium*, and yet serving all three.<sup>540</sup> My emphasis on Thomas's contribution in this area is being offered in this chapter as part of what I am presenting as Thomas's broader project working throughout the *Summa*, to account for the substantially mediatory role to which human beings have been called by their Creator. As Umberto Eco has noted of Thomas's commitment, "In a Dionysian universe, coruscating with beauty, mankind risked losing its place, of being blinded and then annulled. This is why Aquinas began in the *Summa* to deal with issues in psychology, in a way which would transform the whole question."<sup>541</sup>

### 5.2.1 Memorial reflection: prudential memory as disposition to charity

From the very beginning of his formal treatise on prudence in the *Summa* (II.II.47-56), Thomas is already orienting his discussion of memory toward the goal of fruitful discourse. This is possible because prudence itself is the most profoundly versatile—because profoundly discursive—of the moral virtues:

sicut Isidore dicit, *Prudens dicitur quasi porro videns; perspicax enim est, et incertorum praevidet casus*. . . . Unde manifestum est quod prudentia directe pertinet ad vim cognoscitivam, non autem ad vim sensitivam, quia per eam cognoscimus solum ea quae praesto sunt, et quae sensibus offeruntur. Cognoscere autem futura ex praesentibus vel praeteritis, quod pertinet ad prudentiam, proprie rationis est, quia hoc per quamdam collationem agitur.

[According to Isidore, the term 'prudent', *prudens*, comes from 'looking ahead', *porro videns*, for the prudent man is keen-sighted and foresees how uncertainties will fall. . . . And so it is clear that prudence is a function directly of a cognitive power. All the same that is not a sense-power, by which we know only objects offered here and now to empirical experience. Prudence learns from the past and present about the future; this is the special office of reason, since it involves a process of comparison.]<sup>542</sup>

<sup>540</sup> For Thomas's contributions to memory and psychology, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 192-193; Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 42-48, 119. According to Carruthers, who cites also the reflections of Frances Yates, "the lasting, distinctive contribution made by the two Dominicans [Albert and Thomas], building on one another's work and on their Arabic forebears, was to rationalize the arts of memory as a distinct subject in natural science, not solely within dialectic and rhetoric," 192.

<sup>541</sup> Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, 48.

<sup>542</sup> ST II.II.47.1.resp.

Prudence, which is a virtue of insight into the nature of things for the purpose of future action, requires much more than an awareness of present sensible reality. It requires also a particular openness to—remembrance of—historical reality. These qualities constitute reasonableness for Thomas, but such reasonableness is incomplete without the further qualification that prudence is also a deeply relational virtue: “. . . voluntas movet omnes potentias ad suos actus. Primus autem actus appetitivae virtutis est amor, ut supra dictum est. Sic ergo prudentia dicitur esse amor . . . inquantum amor movet ad actum prudentiae (. . . the will sets all our other abilities into human activity. Now the initial activity of the appetitive power is loving, as we have seen. It is in this sense that prudence is said to be love . . . because its activity is caused by love).<sup>543</sup> The reasonableness of prudence has its basis in the act of loving, which is the realm of the will. Augustine’s deeply relational theology is Thomas’s source here.<sup>544</sup> To base the virtue of prudence, then, in the act of loving, is to base it in interaction with an other or others whose own lives becomes a source of the reasonableness of the prudent person.

Thomas does not conclude this inaugural question on the nature of prudence without distinguishing further the particular activity that best reflects its relational quality. This activity is the taking of good counsel, which he defined earlier in the *Secunda pars* as the inquiry made through the power of reason.<sup>545</sup> Thomas’s authority here is Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*): “Eorum autem quae sunt ad finem est consilium in ratione et electio in appetitu, quorum duorum consilium magis proprie pertinet ad prudentiam; dicit enim Philosophus quod *prudens est bene consiliativus*” (Now of those things that are directed to

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<sup>543</sup> *ST* II.II.47.1.ad1.

<sup>544</sup> “And so Augustine adds that prudence is the love which well discerns between the helps and the hindrances in our striving towards God,” II.II.47.1.ad1.

<sup>545</sup> *ST* I.II.14.1.

the end there is counsel in the reason, and choice in the appetite, of which two, counsel belongs more properly to prudence, since the Philosopher states (*Ethic.* vi. 5, 7, 9) that a prudent man *takes good counsel*).<sup>546</sup> The Blackfriars translation of *consilium* as “deliberation” rather than “counsel” in this treatise is worthy of note. “Deliberation” certainly identifies well the process of discernment by which an individual exercises reasonable inquiry, the definition given by Thomas in his first article on counsel in I.II.14. However such a translation tends to exclude the fuller meaning of *consilium* to which Thomas will ultimately appeal in his culminating question on prudence (II.II.52), and to which he gave indication in his earlier discussion of counsel (I.II.14.3):

Counsel properly implies a conference held between several; the very word (*consilium*) denotes this, for it means sitting together (*considium*), from the fact that many sit together in order to confer with one another. Now we must take note that in contingent particular cases, in order that anything be known for certain, it is necessary to take several conditions or circumstances into consideration, which is not easy for one to consider, but are considered by several with greater certainty, since what one takes not of escapes the notice of another.<sup>547</sup>

While “deliberation” primarily denotes an individual discernment, “counsel” primarily denotes a discursive seeking of the truth with others. As will be shown, it is to such a corporate search for truth that Thomas will emphatically return throughout the exercises of the *Summa*.

To summarize then, the reasonableness of prudence is based in its relationality. On the most general level, this relationality is identified as the capacity to love, and Thomas’s source here is Augustine. On a more specific level, the relationality in which prudence is based is reflected through a particular discursive activity, the practice of seeking good counsel. Here, Thomas’s authority is Aristotle. Memory is required for this practice,

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<sup>546</sup> *Summa Theologica*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948), II.II.47.1.ad2.

<sup>547</sup> *ST* I.II.14.3.resp. (Benziger).



however. When Thomas finally turns to his discussion of memory as the first of the parts of prudence (II.II.49.1), he confirms the importance of locational memory for the spiritual life, since “simple and spiritual impressions easily slip from the mind, unless they be tied as it were to some corporeal image.”<sup>548</sup> But it is with temporal memory that he begins and ends his discussion, since “we need experience [*experimentum*] to discover what is true in the majority of cases: wherefore the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* ii. 1) *that intellectual virtue is engendered and fostered by experience and time*. Now experience is the result of many memories as stated in *Metaph.* i. 1, and therefore prudence requires the memory of many things.”<sup>549</sup> It is the concluding reflection of the article on memory that indicates the necessity of temporal memory for the practice of *consilium*: “It behooves us to argue, as it were, about the future from the past; wherefore memory of the past is necessary in order to take good counsel for the future.”<sup>550</sup>

Temporal memory is a necessary part of the exemplary practice of prudence that is counsel. It is worthy of note that Thomas does not qualify memories of compunction or of goodness in this article; he only emphasizes the importance of attending to and cultivating that which “we wish to remember.”<sup>551</sup> His omission of any memorial examples here serves to honor the particular experience of his reader. This is not to indicate, however, that Thomas refrains from offering memorial examples worthy of imitation, or that he has abandoned an account of the painful memories of sin.<sup>552</sup> What the remaining sections of this study attempt to show, in fact, is that the movement of the *Summa* as vertical and horizontal exercises is

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<sup>548</sup> *ST* II.II.49.1.ad2.

<sup>549</sup> *ST* II.II.49.1.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>550</sup> *ST* II.49.1.ad3 (Benziger).

<sup>551</sup> *ST* II.II.49.1.ad2.

<sup>552</sup> This will be discussed more at length in the treatise on *oratio*, but it should be noted that a treatment of the corresponding vices follows each treatment of the virtues in the *Summa*.

one of remembering and discerning the good of friendship in order that the practice of friendship may be lived ever more fruitfully with God and others.

Through the concluding question of his positive treatment of prudence<sup>553</sup> Thomas adverts again to the fullness of meaning indicated by his use of *consilium* as both a discernment on the part of the individual, as well as a thoroughly relational quality that must be remembered by the reader. He attends to counsel in this way by identifying the gift of the Holy Spirit as corresponding to the virtue of prudence: “Now to be moved to do something through reasoned inquiry is the proper characteristic of rational creatures, which inquiry is called taking counsel. Accordingly the Holy Ghost prompts them in a fashion congenial to their deliberativeness. On this account counsel is counted among the gifts of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>554</sup> Through this association, the relational basis of the virtue of prudence is made very explicit; it is to the Holy Spirit that the prudent person turns for the counsel that is most perfectly suited to him or her by virtue of the fact that it is *divine* counsel, and it is a gift. The vertical relation has been made clear. But Thomas pursues this discussion further by emphasizing the implications of one’s open receptivity to this divine gift for mediatory practice in the world: “The mover that is moved, moves through being moved. Hence the human mind, from the very fact that it is directed by the Holy Ghost, is enabled to direct itself and others.”<sup>555</sup> Those who exemplify this practice are the blessed (*beati*) who have the gift of counsel and use it for “acts of praising God, or of helping on others to the end which they themselves have attained, for example the ministrations of the angels and the prayers of

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<sup>553</sup> He will then proceed to identify its corresponding vices (II.II.53-55) before attending to a scriptural meditation on the “commandments of prudence” (II.II.56).

<sup>554</sup> *ST* II.II.52.1.resp.

<sup>555</sup> *ST* II.II.52.2.ad3 (Benziger).

the saints.”<sup>556</sup> For an exemplary model of the mediatory discourse that is counsel, one can go no further among created beings than the prayers of the saints. It is to their discourse, and moreover, to the friendship that founds their discourse, that Thomas will most profoundly direct our attention in the course of his text.

Augustine has provided the basis for prudence as love, Aristotle its premier activity as counsel. The exercise of bringing these two authorities together allows Thomas to present prudence, which is the guide to the moral virtues, as integrally oriented to the practice of that virtue which is the form for all the others, the virtue of charity.<sup>557</sup> By appealing to reason alone, Thomas has already shown that prudence “clearly regards the common good of the people, not merely the private good of one individual.”<sup>558</sup> By appealing to the life of faith as illuminated in the Scriptures, he has confirmed reason’s conclusion: “And so St. Paul speaks of himself *as not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*”<sup>559</sup> By appealing, as noted above, to the life marked by the loving counsel of the Holy Spirit and the saints, Thomas is marking a profoundly communal memory for his reader that serves to dispose him or her ever more intimately and dynamically to the life of charity.

### 5.2.2 Memorial practice: introductory mnemonics in the *exordia* of the *Summa*

Having begun with Thomas’s most theoretical discussion of memory in the *Summa*, it is now important to examine the mnemonic practices found in the beginning of each of the three major parts of his text in order to appreciate how such practices actually provide the framework for his theology of discourse. The general prologue to the entire work establishes Thomas’s personal commitment to effective discourse in the teaching of the faith, including

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<sup>556</sup> *ST* II.II.52.3.ad1 (Benziger).

<sup>557</sup> See *ST* I.II.65.1,2; II.II.23.6.

<sup>558</sup> *ST* II.II.47.10.resp.

<sup>559</sup> *ST* II.II.47.10.resp.

his attentiveness to the order of learning and the capacity of knowing of his reader.<sup>560</sup>

Emphasizing how students with an elementary aptitude for such study have been hindered “partly on account of the multiplicity of useless questions, articles, and arguments,”<sup>561</sup> he reflects a keen awareness of Ciceronian teaching on the *exordium* as “‘a discourse that prepares the mind of the hearer for the rest of the speech’ which is accomplished by making him ‘well-disposed, attentive, teachable.’”<sup>562</sup> Through this general prologue, Thomas offers the *Summa* as a text that is grounded in a pedagogy of care and formation. Furthermore, this foundational pedagogy will be in the service of the divine teacher, through whom all are students in the study of sacred teaching (*sacra doctrina*): “For since it is the part of a wise man to arrange and to judge . . . he is said to be wise in any one order who considers the highest principle in that order: thus in the order of building he who plans the form of the house is called wise and architect . . . . *As a wise architect, I have laid the foundation* (1 Cor. iii.10).”<sup>563</sup> As this early architectural mnemonic illustrates, Thomas’s own discourse of the *cura animarum* must be based in his firm trust and imitation of the wisdom that is “above all human wisdom.”<sup>564</sup>

Ultimately, the very categories of knowing through which scholars order their discourse are accountable, and therefore frail, before the Divine architect. Perhaps it is with this truth that Thomas desires his students to begin their journey through the *Summa*, since it is the pair of quotations from the Book of Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) that marks the first authority of its sequence of *quaestiones* in the *Prima pars* (I.1.ob1), and concludes in I.1.ad1: “For many things are shown to thee above the understanding of man (Ecclus. iii. 25). And in

<sup>560</sup> Thomas’s definition of the capacity of the knower is given in *ST* I.12.4.

<sup>561</sup> *ST* prologue.

<sup>562</sup> Kevin White, “St Thomas Aquinas on Prologues,” 806.

<sup>563</sup> *ST* I.6.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.* As in Augustine’s texts, the categories of authority and audience converge in the *Summa*.

this the sacred science consists.” The *Summa* is a text which, by recalling the wisdom tradition at its very inception, is disposing its readers for divine receptivity.

Just as the quote from Ecclesiasticus showed Thomas to be invoking the memory of the sapiential tradition in his first question from the *Prima pars*, so the introduction and conclusion to the *Secunda pars* are framed with another text from this tradition. The first scriptural text that marks the *Prima secundae* is the Book of Wisdom.<sup>565</sup> In fact, although Thomas will appeal to Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* at length in this early part of the *Secunda pars*,<sup>566</sup> it is not Lady Philosophy, but Wisdom herself who may be said to accompany the wayfarer through the second part of the *Summa*. Replying to the question, “whether happiness once had can be lost,” Thomas offers the scriptural reminders: “(Wisd. vii. 11): *All good things came to me together with her*, i.e., with the contemplation of wisdom. In like manner neither has it any inconvenience attached to it; because it is written of the contemplation of wisdom (Wisd. viii. 16): *Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness* [*non habet amaritudinem conversatio illius, nec taedium convictus eius*]. It is thus evident that the happy man cannot forsake Happiness of his own accord.”<sup>567</sup> By highlighting the experience of the contemplation of Wisdom in the questions on happiness (I.II.2-5), Thomas invites his reader to experience the consolation of Wisdom’s intimate company (*convictus*) and to begin a reflection upon the nature of her *conversatio*.

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<sup>565</sup> ST I.II.1.4.ad1 (Benziger): “Consequently, the diffusion of good does not proceed indefinitely, but, as it is written (Wisd. xi. 21), God disposes all things *in number, weight and measure*.”

<sup>566</sup> Citing the influence of the *Consolation* in Thomas’s *Prima secundae*, John Marenbon points out: “When, in q. 2, Aquinas considers in what human happiness (*beatitudo*) consists, he considers in turn (q. 2, a. 1-4, 6) each of Boethius’s false goods: riches, honours, fame or glory, power and pleasure....in four out of the five discussions, a quotation from it [the *Consolation*] is used to provide the ‘*sed contra*’....When, in the next question, Aquinas moves on to consider what exactly happiness is, the *Consolation* is still in his mind, though more as a source for apparently misleading positions (that God himself is happiness; that happiness is a state, not an activity)...that need to be explained away,” John Marenbon, *Boethius*, 177. See also Servais-Theodore Pinckaers, O.P., “The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 17-29; here, 25: “an attentive reading [of the *Summa*] shows that the *De consolatione* supplies the Christian philosophical substratum of the treatise.”

<sup>567</sup> ST I.II.5.4.resp. (Benziger).

This is a timely invitation which will be needed by the reader, for it accompanies a shift from the more secure setting implied by the early architectural mnemonic of the *Prima pars*, to a mnemonic that will require navigational assistance: “Now just as the ship is entrusted to the captain that he may steer its course, so man is given over to his will and reason; according to Ecclus. xv. 14; *God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel.*”<sup>568</sup>

In addition to recalling the consolation offered by Wisdom’s presence again at the culmination of the treatise on *caritas*,<sup>569</sup> Thomas will also conclude the entire movement of the *Secunda pars* with this text. Here, however, since the reader is about to engage in an extended reflection on the life of Christ in the *Tertia pars*, Thomas’s selection from the book of Wisdom will no longer be a detached presentation of her *conversatio* in order to cultivate longing for her company. Instead, it is an invitation, in the questions on contemplation, to invoke Wisdom directly: “*invocavi, et venit in me spiritus sapientiae*” (I called upon God and the spirit of wisdom came upon me).<sup>570</sup> In this way, the text of the *Summa* may be found to be participating in a rich tradition of formative texts, such as that of Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173), who “presents the progress of the soul through a personification allegory” in *The Twelve Patriarchs*. Richard’s text is “a treatise on the preparation of the soul for contemplation,” and his “interest in various mental states and psychological powers is testimony to an increasing interest in philosophical psychology in Paris.”<sup>571</sup>

By associating the supreme expression of discourse with the *conversatio* of divine wisdom, and further, by associating divine wisdom with beatitude and the love that is *caritas*,

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<sup>568</sup> *ST* I.II.2.5.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>569</sup> *ST* II.II.45.3.

<sup>570</sup> *ST* II.II.180.3.ad4.

<sup>571</sup> Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 201.

Thomas's appeal to the wisdom tradition in the *Secunda pars* serves to cultivate longing in the reader, who seeks to personally participate in the freedom, intimacy, and peace that such discourse implies. And so it is finally, after having worked through all of the horizontal exercises of the *Secunda pars*, that Thomas invites the reader, in the opening of the *Tertia pars*, to accept just such an invitation of discourse and presence through the Person of Christ:

it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others [*se aliis communicet*], as is plain from Dionysius (*Div. Nom.* iv). Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature [*se creaturae communicet*], and this is brought about chiefly by His so joining created nature to Himself that one Person is made up of these three—the Word, a soul and flesh, as Augustine says (*De Trin.* xiii). Hence it is manifest that it was fitting that God should become incarnate.<sup>572</sup>

To understand the meaning of *communicatio* is to have an understanding of the meaning of goodness itself. This is arguably the primary task of the first two parts of the *Summa*, to which we will now turn. Moreover, God has deigned for creatures to have such understanding in the most intimate—and yet incomprehensible—way possible: through the giving of God's self to humanity in the Person of Christ. The task of the *Tertia pars* is to give an account of this divine reality for humanity. In order to fully appreciate the nature of the horizontal exercises that served to dispose the reader for this expression of divine communication, it will be necessary to attend to the specific discussions on friendship, conversation and prayer that have been working up to this point in the *Summa*.

### 5.3 *Prima pars*: Founding the vertical and horizontal exercises of the *Summa*

The personification of divine wisdom that frames the *Secunda pars* serves as a fitting model for illuminating Thomas's general approach to discourse throughout the *Summa*. Just as Wisdom's conversation is presented within the context of her intimate and nurturing presence, each of Thomas's central treatments of discourse—and in particular, its supreme

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<sup>572</sup> *ST* III.1.resp. (Benziger).

expression, prayer (*oratio*)—are always either preceded by, or in the context of, a formal discussion of love. An example of this pattern has already presented itself in the treatise on prudence, wherein the treatment of the discourse that is *consilium* follows upon the discussion of the reasonableness of prudence as based in the love of the will.

### 5.3.1 God's love: source of friendship and discourse (I.20.2.ad3)

What is important to note is that this entire pattern begins in the *Prima pars* with the question on God's love. Attending to an objection of whether God loves non-rational creatures with the love of desire (*concupiscentia*) or with the love of friendship (*amicitia*), Thomas clarifies what is required for the love of friendship by emphasizing its quality of mutuality and the activities that emerge from such sharing: “amicitia non potest haberi nisi ad rationales creatures, in quibus contingit esse redamationem et communicationem in operibus vitae” (friendship cannot exist except *towards* rational creatures, who are capable of *returning* love, and *communicating* one with another in the various works of life).<sup>573</sup> As Eberhard Schockenhoff observes, “Thomas's God is neither the unmoved mover nor the highest thought who sees only his own essence in the finite spirit. He is the God of love who yearns for intimate community with human beings and seeks companionship and exchange with them.”<sup>574</sup> Here, early on in the *Summa*, Thomas emphasizes the elements that will also be important in his discussion of charity in the *Secunda pars*. The love of friendship (*amicitia*) is necessarily constituted by some form of mutuality that: has its source in God; invokes the response of human beings to return this love; and invokes the response of human

<sup>573</sup> ST I.20.2.ad3 (Benziger), emphasis added.

<sup>574</sup> Eberhard Schockenhoff, “The Theological Virtue of Charity (IIa IIae, qq. 23-46),” trans. Grant Kaplan and Frederick G. Lawrence, *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 244-258. Although Schockenhoff's observation is in the context of the *Secunda pars*, it applies equally well at this early moment in the *Summa*. I am grateful to Fred Lawrence in “Grace and Friendship: Postmodern Political Theology and God as Conversational” for his references to Schockenhoff's and Joseph Bobik's work, among others.



beings to communicate this love with one another through a shared participation in the various activities in life (*communicatio*). Here, in this early statement on love in the *Summa*, discourse and friendship are connected through God's love; *communicatio* is understood as a participation in the activities of friendship, and friendship (*amicitia*) is a relation that God shares with human beings. Divine love is hereby acknowledged as the basis for the vertical and horizontal exercises that are to come. Further, in what may be read as a critical corollary to this reply, Thomas is careful to add in the subsequent and final reply to the objections in this question (I.20.2.ad4), that such love as herein described applies to *all* of God's people: "There is nothing to forbid a thing from being loved under one aspect and hated under another. God loves sinners as being real things of nature; such they are, and as such from him." The implication, of course, is that all of God's people are created for friendship. This corollary will be shown to be an integral part of an understanding of *oratio*.

While Thomas doesn't cite an authority for his use of *communicatio* in the citation above (I.20.2.ad3), it is necessary to attend more carefully to his use of the term, for it is the foundational term—both literally and figuratively—by which Thomas will ultimately identify the source *both* of friendship *and* of discourse. It is important to attend, then, to his earliest authorities for this term in the *Summa*, pseudo-Dionysius and Aristotle.<sup>575</sup> Just as in the question on prudence, where Thomas appeals to Augustine for his discussion of love, and to Aristotle for his discussion of *consilium*, a similar phenomenon is going on beginning in questions 19 (God's will) and 20 (God's love) of the *Prima pars*. Here, however, the relevant

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<sup>575</sup> James McEvoy, "The Other as Oneself: Friendship and Love in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas," 33. See also Joseph Bobik, "Aquinas on *Communicatio*, the Foundation of Friendship and *Caritas*," 1-18; Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Spiritual Master*, 280-82; Guy Mansini, O.S.B., "Charity and the Form of Friendship," 32-33.

sources are pseudo-Dionysius and Aristotle, and the discussions are of unitive love of God with God's creatures (*amor unitivus*) and friendship among God's creatures (*amicitia*).<sup>576</sup>

In pseudo-Dionysius's *The Divine Names*, the Latin translation of which was available to Thomas (*De Divinis Nominibus*), he had access to a teaching on the unitive nature of God's love. More specifically, Dionysius's engagement with the forms of *communicatio*—the Greek term is *koinonia*—serve to cultivate contemplative reflection on God's unitive love as revealed in God's creation. *The Divine Names* reflects a vertical movement whereby God communicates God's love to creation, and creation reflects that love back to God. This movement reflects the *exitus-reditus* theme working throughout the *Summa*, by which humankind journeys from God and to God.<sup>577</sup> Of the Latin translations of Aristotle's texts, the *Nicomachean Ethics* would also prove to be tremendously helpful for Thomas's work. For, in Aristotle's treatment of the virtuous life, Thomas found an engagement with *communicatio* that would provide the complementary horizontal movement by which men and women shared the life of friendship, the *koinonia* exemplified in the Acts of the Apostles. Although Thomas eventually returns both to the Pauline reference to

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<sup>576</sup> Through the questions on love in the *Summa* beginning with the *Prima pars* (19, 20), and continuing in the *Secunda pars* (I.II.26-28, II.II.23-27), Thomas makes two crucial steps with these sources in terms of his theology of discourse. The first step is his employment of Dionysius' teaching on unitive love in order to usher in Aristotle's work on friendship (*amicitia*). The second step is an employment of Aristotelian *koinonia* (*communicatio*) as a way of integrating what Thomas knew to be a set of crucial distinctions necessary in the Christian discussion of love. The general procedure by which Thomas fulfills these two steps is as follows. He begins in question 19.1 of the *Prima pars* by taking a stand with Plato's position over that of Aristotle's on God's will. This opens the way for question 20.1 on God's love and Dionysius' teaching on unitive love which indicates a shared life among God and God's people. Immediately in the next article (I.20), Thomas introduces Aristotle's discussion of friendship (*amicitia*) (ob3) and of fellowship (*communicatio*) (ad3) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the context of God's love. With this foundational work complete, Thomas can then move to focus on natural friendship in the *Prima secundae*. Whereas in the *Prima pars*, Dionysius is needed to usher in Aristotle in the context of God's love, in the *Prima secundae*, Thomas is working out a synthesis of their thought for natural friendship (*amicitia*), and using Aristotle's emphases and distinctions of friendship to build his own Christian synthesis. By the time he arrives at the work of the *Secunda secundae*, the authority of Dionysius has served its role in accommodating an authentic appropriation of Aristotle's thought on friendship. In fact, by II.II.23, not one of the articles cites Dionysius. He has fallen away as an authority as Thomas moves into his treatise on charity, while appeals to Aristotle (*communicatio*, *amicitia*) and the scriptures abound in II.II.23.

<sup>577</sup> M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas* (Chicago: Regnery, 1964), 304-5.

*koinonia* (1 Corinthians 1.9) that constitutes the centerpiece of his treatise on *caritas* (II.II.23.1.resp), and to the contemplative use of Dionysius in the beginning of the *Tertia pars* (III.1.resp), the term has undergone some transposition by this point. Through his engagement with Aristotle's understanding of the term beginning in the *Prima pars* as the potential basis for personal, social, cultural and political transformation, Thomas the mendicant preacher and teacher is able to place an entire set of ethical categories and tools in the service of the contemplative language of unitive love that marked the height of monastic spiritual devotion. More specifically, by bringing Aristotelian categories to bear on the Dionysian teaching on unitive love, Thomas is able to provide a journey through sacred doctrine that attends to the whole range of human experience in a way that is both ontologically and psychologically astute, and will be centered in the discourse of friendship.<sup>578</sup>

As James McEvoy and others have noted, Thomas agrees with Aristotle that all of the key elements of friendship find their basis in the Latin term, *communicatio*. As a term meaning "having something in common, sharing in experience; shared life; community,"<sup>579</sup> it resonates with Dionysius' more contemplative understanding of *amor unitivus*, while offering further distinctions concerning the practice of such love for human beings. Stated otherwise, Thomas's use of *communicatio* for Aristotelian *koinonia* could account for the fact that "the foundation upon which a friendship reposes finds active expression when the friends 'keep each other's company, converse and in other like ways are linked together.'"<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> As an intimate sharing empowered by and working within God's great and all-embracing love, friendship will have the capacity to be both inward and outward looking—without contradiction—at the same time. This is how an appropriation of Aristotle's *koinonia* (*communicatio*) will serve reflections on the love to which God calls all persons.

<sup>579</sup> McEvoy, "The Other as Oneself," 33.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

The number of Latin terms synonymous with *communicatio* only serve to reinforce the importance of this idea: *communio*, *communitas*, *congregatio*, and *conversatio*.<sup>581</sup> Such terms allow Thomas to engage Aristotle's *Ethics* in the service of the faith in dynamic ways; the relation between *communicatio* and *conversatio* is especially worthy of note. While *communicatio* carries the broad, general meaning of "communication, participation, the making common, sharing,"<sup>582</sup> in his work, *conversatio* represents a further differentiation and association with civic and domestic life, and moreover, with formation of character and community within that life<sup>583</sup>—a formation that is distinguished by discourse. As he will note in the first treatise on love in the *Secunda pars* (I.II.26-28), the "real union" associated with the challenges of loving in the world is addressed by Aristotle's *Politics*: "*Aristophanes stated that lovers would wish to be united both into one, but since this would result in either one or both being destroyed, they seek a suitable and becoming union;—to live together [conversentur], speak together [colloquantur], and be united together in other like things [et in aliis huiusmodi coniungantur].*"<sup>584</sup>

### 5.3.2 Lives of the saints as exemplary mediatory practice (I.23.8)

As already highlighted, the earliest question on love in the *Prima pars* is God's love as the source of friendship and its communicated activities. At this point, *communicatio* reflects discourse on the most general level as an activity of friendship.<sup>585</sup> Following shortly in its wake, however, is the first important discussion of prayer in the *Summa*, in the last of eight articles on the question of predestination (I.23.8): "whether predestination can be

<sup>581</sup> Roy Deferrari, ed., *A Latin-English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1960), 178.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*: "Conversatio, onis, f., (1) social intercourse, association . . . (2) conduct, way of life, 240.

<sup>584</sup> *ST* I.II.28.1.ad2 (Benziger).

<sup>585</sup> *ST* I.20.2.ad3: "amicitia non potest haberi nisi ad rationales creatures, in quibus contingit esse redamationem et communicationem in operibus vitae."

helped by the prayers of the saints.” This article follows the general pattern of discourse as offered in the context of a discussion of love. As Aquinas himself notes in the preface to I.22, predestination should be considered in the broader context of providence: “So far we have discussed willing in isolation. Now we turn to matters relating to will in conjunction with mind. This is where the question of Providence enters; it cares for all things, but especially for the ordering of men to eternal salvation, so we inquire first into Providence, then into predestination and reprobation.”<sup>586</sup>

In article 8 of the question on predestination, Thomas does not deliberate about the nature of prayer in itself, and he specifically attends to the prayers of the saints in heaven. His focus is on the efficacy of their prayer, and three points are dominant: authentic prayer is always in relation to good practice; prayer is integral to a shared communal life; and prayer represents an invitation for human beings to accept a real cooperation in the divine plan. These three points serve to illustrate prayer in the context of a self-giving to others, and a participation in the life of God. Concluding the reply of this article, Thomas emphasizes how predestination remains in God, however God deems it “in such a manner” that it preserves the dignity he has bestowed upon his creatures, for their salvation which he has willed. Two categories of means for this salvation are available for the human being “without which he will not reach” salvation. These means are “prayer and good works.” This combination occurs four times throughout this article, and the practice of these two activities “fall into the pattern of predestination.” Thomas’s replies to the objections explain how this is so. An individual aids God through prayer and good works as one person aids another:

quis adjuvari per aliquem per quem exequitur suam operationem, sicut dominus per ministrum; et hoc modo Deus adjuvatur per nos, in quantum exequimur suam ordinationem, secundum illud I ad Cor., Dei enim adjutores sumus. Neque hoc est

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<sup>586</sup> ST I.22.prologue.

propter defectum divinae virtutis, sed quia utitur causis mediis ut ordinis pulchritudo servetur in rebus, et ut etiam creaturis dignitatem causalitatis communicet.

[by his serving you to perform your desire, as a minister assists a ruler. In this manner God is helped by us as executing his design; thus St. Paul, For we are fellow-workers with God. This is through no defect in God's power, but because he employs secondary causes to maintain the beauty of order in things, and to share even with creatures the dignity of being causes.]<sup>587</sup>

It is God's desire and God's design, and it is through the merciful sharing (*communicet*) of God's power that persons serve him through this radical cooperation bestowed on us by him as ministers: "sicut dominus per ministrum." Thomas's emphasis here is on 1 Corinthians 3:9: "Dei enim adiutores sumus," the same scriptural text employed by Heloise and Abelard to identify the work of the Paraclete.<sup>588</sup> All are called to such participation. In this article, however, Thomas highlights the saints in heaven as examples of those who have lived up to such a ministry, to such fellowship in God. As such, they will later be identified as having a critical role in our individual and collective memory and salvific promise. The final part of the *Summa* will call attention to this memory: "Now it is manifest that we should show honor to the saints of God, as being members of Christ, the children and friends of God, and our intercessors."<sup>589</sup> At this point in the text, however, the saints are not explicitly identified for their friendship; their mediation is exemplary, and it is exemplary by virtue of their prayer, reflecting a divinely participatory discourse by which human beings are brought into the life of God.

Thus far Thomas has initiated two parallel lines of reflection. The first concerns the gift of friendship and its activities as having their source in God. The second exemplifies the

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<sup>587</sup> *ST* I.23.8.ad2.

<sup>588</sup> 1 Cor. 6-10: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose . . . For we are God's servants, working together, you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation. . . ."

<sup>589</sup> *ST* III.25.6.resp. (Benziger). The articles of question 25 are concerned with "the adoration of Christ."

mediatory role of the saints in heaven as exemplified through their prayer and as reflective of their way of life. While the first line of reflection primarily designates a vertical relation as the basis for horizontal relations, the second, by virtue of the example of the saints as *adjutores* through their mediatory prayer, initiates the horizontal exercises that will receive heightened attention in the *Secunda pars*.

### 5.3.3 The Holy Spirit and the life of grace in creation (I.95)

A final discussion from the *Prima pars* serves to identify the way in which God actually disposes God's creatures for such mediatory practices. The remaining questions of the *Prima pars* attend to the three Divine Persons of the Trinity and to creation. Among these questions, the one which most fittingly follows upon the discussion of the love of God, and of the saints' response to that love, is the question addressing the capacity to love of women and men created in the image of God.<sup>590</sup> In question 95, Thomas begins a consideration of "all that has to do with the first man's will." Throughout the four articles of this question, he is exploring—albeit in an introductory fashion—the relation between nature and grace, the effects of sin upon this relation, and the presence of the Holy Spirit amidst this relation. Beginning with his main reply, Thomas identifies grace in creation by virtue of the way in which the Creator oriented creatures from the beginning—in relationship: "That man was actually set up in grace [*fuerit conditus in gratia*] seems to be required by the very rightness in which God made man for his first state, as it says in *Ecclesiastes*: *God made man right*. For this rightness was a matter of the reason being submissive to God [*ratio subdebatur Deo*], the lower powers to the reason [*rationi vero inferiores vires*], the body to the soul [*et*

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<sup>590</sup> See *ST* I.93 for Thomas's discussion of the *imago Dei* in humanity.

*animae corpus*].”<sup>591</sup> The nature of this originary submissiveness could not have been without grace, insists Thomas, because only God can be the source for such a state of relationality.<sup>592</sup>

While the state of sin has not negated the grace by which God oriented God’s creatures in the beginning, it has required on the part of human beings, a more profound orientation to grace: “Man does not need grace more after sin than before it, but he needs it for more things. Even before sin man needed grace for achieving eternal life, and that is what grace is principally necessary for. But after sin man also needs grace over and above this for the remission of sin and the support of his weakness.”<sup>593</sup> Furthermore, just as grace has been given to the will in some sense from creation, so Thomas confirms Augustine’s position that the Holy Spirit also has in some sense been present to human nature from creation: “As Augustine says . . . it is not being denied that the Holy Spirit was in Adam somehow . . . but he was not in him in the same way as he is now in the faithful, who are admitted to possession of the eternal inheritance immediately after death.”<sup>594</sup> The Holy Spirit, whose ultimate role in the discourse of friendship will be gradually developed, is identified in this early treatise of the *Summa* as present at the inception of all discourse in a way that echoes Augustine’s account of the Holy Spirit as the source of all discernment, the One by whom all persons are enabled to love God and others.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> *ST* I.95.1.resp.

<sup>592</sup> *ST* I.95.resp: “Unde manifestum est quod et illa prima subjectio qua ratio Deo subdebatur non erat solum secundum naturam, sed secundum supernaturalis donum gratiae; non enim potest esse quod effectus est potior quam causa.”

<sup>593</sup> *ST* I.95.4.ad1. For a sustained contemporary reflection of Thomas’s understanding of grace, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Frederick G. Lawrence and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>594</sup> *ST* I.95.1.ad2.

<sup>595</sup> See the *DDC* II.11, discussed in Chapter 3 (3.2.1) above.



#### 5.4 *Prima secundae*: The role of discourse in love and self-knowledge

##### 5.4.1 Fellowship as the context for happiness (I.II.4)

In the *Prima secundae*, it is Thomas's appropriation of the "fellowship of friends" (*societas amicorum*) that constitutes the most important contribution gained from Aristotle's thought. It is with a teaching about human beings'—be they active or contemplative—sharing in the central activities of fruitful living that Thomas begins his formal discussions on friendship in the *Secunda pars*. In the main reply of the final article of I.II.4, the question at hand is: "whether the fellowship of friends is necessary for happiness" (article 8).

Distinguishing the happiness of wayfarers from that of the happiness enjoyed in heaven,

Thomas begins by noting:

si loquamur de felicitate praesentis vitae, sicut philosophus dicit in *IX Ethic.*, felix indiget amicis, non quidem propter utilitatem, cum sit sibi sufficiens; nec propter delectationem, quia habet in seipso delectationem perfectam in operatione virtutis; sed propter bonam operationem, ut scilicet eis benefaciat, et ut eos inspiciens benefacere delectetur, et ut etiam ab eis in benefaciendo adiuvetur. Indiget enim homo ad bene operandum auxilio amicorum, tam in operibus vitae activae, quam in operibus vitae contemplativae.

[if we speak of the happiness of this life, the happy man needs friends, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic* xi. 9), not indeed, to make use of them, since he possesses perfect delight in the operation of virtue; but for the purpose of a good operation, viz., that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again that he may be helped by them in his good work. For in order that man may do well, whether in the works of the active life, or in those of the contemplative life, he needs the assistance\* of friends.]<sup>596</sup>

While Thomas's reply constitutes an exercise against idolatry by indicating how such fellowship is not "essential" to the perfect happiness of heaven, this is not the last word on friendship and beatitude in his main reply. His concluding reflection in this reply is an appeal to Augustine's commentary on the book of Genesis: "Hence Augustine says (*Gen. ad lit.* viii.

<sup>596</sup> *ST* I.II.4.8.resp. (Benziger): \*I have replaced the Benziger translation of *auxilio* as "fellowship" with "assistance" in this instance.

25) that *the spiritual creatures received no other interior aid to happiness than the eternity, truth and charity of the Creator. But if they can be said to be helped from without, perhaps it is only by this that they see one another and rejoice in God, at their fellowship.*”<sup>597</sup> As Augustine himself confirms, and Aristotle provides further distinctions, it is the fellowship of friends that most truly imitates the divine work of salvation. Notably, this same pattern takes place through the three replies of article 8 whereby Thomas first points out that perfection of happiness (*beatitudo*) (ad1) and “perfection of charity” (ad3) are focused solely on the person’s relation to God, only to be followed by an echo of Augustine’s words: “Wherefore, if there were but one soul enjoying God, it would be happy. . . . But supposing one neighbor to be there, love of him results from perfect love of God. Consequently, friendship is, as it were, concomitant with perfect Happiness.” These closing lines constitute a *repetitio* of the teaching from I.20.2.ad3: God’s love and the experience of friendship are complementarily and dynamically connected. And the central element in all of this, which was identified in the very question of I.II.4.8 and which is repeated explicitly seven times throughout the article, is that of fellowship. It is Aristotle’s treatment of *societas* which provides the backdrop for the discussion of natural friendship (*amicitia*), while it is happiness itself which is being anticipated and which “was to be bestowed on others through Christ, who is God and Man.”<sup>598</sup>

#### 5.4.2 Discourse as the central activity of friendship (I.II.26-28)

Whereas the treatment of God’s love in the *Prima pars* introduces friendship in the *Summa* by indicating friendship’s source in God and its potential for mutuality with God and others, the early questions of the *Secunda pars* on human happiness establish friendship as

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<sup>597</sup> ST I.II.8.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>598</sup> ST I.II.5.7.ad2 (Benziger).

fundamental to the fulfillment of every human being. Further along into the *Secunda pars*, Thomas introduces both his treatment of human love (*amor*), and his treatise on the perfection of human love (*caritas*), with a question on friendship.<sup>599</sup> Thomas's main reply in I.II.26.4 to "whether love (*amor*) is properly divided into love of friendship and love of concupiscence"<sup>600</sup> is focused on a distinction among goods and a discernment concerning an ordering of the love of the persons to whom they are directed: "the movement of love has a two-fold tendency: towards the good which a man wishes to someone,—to himself or to another, and towards that to which he wishes some good. Accordingly, man has love of concupiscence towards the good that he wishes to another, and love of friendship, towards him to whom he wishes good."<sup>601</sup> Concluding this reflection, which transcends Aristotle's own distinctions concerning the goods of friendship, Thomas states: "Nam id quod amatur amore amicitiae simpliciter et per se amatur: quod autem amatur amore concupiscentiae non simpliciter et secundum se amatur, sed amatur alteri" (. . . that which is loved with the love of friendship is loved simply and for itself; whereas that which is loved with the love of concupiscence is loved, not simply and for itself, but for something else).<sup>602</sup> He agrees with Aristotle that the good is what is sought in relationships, and that certain relationships have a more virtuous character because of the good sought.<sup>603</sup> Where he transforms Aristotle's categories, however, is crucially instructive.

<sup>599</sup> In the treatise on *amor* (I.II.26-28), question 26.4 asks, "whether love is properly divided into love of friendship and love of concupiscence." In the treatise on *caritas* (II.II.23-46), question 23.1 asks, "whether charity is friendship."

<sup>600</sup> This distinction has already been made in I.20.

<sup>601</sup> *ST* I.II.26.4.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>602</sup> *ST* I.II.26.4.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>603</sup> See Aristotle's discussion of "perfect friendship" in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1947), VIII.3.1156. See also Thomas's statement on the "character of true friendship," *ST* I.II.26.4.ad3.

By transposing Aristotle's three formative ends of friendship (the useful, the pleasant, the virtuous) with the two ends of the love of concupiscence and of friendship, Thomas is ordering the practice of natural friendship toward the practice of friendship for God.<sup>604</sup> He achieves this by subtly shifting the focus from Aristotle's treatment of love that has its end in the life of virtue to a treatment of love that has its end in the life of another person. Stated otherwise, whereas the height of Aristotelian friendship is the life of virtue of the person loving, the height of Christian friendship can only be the love of another person "*simpliciter*." In this way, to come to know the nature of loving "simply" constitutes a formative practice for knowing the way in which God loves God's people, thereby teaching us the way in which we are called to love others.

It is worthwhile recalling here the alternating appeals to Dionysius and Aristotle concerning the building discussion of *communicatio*. Dionysius's reflections on *communicatio* as unitive love from *De Divinis Nominibus* were employed by Thomas in I.20 to validate a gradual incorporation of Aristotle's ethical treatment of *communicatio* and with it, *amicitia*. Aristotle's work has clearly been the motivating element in the discussion of friendship that marked the questions on happiness in the beginning of the *Secunda pars*, thereby allowing Thomas to focus in on important distinctions concerning the formative practice of loving. Such an incorporation and transposition of Aristotelian categories is part of an Aristotelian/Dionysian synthesis that reveals itself in I.II.26-28. In response to a question on the relation between love, passion and union, Thomas highlights his authorities' common ground even despite their respective areas of concern being God's love and the love

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<sup>604</sup> James McEvoy, "The Other as Oneself," 28: this allows Thomas "to recover much of Aristotle's reflections on *philia*, and to do so, furthermore, on his own territory."

that drives the ethical life of human communities: “Dionysius says that *love is a unitive force* (*Div Nom.* iv), and the Philosopher says (*Polit.* ii. I) that union is the work of love.”<sup>605</sup>

Aristotle’s authority has more to contribute to this synthesis, however. There is *communicatio*, which is the shared life of fellowship, and there is *amicitia*, which is the further differentiation of this fellowship in terms of its manifestation among specific persons. But there are also the activities of friendship which, although they are heavily signified by the term *communicatio*, require more particular emphasis in order for Thomas to effectively develop a theology of discourse. Unity is the goal; Dionysius and Aristotle are agreed on this fact. But the way to unity requires further distinctions by way of the formative activities required. In a citation given earlier in this study, Thomas nearly concludes his questions on love in the *Prima secundae* with an appeal to Aristotle:

This is real union, which the lover seeks with the object of his love. Moreover this union is in keeping with the demands of love: for as the Philosopher relates (*Polit.* ii. I), *Aristophanes stated that lovers would wish to be united both into one, but since this would result in either one or both being destroyed*, they seek a suitable and becoming union;—to live together [*conversentur*], speak together [*colloquantur*], and be united together [*conjungantur*] in other like things.”<sup>606</sup>

It is the “colloquy” of friends—indicating the intimate, personal nature of their discourse—that is the one activity distinguished by Thomas among their way of life. As with the distinguishing practice of friendship in human living, the distinguishing practice of such discourse is also at the core of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As Joseph Bobik has pointed out, for Aristotle,

the activities of friendship are summed up in the expression “convivere amico,” and this . . . includes things like . . . doing athletic exercises together, hunting together, studying philosophy together—and the best of all these activities, conversing with

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<sup>605</sup> *ST I.II.26.2.ad2* (Benziger).

<sup>606</sup> *ST I.II.28.1.ad2* (Benziger).

one another (*conversatio*). “Communicatio” (*koinonia*), in this sense, is not only the proper effect of friendship; it is also its imitating and perpetuating cause.<sup>607</sup>

Through Thomas’s conclusion to the questions on love in the first part of the *Prima secundae*, the reader has engaged a set of reflections emphasizing both the necessity of friendship for happiness which is life with God, and the necessity of intimate discourse for an authentic practice of friendship. Before pursuing the nature of such discourse further, however, Thomas engages in a discussion upon the term most affectively associated with friendship in the questions on happiness cited above; that term is *delectatio*.<sup>608</sup>

#### 5.4.3 Memorial sweetness revisited: *delectatio* (I.II.31-34) and *dolor* (I.II.35-39)

Although an exhaustive inquiry into the treatment of delight in the *Secunda pars* is beyond the limits of this study, it should be noted that Thomas begins his engagement with this term well before granting it a formal treatise.<sup>609</sup> In an early question on *fruitio* (enjoyment), that anticipates an engagement with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit,<sup>610</sup> Thomas offers an overview of the experience of delight as it affects both the intellect and the will: “in delight there are two things: perception of what is becoming; and this belongs to the apprehensive power; and complacency in that which is offered as becoming; and this belongs to the appetitive power, in which power delight is formally completed.”<sup>611</sup> As Kevin White has observed, the experience of delight reveals itself in its complexity in the questions on love (I.II.26-29), wherein “the first object of passion, the delightful as agreeable, is a good presented as simply good by apprehension and taken as simply good by appetite. In

<sup>607</sup> Bobik, “Aquinas on *Communicatio*, the Foundation of Friendship and *Caritas*,” 14-15.

<sup>608</sup> See I.II.4.8: “nec propter **delectationem**, quia habet in seipso **delectationem** perfectam in operatione virtutis; sed propter bonam operationem, ut scilicet eis benefaciat, et ut eos inspiciens benefacere **delectetur**, et ut etiam ab eis in benefaciendo adiuvetur” (cited in 5.4.1 above, bold added).

<sup>609</sup> In the questions on happiness, Thomas states that “the reason a man is delighted is that he has some fitting good, either in reality, or in hope, or at least in memory,” I.II.2.6.resp. See for instance Olivier-Thomas Venard’s discussion in *Litterature et Theologie*: “Entre *necessitas* et *delectatio*, la metaphore,” 187-210.

<sup>610</sup> ST I.II.11.1.resp; 11.3.ad2.

<sup>611</sup> ST I.II.11.1.ad3 (Benziger).

something like an act of attention, appetite fixes on—or better, is ‘taken’ by—this good so as to acquire a ‘kinship’ (*connaturalitas*) or ‘harmony’ with it.”<sup>612</sup>

By the time the treatise on delight and sorrow emerges, then, in questions 31-39 of the *Prima secundae*, the reader is prepared to attend to an exploration of the psychological depths of spiritual consolation.<sup>613</sup> Here, both the passions of delight and pain are considered by Thomas as responses to goodness. Delight, of which joy (*gaudium*) is a species,<sup>614</sup> is directed toward what is good, and pain is a response to the denial of that good.<sup>615</sup> By focusing his attention on *delectatio*, the passion itself, rather than the consequent judgment of which declares ‘sweetness,’ Thomas is able to address with much better precision the moral aspects involved with a human being’s orientation to the good. Stated otherwise, Thomas is able to better address the moral ambiguity associated with the memorial tradition of sweetness by providing a series of discernment exercises guiding the passion of delight. As he states in the main reply to his final article on *delectatio*: “The principal subject of moral good and evil is the will . . . . Now the repose of the will . . . in some good object is, precisely, delight.”<sup>616</sup> Furthermore, even though love and its corresponding desires precede the experience of *delectatio*, delight “comes first in point of the end at which one aims: and that is the determining principle which provides us with the standard or rule which is our

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<sup>612</sup> Kevin White, “The Passions of the Soul (Ia IIae, qq. 22-48),” in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 103-115; here, 108.

<sup>613</sup> It is to these questions that the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* points when, in the discussion of spiritual consolation, its writers note: “Le mot *consolation* ne se trouve pas dans la langue de saint *Thomas*. Pour exprimer l’état d’âme correspondant, il a recours au terme générique de *délectation*,” “Consolation spirituelle” (2.1617ff), *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932-1995).

<sup>614</sup> *ST* I.II.31.3.resp.

<sup>615</sup> See *ST* I.II.31.1.ad3; I.II.35.1.resp.

<sup>616</sup> *ST* I.II.34.4.resp.

main criterion in judging actions.”<sup>617</sup> Thomas offers two contributions in this treatise that are significant for a theology of discourse. One contribution is his distinction between the delight associated with memory and that of hope. The other is his commitment to the good of friendship as that which cultivates delight, and also which best heals pain and sorrow.

Delight ultimately concerns the natural orientation of human beings to what is good.<sup>618</sup> Although this orientation, which is one of reasonableness, can become diseased, thereby weakening the capacity to associate with the good, the orientation to goodness remains. What is significant for Thomas is that the presence of good grants delight.<sup>619</sup> And while actual union with what is good in the present is more delightful than potential union, Thomas intimates a sense of the inadequacy or incompleteness of any actual union with what is good on the part of wayfarers. As he proceeds to rank human experiences of delight according to memory, love and hope, he concludes that the delight arising from love and desire is not as great as that of hope, since hope “implies a real prospect of attaining the pleasurable object.”<sup>620</sup> Taken in itself, memory ranks the least of the three, because the object of the good is in the past.<sup>621</sup> Moreover, it is this desire born of hope to which he appeals in discussing how wonder is a source of delight: “it can happen that the search for truth can be the more pleasurable when prompted by greater desire: and such desire is greater, the more one is aware of one’s ignorance. This is why one may find the greatest of pleasure in discovering or learning something new.”<sup>622</sup> In this way, the human capacity for memory is

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<sup>617</sup> *ST* I.II.34.4.ad1. Thomas reiterates this point with emphasis in I.II.34.4ad3: “Since therefore, the goodness of a thing depends on its end, an action cannot be perfectly good unless there is also pleasure found in the good. In a way, then, the goodness of the pleasure is a cause of the goodness of the action.”

<sup>618</sup> *ST* I.II.31.7.

<sup>619</sup> *ST* I.II.32.3.

<sup>620</sup> *ST* I.II.32.3.ad3.

<sup>621</sup> See also I.II.33.2.resp., since if one’s “outlook has radically changed, such memory does not cause pleasure, but distaste.”

<sup>622</sup> *ST* I.II.32.8.resp., ad2.



strongest when it is joined with that of hope, for through hope there is always something more drawing wayfarers to the good that is unity and love.<sup>623</sup>

Among the remaining questions in the treatise on delight, two of the articles are dedicated to the ways in which friendship cultivates the experience of delight according to effect and according to intention.<sup>624</sup> The greatest of these ways in terms of the effect of friendship is when the loving actions (*operationes*) of a friend result in an association of “his good with one’s own.”<sup>625</sup> In terms of the aims of friendship, those which are based in hope of God or of fellow human beings serve to cultivate delight.<sup>626</sup> The fullness of delight is therefore best experienced through a communication of the good in friendship, whereas doing harm to others does not facilitate this same experience.<sup>627</sup>

Next Thomas turns to questions on sorrow. In terms of spiritual formation, the tradition of delight in the good should be favored over the tradition of sorrowing over the lack of the good, since the body is harmed by sorrow more than by any other emotion.<sup>628</sup> Moreover, attention to the good in its most simple form, and especially the good of a human person, should be emphasized.<sup>629</sup> In the context of these reflections on sorrow, Thomas offers a subtle and striking parallel to the two questions on the role of friendship in delight. The first of these questions is “whether pain and sorrow are assuaged by the sympathy of friends,” and the second is “whether pain and sorrow are assuaged by contemplating the truth.”<sup>630</sup> In the objections leading up to the first reply, Thomas brings forth reflections from Augustine’s discussion of friendship in the *Confessions* (VIII,4; IV, 9) and Aristotle’s *Ethics* (IX,

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<sup>623</sup> ST I.II.32.3.ad3.

<sup>624</sup> ST I.II.32.5, 32.6.

<sup>625</sup> ST I.II.32.5.resp.

<sup>626</sup> ST I.II.32.6.resp.

<sup>627</sup> ST I.II.32.6.ad3.

<sup>628</sup> ST I.II.33.3; 37.1; 37.4.resp.

<sup>629</sup> ST I.II.34.2.resp; 34.2.ad2.

<sup>630</sup> ST I.II.38.3, 38.4.

4.1166a31; IX, 11.1171a29) concerning the central role of mediation of friends for another's delight in goodness. Here, the best source of consolation in friendship is the delight that arises from the love of the friend who offers consolation through a sharing in sorrow.<sup>631</sup> In the next question, Thomas refers back to the contemplation of truth in the questions on happiness that began the *Secunda pars*,<sup>632</sup> identifying it as the "greatest of all pleasures." In the concluding line of the main response, and with very little commentary except to say that the joy of contemplation "occurs even in the midst of bodily torture," he declares: "thus the martyr Tiburtius, walking barefoot on burning coals, said, 'I feel that I am walking on roses, in the name of Jesus Christ.'"<sup>633</sup> The contemplation of truth that Thomas illustrates is not any truth, but the truth deeply known through the reception of divine friendship.

#### 5.4.4 The discourse of friendship and the Holy Spirit (I.II.65, 68)

Thomas's work on the passions (I.II.22-48), of which the discussions of love and delight are a part, is followed by that of the habits (I.II.49-89), including the distinction of the habits between good (virtue) and bad (sin). In the discussion of the integral relation that exists among the virtues, and that exists between the virtues and the activity of the Holy Spirit, two points are especially relevant here. First, the discourse of friendship is explicitly taken up in the context of the life of virtue (I.II.65.5). Secondly, Thomas identifies the Holy Spirit as the source and sustainer of the entire life of friendship, human and divine.

In his discussion of the integral relation among the virtues (I.II.65), Thomas takes up again the culminating point of I.II.26-28 that friendship is constituted by the activities of social interaction. After emphasizing that prudence, which governs all of the moral virtues, including the passions (I.II.65.1.ad3), can only be perfected through charity (I.II.65.2.resp),

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<sup>631</sup> ST I.II.38.3.

<sup>632</sup> ST I.II.3.5.

<sup>633</sup> ST I.II.38.4.resp.

because “God operates no less perfectly in works of grace than in works of nature,”

(I.II.65.3.resp), Thomas answers negatively to the question “whether charity can be without faith and hope” in the lives of wayfarers. His reply, which begins by repeating the terms of God’s love from the *Prima pars*, must be cited in its entirety:

Charity signifies not only the love of God [*amorem Dei*], but also a certain friendship [*amicitiam*] with Him; which implies, besides love, a certain mutual return [*mutuam redamationem*] of love, together with mutual communion [*mutua communicatione*], as stated in *Ethic.* viii.2. That this belongs to charity is evident from 1 Jo. iv. 16: *He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him*, and from 1 Cor. 1, 9, where it is written: *God is faithful, by whom you are called unto the fellowship* [*societatem*] *of His Son*. Now this fellowship [*societas*] of man with God, which consists in a certain familiar colloquy [*familiaris conversatio*] with Him, is begun here, in this life, by grace, but will be perfected in the future life, by glory; each of which things we hold by faith and hope. Wherefore just as friendship [*amicitiam*] with a person would be impossible, if one disbelieved in, or despaired of, the possibility of their fellowship [*societatem*] or familiar colloquy [*familiaris conversationem*]; so too, friendship with God [*amicitiam ad Deum*], which is charity, is impossible without faith, so as to believe in this fellowship [*societatem*] and colloquy [*conversationem*] with God, and to hope to attain to the fellowship [*societatem*]. Therefore, charity is quite impossible without faith and hope.<sup>634</sup>

This passage begins by repeating the central terms employed in the discussion of God’s love from the *Prima pars* (*mutuam redamationem*, *mutua communicatione*), only here these terms are marked by an intimate mutuality. Moreover, the repetition of *societas* and *amicitia* and their associations with intimate interaction (*familiaris conversatio*, *conversationem*) is repeated three times in this passage. This interaction is shown to be an integral part of fellowship, but a distinct activity within it. Moreover, this fellowship seems not to exist without it; at the very least, one must believe and hope in both the efficacy of *conversatio* as well as the truth of *amicitia* if life with God is to be a reality.

Furthermore, the reason why Thomas can insist upon this general understanding of natural friendship for reflecting on friendship with God is because he has held that human

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<sup>634</sup> ST I.II.65.5.resp. (Benziger).

beings have been naturally oriented to this friendship by God at creation. This was Thomas's initial teaching on friendship in the context of God's love in the *Prima pars*, and he has been reinforcing it along the way, as illustrated in the passages noted throughout this chapter.<sup>635</sup> It is through the questions on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of virtue, however, where Thomas provides a further set of teachings about the way in which an understanding of friendship in the context of the moral virtues may become transformed into an understanding of friendship in the context of the theological virtues.

Human beings have been created for friendship, which is the life of love guided most naturally through the moral virtues. As the ruling virtue of the moral life, prudence must then be the ruling virtue in the practice of friendship. But since to practice a virtue is ultimately to practice its perfection—or correspondingly, to refuse to practice its perfection—seeking such perfection is to have some sort of orientation to the life of charity, even as the life of charity is beyond one's natural capacities. Since the life of charity constitutes a transformed life in God, Thomas must help to identify the ways in which this transformation may come about, and it is through the Person of the Holy Spirit, who

dwells in us by charity, as it is written, *God's charity has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us*. So also our reason is perfected by prudence. Hence, just as the moral virtues are connected with one another in prudence, so the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are connected with one another in charity, in such wise that one who has charity has all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, while none of the Gifts can be had without charity.<sup>636</sup>

Natural friendship, guided by prudence, is perfected in Divine friendship, which is guided by charity. And it is the Person of the Holy Spirit who facilitates this transformation and by whom salvation may be ultimately gained.<sup>637</sup> Through the movement of the Spirit, the

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<sup>635</sup> This progression began with *ST* I.20.2.ad3.

<sup>636</sup> *ST* I.II.68.5.resp.

<sup>637</sup> *ST* I.II.68.2; I.II.68.8.

powers of the soul are perfected. Moreover, perhaps it is only in the midst of such reflection on the Spirit that one may recognize how both the vertical and horizontal exercises of love have their place. While the gifts of the Spirit precede the moral virtues according to the “order of perfection and dignity, as the love of God is prior to the love of neighbour,” Thomas points out that it is in accordance with “the order of generation or disposition,” that “love of neighbour precedes the love of God, so far as the acts of love are concerned. It is in this way that the moral and intellectual virtues are prior to the Gifts; for when a man is in a good state as regards his own reason, he is disposed to be in a good state in regard to God.”<sup>638</sup>

Since it is the Holy Spirit facilitating this transformation from the friendship known according to prudence to the friendship known according to charity, it must also be the Holy Spirit who facilitates the transformation from the *familiaris conversatio* distinguishing the life of prudence from that of charity. The treatise on grace (I.II.109-114) that serves as the transition to the *Secunda secundae* allows Thomas to pursue this reflective sequence.<sup>639</sup>

#### 5.4.5 *Oratio*: premier discourse for self-knowledge (I.II.109-114)

The treatise on grace (I.II.109-114) constitutes Thomas’s first substantial discussion of *oratio* since the question on the prayers of the saints from the *Prima pars* (I.23.8). Here, however, Thomas focuses not on the saints in heaven, but rather on growth in self-knowledge on the part of wayfarers. Moreover, this process takes place through the empowering work of God’s grace which is a “participation of the Divine Nature” (*ad naturam divinam participatam*, I.II.110.3). In the final section of his reply in I.II.109.9, Thomas is answering

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<sup>638</sup> ST I.II.68.8.ad2.

<sup>639</sup> Through the treatise on grace, Thomas is able to develop more deeply the earlier discussion of grace and the Holy Spirit present at creation, ST I.95.1-4.

the question: “whether one who has already obtained grace, can, of himself and without further help of grace, do good and avoid sin.” He explains:

In the intellect, too, there remains the darkness of ignorance, whereby, as it is written (Rom. viii.26): *We know not what we should pray for as we ought [quid oremus sicut oportet, nescimus]*; since on account of the various turns of circumstances, and because we do not know ourselves perfectly, we cannot fully know what is for our good, according to Wis. ix. 14: *For the thoughts of mortal men are fearful and our counsels uncertain*. Hence we must be guided and guarded by God, Who knows and can do all things. For which reason also it is becoming in those who have been born again as sons of God, to say: *Lead us not into temptation, and Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, and whatever else is contained in the Lord’s Prayer pertaining to this.<sup>640</sup>

Grace is required for the entire journey of human living. It is in fact God’s grace that directs human beings as to the actual practice of prayer, and therefore is involved in the path of self-knowledge. Authentic prayer is a means of recognizing God’s intimate presence leading men and women closer to God. And it is through grace that prayer connects us more intimately with God who knows our very selves, and “what is for our good,” aspects of relationship that Thomas has already established as crucial aspects of true friendship. Moreover, wayfarers who have committed themselves to the practice of prayer—which is a cooperation with God’s grace in the journey of self-knowledge and of intimacy with God—find their model in the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer as the exemplary model by which he or she accepts being “guided and guarded by God, Who knows and can do all things.”

A central emphasis of Thomas that grace and human nature are not at odds with one another—that God’s help and our own efforts are in fact positively and inseparably engaged—makes itself clear from the beginning to the end of the questions on grace. Early in the treatise, through an analogy that considers God’s help in the context of Aristotle’s discussion of friendship, Thomas notes: “What we can do with the Divine assistance is not

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<sup>640</sup> ST I.II.109.9.resp. (Benziger).

altogether impossible to us; according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* iii.3): *What we can do through our friends, we can do, in some sense, by ourselves.*”<sup>641</sup> This same point about friendship is taken up in the last question of the *Prima secundae*. In I.II.114.6, Thomas addresses “whether a man can merit the first grace for another.” The conclusion to the main reply explains: “one may merit the first grace for another congruously; because a man in grace fulfills God’s will, and it is congruous and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfill man’s desire for the salvation of another.”<sup>642</sup> The difference between God’s friendship and human response, however, reveals itself in the disorder of human living, for which wayfarers must appeal to God’s mercy through impetrative prayer. And it is to impetrative prayer that Thomas predominately refers throughout the questions on grace, and with which he concludes each of the last two replies to the objections of I.II.114.6: “Dan ix. 18: *For it is not for our justifications that we present our prayers before Thy face, but for the multitude of Thy tender mercies.*”<sup>643</sup> As with all other human responses to God, the human response of prayer is itself an expression of human free will empowered and sustained by God.<sup>644</sup>

## 5.5 *Secunda secundae*: Prayer: remembering and growing in friendship

### 5.5.1 Petitionary prayer: gauging the movement of hope (II.II.17)

The way in which prayer has been presented so far is in the context of a relationship with a loving God who seeks intimacy with men and women through the gift of grace. The saints mediate God’s love through their prayers, and wayfarers grow in self-knowledge of this love through God’s mercy.<sup>645</sup> Thomas’s brief reference to prayer within his treatment of the theological virtue of hope (II.II.17-22) serves to reinforce this presentation by

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<sup>641</sup> ST I.II.109.4.ad2 (Benziger).

<sup>642</sup> ST I.II.114.6.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>643</sup> ST I.II.114.6.ad2 (Benziger).

<sup>644</sup> ST I.II.109.6.

<sup>645</sup> ST I.23.8; I.II.109-114.

highlighting God's invitation to an even deeper relationality through the life of the theological virtues. It is within this deepening of the life of grace that the virtues of faith, hope and charity lead men and women to union with God, such that their "walk[ing] as befits the light of grace" is essentially a walking in the friendship of God.<sup>646</sup> This culminating treatment of friendship that will be offered most declaratively in the beginning of the treatise on *caritas* (II.II.23), receives notable treatment in the discussion of friendship with God as the ultimate object of hope. It is within the early articles of question 17, which discuss the nature of hope, wherein Thomas considers an understanding of prayer explicitly as petition: "prayer (*petitio*) is an expression of hope, for it is written (Ps. xxxvi. 5): *Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him, and He will do it.*"<sup>647</sup> Thomas is here considering how hope, and through it, prayer, provides the dynamic key linking the person's life of faith and his or her life of charity, or union, or friendship with God. Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., explains the dynamic of hope in this context, citing Thomas in his concluding words: "While charity makes us adhere to God because of Himself, in uniting man's spirit with God's in a feeling of love, and faith makes man adhere to God inasmuch as he is the source of knowledge of the truth, 'hope makes us adhere to God as the principle in us of the perfect good, inasmuch as *through hope we rely on divine help to obtain beatitude.*'"<sup>648</sup> To attend to the movement of hope, then, is to recognize the divine source of movement in human experience; God leads persons through the life of faith by way of hope for a life of deeper union.

As noted above, Thomas's reflection on Psalm 36 in these early articles on the nature of hope has led him to briefly consider the implications of petitionary prayer. And despite the fact that no further reference to such prayer is made in any of the remaining questions of the

<sup>646</sup> See *ST* I.II.110.3 for the relation of grace to the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

<sup>647</sup> *ST* II.II.17.2.ob2; II.II.17.4.ob3 (Benziger).

<sup>648</sup> Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Spiritual Master*, 328. The italics are Torrell's; see *ST* II.II.17.6.



treatise (II.II.17-22), Thomas does make emphatic reference to the role of friendship in relationships marked both by hope and by charity. First, he distinguishes the relation of these virtues according to the “order of generation” and “of perfection.”<sup>649</sup> According to the first order, hope leads men and women to love of God [informed hope], and therefore to a recognition of God’s friendship. According to the second order, “charity naturally precedes hope, wherefore, with the advent of charity, hope is made more perfect, because we hope chiefly in our friends” [formed hope].<sup>650</sup> As a theological virtue, this hope which “proceeds from charity” is “the movement of living hope, viz., that whereby man hopes to obtain good from God, as from a friend.”<sup>651</sup> For a reader of the *Summa* who has been carefully attending to Thomas’s exercises in the discourse of friendship, the questions on hope serve to cultivate a desire to speak with God: to practice the premier colloquial activity of friendship (I.II.28), that is sustained and nurtured by grace for growth in self-knowledge (I.II.109), for which one was created (I.20), and which is best identified as the exemplary practice of prayer in the mediatory practice of the saints (I.22.8), since the human capacity for hope indicates that there is always something more drawing us to the good that is unity and love (I.II.32.3.ad3).

### 5.5.2 *Caritas*: call to divine friendship (II.II.23)

Whenever Thomas is focusing on the nature of friendship in the *Summa*, he is always also focusing on the nature of love.<sup>652</sup> Among such discussions of love—in particular, God’s love (I.20), human love (I.II.26-28), and the perfection of human love, which is charity

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<sup>649</sup> *ST* II.II.17.8.resp.

<sup>650</sup> *ST* II.II.17.8.resp.

<sup>651</sup> *ST* II.II.17.8.ad2.

<sup>652</sup> McEvoy, “The Other as Oneself,” 20. See also Paul Waddell, C.P., *Friends of God: Virtues and Gifts in Aquinas*, 88, and *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992). For an extensive list of sources, see the third section of the bibliography (“Additional studies on Aquinas’s doctrine of love, friendship, charity and related topics”) in *On Love and Charity: Readings from the Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, trans. Peter A. Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin, and Joseph Bolin (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008). It may also be viewed online at: <http://cuapress.cua.edu/res/docs/thomasaquinas-suppmaterials.pdf>.

(II.II.23-46)—that of *caritas* delivers Thomas’s most thorough definition of friendship in the entire *Summa*, precisely because of the transformative role of charity in human experience. More crucially, however, Thomas introduces a new teaching on love in this treatise, one that has been revealed only dialectically and in part throughout the earlier sections of the text: the discourse of friendship not only has its source in God (I.20.2.ad3). The very ground of the relationship between God and human beings is founded in this discourse of friendship, this *communicatio*. Thomas identifies this absolutely and incredibly extravagant reality that is God’s intimate love and mercy in the very first article of the treatise on charity in answer to the question “whether charity is friendship.” His reply is in three parts. It begins by repeating the distinction between loving another for our good versus loving another simply for themselves. Next Thomas emphasizes that mutual loving requires that it be based on some kind of fellowship: *Talis autem mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliqua communicatione*. Finally, he concludes that:

Cum igitur sit aliqua communicatio hominis ad Deum secundum quod nobis suam beatitudinem communicat, super hac communicatione oportet aliquam amicitiam fundari. De qua quidem communicatione dicitur I Cor., *Fidelis Deus per quem vocati estis in societatem Filii ejus*. Amor autem super hac communicatione fundatus est caritas. Unde manifestum est quod caritas amicitia quaedam est hominis ad Deum.

[since there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as He communicates His happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication, of which it is written (1 Cor. i. 9): *God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son*. The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God.]<sup>653</sup>

Human friendship with God, then, assumes the same definition as that of charity; Thomas is clearly comfortable with this equation. This friendship involves benevolent and mutual love, and Thomas agrees with Aristotle that all of the key elements of friendship have their basis in

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<sup>653</sup> ST II.II.23.1.resp. (Benziger).

*communicatio*. The profound reality at the heart of the Christian faith, however, is much more than this, since as Thomas notes, God *is* this *communicatio*—this fellowship and its discourse—in and through the Person of Christ. In fact, while the reply given by Thomas above begins in a formal sense with the core teaching of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and concludes with the last line of the grand movement of St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, it is more accurate to consider that Thomas begins not with Aristotle, but with St. John’s Gospel. For the *sed contra* of this article reads: “It is written (Jo. xv. 15): *I will not now call [dicam] you servants . . . but My friends.*” What should be striking to a reader who has been engaging in the *Summa*’s exercises in the discourse of friendship, is that in both of the framing scriptural passages to this first treatise on *caritas*, the God who has founded this *communicatio* by taking humanity to himself in the Person of Christ, has *called* [*dicam, vocati*] men and women in friendship. Discourse is constitutive of the love that is based on God’s *communicatio*.

From this understanding of *caritas* as discursive friendship based on *communicatio*, two crucial corollaries emerge. The first concerns the mediatory activities of friendship residing at the heart of Thomas’s understanding of *communicatio*. The second concerns the transformative work of the Spirit residing at the heart of all mediation. As Bobik has noted of Thomas’s reflection on the meaning of *communicatio* in this opening article of the treatise, it is a radical extension of Aristotle’s own understanding of friendship. Aristotle’s key distinction is between friendship understood *as* a *koinonia* and friendship understood as being “*in* a *koinonia*. To say that it *is* a *koinonia* is to focus on the *acts* or *operations* or *doings* of friends, which is clearly what Aristotle has in mind in, for example, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. IX, ch. 12, 1171 b 32. But to say that friendship is *in* a *koinonia* (as in . . . Bk.

VIII, ch. 12, 1161 b 11) is to focus on the *social context* in which friendship (along with justice) arises.”<sup>654</sup> These same two distinctions may be found in Thomas’s treatment of *communicatio* in the *Summa*, but Bobik identifies a third in the treatise on *caritas* which, while acknowledged in Aristotle’s philosophy in terms of the mutual love of human beings, is meant first and foremost in Thomas’s theology to be between God and humanity. In Thomas’s treatment,

There is, first, “communicatio” as designating a social relational context which is the foundation out of which friendship arises (or, at least, can arise). Secondly, there is “communicatio” as designating the activities of friendship. Thirdly, there is “communicatio” as designating the activity of offering a gift which provides a foundation (where there was none) out of which friendship can arise. Without this provided foundation, friendship could never arise. Indeed, without a foundation, no friendship can arise.<sup>655</sup>

In Bobik’s analysis of the first article of the treatise on *caritas* (II.II.23.1), he explicitly identifies the first and the third aspects of Thomas’s treatment of *communicatio*. In fact, both of these aspects—relationality and foundational generosity—are clearly reflected in the Pauline declaration: *God is faithful: by Whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son.*<sup>656</sup>

What Bobik overlooks, however, both in Thomas’s engagement with his scriptural citations as well as in the replies that follow upon them, is the second meaning attributed to *communicatio*: that of “the activities of friendship.” This second meaning is not relegated only to Thomas’s use of the term in the *Prima pars* and *Prima secundae*; in fact, it receives elevated attention in this treatise, beginning with the ‘call’ to friendship indicated in both the Johannine and Pauline citations indicated above. God, who gives himself in fellowship [first

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<sup>654</sup> Here, Bobik is citing the work of Bond, Gillon, Rausch, Wilms, Savagnone, and Keller in light of Thomas’s own treatment. See “Aquinas on Communicatio, the Foundation of Friendship and Caritas,” 6, n25.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

meaning of *communicatio*] through the foundational gift given in the Person of Christ [third meaning], has *called* men and women to have an intimate share in His love in the world [second meaning]. It is the activity of *discourse* that resides at the literal and figurative center of the Pauline text.

A closer examination of the objections and replies reveals that Thomas is also attending to this second meaning of *communicatio* throughout the article in order to pursue it further along in the treatise in a way that continues to dispose the reader for the premier activity of discourse that is prayer. In this article, *caritas* may be said to constitute the discursive *response* to Christ's call in two ways: first, by highlighting its implications for humanity's discourse with God, and second, by highlighting its implications for humanity's discourse with humanity. Among the three objections of II.II.23.1, all of which are engaged with Aristotle's understanding of friendship, the first is an objection to friendship with God based on the impossibility of intimate interaction with the Divine.<sup>657</sup> Thomas's reply begins by employing *communicatio*, only to abandon it for the more intimate term signifying the actual practices of friendship, *conversatio*:

duplex est hominis vita. Una quidem exterior secundum naturam sensibilem et corporalem, et secundum hanc vitam non est nobis **communicatio** vel **conversatio** cum Deo et angelis. Alia autem est vita hominis spiritualis secundum mentem, et secundum hanc vitam est nobis **conversatio** et cum Deo et cum angelis, in praesenti, quidem statu imperfecte, unde dicitur *Philipp.*, *Nostra conversatio in coelis est*. Sed ista **conversatio** perficietur in patria quando *servi ejus servient Deo et videbunt faciem ejus*, ut dicitur *Apoc.* Et ideo hic est caritas imperfecta, sed perficietur in patria.

[Man leads a double life. One is outward according to the world of body and senses; the communion or intercourse with God and the angels of which we are speaking is not here. The other is inward, according to the life of the mind and spirit; it is here that we have intercourse with God and the angels, though imperfectly in our present state, for *our citizenship is in heaven*, yet perfectly in man's true home where *his*

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<sup>657</sup> ST II.II.23.1.ob1.

*servants will serve God and will see his face*, as the *Revelation* says. And so here our charity is imperfect, but will be made perfect in heaven.]<sup>658</sup>

The imperfect *conversatio* shared in this life between human beings and God is reflective of the imperfect friendship (*caritas*) practiced by men and women in this life. While explicitly indicating that wayfarers' lives of friendship will only find perfect expression in heaven, this reply, in light of the entire movement of the *Secunda pars* up until this point, serves to cultivate a longing in the reader to know more deeply the ways of tending to the *conversatio* of this life in order to be worthy of the next.

Subsequent questions in the treatise address this longing by illuminating the paradox of *caritas*. While it is true that “the charity of a wayfarer can increase” (II.II.24.4), it is also true that “the charity of Christ . . . surpasseth all knowledge” (II.II.24.1.ad2). What an authentic cultivation of this friendship requires, then, is an intimate participation in Christ's love, and such participation is possible only insofar as the Holy Spirit is welcomed: “This is what God does in fact when he increases charity: he makes it take a deeper hold, and brings it about that the likeness of the Holy Spirit is more perfectly shared in the soul” (II.II.24.5.ad3). Thomas is disposing the reader here for the transformative discourse of prayer, for as the treatise on *oratio* will reveal, “to pray in spirit and in truth is to set about praying through the instigation of the Spirit.”<sup>659</sup>

All reference to the discourse of prayer as growth in charity is not reserved for the treatise on *oratio*, however. Moreover, Thomas's explicit discussion of prayer in the treatise on charity is in the context of horizontal exercises. While the first objection of II.II.23.1 was focused on *caritas* as friendship with God, the following two are objections to the possibility

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<sup>658</sup> ST II.II.23.1.ad1 (bold added).

<sup>659</sup> ST II.II.83.13.ad1 (Benziger).

of friendship with all of God's people, namely enemies (*inimici*)<sup>660</sup> and sinners (*peccatores*).<sup>661</sup> The replies found in the article itself constitute a profound meditation on the implications of God's *communicatio* as the founding gift of love. Men and women are called to respond to this gift in accordance with the faithful love of friendship: "when for the sake of a friend you love those belonging to him, be they children, servants or anyone connected with him at all, even if they hurt or hate us, so much do we love him."<sup>662</sup> Where the human response to this gift ultimately reveals itself is in the activities of charity. Thomas attends to these activities in his answer to the question, "whether it is necessary for salvation that we should show our enemies the signs and effects of love":

The effects and signs [signa et effectus] of charity are the result of inward love . . . it is absolutely necessary . . . that we should inwardly love our enemies in general. . . . We must accordingly apply this to the showing of the effects and signs of love. For some of the signs and favors of love are shown to our neighbors in general, as when we pray [*orat*] for all the faithful, or for a whole people, or when anyone bestows a favor on a whole community: and the fulfillment of the precept requires that we should show like favors or signs of love towards our enemies.<sup>663</sup>

While there are other such activities of charity that correspond with its perfection to which human beings aspire, Thomas indicates that without prayer, neither have we fulfilled what is "absolutely necessary," nor will we be able to approach its perfection.

Thomas attends to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as the gift most fitting to the theological virtue of charity; the treatise on the gift of wisdom is the culminating one in Thomas's positive treatise on the virtue of charity.<sup>664</sup> In this way, he is able to conclude his extended reflection on friendship with God with a reflection on the fullness of love and

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<sup>660</sup> *ST* II.II.23.1.ob2.

<sup>661</sup> *ST* II.II.23.1.ob3.

<sup>662</sup> *ST* II.II.23.1.ad2: "In this way the friendship of charity extends even to our enemies, for we love them for the sake of God who is the principal in our loving."

<sup>663</sup> *ST* II.II.25.9.resp.

<sup>664</sup> See the order of questions in the treatise of II.II.23-46.

knowledge that arises only through an intimate cooperation with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the entire question dedicated to the gift of wisdom may be considered a profound reflection on the cooperation with the Spirit as the source of all authentic relationality, human and divine. The reflection begins with a distinction between wisdom as an intellectual virtue focused on the relation of causes, and wisdom as a gift focused on relation to God cultivated through the Holy Spirit: “according to 1 Cor. ii.15: *The spiritual man judgeth all things, because . . . the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.*”<sup>665</sup> As a gift, wisdom does not arise primarily from the individual efforts of human beings but through a cooperation with the Holy Spirit who has transformed human desire and judgment into divine desire and judgment. This leads to further reflection upon the connaturality which is experienced through the virtue of charity and leads to a deep awareness of the work of the Spirit.<sup>666</sup> Finally, it is through this deep participation in the life of the Spirit that the life of beatitude with God and others is more faithfully anticipated. This point is repeated throughout question 45: the gift of wisdom is at once an insight into life with God *and* life with others—these cannot be understood as exclusive of one another. The Spirit does not discriminate one from the other. Such a point is clearly crucial for Thomas, as he seeks to express it in different forms throughout the question. Emphasizing that the gift of wisdom is both speculative and practical, he continues: “from the very fact that wisdom as a gift is more excellent than wisdom as an intellectual virtue, since it attains to God more intimately by a kind of union of the soul with Him, it is able to direct us not only in contemplation but also in action.”<sup>667</sup>

Thomas’s emphatic point that the wisdom of the Holy Spirit directs men and women in both the speculative and practical intellect, and in both the contemplative and active life,

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<sup>665</sup> ST II.II.45.1.resp. (Benziger).

<sup>666</sup> ST II.II.45.2, II.II.45.4.

<sup>667</sup> ST II.II.45.3.resp., II.II.45.3.ad1. This point is stressed again in II.II.45.5 and II.II.45.6.ad3.



functions as a pattern through which *communicatio* and *conversatio*—or friendship and the activities of friendship—may be more fruitfully considered. It is in the context of this pattern that the ends of wisdom, charity and prudence converge. It is in the context of this pattern, also, that Thomas returns again to his reflection on the presentation of Wisdom with which he began the *Secunda pars* with the questions on “the attainment of happiness.” However, whereas his reflection on Wisdom 8.16 (“Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness.”) occupies the response in those early questions, here it occupies the objection wherein wisdom is contested as “merely contemplative, and not practical or active.”<sup>668</sup> Thomas’s response implies that the wisdom of God is not only enjoyed among the saints who are in heaven, but it is also dynamically working among the lives of those still on their journey to God: “Nor from the direction of wisdom does there result any bitterness or toil in human acts; on the contrary the result of wisdom is to make the bitter sweet, and labor a rest.”<sup>669</sup> After having arrived at this final reply to the objections concerning the speculative and practical life of virtue, a return to the *sed contra* proves equally fruitful: “It is written (Coloss. iv. 5): *Walk with wisdom towards them that are without.*”<sup>670</sup>

### 5.5.3 *Oratio*: premier activity of friendship (II.II.83)

To engage the movement of the *Summa Theologiae* as a series of exercises in a theology of discourse is to encounter an ever-deepening dialectic of reflections on friendship and its discourse working throughout the text. Whereas the reflections on friendship contribute a whole range of exercises in the dynamics of relationality and its source in God, the reflections on discourse, always emerging from discussions of relationality up until this point, have contributed a range of exercises in the dynamics of the communication of

<sup>668</sup> ST II.II.45.3.ob3 (Benziger).

<sup>669</sup> ST II.II.45.3.ad3 (Benziger).

<sup>670</sup> ST II.II.45.3.sc. (Benziger).

friendship. More specifically, up until this point in the *Summa*, these reflections on discourse have generally functioned to dispose the reader to meditate upon the various categories to which discourse has been referred: *communicatio*, *conversatio*, *colloquium*, *consilium*, *petitio*, *oratio*. It is only with the treatise on prayer in the *Secunda secundae*, however, that Thomas pursues a sustained reflection on the nature of discourse itself, and notably so. For the treatise on *oratio* is the longest of the *Summa Theologiae*, with 17 articles. In fact, here the dialectic shifts from discourse treated in the context of friendship to relationality treated in the context of discourse itself. Simply in terms of the form, then, of question 83 of the *Secunda secundae*, Thomas is calling attention to theological reflection on discourse.<sup>671</sup> Moreover, he is highlighting *oratio* as the principal form of transformative discourse for the life of faithful discipleship.<sup>672</sup>

The placement of the treatise on *oratio* (II.II.83) deserves attention. In terms of the broader movement of the *Summa*, it is presented in the context of the cardinal virtue of justice (II.II.57-122), and follows closely upon the treatment of the theological virtue of charity as “friendship with God” (II.II.23-46), separated only by the cardinal virtue of prudence (II.II.47-56) and its association with the gift of counsel. The structure of this order reflects that of the *Prima pars*, wherein the discussion of the prayers of the saints (I.23.8) from among the questions on providence and predestination (I.22, 23), follow Thomas’s discussion of God’s love (I.20) and His justice and mercy (I.21). Such a context for prayer—

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<sup>671</sup> Ceslaus Veleck, O.P., “Appendix III: Prayer,” *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 39 (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964- ), 259-261; here, 259.

<sup>672</sup> Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, 279: “whereas Thomas worked hard to unscramble the notion of prayer, he seems to have been much less interested in disentangling ‘contemplation,’ so that his treatise in the *Summa* is not entirely coherent and we do not find a succession of discussions of ‘contemplation’ to parallel the dossier on prayer.”

that it always succeeds Thomas's discussion of love—is worth repeating, since both discussions of love (I.20, II.II.23) include important statements on friendship.

The placement of the treatise on *oratio* in the *Secunda pars* is worthy of further note for the way in which it is treated within the virtue of religion, which constitutes “a potential part of justice.” As a virtue, religion is part and parcel of human flourishing, but its special status in terms of justice also means that in accordance with Thomas's framework, “it cannot be regarded . . . as a safe investment assuring a certain return. By religion we are engaged in ‘exchanges,’ but not as equal partners. If we gain anything, this is not the calculated result of efforts but a gift.”<sup>673</sup> From the very beginning of his discussion of religion, in fact, Thomas declines the possible options of introducing it either by way of monastic *lectio*, or by the tradition of compunction, or by the ancient tradition of duty, in favor of a more basic understanding of religion that is common to all of these options:

whether religion is derived from frequent re-reading [relectio], from a repeated seeking of something lost through negligence [religere], or from the fact that it is a bond [religare], religion implies a relationship to God. For it is He to Whom we ought to be bound as to our unfailing principle; to Whom also our choice should be resolutely directed as to our last end; and Whom we lose when we neglect Him by sin, and should recover by believing in Him and confessing our faith.<sup>674</sup>

The acts of belief and confession are certainly involved in giving to God what is due. But understood in this way, they are a minimalist practice of religion to say the least. Thomas places such acts in the context of something far greater—the invitation to deeper relationship with God, one that integrally involves both the intellectual and the affective practice of friendship.<sup>675</sup> Right from the start of Thomas's treatment of religion, then, all memorial

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<sup>673</sup> Ceslaus Veleck, O.P., “Appendix I: The Setting,” *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 39 (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964- ), 253.

<sup>674</sup> *ST* II.II.81.1.resp.

<sup>675</sup> In *ST* II.II.80.1, Thomas distinguishes his own understanding of the relationship of justice and friendship from that of Cicero, whom he shows to adhere strictly to what is “the essential character of justice [which]

traditions are understood in the context of relationship. This allows Thomas to distinguish his own treatment of prayer as distinct from that of the treatment of penance, which was the traditional route, and the one taken by him in his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.<sup>676</sup> In this way also, *oratio* serves as a vehicle for cultivating relationship by “rejecting constantly the temptation of trying to manipulate the divine [and the human] for human ends and recognizing constant indebtedness to a generosity for which no adequate return is possible.”<sup>677</sup>

As in the other brief treatments of prayer in the *Secunda pars*, in the treatise on *oratio* Thomas is focusing on the prayers of wayfarers. What is new here, however, is a specific focus on the nature of prayer itself as one of the two “interior” and primary acts of religion, the first being that of devotion (*devotio*).<sup>678</sup> By prefacing the treatment of prayer with that of devotion, Thomas is formally introducing a new element to the treatment of prayer, one unique among his own works and among those of his forebears.<sup>679</sup> What makes devotion unique is its status as a “special act of the will” which has as its sole aim “to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God.”<sup>680</sup> Thomas’s very first words of reply to the four articles on devotion associate it with the eternal quality of a vow, one to which all who are faithful to God may commit themselves: “The word ‘devotion’ is derived from ‘vowing’ (*devovendo*); hence, people are called devout when, so to speak, they vow themselves to God.”<sup>681</sup>

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consists in rendering to another his due according to equality.” See II.II.80.1.ad2 for his integration of Aristotle’s treatment of friendship, which engages the affective life in this context.

<sup>676</sup> Dewan, “St. Thomas and the Ontology of Prayer,” 366.

<sup>677</sup> Veleck, “Appendix I: The Setting,” 253.

<sup>678</sup> *ST* II.II.82.1.resp.

<sup>679</sup> Ceslaus Veleck, O.P., “Appendix II: Devotion,” *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. 39 (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964- ), 256.

<sup>680</sup> *ST* II.II.82.1.resp.

<sup>681</sup> *ST* II.II.82.1.resp.

Devotion constitutes the foundational, interior act of prayer, and is the basis of every authentic act of religion.<sup>682</sup> As such, devotion plays a crucial part of a theology of discourse in which *oratio* constitutes the premier activity. Even before introducing the treatise on prayer, Thomas emphasizes this work of devotion by attending to its relation to charity, as well as its integral facilitation with the memorial traditions of goodness and sin. In terms of devotion's relation to charity, Thomas appeals yet again to human beings' fundamental orientation to the experience of friendship. For the special act of the will that constitutes devotion in terms of the worship of God through religion is based on the prior movement of love that is the foundation of the virtue of charity in terms of union with God,<sup>683</sup> and which Thomas identifies as friendship. As such, "charity both causes devotion, since love makes one prompt to serve a friend, and is nourished by devotion, just as any friendship is nourished and strengthened by being dwelt on and acted on."<sup>684</sup>

Moreover, since both devotion and charity are primarily concerned with the transformation of the will in relationship with God, the object of which is knowing God as the source of all goodness, Thomas proceeds to establish the act of devotion as that which is intimately engaged with the formative memorial traditions of Christian spiritual practice. The very act of devotion arises "in one of two ways. The first way is by consideration of the divine goodness and kindness . . . . The second type is by considering man's weaknesses, which leads to the realization that man must depend upon God . . . . since it banishes presumption which leads man to trust in his own strength."<sup>685</sup> This reflection is crucial to an understanding and practice of devotion in Thomas's estimation. Without it, the effect of

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<sup>682</sup> *ST* II.II.82.2, II.II.83.3.

<sup>683</sup> *ST* II.II.82.2.ad1.

<sup>684</sup> *ST* II.II.82.2.ad2.

<sup>685</sup> *ST* II.II.82.3.resp.

devotion that facilitates the practice of prayer, and that he specifically identifies with the experience of delight, is without foundation. The final article of the question on devotion is dedicated to this reflection:

The direct and principal effect of devotion is spiritual joy [*spiritualem laetitiam*], though sorrow is its secondary and indirect effect. As the previous article states . . . . Considering God's goodness is the principal cause [of devotion] because this is the goal of a man who submits himself to God. From this consideration joy follows, as the Psalmist says, *I remembered God and was delighted* [*Memor fui Dei et delectatus sum*].<sup>686</sup>

It is through the act of devotion that the life of faithful discipleship may be most authentically identified as a life of joyful service in faithful relationship with God by honoring the memory of God's love. Moreover, since the transformative discourse of prayer will be shown to be necessarily based in devotion, Thomas is already indicating that prayer itself is a discourse that is both guided by the life of friendship, as well being a cultivating factor in that life.

While explicit references to friendship are notably absent from the entire treatise on prayer, two points should be noted. First, and most importantly, explicit references to charity are working throughout the treatise. A second related point is that I suggest Thomas is here concerned with prayer primarily as a central *activity* of friendship. As such, he is going to examine in the seventeen articles of question 83 this activity *in itself*, rather than reflecting *about* friendship as he has done at critical points throughout the *Summa* thus far.

Furthermore, the following analysis of Thomas's work in this treatise is not in any way an attempt to exhaust its possibilities for theological reflection.<sup>687</sup> What it does attempt, however, is to interpret Thomas's treatise as a reflective meditation that attends on one hand to the general nature of all discourse, and on the other to the transformative spiritual

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<sup>686</sup> ST II.II.82.4.resp.

<sup>687</sup> On this point I also defer to the estimation of the treatise by such scholars as Simon Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, 271, and Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the Ontology of Prayer," 366.

conversation that is the life of the Holy Spirit in the world. To this end, I will present Thomas's discussion of *oratio* as a deepening dialectic that engages the formal elements of prayer through an ongoing encounter with the relational dynamics of these elements. More specifically, the presentation is as follows: *oratio* as general and special discourse (articles 1-3); prayer's relationality (4); content of prayer (5-6); relationality (7-8); exemplary prayer (9); relationality (10-11); the form of prayer (12-15); and relationality (16-17).<sup>688</sup>

Throughout the opening articles of the treatise, Thomas identifies the semiotic trajectory that is taken up by the term *oratio* as general and special discourse, beginning with an indication in article one that to pursue such a project has authoritative backing: "Isidore says, *to pray is to speak*."<sup>689</sup> As a term categorizing all discourse in general, *oratio* is "spoken reason" [*oris ratio*], which, through its capacity in the practical intellect, is engaged in an ongoing inquiry of discerning the best order of arranging the matters of life.<sup>690</sup> It is this general understanding of *oratio* as inquiring discourse that informs the more specific identification of *oratio* as petition (*petitio*), "in line with Augustine's comment that 'prayer is a kind of petition.'"<sup>691</sup> Finally, due to the fact that the reason is moved by the will to act, and that charity is the ultimate perfecter of the movement of the will by moving it to union with God, petition emerges into its contemplative mode: "So Dionysius . . . says that 'when we

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<sup>688</sup> The specific questions of the treatise are as follows: (1) Is prayer an act of the cognitive or appetitive powers? (2) Is prayer useful? (3) Is prayer an act of religion? (4) Should we only pray to God? (5) Should we ask for something definite when we pray? (6) Should we ask for temporal goods when we pray? (7) Should we pray for others? (8) Should we to pray for our enemies? (9) Concerning the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, (10) Is prayer proper to rational beings? (11) Do the saints in heaven pray for us? (12) Should prayer be vocal? (13) Is attention necessary during prayer? (14) Should prayer continue for a long time? (15) Is praying meritorious? (16) Do sinners achieve anything through prayer? (17) What are the different kinds of prayer?

<sup>689</sup> *ST* II.II.83.1.sc.

<sup>690</sup> *ST* II.II.83.1.resp. It is Cassiodorus's commentary on Psalm 38 that provides the reference for prayer as "spoken reason."

<sup>691</sup> *ST* II.II.83.1.resp.

call upon God in our prayers, we are present to him with our minds unveiled.”<sup>692</sup> Ultimately, Thomas explains, even Damascene’s identification of prayer as “an ascent of the mind to God” includes this element of petition.<sup>693</sup> By presenting *oratio* in this manner—that is, as the discursive act of prudence that is oriented to the transforming virtue of *caritas*—Thomas is affirming it as the premier discourse for human flourishing. He reinforces this presentation in the following two articles by emphasizing how *oratio* is an authentic mediatory practice by which human beings effect change in the world,<sup>694</sup> which, through its psychosomatic status, “excels all other acts of religion.”<sup>695</sup> In this sense, the act of prayer itself is a source of gratitude, “so Chrysostom says, “consider what a joy is granted you, what glory is bestowed upon you, that you can speak with God in your prayers [*orationibus fabulari cum Deo*], that you can engage in conversation [*miscere colloquia*] with Christ and plead for whatever you want, whatever you desire [*quod velis, quod desideras, postulare*].”<sup>696</sup>

Following the opening discussion of the discursive nature of *oratio*, Thomas introduces the first of a series of questions explicitly concerning the relational dynamic of prayer. “Should we pray only to God?” he asks in article 4. While the question itself indicates a vertical exercise in prayer, since only God can fulfill our prayers,<sup>697</sup> the general movement of the article is actually concerned with right relations among God’s creatures, including a right understanding of prayers “to the angels and the saints,” as well as to “people in this world.”<sup>698</sup> In each case, the practice of prayer is offered by Thomas as a deeply corporate venture shared among God’s people: “we address prayer to the angels and the saints not

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<sup>692</sup> ST II.II.83.1.ad2.

<sup>693</sup> ST II.II.83.1.ad2.

<sup>694</sup> ST II.II.83.2.resp: “So human beings have to do certain things . . . in order to bring about certain effects by their acts, according to the pattern planned by God.”

<sup>695</sup> ST II.II.83.3.ad3.

<sup>696</sup> ST II.II.83.2.ad3.

<sup>697</sup> ST II.II.83.4.resp.

<sup>698</sup> ST II.II.83.4.resp., ad3.



because we want them to let God know what we want, but because we want our petitions to be successful through their intercessions and merits.” Moreover, the cooperative nature of prayer is such that it informs the conversation of daily living: “People in this world or in purgatory do not yet enjoy the vision of the Word which would enable them to know what we are thinking or saying, and so we do not beg for their intercession by praying, but, in the case of the living, we ask for their intercession by talking to them [*colloquendo*].”<sup>699</sup>

The role of prayer along the journey of self-knowledge that was introduced in the questions on grace (I.II.109-114) reappears in the following two articles concerning the content of prayer. Thomas’s discussion in these articles tends to cultivate humility in his reader on both an apophatic and cataphatic level. Article 5 cultivates humility by emphasizing our ignorance of ourselves and our urgent need of the Holy Spirit who “helps our weakness by inspiring us with holy desires and so making us plead rightly.”<sup>700</sup> Article 6 cultivates humility by insisting that earnest desires for divine assistance in worldly matters actually serve to elevate such matters, in a way that they would not otherwise be comprehended if they had not been brought to prayer.<sup>701</sup>

Again Thomas adverts to the relational dynamic of prayer, asking about the worthiness of prayer for others (article 7) and for enemies in particular (article 8). This time, however, his inquiry into the corporate nature of prayer attends more explicitly to its devotional nature, explaining the nature of transformed desire as reflected in prayer that is for self and others<sup>702</sup> and that finds its exemplary model in the Lord’s Prayer: “As Cyprian says, the reason for our saying ‘Our Father’ and not ‘My Father’ and ‘Give us’ not ‘Give me’ is

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<sup>699</sup> ST II.II.83.4.ad3.

<sup>700</sup> ST II.II.83.5.ad1.

<sup>701</sup> ST II.II.83.6.ad3.

<sup>702</sup> ST II.II.83.7.resp.

that the teacher of unity did not want prayer to be made in a state of isolation. . . .he wanted one person to pray for all, just as he bore all of us in himself alone.”<sup>703</sup> An extended exercise in humility is also working throughout these questions, serving to cultivate a deeper commitment to the prayer of all of God’s people: “since we cannot distinguish between the predestined and the reprobate, as Augustine says, and so should not deny anyone the benefit of fraternal correction, on the same basis, we should not deny anyone the help of our prayers.”<sup>704</sup> Furthermore, since the practice of charity is marked by the associations and similitudes characteristic of devotional love rather than with the divisions and distinctions more characteristic of a judgment made in isolation, prayer understood as the practice of *caritas* is always focused on the love of another and the good of another: “So we are bound to pray for our enemies in the same way that we are bound to love them. How we are bound to love them we have already seen, in the treatise on charity; we must love their human nature, not their guilt.”<sup>705</sup> And what is being repeated from the treatise on charity, has already been discussed as early as the treatise on God’s love from the *Prima pars*.<sup>706</sup>

The Lord’s Prayer is the exemplary prayer of the faithful, not only for the way in which it cultivates unity among God’s people, which was highlighted in article 7, but also for the way in which it cultivates unity within the person herself: “this prayer not only instructs our pleading, it also gives shape to our whole affective life” by directing us to our ultimate end, who is God.<sup>707</sup> Once again the memorial traditions designated in the treatise on devotion receive central attention in this reply: “There are two ways in which something can set us on our way toward our goal: directly or indirectly. We are directly set on our way by any good

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<sup>703</sup> ST II.II.83.7.ad1.

<sup>704</sup> ST II.II.83.7.ad3.

<sup>705</sup> ST II.II.83.8.resp.

<sup>706</sup> See ST II.II.25.8,9; I.20.2.ad4.

<sup>707</sup> ST II.II.83.9.resp.

which helps us toward our goal.” Otherwise, Thomas adds, we approach our goal indirectly “by the removal of obstacles.” These are three: sin, temptation, and the pain associated with present trials.<sup>708</sup>

By attending again to the relationality of prayer, his reflection recalls the strength-in-weakness topos of the correspondence of Heloise and Abelard. Thomas begins by furthering the exercise of humility in article 10, emphasizing how the reasonableness of the person of prayer is marked predominantly by their acknowledged sense of weakness, vulnerability or need: “So praying properly belongs to beings that have reason and have someone superior to them who can be entreated.”<sup>709</sup> The question of article 11, “Do the saints in heaven pray for us?” reflects back to the first question on prayer in the *Prima pars*. There is a significant difference, however, between these two questions. Whereas the earlier question was focused on the saints in heaven, and moreover, on the efficacy of their prayers, the present article is more closely focused on the transformative nature of prayer itself. As Thomas notes, citing St. Jerome in the concluding line of his main reply: “If the apostles and martyrs pray for other people while they are still in the body, when they still need to worry about themselves, how much more will they do so after they have won their crowns, their victories and their triumphs?”<sup>710</sup> The prayers of the saints are in fact spoken in the world whenever those whose hearts are conformed to God seek God’s will.<sup>711</sup> Thomas’s final replies to the objections in this article maintain an ever-deepening emphasis on prayer as a radically intimate and communal venture designated by God for the unity of God’s people. This includes a call to attention to the unique names by which each saint was “best known to us”

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<sup>708</sup> ST II.II.83.9.resp.

<sup>709</sup> ST II.II.83.10.resp.

<sup>710</sup> ST II.II.83.11.resp.

<sup>711</sup> ST II.II.83.11.ad2.

during their lifetime,<sup>712</sup> as well as the striking last words of an otherwise characteristic Dionysian reflection confirming Thomas's radical sense of the communal nature of prayer as designated by the Lord: "God wants lower beings to be helped by all higher beings, and so it is proper not just to seek help from the higher saints, but also from the lower ones; otherwise we should have to confine ourselves to begging mercy from God alone."<sup>713</sup>

Following the striking tribute to a theology of discourse that was building in the relationality articles of 7, 8 and 11 of the treatise on prayer, Thomas moves, through something of a denouement in articles 12-15, by attending to several rather technical questions concerned with the form that prayer should take, before concluding them with the question of the meritorious nature of prayer. Throughout these articles, which include distinctions between communal and individual prayer, the types of vocal prayer, the matters of attention and duration concerning prayer, and the general conditions necessary for prayer, two general points of emphasis emerge. One point is the necessity of discernment on the part of anyone seeking to cultivate the life of prayer, since prayer is for the particular formation in charity of those who are praying. Thomas twice employs the analogy of the physician in these articles. In attending to the matter of the duration of prayer, he explains that "whatever we are dealing with, its quantity ought to be proportionate to its purpose. Medicine, for instance, has to be taken in the right quantity to restore the patient to health."<sup>714</sup> Thomas employs this analogy not only for those who pray, but also to describe the work of the Divine Physician:

This is why Augustine says that someone praying faithfully for the necessities of this life is both mercifully heard and mercifully not heard, because the doctor knows better than the patient what is going to be useful to someone who is sick. This is the

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<sup>712</sup> *ST* II.II.83.11.ad5.

<sup>713</sup> *ST* II.II.83.11.ad4: "alioquin esset solius Dei misericordia imploranda."

<sup>714</sup> *ST* II.II.83.14.resp.

reason why even Paul was not heard when he asked for the sting in his flesh to be removed; it was not expedient.<sup>715</sup>

By attending to the analogy of the physician to express both the work of God and that of women and men praying for salvation, the mediatory work of human beings continues to be cultivated in this treatise. This work must, however, have its basis in devotion,<sup>716</sup> and this constitutes Thomas's second point of emphasis working throughout articles 12-15: the life of prayer is always a life of humble faithfulness in the Lord. Whereas this point is reflected more implicitly in Thomas's indication that vocal prayer is not necessarily only relegated to the prayer of novices,<sup>717</sup> it is reflected most explicitly in the question concerning the meritorious nature of prayer: "Prayer comes from charity by way of the virtue of religion, since prayer is an act of religion, as we have seen, and it is accompanied by various other virtues which are necessary for the goodness of prayer, namely humility and faith."<sup>718</sup> If these virtues are rightly disposed to the "prompting of the Spirit," then even in spite of human weakness, prayer is being offered "in spirit and in truth."<sup>719</sup>

The closing articles of the treatise on *oratio* attend to the relational dynamic of prayer by engaging in a repetition of the central themes that have been working throughout the treatise. In answer to the question, "Do sinners obtain anything from God by praying?" Thomas begins the main reply by repeating the way in which God's mediators in the world should imitate God's encounter with others in relationship: "There are two ways of looking at sinners: we may think of their human nature, which God loves, or we may think of their guilt,

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<sup>715</sup> *ST* II.II.83.15.ad2.

<sup>716</sup> *ST* II.II.83.12.resp; II.II.83.15.resp.

<sup>717</sup> *ST* II.II.83.12.resp.

<sup>718</sup> *ST* II.II.83.15.resp.

<sup>719</sup> *ST* II.II.83.13.ad1.

which God hates.”<sup>720</sup> Thomas’s repeated point is that we should be loving all those whom God loves. The article concludes by repeating the radically communal participation in prayer to which God calls God’s people: “As we have seen, the Lord’s Prayer is recited in the name of the church as a whole, so if people who are individually not willing to forgive their neighbors’ sins say the Lord’s Prayer, they are not lying, even though they are saying something which is not true of them as individuals, because it is true of the church.”<sup>721</sup> In this way the Lord’s Prayer is exemplary; through it, the ecclesial community embodies a school of friendship for the formation of each of its members.

As the final article of the treatise on prayer, article 17 is an inquiry into the categories attributed to prayer in St. Paul’s First Letter to Timothy (1 Tim 2.1).<sup>722</sup> While the article begins as an excursion into the distinctions between “supplications, petitions, intercessions and thanksgivings,” it concludes by invoking the memorial tradition of goodness in light of the very first discussion guiding the entire treatise—relationship with a God who desires intimacy with his people:

When we are talking about several different things, the ones that are past come before the ones that are future; but where we are talking about one and the same thing, it is future before it is past. So we thank God for his other blessings before we embark on our pleading, but in the case of any individual blessing we first plead for it and only at the end, once we have received it, do we give thanks for it. But prayer comes before pleading, since that is how we approach the God to whom we are going to address our petition. And entreaty comes before prayer, because it is the thought of God’s goodness which gives us the courage to approach him.<sup>723</sup>

By invoking the movement of memory in this passage, Thomas’s reflection here indicates that taken together, the parts of prayer fulfill the deep desire of the prudent person for good

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<sup>720</sup> *ST II.II.83.16.resp.*

<sup>721</sup> *ST II.II.83.16.ad3.*

<sup>722</sup> *ST II.II.83.17*: “*utrum convenienter dicantur esse orationis partes obsecrationes, orationes, postulationes, et gratiarum actiones.*”

<sup>723</sup> *ST II.II.83.17.ad3.*

counsel, ultimately received through the Holy Spirit and anticipated in the earlier questions on prudence.<sup>724</sup> More specifically, the prayers of entreaty and thanksgiving fulfill the will's inclination to offer discursive acknowledgment for the memory of God's goodness.

With this closing article, exercises in *oratio* as the premier activity of mediatory friendship in the world conclude on a note of humility and gratitude for the Divine relationship extended to humanity. A further note of speculation is required, however. For Thomas's appeal to the categories of prayer is an appeal to the opening to St. Paul's second chapter of his First Letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 2.1). But Paul's reference to prayer serves simply as a salutary introduction to his central message, which follows almost immediately upon his introduction, and which is the good news of Christ as Divine mediator of humanity: "For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time . . . . I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument" (1 Tim. 2.5-6). Paul's rhetorical structure linking prayer and the meditation of Christ as Mediator may also be discerned in Thomas's project in the *Summa*. For the treatise on *oratio* is not the last explicit treatise on prayer in this text. Rather, it may be said to constitute the prefatory exercise to the treatise attending to the prayer of the Divine Mediator himself (III.21.1-4) in the *Tertia pars*.

#### 5.6 *Tertia pars*: Christ, Mediator of the discourse of friendship

A sustained reflection on the dynamics of *communicatio* in the *Summa* must include an engagement with Thomas's treatment of terms of relationality and of discourse working throughout the text. The basic human experience of natural friendship (*amicitia*) and its

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<sup>724</sup> ST II.II.49.1.resp.: "It behooves us to argue, as it were, about the future from the past; wherefore memory of the past is necessary in order to take good counsel for the future."

activities (*conversatio*) is fundamental to the fulfillment of every human being, and constitutes loving another for their own sake. The friendship that is charity (*caritas*) is the divine inheritance to which all human beings are invited as created persons called into fellowship with God through the Person of Christ. Such a friendship constitutes a whole new level of human fulfillment characterized by the life of the Spirit which is “being-in-love in an unrestricted manner [which] is a real, intrinsic, proper, supernatural fulfillment of our natural capacity for self-transcendence.”<sup>725</sup> This friendship with God is most truly known through “the fellowship of His Son.”<sup>726</sup> By the conclusion of the *Secunda Pars*, Thomas has offered these fundamental truths about friendship in the *Summa*, such that the *Prima pars* primarily reflects a downward, vertical movement, from God’s love to human love, while the *Secunda pars* primarily reflects a horizontal movement through its attention to love shared among human beings, including an introduction to the love shared through Christ’s humanity.

With the *Tertia Pars*, the discourse of friendship reflects its most dynamic form, taking on—in a sustained manner—both the vertical and horizontal movements through the Person of Christ. What was existentially unintelligible in the treatise on *oratio* due to the weakness of human comprehension now discovers its founding intelligibility. Here, the divine designation for friendship and its discourse introduced in I.20 is truly embodied through the “mystery of the Incarnation” (III. prologue). God, *as God*, has condescended to engage us, *as human beings*, in our human mutuality, itself a divine gift. The following reading of the discourse of friendship centers around three questions in the *Tertia Pars*: the *communicatio* of the Incarnation (q. 1); Christ’s prayer (q. 21); and Christ as Mediator of

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<sup>725</sup> Robert Doran, S.J., *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 50. This experience is marked by God’s mystery: “In ways we hardly understand, this universe and everything in it were from the beginning oriented, ordered, configured to the missions of the Son and the Spirit.”

<sup>726</sup> 1 Cor. 1.9. See *ST* II.II.23.1, cited above.



friendship (q. 26). Through each of these questions, Thomas revisits the movements of the *Prima pars* and *Secunda pars* concerning friendship, but this time he does so explicitly through the Person of Christ. In this way, the entire *Tertia Pars* may be considered to be a reflection on divine friendship and the perfection of human friendship: what God has done for our sake through Christ. By engaging the three particular questions noted as significant movements or spiritual exercises in the discourse of friendship in the *Tertia Pars*, the reader is invited to deeper reflection upon: the call to divine friendship through God's love in the sending of his Son (q. 1); the fulfillment of human discourse in Christ (q. 21); the implications of the discourse of friendship for the history of humankind through Christ as mediator (q. 26).

#### 5.6.1 The Incarnation: *communicatio* of God's love (III.1)

If there is one overriding emphasis orienting the articles of III.1, it is that God's love is the only ultimate account for the "fittingness of the Incarnation." Article one begins to highlight this emphasis by employing the key term associated with friendship in both I.20 and II-II.23:

But goodness implies self-communication [*se aliis communicet*], as Dionysius shows. Therefore it is appropriate for the highest good to communicate itself to the creature [*se creaturae communicet*] in the highest way possible. But, as Augustine teaches, this takes place above all when *he so perfectly joins human nature to himself that one person is constituted from these three: Word, soul, flesh*. Clearly then, it was right for God to be incarnate.<sup>727</sup>

From the very first reply to this question, Thomas highlights—through *communicatio*—the absolutely extravagant, mystifying gift of God's love for humanity. Again relying on Augustine's authority in article two, Thomas explicitly sustains this theme "for the restoration of human nature." In his reply, Thomas's identification of God's gift of the

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<sup>727</sup> ST III.1.1.resp.

theological virtues is thoroughly infused with the language of divine intimacy and love for mankind:

First, with regard to faith, greater assurance is guaranteed when the belief rests on God himself speaking. . . . Second, as to hope . . . to quote Augustine, *nothing is so needful to build up our hope than for us to be shown how much God loves us. And what is a better sign of this than the Son of God deigning to share our nature?* Third, as to charity, which is most greatly enkindled by the Incarnation for, as Augustine asks, *what greater cause is there for the coming of the Lord than to show God's love for us?* He goes on, *If we have been slow to love, let us not be slow to love in return.*<sup>728</sup>

Through the Incarnation, men and women themselves are invited to participate in this divine intimacy, even as to a “full sharing in divinity, which is true happiness and the purpose of human life.”<sup>729</sup> In article 5, Thomas’s inquiry into “the immensity of divine love” in the Incarnation—might it have been a greater love if Christ had come earlier?—opens into a reflection on God’s wisdom and on human freedom.<sup>730</sup> Again, God’s love has been for our sake, and the first reply to the objections begins: “Love does not delay to aid a friend, yet with a care for the right timing and for personal conditions.”<sup>731</sup>

### 5.6.2 Christ’s prayer (III.21)

In accordance with the plan of the *Tertia pars*, dedicated to “Christ, Who as man, is our way to God,”<sup>732</sup> Thomas provides in question 21 a consideration of how the God who is at once the source of friendship, and who has assumed our human nature, has prayed. As in the treatise on *oratio*, Thomas is going to reflect on prayer as a central activity of friendship. The profound mystery here, however, is that the will of the man who speaks the prayer is in perfect union with the will of God who models the prayer for all humanity. In this way,

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<sup>728</sup> *ST* III.1.2.resp.

<sup>729</sup> *ST* III.1.2.resp.

<sup>730</sup> *ST* III.1.5.resp.

<sup>731</sup> *ST* III.1.5.ad1.

<sup>732</sup> This plan was indicated in the early prologue to the *Prima pars*: *ST* I.2.prologue.

question 21 achieves something far greater than what has come before through its reflection on the example of the only human being in history who can offer perfect consolation through his prayer. Thomas reflects upon this example throughout each of the four articles attending to the “prayer of Christ.”

Among the articles of III.21, several points stand out. First, the prayer of Christ is the prayer of his humanity given “for our instruction.”<sup>733</sup> Second, as the prayer in Gethsemane reveals, God desires wayfarers to place all earnest affections [cum omnibus naturalibus affectibus] before the Divine will.<sup>734</sup> Third, impetrative prayer was a part of his experience: “Just as in his human nature he had already received certain gifts from His Father, so there were other gifts which He had not yet received but expected to receive.”<sup>735</sup> Petition is not only for beginners. Fourth, the example of Christ is the example of a rightly ordered human being, demonstrating clearly *how*, in fact, the will best informs the reason—through the guiding love of the Holy Spirit. For in Christ:

the will of reason . . . was fulfilled because it was in conformity with God, and consequently His every prayer was fulfilled. For in this respect also is it that other[s'] . . . prayers are fulfilled, in that their will is in conformity with God, according to Rom. viii. 27: *And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth*, that is, approves of *what the Spirit desireth*, that is, what the Spirit makes the saints to desire.<sup>736</sup>

Christ’s prayer reflects perfect cooperation with the Spirit. Again, Thomas holds up the lives of the saints as exemplary participants in this cooperation of prayer. Here, however, they are

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<sup>733</sup> ST III.21.1.resp., III.21.1.ad1.

<sup>734</sup> ST III.21.2.resp: “He prayed in this way with the object of offering us a three-fold teaching. First he wished to reveal to us that he had assumed a true human nature together with all its natural urges. Second, he wished to show that it is permissible for a man to entertain an instinctive affection for something which God does not will. Third, he wished to show that man must submit his own impulses to the divine will.” See also III.18.5.resp.: It was God’s will that Christ should undergo pain and suffering and death. Not that these things attracted the divine will for what they are in themselves; they were willed only as a means for bringing about man’s salvation. It is clear from this that Christ could will something other than what God willed; that is to say, if we consider Christ’s sensuous will and his rational will acting by natural instinct. But by the act of will modified by judgment Christ always willed the same object as God. This conclusion is borne out by Christ’s own words, *Not my will, but thine, be done.*”

<sup>735</sup> ST III.21.3.resp.

<sup>736</sup> ST III.21.4.resp.

identified at the height of the discussion of the mediatory prayer of Christ. Here also, the whole range of earlier discussions of the *Summa* involving the discourse of friendship may be found to converge. This is the final point: the perfect cooperation of the humanity of Christ in prayer was at once a prayer for his own glorification and for the redemption of mankind—no conflict existed between these two realities for Christ: “This very glory which Christ, while praying, besought for Himself, pertained to the salvation of others according to Rom. iv. 25 . . . So also anyone that asks a benefit of God that he may use it for the good of others, prays not only for himself, but also for others.”<sup>737</sup>

It is precisely through Christ’s mediation of divine love that humankind can best begin to comprehend the way in which the saints have given themselves to God’s love for all. Before culminating his reflection on the Person of Christ in the *Tertia Pars*, in a question attending to the adoration of Christ, Thomas offers a meditation on the saints as “friends of God.” They are deserving of our memory, because they are “our advocates with” God and likewise friends in hope, for “their bodies. . . were the temples and instruments of the Holy Spirit, dwelling and acting within them, and which are to be made like the body of Christ by glorious resurrection. It is for this reason that God himself grants honour to their relics by performing miracles when they are present.”<sup>738</sup> Through the devotion of their lives as exemplary friends in Christ, the saints transformatively dispose our memories for a life of faith, hope and love in accordance with the working of the Spirit. By sharing ever more deeply in this life of friendship, the people of God become the body of Christ in the world.

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<sup>737</sup> *ST* III.21.3.ad3.

<sup>738</sup> *ST* III.25.6.resp.: “Manifestum est autem quod sanctos Dei in veneratione debemus habere, tanquam membra Christi, Dei filios et amicos, et intercessores, nostros. Et ideo eorum reliquias qualescumque honore congruo in eorum memoriam venerari debemus, et praecipue eorum corpora, quae fuerunt templum spiritus sancti, et organa spiritus sancti in eis habitantis et operantis, et sunt corpori Christi configuranda per gloriam resurrectionis. Unde et ipse Deus huiusmodi reliquias convenienter honorat, in eorum praesentia miracula faciendo.”

### 5.6.3 Living friendship in the life of Christ (III.26)

The exercises in the mediatory discourse of friendship culminate in Christ, the Mediator of God and humanity. The source of this divine act is God's love for the sake of all humankind: Christ "*gave himself [as] a redemption for all* [1 Tim 2.5-6]," and men and women are called to share in this friendship: "This does not exclude others being named subordinate mediators between God and man should they co-operate in uniting men with God, either as preparing the way or as ministers."<sup>739</sup>

To authentically witness to the Divine mediation of Christ is at once to participate in the discursive nature of his life. As Thomas notes, it is Christ who has deemed in his humanity "*convenit ei conjungere homines Deo, praecepta et dona Dei hominibus exhibendo et pro hominibus Deo satisfaciendo et interpellando*" (to unite human beings to God by giving forth to them both precepts and gifts, and by atoning and interceding for human beings with God).<sup>740</sup> The three verbs employed by Thomas as marking Christ's mediating love in the world are *exhibendo*, *satisfaciendo*, and *interpellando*. The first term (*exhibendo*) reflects a love held firm in Christ and given generously for sinners. The second (*satisfaciendo*) reflects his shared fellowship in the life of suffering that leads to our redemption. The third, *interpellando*, signifies a profoundly unrelenting and passionate act of intercessionary pleading reflective of the life of a devoted friend. Through this testimony in the *Tertia pars* to Christ's love in the world, the witness to God's love as put forth in the *Prima pars*<sup>741</sup> is

<sup>739</sup> ST III.26.1.resp: "Nihil tamen prohibet aliquos alios secundum quid dici mediatores inter Deum et homines, prout scilicet cooperantur ad unionem hominum cum Deo dispositive vel ministerialiter." Such a call can be freely rejected, however. Thomas's striking illustration of the way in which sin infects the good of human friendship is epitomized as a demon who is "an evil mediator who separates friends."<sup>739</sup> By contrast, Christ is "the good mediator who reconciles enemies," ST III.26.1.ad2. In both cases, Book IX.13 of Augustine's *City of God* is Thomas's frame of reference.

<sup>740</sup> ST III.26.2.resp.

<sup>741</sup> ST I.20.2.ad3: "Friendship cannot exist except towards rational creatures, who are capable of returning love, and communicating one with another in the various works of life."

most perfectly reflected. Taken as the two framing passages on friendship in the *Summa*, these passages capture the entire movement of friendship that has taken place, from God's love, to human love, to human love transformed through the Person of Christ.

As illustrated above, the consolation of the call to divine friendship is already clear to the reader of the *Summa* by the conclusion of III.26. What remains in the questions that follow is whether or not men and women will accept this call by entering more deeply into the life of Christ and embracing the life of the Spirit through the sacraments given for our sake – in friendship. Thomas's reflection on such a life is most appropriate here; in the very center of his main reply to the question of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist, he states:

this belongs to Christ's love [*caritati Christi*], out of which for our salvation He assumed a true body of our nature. And because it is the special feature of friendship to live together with friends, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* ix), He promises us His bodily presence as a reward, saying (Matth. xxiv. 28): *Where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together*. Yet meanwhile in our pilgrimage He does not deprive us of His bodily presence; but unites us with Himself in this sacrament through the truth of His body and blood. Hence (John vi. 57) he says: *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him*. Hence this sacrament is the sign of supreme charity, and the uplifter of our hope, from such familiar union [*familiari coniunctione*] of Christ with us.<sup>742</sup>

In friendship, Christ's love for God's people is an eternal self-offering given in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Through our participation in the Eucharist, "the sign of supreme charity," we are literally—albeit undeservedly and yet absolutely extravagantly—embraced in the life of God through the Person of Christ. Such an embrace continually calls forth a transformation in us such that we may seek to be active participants in the communion of saints, to *become* Christ in and for the world, calling all people to this divine union by living (*conversatio*), according to our unique vocations in the Spirit, the preaching, poverty,

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<sup>742</sup> *ST* III.75.1.resp.

temptations, passion and resurrection of Christ. In Thomas's account, it is precisely through Christ's familiar union (*familiari coniunctione*) with men and women that our lives may be transformed in God's love.

## 5.7 Conclusion

Especially when engaged as a spiritually formative text from the tradition, Thomas Aquinas's thirteenth-century *Summa Theologiae* constitutes a rich medieval resource for systematic theologians discerning a theology of discourse in the service of the church and the world. In addition to affirming Augustine's teaching that love is the divinely ordained hermeneutical entry point for all discourse, the *Summa Theologiae* offers a further development of the foundational exercises working throughout Augustine's texts. Particularly through his work in the *Secunda pars*, Thomas is able to cultivate the horizontal exercises that are working only implicitly in the narrative of the *Confessions*. These exercises also serve to develop the teaching of the *De doctrina christiana*, for while that text is largely comprised of horizontal exercises, such exercises have a specific concern with scriptural discourse, whereas the genre of the *Summa* enables Thomas to take a broader scope.<sup>743</sup> The basis for this broader scope may be discerned in Thomas's sustained reflection on friendship in the *Summa*. Through such reflection, he is appealing to a universal experience acknowledged by Augustine in the *Confessions*, rigorously engaged in medieval discourse, and exemplified in the twelfth-century epistolary narrative of Heloise and Abelard.

Complementing Augustine's sustained penitential discourse with God concerning the fragile and disordered nature of human friendship, Heloise and Abelard's *Letters* constitute a narrative exploration of the ways in which the redemptive dynamics of human friendship

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<sup>743</sup> Cf. Robert Sweetman, *Dominican Preaching in the Southern Low Countries 1240-1260*, 94. Sweetman identifies Thomas of Cantimpré's *Liber de natura rerum* to be also working along these lines.

serve to mediate divine love among God's people. This required a rigorous integration of the memorial traditions of sin and goodness. Furthermore, this integrative ethics of memory that Heloise sought to recover was one which identified the height of created goodness in the gift of friendship. Incorporating this medieval insight beginning with the early question on God's love (I.20) in the *Summa*, Thomas provides a teaching text with the theological structure and vocabulary that constitute the tools for living out the redemptive dynamics of human friendship phenomenologically expressed in the *Letters*.

The nature of discourse is best discerned in the context of authentic relationality. Thomas exemplifies this insight throughout the *Summa* wherein each substantial treatment of discourse either falls within, or follows upon, discussions of love. Thomas exemplifies this pattern in his own approach to the text; as noted in his general prologue, he orders the sequence of *quaestiones* working throughout the *Summa* in accordance with his prior concern for the formation of his students. Furthermore, the text progresses as a dialectic between reflections on love and its discourse. Through an introduction of the central term—*communicatio*—uniting these reflections, the *Prima pars* begins by founding all discourse in terms of God's love and highlighting the mediatory role of the saints in terms of this discourse. Emphasizing the essential role of friendship for human flourishing, the *Prima secundae* establishes discourse as the central activity of friendship, as well as identifying *oratio* as the premier form of discourse by which human beings grow in self-knowledge. Through the treatise on *oratio* in the *Secunda secundae*, Thomas provides a deeper reflection upon this premier discourse as that which reflects an authentically integrated love of self, others and God. Each of these spiritual exercises serves to dispose the reader for the reflection of the *Tertia pars*: the fulfillment of all discourse in the Person of Christ through



whose Spirit the communion of saints has been formed as the mediators of friendship *par excellence*.

## Conclusion

Contemporary approaches to systematic theology as a *theology of discourse* attend to the very nature of the theological endeavor itself and its ministry in the service of the life of conversion of the people of God. Central to this project is critical reflection of ways in which language and relationality both inform and are formed by the Christian faith. The hermeneutical circle of contributions by David Tracy (the dynamics of language), David Burrell (the dynamics of relationality), and Sarah Coakley (the dynamics of gender collaboration) illuminate the central elements of a theology of discourse while also indicating the need for further work in these areas. Moreover, the explicit and implicit appeals to Augustine's reflection in these areas by such scholars suggest that the work of retrieval is necessary.

Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and *Confessions* are two texts from the Christian tradition offering a pattern of spiritual exercises or discursive practices by which other contributions may be measured. By adverting to a general "vertical" and "horizontal" pattern that may be discerned in spiritual reflections of love via the Johannine tradition, David Burrell's brief introduction to this pattern in his reading of Book Nine of Augustine's *Confessions* reflects one that is profoundly cruciform: founded in vertical exercises between created beings and Creator, and yielding horizontal exercises among God's people.

The *Letters* of Heloise and Abelard, and Thomas Aquinas's reflection on the discourse of prayer, both serve to confirm Augustine's theological insights and to develop them respectively. Through an emphasis on horizontal exercises yielding a mutually participatory commitment to ongoing conversion in the Lord, each other, and their greater communities, Heloise and Abelard's correspondence contributes an integrated ethics of

memory through a sustained reflection on the nature of human and divine friendship.

Through this integrated reflection of both the penitential and redemptive aspects of human friendship, their correspondence constitutes a worthy retrieval from the tradition that examines and cultivates the virtues prescribed by David Tracy for moving ahead in theological reflection on discourse.<sup>744</sup>

Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* provides both the systematic structure and vocabulary sustaining such reflection, as well as a deepening of the full range of vertical and horizontal exercises that are foundational in the work of Augustine. In the *Summa*, friendship constitutes a school of holiness by which men and women are called through the Holy Spirit to collaborative participation in the truths of the Christian faith. Reflective of such participation are the exercises of receptivity, discernment, and conversion in the Lord which constitute a *conversatio*, or way of life, and of which prayer is its premier discourse. Because of Christ's life, passion, and resurrection, the life of friendship has been gifted to creation for life in God, the saints' mediatory discourse has been made possible, and the same Spirit seeks to speak such mediatory discourse to all who are willing to attend to the divine source of their deepest longing.

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<sup>744</sup> Tracy, *On Naming the Present*, 138: "Anyone who undertakes this journey must try to hold together three virtues ordinarily kept apart: the virtue of self-respect and self-dignity maintained by all those who never leave their tradition; the virtue of a radical openness to other and different traditions; the virtue of ethical universality with a sense of justice by all who insist upon the communality of the human." These were discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.2) above.

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