

**THE EXPRESSION OF CHRISTIANITY:  
THEMES FROM THE LETTERS OF PAULINUS OF NOLA**

**by**

**CATHERINE CONYBEARE**

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate Department of The Centre for Medieval Studies  
University of Toronto**

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This study uses a close reading of the letters of Paulinus of Nola (c. 355-431) to produce a thematic commentary.

Chapter one is a systematic examination of the circumstances of delivery of letters in late antiquity: the chapter discusses such issues as the norms (or their contravention) for composing letters, the role of the letter-carrier in augmenting their message, the directions to explicit and implicit audiences, and the sacramental nature of Christian epistolography, to conclude that the process of composition and distribution of letters has important implications for ideas of public/private divisions in late antiquity and for appreciation of the texture of Christian life at the period.

The second chapter contains a study of ideas of Christian friendship as they are developed and played out in epistolary exchange. Letters express the love of friends, which reflects and is enriched by Christ's love; in loving a friend more fully, one will also love Christ more fully, and hence become more fully Christian. The entire process of

communication surrounding the composition of the physical letters constantly explores and reenacts this experience.

Chapter three explores the patterns of thought with which this perpetual relation of the spiritual to the temporal, the invisible to the visible, is accomplished, and concludes that it is due to an essentially imagistic (and hence non-linear) manner of framing experience and making connections. This assertion, based on densely imagistic passages in Paulinus, is supported with reference to the more developed critique of these phenomena in the study of the visual arts.

The concluding chapter investigates ideas of the self and of personal identity that the conclusions of the preceding studies entail. “Personal identity” is considered as not necessarily coextensive with either the philosophical self or the soul, but as something closer to the modern, untechnical “sense of self”. This chapter finds that the self in late antiquity is, in a most thoroughgoing sense, relational. This has important consequences for the notion of the transformation wrought by conversion and is explored in a detailed reading of the renowned correspondence between Ausonius and Paulinus.



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## INTRODUCTION

My subject in this thesis is the collection of prose letters written between the 390s and the 420s A.D. by Paulinus of Nola. I intend to consider the letters as actual letters, and to look at the process of correspondence as both conveying and shaping the Christian thought of Paulinus.

In his own time, Paulinus was viewed as an emblematic example of aristocratic conversion to ascetic Christianity. Ambrose wrote of the event to Sabinus with ill-concealed exultation: he exclaims, “what will the leading men say when they hear this? That someone from that family, that lineage, that stock, and endowed with such tremendous eloquence has migrated from the senate, and that the line of succession of a noble family has been broken: it cannot be borne”.<sup>1</sup> Sulpicius Severus puts praise of Paulinus for his renunciation of secular wealth into the mouth of Saint Martin: “his conversation with us was simply that worldly enticements and secular burdens should be abandoned, to follow the Lord Jesus free and unencumbered: he adduced to us as the most outstanding example of this in present times the aforementioned glorious Paulinus, who, almost alone in these times, rejected the highest wealth, followed Christ, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, Letter VI. XXVII (=Maur. 58), 3, written in 395: “haec ubi audierint procures viri, quae loquentur? ex illa familia, illa prosapia, illa indole, tanta praeditum eloquentia migrasse a senatu, interceptam familiae nobilis successionem: ferri hoc non posse.” The translations of all texts cited in this work are my own, unless otherwise stated.

fulfilled the teachings of the gospel...".<sup>2</sup> For Augustine too, Paulinus' renunciation of wealth and position was exemplary: he is mentioned several times, notably in the first book of the City of God: "My friend Paulinus, bishop of Nola, from the most opulent riches voluntarily became exceedingly poor and abundantly holy; when the barbarians devastated Nola and he was held captive by them ..., he prayed, 'Lord, let me not be tortured for the sake of gold and silver; for you know where all my possessions are'."<sup>3</sup> Immediately after the death of Paulinus in 431, Uranius, his presbyter, wrote an account of his passing, juxtaposing the events of his last days with an extended hagiographic description of his merits. The saintliness of Paulinus is confirmed by a conversation before his death with his fratres, Januarius, bishop and martyr, and Saint Martin of Tours; and at his death there is a "privatus in cellula ... terrae motus", a private earthquake in his cell -- which, explains Uranius, is far from incredible, as "in cuius obitu totus pene orbis ingemuit", "almost the whole world groaned over his death".<sup>4</sup> Two aspects of Paulinus are particularly singled out for comment: upon his conversion, he opened his barns and treasury to the poor; and he was always loved by all. Paulinus' emblematic

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<sup>2</sup> Sulpicius Severus, Vita S. Martini 25, 4: "sermo autem illius non alius apud nos fuit, quam mundi inlecebras et saeculi onera relinquenda, ut Dominum Iesum liberi expeditique sequeremur: praestantissimumque nobis praesentium temporum inlustris viri Paulini, cuius supra fecimus mentionem, exemplum ingerebat, qui summis opibus abiectis Christum secutus solus paene his temporibus evangelica praecepta complexset". Paulinus also appears in the Vita when Martin cures him of an eye infection, 19, 3; and in Sulpicius' Dialogues I, 23, 4 and II, 17, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, Civ. I, 10: "...Paulinus noster, Nolensis episcopus, ex opulentissimo divite voluntate pauperrimus et copiosissime sanctus, quando et ipsam Nola barbari vastaverunt, cum ab eis teneretur ... precabatur: 'Domine, non excrucier propter aurum et argentum; ubi enim sint omnia mea, tu scis.'" Augustine's letters to Paulinus contain many rapturous testimonia to his sanctity; from them we may select the one most literally suggestive of rapture, his account of his monks' reception of Paulinus' first letter: "quotquot eas legerunt, rapiunt, quia rapiuntur, cum legunt". Augustine, Letter XXVII, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Januarius and Martin: De Obitu Paulini 3 (col. 861A); the private earthquake: De Obitu Paulini 4 (col. 862A).

status is completed, in Uranius, by his adoption of the best qualities of each of the patriarchs.<sup>5</sup>

Paulinus' emblematic status continued after his death: writers continued, though less frequently, to dwell primarily upon his miraculous renunciation of wealth and status. There is the famous story in Gregory the Great's Dialogues about Paulinus' encounter with pirates,<sup>6</sup> and Gregory of Tours continues in the tradition of seeing Paulinus as an emblematic figure, choosing the Bishop of Nola for the final vita in his Lives of the Confessors, and his patron Saint Felix as the culmination for his Lives of the Martyrs.<sup>7</sup> But there is nothing to parallel those rapturous testimonia which Paulinus received in his own lifetime: emblems have the disadvantage of being both irreducibly topical -- their validity restricted to a certain historical moment -- and necessarily two-dimensional.<sup>8</sup>

It is perhaps for this reason that significant modern studies of Paulinus are relatively few -- and particularly studies drawing on his prose letters; his metrical works, apparently because of their more obvious appeal to traditional classicists, have fared rather better. Paulinus remains exemplary, and hence, though of utility in developing the narrative of declining empire, of only limited interest. W. H. C. Frend concludes his study "The Two Worlds of Paulinus of Nola" with the words, "Paulinus of Nola,

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<sup>5</sup> List of patriarchs: De Obitu Paulini 8 (col. 863B-C).

<sup>6</sup> Gregory, Dial. III, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Tours, De Gloria Confessorum, II, 108 (Paulinus); De Gloria Martyrum 103 (Felix).

<sup>8</sup> On Paulinus as emblematic figure, and its limitations, see Dennis Trout, "History, Biography, and the Exemplary Life of Paulinus of Nola", forthcoming in SP: he calls for a more nuanced and multi-dimensional reading of Paulinus.

Romano-Gallic aristocrat, Christian man of letters, and seeker after perfection, fully represented the spirit of his times.”<sup>9</sup> In this and an earlier study of Paulinus,<sup>10</sup> Frend uses Paulinus as exemplum to elaborate the thesis, famously espoused by Momigliano (after Gibbon),<sup>11</sup> that Christianity played the villain in the downfall of the Roman Empire, seducing aristocrats away from their proper role of defending the empire against barbarian incursions. This argument has also been made by the translator of Paulinus’ works, P. G. Walsh.<sup>12</sup> Joseph Lienhard, in his careful study of the contribution of Paulinus to early Western monasticism, resists the temptation to make him emblematic, but still, in a modified form, finds him exemplary: “His importance in [the monastic] movement should not be exaggerated; nor, however, should it be underestimated. Paulinus is not himself a link in a rigid chain of tradition. But he is an example, a good example and an instructive one, of the hesitant beginnings of monasticism in the West.”<sup>13</sup>

The historically exemplary status of Paulinus has, in another way, guided the

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- <sup>9</sup> “The Two Worlds of Paulinus of Nola”, in J. W. Binns ed., Latin Literature of the Fourth Century (London/Boston 1974), 100-133; quote from p. 127.
- <sup>10</sup> W. H. C. Frend, “Paulinus of Nola and the last century of the western empire”, JRS 59 (1969), 1-11. This ends even more uncompromisingly: “Paulinus... was truly representative of the deeper psychological causes that led to the fall of the Roman Empire in the West”.
- <sup>11</sup> See A. Momigliano, “Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire”, in A. Momigliano ed., Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century (Oxford 1963), pp. 1-16.
- <sup>12</sup> Walsh, “Paulinus of Nola and the Conflict of Ideologies in the Fourth Century”, in P. Granfield and J. A. Jungmann edd., Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten (2 vols.: Münster 1970), II, 565-571.
- <sup>13</sup> Joseph T. Lienhard, Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism Theophaneia 28: Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums (Cologne/ Bonn 1977).

choice of subject in the two most recent dissertations to concern themselves with him. Both these have concentrated on Paulinus' exemplary disbursement of earthly wealth to lay up riches in heaven. Joanna Summers traces the emergence of a Christian discourse on wealth, developed from Luc. 18, 22: "omnia quaecumque habes vende, et da pauperibus, et habebis thesaurum in caelo; et veni, sequere me", "sell everything which you have, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me". She places Paulinus' protestations on wealth within this discourse; and, though she argues that it is hard to discriminate principle from practice, she concludes that his divestment proved insignificant, as he retained all his old trappings and connections of worldly power, merely augmenting them with his ecclesiastical status.<sup>14</sup> This reading seems to me to be troublingly ex post facto, as if, for example, there were a pre-established ecclesiastical role at the period which Paulinus could automatically enter, rather than a set of fluid discourses and positions -- in which Paulinus himself was participating -- competing for power. Far more nuanced, and less determinist, is the study of Dennis Trout.<sup>15</sup> He addresses very similar themes to those of Summers, but from a more traditional socio-historical angle, carefully investigating Paulinus' social milieu and teasing out what little Paulinus tells us of his actual methods of disbursement of wealth. He emphasizes both the processual and the visible nature of Paulinus' withdrawal, firmly contradicting Momigliano's thesis:<sup>16</sup> "when Paulinus renounced the

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<sup>14</sup> Joanna Ceinwen Summers, Paulinus of Nola and the Renunciation of Wealth (PhD thesis: King's College London, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Dennis E. Trout, Secular Renunciation and Social Action: Paulinus of Nola and Late Roman Society (PhD thesis: Duke University, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Trout makes this explicit, Secular Renunciation, p. 364.

world in 394, he did not forget it; not did he wish it to forget him".<sup>17</sup> Trout also develops an account of the way in which, for Paulinus, Christian modes of social action "paradoxically" created a social position as prominent, though different in kind, as that which he had abandoned in the secular world.

Such has been the pressure of the traditional image of Paulinus as exemplum and as legendary disburser of wealth that only two monographs this century, as far as I am aware, form true precursors to this study of his letters qua letters and of the ideas contained in them. The first is a doctoral dissertation from the turn of the century, Paul Reinelt's Studien über die Briefe des hl. Paulinus von Nola -- which would perhaps have been more aptly entitled Prolegomena...: its first part crisply surveys the collection as a whole, including offering a then-revisionary dating of the letters; the second, the intellectual background to the letters ("das Bibelstudium der Zeit", "das literarische Ideal der zeitgenössischen Aszetik", for example) and its instantiation in and significance for the letters.<sup>18</sup> The second monograph concentrates on one of the themes adumbrated and explored in the letters of Paulinus, that of Christian friendship. Fabre's Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne charts in considerable detail the course of individual friendships for Paulinus, but leaves almost entirely out of his account the theological

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<sup>17</sup> Trout, Secular Renunciation, p. 360. Trout summarizes Paulinus' attitude to secular renunciation at p. 287: "His developed theoretical position is founded upon several principles rich in traditional nuances: an adamant insistence on the dangerous and deceptive nature of worldly goods; a subordination of all other elements of conversion to the absolute necessity of a total inner reorientation, and a correlative emphasis on mental detachment from possessions; and an advocacy of the proper use of riches, not their heedless rejection."

<sup>18</sup> Paul Reinelt, Studien über die Briefe des hl. Paulinus von Nola (Breslau 1903). Dating, pp. 58-59; "Bibelstudium", pp. 84-91; "literarische Ideal", pp. 99-103.

aspects of friendship, or, for that matter, its role in a broader Christian worldview.<sup>19</sup> The topic has thus long been overdue for the reconsideration which I essay below in Chapter Two. In preparing this study, Fabre also wrote an account of the chronology of Paulinus' work which, though intermittently challenged, remains generally accepted.<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding this somewhat slender interpretative tradition, the letters of Paulinus are of particular interest for a number of reasons. The range of his correspondents is extraordinary: directly or indirectly, he was connected with practically every important figure of the Christian Latin West in his time. His letter collection is therefore significant as an entrée to other epistolary exchanges between the Western fathers of the church. It also straddles the classical and Christian traditions, the converting aristocracy and the converted middle classes, in a most remarkable manner. Above all, the letters repay reading in their own right. They bear witness to Paulinus' literary enactment of his commitment to Christianity and his realization of an individual mode of Christian expression.

Meropius Pontius Paulinus was born of a distinguished and wealthy family<sup>21</sup> not later than 355,<sup>22</sup> and brought up near Bordeaux in Aquitaine. He was apparently tutored

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<sup>19</sup> Pierre Fabre, Saint Paulin de Nole et l'amitié chrétienne (Paris 1948).

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Fabre, Essai sur la chronologie de l'oeuvre de saint Paulin de Nole (Paris 1948). See further below on the dating of Paulinus' letters.

<sup>21</sup> Paulinus' family as senatorial: Poem XXI, 458. Familial distinction and wealth: see the praeteritio of Uranius, De Obitu 9: "Taceamus generis nobilitatem, paternis maternisque natalibus in senatorum purpuras admirabiliter rutilantem...". See also the letter of Ambrose, cited at note 1 above.

<sup>22</sup> The date is based on the first letter of Paulinus to Augustine, when he describes his physical age as the same as that of the man cured by the Apostles at the Porta



at Bordeaux by the grammaticus Decimus Magnus Ausonius, subsequently tutor at the imperial court to the future emperor Gratian; despite a discrepancy of some forty years between their ages, the two men formed a close literary friendship which was severed only at Paulinus' insistence on a committed ascetic Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Initially he followed the expected public career for a man of his parentage, being appointed consul suffectus in 378<sup>24</sup> and governor (consularis) of Campania in 381. Here he first took part in the celebrations for the feast day of St. Felix of Nola, whose cult he was later to do so much to develop and adorn.<sup>25</sup> He subsequently returned to Gaul, the first move in a protracted transformation of his way of life, and soon afterwards married the devout Spanish heiress Therasia.<sup>26</sup> In 389 he was baptized by Bishop Delphinus at Bordeaux,<sup>27</sup> having been

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Speciosa (Act. 4, 22). The man's age was "amplius quadraginta"; the letter is dated to 395.

- <sup>23</sup> For Ausonius, see Robert A. Kaster, Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity (Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London 1988) pp. 247-249, and R. P. H. Green's introduction to his edition of The Works of Ausonius (Oxford 1991). Further on Paulinus' education, see Chapter 1, note 8 and text. The disseverance of the friendship between Paulinus and Ausonius is discussed at some length in Chapter 4.
- <sup>24</sup> The rank is inferred from Ausonius' reference to Paulinus' trabea, which at this period seems to have designated specifically a consular robe: Ausonius XXVII. XXI, 60 (Green's numeration).
- <sup>25</sup> The second Natalicium for St. Felix, written for his feast day in 396, records that it was three lustra -- fifteen years -- since Paulinus had first participated in the festivities: hence the dating of the governorship. Paulinus, Poem XIII, 7-9.
- <sup>26</sup> Paulinus married in Spain: Poem XXI, 398-403. More on Therasia: see again Ambrose, Letter VI. XXVII, 2. "Devout" is inferred from the fact that Ausonius resentfully attributed to her Paulinus' increased "Christianization": Ausonius, XXVII. XXII, 31 "Tanaquil tua" (Paulinus rebuffs the insinuation, Poem X, 192: "nec Tanaquil mihi, sed Lucretia, coniunx"). Further on the relationship of Paulinus and Therasia, see Chapter 2, text to notes 89-91.
- <sup>27</sup> Paulinus, Letter III, 4 to Alypius: "a Delphino Burdigalae baptizatus..."

prepared for baptism by the priest Amandus;<sup>28</sup> shortly thereafter, the couple moved to Spain. Together, it seems (for little is known of this period of their lives), they began the slow process of divestment of their considerable property, with a view to leading more truly Christian lives. It seems to have been at around this time that Paulinus' brother met a violent death;<sup>29</sup> but, although the earliest surviving letters respond to his consolationes from Delphinus and Amandus, Paulinus tells us almost nothing of the circumstances.<sup>30</sup> The death in infancy of Paulinus and Therasia's only child, a son,<sup>31</sup> seems to have quickened their desire for withdrawal: on Christmas Day, 394,<sup>32</sup> Paulinus was ordained "subito" by Bishop Lampius at Barcelona,<sup>33</sup> and the following summer he and Therasia removed to his estates at Nola. There they were to remain for the rest of their lives, founding a monastery and becoming patrons, impresarios indeed, of the cult of Saint Felix. From there, too, Paulinus wrote (often in his wife's name as well) almost all the letters which survive to us<sup>34</sup>.

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28 In Letter II, 4 to Amandus, Paulinus describes himself as "per vos deo natus".

29 See Paulinus, Poem XXI, 416-420.

30 Paulinus, Letters XXXV and XXXVI.

31 Their son was called Celsus; he was only eight days old. Paulinus recalls his death in a poem of consolation for the death of another boy named Celsus, Poem XXXI, 599-610 and 619-620.

32 Following the dating for which Dennis Trout argues, following Fabre, "The dates of the ordination of Paulinus of Bordeaux and his departure for Nola", REAug 37 (1991), 237-260.

33 Letter III, 4 to Alypius.

34 The letters of Paulinus are cited from the edition of Hartel, CSEL XXIX (Vienna 1894).

His correspondents included those who had been influential on him as he developed his ideas of an appropriate Christian way of life, notably Delphinus, the aforementioned bishop of Bordeaux, and Amandus his successor.<sup>35</sup> With these may be placed his lifelong friend Sulpicius Severus, who had undergone a similar process of conversion and renunciation under the influence of Saint Martin of Tours, of whom he was to write the celebrated biography;<sup>36</sup> he settled at Primuliacum in Southern Gaul, and vied with Paulinus for achievement in asceticism and church-building.<sup>37</sup> But after retiring to Nola, Paulinus also made contact with some of the most prominent Christians of the day: several letters on either side survive from his correspondence with Augustine, and he also wrote to Augustine's friend and associate in North Africa, Alypius;<sup>38</sup> three letters to him from Jerome bear witness to another important contact, though it seems that Jerome swiftly became disenchanted with the man he had originally embraced as a

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<sup>35</sup> Recipients respectively of Paulinus, Letters X, XIV, XIX, XX, XXXV and II, IX, XII, XV, XXI, XXXVI.

<sup>36</sup> For Sulpicius' exquisite oblique compliment to the exemplary Paulinus in his Vita S. Martini, see text to note 2 above. On Sulpicius himself, see Clare Stancliffe, Saint Martin and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus (Oxford 1983). He received Paulinus, Letters I, V, XI, XVII, XXII-XXIV, XXVII-XXXII; unfortunately, none of his side of the correspondence survives.

<sup>37</sup> For the church-building, see especially Paulinus, Letter XXXII; for the course of the epistolary friendship between the two men, see Chapter 2, especially the text to notes 97-108.

<sup>38</sup> Paulinus, Letters IV, VI, XLV, and L are addressed to Augustine; Letter III to Alypius. Augustine addressed to Paulinus Letters XXVII, XXXI, XLII, XLV (with Alypius), LXXX, XCV, and CXLIX. The letters of Augustine are cited from the editions by Goldbacher, CSEL XXXIV, XLIV, LVII, and LVIII (1895-1923), and by Divjak, CSEL LXXXVIII (1981). The standard biography of Augustine is still that of Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo (London 1967).

promising protégé.<sup>39</sup> We know that he communicated with Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, by whom he was “semper ... dilectione ad fidem innutritus”, “always nurtured for faith with love”, and, apparently, claimed as a member of his clergy.<sup>40</sup> Although no letters between the two survive, Ambrose sent relics of Saints Gervasius and Protasius to Paulinus.<sup>41</sup> We also have letters from Paulinus to such prominent figures as Rufinus and Victricius of Rouen.<sup>42</sup> His letter to Eucherius and Galla is an important early source for Lerinian monasticism.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear that Paulinus was renowned for his letters in his own lifetime. Sanctus provides him with an “adnotatio epistolarum”, a register of his own letters; Paulinus writes to reprove Amandus for so exaggerating his merit that their mutual mentor Delphinus has requested from him a letter.<sup>44</sup> Notwithstanding the brevity of the account in the *Epistola de Obitu S. Paulini*, Paulinus’ letters are twice mentioned as crucial points of contact with the great man. Everyone had wished to see and know him; and “qui

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<sup>39</sup> Jerome, *Letters* LIII, LVIII, and LXXXV. The letters of Jerome are cited from the edition of Hilberg, *CSEL* LIV-LVI (1910-1918). For a recent biographical study of Jerome, see Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis* (Stuttgart 1992).

<sup>40</sup> Paulinus, *Letter* III, 4 to Alypius again.

<sup>41</sup> Paulinus, *Letter* XXXII, 17. The letters of Ambrose are cited from the edition of Faller, *CSEL* X, 1-3 (1968-1982). He has just received a long-awaited modern biography: Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Paulinus to Rufinus: *Letters* XLVI and XLVII; to Victricius of Rouen: *Letters* XVIII and XXXVII.

<sup>43</sup> Paulinus, *Letter* LI.

<sup>44</sup> *Letter* XLI, 1 replies to Sanctus; Paulinus’ reproof to Amandus, IX, 1. Delphinus’ request is fulfilled in *Letter* X.

corpore eum videre non poterant, saltem eius epistolas contingere cupiebant. Erat enim suavis et blandus in litteris...”, “those who could not see him in person wished at least to make contact with his letters. For he was sweet and charming in his letters...”.<sup>45</sup>

However, it is equally clear that Paulinus kept no record or copies of his own letters. The same letter to Sanctus qualifies the mention of the letters with “quas meas esse indicastis”, “which you have told me are mine”, and goes on:

nam vere prope omnium earum ita inmemor eram, ut meas esse non recognoscerem, nisi vestris litteris credidissem.<sup>46</sup>

For I had certainly so forgotten almost all of them, that I wouldn't have recognized them as mine if I hadn't believed your letter.

This is in marked contrast to Paulinus' own correspondent, Augustine, who made a habit of keeping copies of his own letters -- and, presumably, the letters of several of his correspondents: witness the letters from Paulinus, Nebridius, and Jerome to be gleaned from the Augustinian collection<sup>47</sup> -- and intended to catalogue and comment on them in his Retractions.<sup>48</sup> Augustine's care over his own letters at least begins to account for the fact that a far more extensive and arguably more representative sample of Augustine's

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<sup>45</sup> De Obitu Paulini, 9 (col. 864B); see also col. 864A: Paulinus “alios epistolis, alios sumptibus adiuvabat”.

<sup>46</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLI, 1. Typically, Paulinus attaches significance to Sanctus' gesture as a proof of “caritas”: “unde maius accepi documentum caritatis vestrae, quia plus me vobis quam mihi notum esse perspexi”.

<sup>47</sup> Further evidence is supplied by a remark in a letter to Seleuciana, who appears to have misconstrued a point of doctrine: “...exemplum epistulae tuae, ne forsitan tu non habeas, misi tibi, in quo diligentius consideres ad ea me respondere, quae inveni in litteris tuis ...”. Letter CCLXV, 1.

<sup>48</sup> See Augustine, Letter CCXXIV, 2, written in 428, four years before his death, to Quodvultdeus: “Et duo iam volumina absolveram retractatis omnibus libris meis ...; restabant epistulae, deinde tractatus populares, quas Graeci homilias vocant. Et plurimas iam epistularum legeram, sed adhuc nihil inde dictaveram ...”.

correspondence remains to us. For example, a significant proportion of the letters is concerned with the minutiae of church administration, a further sheaf with his confrontations with Donatism or Pelagianism; yet despite the fact that Paulinus too was a bishop and presumably had similar concerns, such topics are entirely unrepresented in his surviving letters. We have no idea, for example, whether Paulinus ever held audientia episcopalis, or publicly combatted heresy, or was asked for doctrinal advice. (His response, indeed, to a question of Augustine's about resurrection would suggest that he was uncomfortable with formal theological discussion.<sup>49</sup>) For that matter, we are indebted to the Augustinian corpus for the fullest preservation of the epistolary exchange between Augustine and Paulinus.<sup>50</sup> This is the only section of Paulinus' correspondence of which both sides, albeit in part, survive, and will accordingly be particularly emphasized in the study to follow.

The boundaries of letter-collections from the fourth century are perforce particularly ill-defined, owing to the publication techniques of the period. Certainly there was no technique which reflected the modern one of simultaneously releasing onto the market multiple copies of a single work.<sup>51</sup> In a sense, any written work, once directed to a recipient, became "published" automatically, for it seems to have been assumed that

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<sup>49</sup> See Paulinus, Letter XLV, 4. Judging by this response, however, he may have been a more accomplished advisor "de praesenti vitae ... statu".

<sup>50</sup> Hartel Praef. xvi: "uberrimam messem novarum epistularum corpus S. Augustini obtulit, in quo epistulae 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 45, 50 exstabant." See also Hans Lietzmann, "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Briefsammlung Augustins", in Kleine Schriften, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 67 (Berlin 1958), p. 278.

<sup>51</sup> H.-I. Marrou, "La technique de l'édition à l'époque patristique", VChr 3 (1949), 208-224: question of parallel to modern publication posed, p. 216; answered in the negative, p. 221. The argument in this paragraph is indebted to this article.

sending out such a work conferred the right to communicate its contents and, indeed, to take copies.<sup>52</sup> Often, the “publication” of a treatise entailed merely sending it to another party, under a covering letter bestowing the right -- or even the obligation -- to publicize its contents.<sup>53</sup> How, then, in this instance would the treatise be considered as published and the letter not? Few authors of the fourth century were as textually aware as Augustine, with his public revision, in the Retractions, of texts already released; there is no internal evidence to suggest that Paulinus would have considered it necessary to collect or reissue his own letters after their first “publication”, their simple direction to a recipient.

It must be acknowledged, then, that any reference to the “corpus” or “collection” of Paulinus’ letters probably invokes a latter-day construct, and not a body of writing which Paulinus himself would have recognized. Although Paulinus’ fame survived his death, it seems to have been preserved anecdotally and not through continued attention to his literary works -- least of all his letters. Perhaps the themes of the letters became dated; perhaps their Latinity was too complex for later generations. At any rate, Reinelt concludes: “Im allgemeinen aber galten die heroische Entsagung Paulins, seine Nächstenliebe und die ihm zugeschriebenen Wunder viel mehr als seine Briefe.”<sup>54</sup> We

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<sup>52</sup> The prologue to Augustine’s Retractions betrays a strong sense of the irreversibility of publication: “scribere autem ista mihi placuit, ut haec emittam in manus hominum, a quibus ea quae iam edidi revocare emendanda non possum.” Retr. Prol. 3. See further the discussion of public/private in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 below.

<sup>53</sup> See C. Lambot, “Lettre inédite de S. Augustin relative au De Civitate Dei”, RBen 51 (1939), 109-121. Marrou comments: “Rien de plus clair: l’exemplaire de la Cité de Dieu adressé à Firmus n’est pas destiné qu’à lui” (my emphasis). “Technique”, p. 219.

<sup>54</sup> Reinelt, Studien, p. 68. Reinelt also gathers together (pp. 68-70) the negative modern opinions on Paulinus, ending with the scathing judgement of Kaufmann

may infer that Paulinus' letters, left uncollected in his own lifetime, are likely to have been somewhat haphazardly and partially gathered after his death.<sup>55</sup>

The oldest surviving manuscript of Paulinus' letters is dated by Hartel to the tenth century.<sup>56</sup> It contains, except for the consolatory letter to Pammachius, only letters addressed to correspondents in Gaul, and predominantly those in Aquitaine: hence Fabre's observation that "Il est donc probable que c'est en Aquitaine qu'elle s'est formée".<sup>57</sup> The letters are arranged according to correspondent: the ten letters to Sulpicius open the manuscript, followed by five to Delphinus, six to Amandus (the order of the two presumably accounted for by Delphinus' seniority), and eleven singillatim (in fact twelve in the modern numeration, but the beginning of XXXIII is joined with the end of XIII).<sup>58</sup> The prose letters are completed with the letter to Jovius, followed by the poem also addressed to him.<sup>59</sup> Within these groupings, no apparent order is adhered to

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on Paulinus' "Heuchelei" and "Koketterie"!

<sup>55</sup> Hartel says, "epistulae ... mox post Paulini mortem ab amicis collectae fuisse videntur..." (praef. v), but offers no firm corroborating evidence beyond the suggestion from Letter XLI to Sanctus.

<sup>56</sup> Hartel Praef. vi; the manuscript is Codex Parisinus 2122, "O" in Hartel's apparatus. This is perhaps from an eighth-century archetype: Fabre Chronologie, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Fabre, Chronologie, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> The order of the letters in O:  
to Sulpicius, V, XXIV, XXIII (divided into two parts), XI, I, XXII, XXX, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXI.  
to Delphinus, X, XX, XIX, XIV, XXXV.  
to Amandus, XXXVI, XII, IX, II, XXI, XV.  
singillatim, XXXVII, XVIII, XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLIV, XLII, XXXIII, XIII (with preceding letter), XXXIV, XLIII, XXXII, XVI.

<sup>59</sup> Letter XVI; Poem XXII.



(by contrast, once again, with the early manuscripts of Augustine's letters, which, while also grouped according to addressee, are arranged chronologically within the subdivisions<sup>60</sup>). The emphasis on Gallic addressees might suggest a provenance in Gaul. However, the temptation to identify this manuscript as a direct descendant of Sanctus' "adnotatio epistolarum" should, I feel, be resisted, not least because neither the letter to Sanctus nor the one jointly addressed to Amandus and to presumably the same Sanctus, which immediately precedes it in Hartel's edition, is included. They are, however, to be found in the other five manuscripts which, together with the tenth-century one, comprise our only testimonia of Paulinus' prose letters.

The remaining manuscripts fall essentially into two groups. Hartel's PFU<sup>61</sup> are all dated to the fifteenth century. P contains the same letters as O, in the same order, but adds letters XL, XLI (the letter to Sanctus), IV, VI, III, VII, and VIII. F repeats this sequence, adding five letters from Augustine to Paulinus and Letter L from Paulinus to Augustine. U retains the sequence, organizing it formally into five libri, except that the exchange with Augustine and the preliminary letter from Paulinus to Alypius are extracted to form the first liber.<sup>62</sup> (The second book, the letters to Sulpicius, intriguingly

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<sup>60</sup> See D. de Bruyne, "Les anciennes collections et la chronologie des lettres de saint Augustin", RBén 43 (1931), 294-295 (conclusions (5) and (6)); also Lietzmann, "Entstehungsgeschichte", 303-304, concluding that Augustine personally collected and edited his early correspondence.

<sup>61</sup> P: codex Parisin. lat. papyr. 9548.  
F: Laurentianus plut. 23. cod. 20 memb. 259.  
U: codex Urbin. lat. 45 membr. f. 203.

<sup>62</sup> The first book comprises Letters IV, VI, L, III followed by Augustine's letters; Libri 2-5 are, therefore, the letters to Sulpicius; to Delphinus; to Amandus; and "ad diversos" (with the letters to Augustine removed).

adds Ausonius' poem to Paulinus "Quarta tibi haec...",<sup>63</sup> and attributes it to Sulpicius.) The other two manuscripts, L and M,<sup>64</sup> share an ordering for the letters which is quite different from FPU -- though interestingly they preserve the order of FPU for the letters "ad diversos", with some additions at the end.

These manuscripts typically contain only one of the carmina, Poem XXII, which goes with the letter to Jovius in PFU but is divorced from it in LM. Interestingly, the earliest manuscript also contains the metrical exchange between Ausonius and Paulinus<sup>65</sup> and a few of the other carmina,<sup>66</sup> which are generally missing from the remaining manuscripts of the letters.<sup>67</sup> This leads Hartel to posit an archetype which contains "epistulas plurimas"<sup>68</sup> -- presumably the prose letters of O, with the few extra common to the other manuscripts (for example, the letters to Sanctus) -- but none of the poems except XXII; he argues that the carmina in O derive from a separate source.<sup>69</sup> His stemma is thus constructed with three separate lines of descent from the archetype: that

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<sup>63</sup> Ausonius XXVII. XXI.

<sup>64</sup> L: codex Lugdunensis 535 membr. 4<sup>o</sup> f. 131.  
M: codex Monacensis membr. 26303.

<sup>65</sup> Paulinus, Poems X and XI in Hartel's edition, along with Ausonius, XXVII. XVII-XXIII/XXIV (the two last being two different versions, supplied by Green, of the last poem in the correspondence).

<sup>66</sup> Poems XXIV, XXXI, XVII, IX, VII and VIII in Hartel's edition.

<sup>67</sup> Although F, P and U contain Ausonius' "quarta tibi haec ..." (XXVII. 21 in Green's edition).

<sup>68</sup> Hartel, Praef. xiv.

<sup>69</sup> Hartel, Praef. xiv.

of O; that of FPU, through a mediating source; that of LM, again through a mediating source. This is not entirely satisfactory. It seems problematic, indeed, question-begging, to posit a single archetype from which O descends directly but from which the scribe of O elected not to copy some of the material. Moreover, the source of the carmina in O remains unexplained. It seems far more likely -- particularly in the light of my earlier observations about the lack of a definitive "collection" of the letters in Paulinus' own time -- that O represents one tradition, LM another. FPU appear to derive their ordering from O's tradition, though probably not directly from O itself, but clearly have another source for material as well. A more exact relation than this, given the absence of surviving intermediaries, is hard to determine. However, even this conclusion may lead us to suppose that Hartel's reliance on O, his "codex optimus",<sup>70</sup> is ill-founded. Even if there was originally a single archetype, which seems unlikely, there is no reason to suggest that a reading from O is more authoritative, or closer to the archetype in any way except chronologically. In several cases, Hartel's support for O has led him to print quite extraordinary readings; where these have a bearing on my argument, I shall address them ad loc.

The remainder of the letters printed by Hartel have been preserved for us in other collections. The preservation of the exchange with Augustine has already been mentioned (though it is also, as we have seen, present in FPU); manuscripts of Jerome give Letters XXV and XXV\* to Crispinianus (originally attributed to Jerome) and Letter XXVI to Sebastianus, as well, of course, as Jerome's side of the correspondence with Paulinus.<sup>71</sup> The letters to Marcella and Celancia, also from the Hieronymian tradition,

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<sup>70</sup> Hartel, Praef. xv.

<sup>71</sup> That is, Jerome, Letters LIII, LVIII, and LXXXV.

first crept into the Paulinian corpus in the printed edition of Rosweyd and Sacchinus in 1622; they are presented by Hartel in an Appendix, but were only briefly thought to be by Paulinus. There are also Letters XLVI and XLVII, introduced from codices of Rufinus. Reinelt argues vigorously that these are inauthentic;<sup>72</sup> Fabre reviews the evidence to conclude that, even if the attribution is not certain, it is “vraisemblable” that these letters are from Paulinus, and Walsh says briskly that Reinelt’s suggestion “has little validity”.<sup>73</sup> I prefer to follow Fabre and Walsh, and read these letters as authentic.

Not only is the “corpus” of Paulinus’ letters a posthumous construct, but the system of numeration which has become canonical has equally dubious foundations. It bears no relation to either of the predominant orders in which the letters are presented in the manuscript tradition, but instead represents an early attempt to establish a chronological order for the letters. By the time of Hartel’s edition in 1894, this chronology had already been substantially reconsidered; yet despite his open disdain for the edition of Lebrun which, in 1685, had first suggested the order, he effectively enshrined it in tradition by replicating the numeration, justifying this eccentric decision on the grounds that Migne had already followed Lebrun, and that it would more convenient for the men [*sic*] who were working on the letters if he did the same.<sup>74</sup> Fabre was scathing about this evasion of responsibility: “...on est stupéfait de voir que Hartel ne pose pas même la question [de chronologie], pas plus dans ses articles que dans son édition.” He does, however, acknowledge that the very proliferation of chronological

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<sup>72</sup> Reinelt, Studien, pp. 45-52.

<sup>73</sup> Fabre, Chronologie pp. 88-97; Walsh, Letters II, p. 355.

<sup>74</sup> Hartel, Praef. xxvi. Even in 1948, Fabre comments (Chronologie, p. 2, n. 4), “Le mot virorum est divertissant!”

studies of Paulinus' letters "prouve suffisamment que la question n'a pas été entièrement résolue".<sup>75</sup>

I have not attempted here to add to these chronological studies, or to engage in the debates raging round the precise dating of early events in Paulinus' life. The current situation is that Trout has defended Fabre's scheme in the face of the revisions of Desmulliez; Perrin considers Trout's arguments inconclusive, and prefers to let Desmulliez' chronology stand.<sup>76</sup> For the type of study I wish to undertake, establishing a precise absolute date for any given letter is less important than acknowledging a relative chronology to facilitate the charting of changes in modes of thought or expression. Where I do cite precise dates, I use the traditional dating of Fabre. In his table, the most significant deviations in relative chronology from the order of the letters printed by Hartel are that two of the despatches to Amandus and Delphinus are considered to predate the rest of the surviving letters (Letters XXXV and XXXVI being dated to 390-392 and Letters IX and X to 393); and that Letter XXIX, the account to Sulpicius of the visit of Melania the Elder, is placed in the same year (400) as the tours de force of Letters XXIII and XXIV, and prior to Letter XXVII.

At the end of all this, we can say with reasonable confidence that we have fifty authentic letters of Paulinus around which to base this study of his thought: from Hartel's

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<sup>75</sup> Fabre, Chronologie, pp. 3 and 4 respectively.

<sup>76</sup> See Fabre, Chronologie; Dennis E. Trout, "Dates of the ordination of Paulinus"; J. Desmulliez, "Paulin de Nole. Études chronologiques (393-397)", RecAug 20 (1985), 35-64; Michel-Yves Perrin, "'Ad implendum caritatis ministerium'. La place des courriers dans la correspondance de Paulin de Nole", MEFRA 104 (1992), 1025-1068. Trout also argues more extensively in favour of Fabre's chronology in Secular Renunciation.

total of 51 we should subtract Letter XXXIV, which is in fact the sermon “de gazophylacio”, and Letter XLVIII, which is so small a fragment as to be useless for my purposes; at the same time, we should remember to add the second letter to Crispinianus, XXV\*. However, these letters are presented in an order so eccentric that it is unwise to base any arguments on their juxtaposition bar in the most securely attested cases.

The probable lack of a single archetype for the manuscripts of Paulinus’ letters, and the fragmentary nature of the correspondence drawn from other sources, has one extremely important implication for this study. We are forced to take into account the possibility that these letters were selected for preservation for precisely the characteristics which I discuss in the subsequent study: for their significance in the burgeoning genre of Christian literature as exquisite expressions of Christian friendship, as texts for meditation, and as fine exemplars of the process of Christian communication.<sup>77</sup> If this were the case, it would far from vitiate the study -- indeed, it would show the contemporary importance of the phenomena which I isolate for discussion; but it does mean that extrapolation to the generality of late antique Latin letters should, and will, be made with caution.

My aim has been, starting from a close reading of the letters of Paulinus, to produce what is essentially a thematic commentary upon them. I begin, in chapter one, with a systematic examination of the circumstances of delivery of letters in late antiquity:

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<sup>77</sup> Perhaps this, combined with the lack of interest in literary posterity which apparently led Paulinus to preserve neither his own letters nor those of his correspondents, may explain the preservation of Paulinus’ letters in the face of the loss of Sulpicius’. Note Stancliffe’s comments on Sulpicius’ very different prose style, Saint Martin p. 38 ff.: although she suggests that his letters may have been written in a style closer to that of Paulinus, there is no evidence on which to base this idea.

the chapter discusses such issues as the norms (or their contravention) for composing letters, the role of the letter-carrier in augmenting their message, the directions to explicit and implicit audiences, and the sacramental nature of Christian epistolography, to conclude that the process of composition and distribution of letters has important implications for ideas of public/private divisions in late antiquity and for appreciation of the texture of Christian life at the period. This leads directly into the thought of the second chapter, which contains a study of ideas of Christian friendship as they are developed and played out in epistolary exchange. Letters express the love of friends, which reflects and is enriched by Christ's love; in loving a friend more fully, one will also love Christ more fully, and hence become more fully Christian. The entire process of communication surrounding the composition of the physical letters constantly explores and reenacts this experience. Chapter the third essays an exploration of the patterns of thought with which this perpetual relation of the spiritual to the temporal, the invisible to the visible, is accomplished, and concludes that it is due to an essentially imagistic (and hence non-linear) manner of framing experience and making connections. This assertion, based on densely imagistic passages in Paulinus, is supported with reference to the more developed critique of these phenomena in the study of the visual arts. The fourth, and concluding, chapter investigates ideas of the self and of personal identity that the conclusions of the preceding studies entail. "Personal identity" is considered as not necessarily coextensive with either the philosophical self or the soul, but as something closer to the modern, untechnical "sense of self". This chapter finds that the self in late antiquity is, in a most thoroughgoing sense, relational. This has important consequences for the notion of the transformation wrought by conversion, which will be explored in a detailed reading of the correspondence between Ausonius and Paulinus. The self is, moreover, always configured as completed by God; yet, despite conscientious attempts to think of the self as purely spiritual, it remains strongly associated with a physical entity.

Several themes are suggested which span the divisions artificially imposed on this study by the arrangement of the chapters. Most importantly, there is the theme of striving for understanding of the relationship between the temporal and spiritual realms, so often framed in an appreciation of symbolic value in things, events, or people. Since this understanding seems to me to be founded in the habituation to imagistic patterns of thought, my chapter on images, while in many ways the most speculative, is also the pivot of my argument. It tries to recreate the significance of the Christian attachment to finding meaning in paradox -- another theme which runs throughout the study; and its explanatory force is tested in its attempt to make less rebarbative the extensive imagistic jeux d'esprit to be found in Paulinus' letters, which have tended to disgust or to mystify modern taste. Also of importance are the effects of an ideally communitarian existence on patterns of thought and responses. That such an existence should be significant for the way in which friendships are formulated and sustained should be immediately apparent; but, as I shall argue, a sense of community is of equal significance in formulating a sense of self. Finally, the impression of a conscious creation and enactment of new ideas about how to live a Christian life pervades the letters of Paulinus and his correspondents. While inevitably linked to antecedent modes of thought, they are striving, severally and collectively, towards the expression of Christianity.



## CHAPTER ONE

### **IPSAE LITTERAE**

A study of the ideas in the letters must begin by establishing the nature of the letters themselves. What constitutes a “letter” has been interminably discussed and redefined.<sup>1</sup> Scholars of the New Testament have been especially assiduous in their quest for schematic distinctions between types of and typical themes in letters<sup>2</sup>; but so, of course, were those few who wrote on the subject in late antiquity.<sup>3</sup> It is not my purpose here to enter this debate: it is clear that Paulinus and his correspondents had a working notion of litterae or epistulae, and my purpose in this chapter is to tease out, from internal evidence in the letters, the contents of this working notion. That this on occasion includes what have subsequently been designated as theological treatises is a possibility I

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- <sup>1</sup> Reviewed in brief by Giles Constable, Letters and Letter-Collections, *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental* 17 (Turnhout 1976), pp. 11-25; useful caveats against “a modern frame of reference and anachronistic criteria” for judging antique and medieval letters, pp. 12-13. For an overview of the tradition in antiquity and (briefly) the early Christian period, see “Epistolographie”, RE Suppl. V, 185-220.
  - <sup>2</sup> Dating at least from Deissmann’s letter/epistle distinction, which is entirely unhelpful for the letters of late antiquity (and increasingly regarded as of questionable value even for the letters of Paul: see most recently Harry Y. Gamble, Books and Readers in the Early Church (New Haven and London 1995), esp. pp. 32-40).
  - <sup>3</sup> These sources have been usefully gathered by Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, *Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study* 19 (Atlanta 1988); note especially the contribution of Pseudo-Libanius, p. 66 ff.

am willing to embrace, and which will be illuminated by discussions to follow.<sup>4</sup>

In brief: my interest in this chapter lies with the letters as historical events. By speaking of letters as “historical events”, I attempt to include far more than merely the textual traces of the correspondence: the letters of late antiquity, though abundant, are imperfectly and incompletely preserved; the superscriptions indicating recipients, which might be thought to be the most reliable indicators of their epistolary status, do not reliably survive.<sup>5</sup> What must also be taken into account is the entire nexus of communication which surrounded these textual traces, the written documents. This could include everything from supplementary notes, which have not survived, through gifts of one sort or another sent with the letter, to verbal messages brought by the letter-carriers.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, I shall argue that what we refer to as a letter was often a relatively insignificant part of this more general and various communication. This chapter will set out what this communication seems to have entailed, and suggest some of its implications for the study of Paulinus and of late antiquity more generally.

A variety of models for letters would have been available to a writer such as

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- <sup>4</sup> We may in any case note the observation of Marrou, that methods of publication in the fourth century account for “la frontière indécise qui, dans la littérature patristique, sépare lettres et traités”. He also cites instances of patristic uncertainty about whether to categorize a work as letter or treatise. “Technique de l’édition”, pp. 221 and 222 respectively.
- <sup>5</sup> Dennis Trout has discussed the unreliability of epistolary tituli: see Trout, Secular Renunciation p. 73 ff.
- <sup>6</sup> As John Matthews has pointed out in his study of the letters of Symmachus: “It is clear ... that the letters were not always intended to say everything that we might expect of them.” He discusses the extra-textual aspects of the letters in “The Letters of Symmachus”, Latin Literature of the Fourth Century, ed. J. W. Binns (London/ Boston 1974), pp. 63-64.

Paulinus, whose increasing commitment to Christianity belied his classical training. As a Christian, his obvious model was the letters of Saint Paul to the early Christian communities, letters marked by their tension between the personal and the preaching voice, their studied simplicity and directness, and their combination of Christian instruction, admonishment and reflective exposition. Paulinus drew heavily on many of Saint Paul's themes and phrases, as will be seen; but his inspiration for the form of epistolary composition seems to have come for the most part from elsewhere. His pagan education would certainly have included a familiarity with the letters of Cicero and Seneca, and he would probably have had some knowledge of Pliny;<sup>7</sup> we know, not least from echoes in his verse correspondence with Ausonius, that he had read the lyric poetry of Horace, and he may well have had some knowledge of Horace's epistles too.<sup>8</sup> Cicero had set the model for a letter as half of a conversation between friends, a purportedly informal purveyor of news and gossip<sup>9</sup> -- yet at the same time, optionally a vehicle for

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<sup>7</sup> On the survival of Pliny into late antiquity, and his likely appeal to such epistolographers as Ausonius and Symmachus, see Alan Cameron, "The Fate of Pliny's Letters in the Late Empire", *CQ* n.s. 15 (1965), 289-298.

<sup>8</sup> We know little specifically of Paulinus' education; we may perhaps infer its type and contents from what we know of his tutor Ausonius' career and reading, though it is apparent that Paulinus' Greek was very much inferior to that of Ausonius, and he was probably never at home reading in the language. See R. P. H. Green, *The Works of Ausonius* (Oxford 1991), especially pp. xx-xxii on Ausonius' reading, which certainly included all the authors mentioned above; Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: the Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1988). Werner Erdt tries to trace Paulinus' attitude to classical education through a commentary on his letter to the pagan Jovius, *Christentum und heidnisch-antike Bildung bei Paulin von Nola mit Kommentar und Übersetzung des 16. Briefes*, *Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie* 82 (Meisenheim 1976). More generally, see H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (6th ed., Paris 1965).

<sup>9</sup> A typical epistolary phrase from Cicero: "Ego, etsi nihil habeo, quod ad te scribam, scribo tamen, quia tecum loqui videor", *Att.* XII, 53. Cicero prefers the use of sermo quotidianus; he also insists on the need for jocularity in private letters.

self-advertisement and political advancement; Seneca had written a set of didactic philosophical essays on moral improvement, all addressed to a single “pupil”, Lucilius, which make no pretence of representing a private correspondence. The letters of Pliny, however, set a pattern for an ambiguity of public and private voice which, as we shall see, resonates closely with the practice of Paulinus: his collection begins with a dedicatory note to the equestrian Septicius Clarus, “Frequenter hortatus es ut epistulas, si quas paulo curatius scripsissem, colligerem publicaremque”, “You have often encouraged me to collect and publish any letters which I have written with rather more care than usual”.<sup>10</sup> This lays the claim that the letters had their origin in a genuine correspondence, while acknowledging both Pliny’s editorial and arranging hand, and his care for polished composition in the first place. Pliny also insists on the need for brevity in correspondence, and prefers that each letter should explore a single theme.<sup>11</sup>

With this literary context, the letters of late antiquity established a certain rhetoric of epistolary norms to which they frequently advert. I speak of “norms” rather than theory because reading epistolary theory, however contemporaneous, back into the letters of late antiquity leads to awkward confusions and elisions.<sup>12</sup> However, as we shall see, this rhetoric tends to be invoked negatively, in circumstances asserted as a departure

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<sup>10</sup> Pliny, Letter I. 1, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Sherwin-White summarizes the letters which form exceptions to this rule: see A. N. Sherwin-White, The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary (Oxford 1966), pp. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> And, ultimately, statements like the following, which are simply not borne out by the letters of late antiquity: “Letter writers such as Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Synesius, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine tend to follow the ‘textbooks’ on rhetoric and epistolary theory.” Stanley K. Stowers, Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity (Philadelphia 1986), p. 24. The inverted commas are revealing: what “textbooks”?

from its restrictions. A reading of the internal evidence from the letters is invaluable in investigating the practices of epistolary composition.

This rhetoric of epistolary norms is seen exquisitely expressed in the intricate and minimalist letters of Paulinus' pagan contemporary Symmachus. Symmachus' sense of epistolary priorities seems to owe a great deal to Pliny,<sup>13</sup> and it is his model which seems to be most vivid to Paulinus. We are fortunate that in the Symmachan collection there has survived a letter to his son (also Symmachus), advising him on the proper composition of a letter:

Scintillare acuminibus atque sententiis epistulas tuas gaudeo; decet enim loqui exultantius iuvenalem calorem. sed volo, ut in aliis materiis aculeis orationis utaris, huic autem generi scriptionis maturum aliquid et comicum misceas; quod tibi etiam rhetorem tuum credo praecipere. nam ut in vestitu hominum ceteroque vitae cultu loco ac tempori apta sumuntur, ita ingeniorum varietas in familiaribus scriptis negligentiam quandam debet imitari, in forensibus vero quaterere arma facundiae. sed de his non ibo longius ...<sup>14</sup>

I am delighted that your letters shimmer with pungent opinions; youthful warmth ought to speak with some exuberance. However, I wish you to use your darts of rhetoric on other matters, but for this type of writing, please mix in something considered and amusing -- which I believe your teacher also advises you to do. For just as things appropriate to the place and occasion are adopted in men's attire and the rest of their way of life, a corresponding variation of character should imitate a certain insouciance in letters to friends, but brandish the weapons of eloquence in public writings. But I won't pursue this subject further ...

The Thesaurus Linguae Latinae lists forensis as an antonym to domesticus: Symmachus is invoking the forensic eloquence fostered in his son's education, and hence the traditional division between public and private spheres of life which Christians of

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<sup>13</sup> See Cameron, "Fate of Pliny's Letters", cited above.

<sup>14</sup> Symmachus, Letter VII. IX.

Paulinus' generation are to reinterpret.<sup>15</sup> His advice for private letters is, be witty; be versatile; be learned -- but wear your learning lightly. Symmachus himself exemplifies his behest in the composition of his letter. He passes swiftly on to his next subject ("non ibo longius", "I shan't go on about it"), for the cardinal rule of such correspondence is to be brief<sup>16</sup> -- charmingly expressed in a letter to Paulinus' one-time tutor Ausonius:

Petis a me litteras longiores. est hoc in nos veri amoris indicium. sed ego qui sim paupertini ingenii mei conscius, Laconicae malo studere brevitati quam multiugis paginis infantiae meae maciem publicare.<sup>17</sup>

You are asking for longer letters from me. This is a mark of your true love for me. But since I am aware of my utterly impoverished talent, I prefer to strive for Laconian brevity rather than publicize my meagre burbling in manifold pages.

(We may contrast the request of Augustine to Jerome for a longer letter, for from so great a man "nullus sermo prolixus est", no speech is too long.<sup>18</sup>)

In Christian letters of the period, the desired aim of conciseness is usually expressed as a fear of engendering taedium or fatigatio in the correspondents. So Paulinus avers at the end of a letter to his catechist Amandus, future bishop of Bordeaux:

vellem quantum in me est adhuc prorogare sermonem, nisi et carta deficiens et metus fatigationis tuae cogeret verbis modum poni et

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<sup>15</sup> TLI VI, 1, col. 1054. This use of forensis also, of course, draws on its literal sense of "quod in foro est, versatur, agitur ..." (col. 1052), and thereby recalls the Roman rhetorical basis of the younger Symmachus' education.

<sup>16</sup> On brevitas-formulae (though without specific application to an epistolary context), see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, tr. Willard R. Trask (repr. Princeton 1990), Excursus XIII; this also briefly treats of the theme of the taedium caused by lack of brevitas.

<sup>17</sup> Symmachus, Letter I. XIV.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, Letter XL, 1.

epistolam terminari.<sup>19</sup>

I would like to draw out the conversation as long as I could, but the shortage of space and my fear of exhausting you compel me to put a limit to my words and conclude the letter.

The idea of the modus of a letter as its appropriate length recurs notably in Jerome's renowned letter to Paulinus on the interpretation of scripture: "cernis me scripturarum amore raptum excessisse modum epistolae ...", "you see that, in being carried away by my love of the scriptures, I have exceeded the due length of a letter".<sup>20</sup> (However, he proceeds undeterred to expound the "novum breviter testamentum"! ) The fear of tiring a correspondent or of going on too long is often given a peculiarly Christian twist by being characterized lightly as a peccatum. Paulinus poses a problem to Florentius:

dum pluribus apud te verbis ago, ut pro peccatis meis vel potius adversus peccata mea promerear, cum orationes intendas, adcumulo eandem de loquacitate mea sarcinam, quam de orationibus tuis minui peto, tamquam inmemor scriptum: "de multiloquio non effugies peccatum" [Proverbs 10, 19].<sup>21</sup>

While I am pouring out verbiage to you, asking that I should win you over on behalf of my sins -- or rather, against my sins -- when you direct your prayers, I am heaping up that same burden from loquacity which I am seeking to lessen from your prayers, as if I have forgotten that it is written: "with respect to garrulity, you shall not escape sin".

The same passage from Proverbs resonates in the background when Paulinus justifies his lengthy remonstrance with Sulpicius Severus over the latter's plans to place a portrait of Paulinus in his baptistry: "ita te diligo, ut magis de non obtemperando tibi quam de

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<sup>19</sup> Paulinus, Letter XII, 11. For "metus fatigationis tuae" see also Letter XIX, 4 (to Delphinus); also "nimium vos fatigo" in XLI, 3 (probably to Sanctus), "loquacius vos fatigo", in XXXIX, 8 (to Aper and Amanda).

<sup>20</sup> Jerome, Letter LIII, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLII, 5.

multiloquio peccatum timerem<sup>22</sup>”, “I love you so much that I would fear sin more from not checking you than from garrulity”.<sup>23</sup> And he opens a letter to Delphinus as follows, neatly summing up the obligations of epistolary exchange:

oportebat quidem nos sapientiae doctrinam servantes, iugum linguae nostrae et stateram verbis inponere, ut et de multiloquio nostro et de tua fatigatione geminandum nobis peccatum evaderemus.<sup>24</sup>

Now, I ought to keep the counsel of wisdom and impose a yoke on my tongue and a balance on my words, so as to avoid incurring the double sin of my garrulity and your exhaustion.

The idea of a letter as an officium, often expressed in Symmachus (and indeed in classical letter collections before him), remains prevalent in Christian correspondence.<sup>25</sup> The term itself is often used; and the idea that it represents, of the duty for measured and regular epistolary exchange, is almost invariably present. In a letter to Rufinus, who is about to leave Rome for the East, Paulinus fears not performing the officium of writing more than the possible wasted effort (damnum) if the letter fails to reach Rufinus before he leaves.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the opportune presence of carriers reminds Paulinus to send the “officium litterarum mearum”, the “affectionate obligation of my letters”, to Eucherius

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22 It is a commonplace of Paulinus’ prose style that he vitiates the sequence of tenses in this manner, following a present indicative verb with an imperfect subjunctive.

23 Paulinus, Letter XXXII, 4. For the conjunction of “multiloquium” and “peccatum”, see also XII, 2 (the letter to Amandus quoted above).

24 Paulinus, Letter XX, 1.

25 On the writing of letters as an officium for Symmachus, see Philippe Bruggisser, Symmaque ou le rituel épistolaire de l’amitié littéraire (Fribourg 1993), “Les officia de l’épistolier”, pp. 4-16.

26 Paulinus, Letter XLVII, 1.



and Galla at Lérins.<sup>27</sup> The first letter of Paulinus to Augustine is “officium nostrum”, and letter-writing an “officium” in a letter to Severus.<sup>28</sup> Even after the disastrous encounter in letters between Augustine and Jerome, the latter feels obliged to perform the officium of continuing the correspondence, if in the most abbreviated form possible. He grudgingly refers to a letter as a “promptum ...salutationis officium”, a “punctual obligatory greeting”.<sup>29</sup>

The frequency of the correspondence is of importance. Apologies are made for a letter that is considered belated: both Paulinus and Jerome open their letters of consolation to Pammachius on the death of his wife Paulina with an explanation of, or apology for, their delay in writing.<sup>30</sup> The normal expectation is of a regular reciprocated exchange, occurring about once a year. This expectation is made explicit in the case of Paulinus and Sulpicius: “sat enim nobis erat annuis com meatibus emereri litteras tuas ...”, “for we were satisfied with deserving your letters at yearly intervals...”.<sup>31</sup> The expected frequency of exchange is of particular interest, given the distance that the letter-

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<sup>27</sup> Paulinus, Letter LI, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Paulinus, Letters VI, 1 and XVII, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Jerome, Letter CIII, 1. Ambrose too may refer to a letter as “officium” -- for example, “aliquod officium sermonis mei”, VIII. 61 (=Maur. 89), to Alypius.

<sup>30</sup> Paulinus, Letter XIII, 2 (note “officium” again): “si forte id ipsum culpa magis quam gratiae iudicetur, quod tardius fungar officio caritatis...”; Jerome, Letter LXVI, 1: “...ego, serus consolator, qui inportune per biennium tacui ...”.

<sup>31</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 2. See also the thanksgiving for the return of the carrier Cardamas after two years’ absence in Letter XIX, 1 (to Delphinus).

carriers were obliged to travel.<sup>32</sup> Deviations from the norm of annual exchange are a cause of concern: “quid est, qui duas aestates easdemque in Africa sitire cogamur?” -- “what’s wrong, that we should be forced to thirst for two summers -- and those in Africa?” demands Augustine of Paulinus.<sup>33</sup> (The emphasis is interesting in view of Augustine’s recent return to Africa from a far more urbane life in Milan, at the centre of things.) Ignoring the duty of reciprocation also merits apology: there is an anxious concern to explain a letter sent out of turn in Paulinus’ second letter to Augustine:

et credo in manu et in gratia domini sermonem meum ad te fuisse  
perlatum; sed morante adhuc puero, quem ad te aliosque dilectos aequae  
deo salutandos ante hiemem miseramus, non potuimus ultra et officium  
nostrum suspendere et desiderium sermonis tui cupidissimum temperare.<sup>34</sup>

I do believe that my letter was brought to you in the Lord’s hand and his grace; but since the servant is still detained, whom I had sent before winter to greet you and other people equally beloved of God, I could no longer postpone my obligation or restrain my most avid desire for your conversation.<sup>35</sup>

Similar anxieties are expressed by Augustine: in his third letter to Jerome, for example, he assumes (correctly!) that Jerome must be offended, since he has had no reply.<sup>36</sup>

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32 For an estimate of the distance one could expect to travel in a day -- probably 30-35 km. -- see Othmar Perler, *Les Voyages de Saint Augustin* (Paris 1969), pp. 31-32, “Rapidité des voyages”.

33 Augustine, *Letter XLII*.

34 Paulinus, *Letter VI*, 1.

35 It seems to me no coincidence that here, as so often elsewhere, “sermo” may equally happily be translated “letter” or “conversation”, according to context: q.v. the ancient idea of a letter as a conversation between those absent, referred to above; and see Ambrose, *Book VII*, *Letter XLVIII* (=Maur. 66), 1 (to Romulus): “Epistularum genus propterea repertum, ut quidem nobis cum absentibus sermo sit, in dubium non venit”.

36 Augustine, *Letter LXVII*, 1.

Indeed, the presumption of regularity in epistolary exchange seems to be universal.<sup>37</sup>

A concern for whether letters were to be written in prose or metrical form belonged, however, to the Christians alone. Caelius Sedulius, in the letter to Macedonius that forms a preface to his Carmen Paschale, provides us in the second quarter of the fifth century<sup>38</sup> with a remarkably full apologia (in prose) for the use of metre as well as prose, which reveals that metrical composition was still associated with the pagan world:

...multi sunt quos studiorum saecularium disciplina per poeticas magis delicias et carminum voluptates oblectat. hi quicquid rhetoricae facundiae perlegunt, neglegentius adsequuntur, quoniam illud haud diligunt: quod autem versuum viderint blandimento mellitum, tanta cordis aviditate suscipiunt, ut in alta memoria saepius haec iterando constituent et reponant.<sup>39</sup>

...there are many people whose secular training causes them to be more diverted by poetic delights and the pleasures of verse. These people pursue with indifference whatever they read of rhetorical eloquence [i.e. prose], for they have no love for it; but when they read something sweetened with the allure of poetry, they take it to heart so eagerly that by frequent repetition they store it deep in their memory.

For Paulinus, immersed as he would formerly have been in the pagan classics and techniques of metrical composition<sup>40</sup>, we may infer that the tension between prose as a

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<sup>37</sup> On the expectation of regular exchange elsewhere, see for example Symmachus, Letter I. XXVI (to Ausonius): “dudum parvus es litterarum”; VIII. XXXIX (to Dynamius): “Queri de silentio meo non potes, qui nihil scriptorum mihi hucusque tribuisti ... Ero deinceps ad exercendum stilum promptior, si me fructu mutui sermonis animaveris”.

<sup>38</sup> Sedulius’ dates are doubtful; but there is a secure terminus ante quem in that he is quoted by Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna, who died in 450. For a convenient review of the scant details of Sedulius’ life, and of the sources for them, see Michael Roberts, Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity (Liverpool 1985), pp. 77-78.

<sup>39</sup> Sedulius, Epistola ad Macedonium, p.5 in the edition of Huemer, CSEL X.

<sup>40</sup> For Paulinus’ education, see footnote 8 and accompanying text above.

Christian medium and verse as a pre-Christian one was particularly powerful. He observes in his letter to Licentius (quoted below) that “a quo studio ego aevi quondam tui non abhorruī”, “I didn’t shrink from the study [of verse] when I was your age”.<sup>41</sup> Having previously been a master of the verse epistolary form, Paulinus responded after his ascetic conversion with an almost complete rejection of metrical form for letters. R. P. H. Green observes, “We can detect no hesitation in Paulinus’ mind about the propriety of continuing to write poetry”;<sup>42</sup> but it is clear from his change of practice that Paulinus does reconsider his ideas about the proper application for poetry. In any case, Green’s observation is not entirely accurate. We may call to witness the renowned exchange of verse letters with Ausonius.<sup>43</sup> Paulinus observes sadly to his former mentor that vicious jokes of the sort which Ausonius has indulged in his previous letter “saepe poetarum, numquam decet esse parentum”, “often befit poets, but never parents”.<sup>44</sup> The tension between classical, Muse-inspired poetry and a Christian worldview has already been much in play in the letter. Paulinus insists that he cannot be summoned back to Gaul with the Muses: “non his numinibus tibi me patriaeque reduces”, “you won’t bring me back to you and my homeland with these divinities”.<sup>45</sup> In this context, the distinction between the behaviour appropriate to poeta and to parens, so unfavourable to the latter,

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<sup>41</sup> Paulinus, Letter VIII, 3.

<sup>42</sup> The Poetry of Paulinus of Nola. A Study of his Latinity (Brussels 1971), p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> The most recent edition of this exchange is that in Green, Ausonius, pp. 708-719 for Paulinus’ letters (= Poems X and XI in Hartel’s edition, CSEL XXX (Vienna 1894)), pp. 215-231 for those of Ausonius. I discuss the exchange more fully in Chapter 4.

<sup>44</sup> Paulinus, Poem X, 264. The accusation is, ironically, buttressed by a borrowing in the previous line from Persius Sat. V, 86, “mordaci lotus aceto”.

<sup>45</sup> Paulinus, Poem X, 113.

implies first, hurtfully, that Ausonius is not the parens to Paulinus which he claims to be, and second, that poetry is unsuited to the universal Christian parens, God.<sup>46</sup> From then on, Paulinus almost never again uses verse for epistolary purposes -- which reflects the fact that for Paulinus the significance of poetry has been unalterably changed.

When Paulinus does write in verse, a rationale is required, and his choice, like that of Sedulius, tends to be connected with a project of suasion. In his letter to the luke-warm Licentius in the late 390s, Paulinus felt compelled to explain his decision to write in metrical form: he fears to disgust or bore Licentius with the “asperitate temerarii sermonis”, the “harshness of importunate language” (the letter has been solicited by Augustine); but, noticing that his correspondent is familiar with metrical forms (“musicis modis”), he will write in verse, “ut te ad dominum harmoniae omniformis artificem modulamine carminis evocarem”, “to call you to God, the maker of multifarious harmonies, with melodious song”.<sup>47</sup> It is notable that the only other letters written in verse subsequent to Paulinus’ withdrawal are also planned to persuade those much involved in the secular world of the merits of Christianity;<sup>48</sup> he also attempts the versification of some psalms, another project which suggests the communication of a Christian message to those of refined classical tastes. Most significantly, the greater part of Paulinus’ surviving poetic corpus devotes his talent for prosody to his project of

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<sup>46</sup> Paulinus has emphasized this dual application of parens in the course of the letter: see, again, the discussion in Chapter 4.

<sup>47</sup> Paulinus, Letter VIII, 3. Taedium, unfortunately, is not avoided in the rather plodding result.

<sup>48</sup> These are Poem XXII, to Jovius (the pagan dabbling in philosophy to whom Letter XVI is also addressed), and Poem XXIV, to Cytherius. It seems that the latter, from a noble Aquitainian family, was much involved in public life, although he had placed his son in Sulpicius’ monastery.

Christian suasion par excellence, the Natalicia written annually in honour of the feast day of St. Felix of Nola, and performed to those who came to his shrine: these, it seems, were instrumental in popularizing the cult of an obscure saint and dubious martyr. Poetry, in fact, becomes Paulinus' primary didactic mode, which perhaps accounts for the fact that the verse written after his conversion tends to be far more pedestrian than his prose letters. Green points out that Paulinus attempted, after his conversion, to "please the cultured and teach the uneducated" in his poetry (but, unfortunately, does not really develop this point);<sup>49</sup> though this attempt was not entirely successful, it bespeaks the effort to communicate to -- and to satisfy -- a large audience. Meanwhile, Paulinus' adoption of prose for his epistolary endeavours does not necessarily imply a smaller expected audience; but it does, for the most part, suggest a readership which has already attained some level of commitment to Christianity. Indeed, his desire to shape his thoughts in prose seems to form an essential part of his deeper Christian commitment; it is perhaps connected not just with the avoidance of pagan taint but also with the desire to respond creatively to types of writing that were being formulated as distinctively Christian. At Cassiciacum and afterwards, in the mid-380s, Augustine had explored, and ultimately rejected, the potential of dialogue form as a Christian medium; Jerome, meanwhile, was exhorting Paulinus to write biblical commentary.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the epistolary form appealed to Paulinus by being a less dogmatic, more open-ended means of communicating his Christian thoughts (certainly it is only in the verse letters that he

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<sup>49</sup> Green, Poetry of Paulinus, p. 129.

<sup>50</sup> On the creation and formalization of ideas of Christian reading and writing at this period, see Mark Vessey, Ideas of Christian Writing in Late Roman Gaul (DPhil thesis: Oxford 1988), especially pp. 41-57 on the exchange between Paulinus and Jerome. Note Jerome's insistence on the need for exemplars -- notably, himself! (p. 56). I am indebted to Mark Vessey for suggesting to me the significance of Paulinus' choice of prose over metrical form for his letters.

attempts anything like a systematic declaration of faith); perhaps this impression is a mere accident of survival.

In any case, the written text of the letter, and its forms and conventions, is only the beginning of the historical event represented by epistolary exchange. Other important exchanges, beyond the textual one, are taking place. Often the text of the letter is accompanied by some sort of gift for the addressee. This practice, once again, represents a Christian permutation of pagan aristocratic habits: it continues the ceremonial function of gift-giving, while the symbolism of the ceremony is radically changed.<sup>51</sup> Where previously Paulinus would have sent a correspondent delicacies from his estates (despatching “pauculas ficedulas”, “a few little fig-peckers”, to Gestidius<sup>52</sup>), he now sent offerings appropriate to his Christian calling. In his early months at Nola, he favoured gifts simply of bread: Augustine and Sulpicius Severus were both recipients, and Romanianus and Licentius were each sent five panes as a buccellatum, a military ration, for their Christian campaigns.<sup>53</sup> The symbolism of these gifts does not seem primarily to be a reference to Christ’s blessing of bread -- the panes are not apparently consecrated, and no reference is made to their possible use in a liturgical context. (Such a context is far from impossible, as the idea of the eucharistic meal is well established at this period, descending from the chabûrah meal in Jewish custom as well as the Lord’s Supper.<sup>54</sup>)

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<sup>51</sup> Trout, Secular Renunciation p. 274 f.; for the classical period, see Richard P. Saller, Personal Patronage in the Early Empire (Cambridge 1982), pp. 122-24.

<sup>52</sup> Paulinus, Poem I, line 7 of prose section. OLD glosses “ficedula” ad loc. as “a small bird esteemed a delicacy in Autumn when it feeds on figs and grapes”.

<sup>53</sup> Panis to Augustine: Paulinus, Letter IV, 5; to Sulpicius: V, 21; panes as buccellatum, VII, 3.

<sup>54</sup> See Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster 1945), pp. 48-140.

Rather, they are intended to reinforce Christian communion in a broader sense: thus Paulinus concludes his first letter to Augustine with the words “panem unum, quem unanimittatis indicio misimus caritati tuae, rogamus accipiendo benedicas”, “please bless with your acceptance the bread which we have sent to your grace as a mark of unanimity”.<sup>55</sup> The gifts represent a striving for connection, and, through connection, for blessing to the giver. This is made explicit, for example, in Paulinus’ presentation of panis Campanus to Sulpicius:

Panem Campanum de cellula nostra tibi pro eulogia misimus, tantum meritis in domino tuis freti, ut plena ad te perferendum sui gratia crederemus; tu licet uberioribus micis a domini mensa iam saturatus sis, dignare et a peccatoribus acceptum in nomine domini panem in eulogiam vertere.<sup>56</sup>

We have sent Campanian bread from our own little monastery to you as a blessed offering, so confident in your merits in the Lord that we trust it will be brought to you in the fulness of its grace; though you have already been filled with richer morsels from the Lord’s table, please turn the bread received in the Lord’s name from sinners into a blessing.

A tension between the active and passive senses of eulogia hovers behind this passage: the word denotes a blessing tout court (= benedictio), but also has the technical meaning of bread blessed (as opposed to consecrated) and distributed to the people. Paulinus also sends to Sulpicius a “scutella buxea”, a boxwood plate, and asks that he receives this with the bread as “apophoreta voti spiritualis”: a further double entendre based on the fact that apophoretum, while it had come to mean “offering”, had originally referred specifically to a gift given by the host to his guests after a meal.<sup>57</sup> What is of importance is that the gifts should symbolize spiritual connection, and it is as such symbols that they

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<sup>55</sup> Paulinus, Letter IV, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Paulinus, Letter V, 21.

<sup>57</sup> For eulogia, see TLL V, 2. 1048; for apophoreta, see Blaise s.v. apophoretum, and TLL II. 250/1 s.v. apophoretus, both citing this passage.



are received.<sup>58</sup> Thus they extend the message of the written letter. Alypius' gift to Paulinus of Augustine's five treatises "contra Manichaeos" (which have not been securely identified<sup>59</sup>) seems to have initiated Paulinus' correspondence with the clergy of North Africa, and is described as "prima affectus sui documenta et caritatis tuae pignora", "the first intimations of his [Alypius'] affection and pledges of your [Augustine's] love".<sup>60</sup> When the gift, as here, is a book or books, they are naturally significant not only for their symbolic value but also for their contents. So there are two ways in which Christian gifts of books are differentiated from pagan: by their place in a greater spiritual scheme; and by the nature of the material shared.

To illustrate this, one may compare a pagan with a Christian letter for content and tone; both have ostensibly the same purpose, to accompany a gift of books. The first is a cover letter from Symmachus to Ausonius for a present of Pliny's Natural History:

Si te amor habet naturalis historiae, quam Plinius elaboravit, en tibi libellos, quorum mihi praesentanea copia fuit, in quis, ut arbitror, opulentae eruditioni tuae neglegens veritatis librarius displicebit. sed mihi fraudi non erit emendationis incuria. malui enim tibi probari mei muneris celeritate, quam alieni operis examine. vale.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This represents, I think, a rather richer concept than Frend's description of Paulinus as "a clearing-house for the exchange of opinions and books", "Two Worlds", p. 115.

<sup>59</sup> Augustine wrote no "pentateuch", as Paulinus describes it, against the Manicheans; both Lietzmann ("Entstehungsgeschichte", 273 n. 1) and Fabre (Chronologie p. 15, n. 3) follow Buse (cit. Fabre) in suggesting that the five books were De vera religione, De Genesi contra Manichaeos libri II, De moribus ecclesiae catholicae, and De moribus Manichaeorum.

<sup>60</sup> Paulinus, Letter IV, 2. For an account of the initiation of Paulinus' correspondence with North Africa, see Trout, Secular Renunciation p. 253 ff.; also, briefly, Paolino di Nola: Epistole ad Agostino ed. Teresa Piscitelli Carpino (Naples 1989), p. 28 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Symmachus, Letter I. XXIV.

If you are fond of the natural history which Pliny completed, here are the books for you, of which I have a current abundance and in which, I think, it will displease your abundant erudition that the copyist has been careless of the true version. But I shall not have done wrong<sup>62</sup> by neglecting to emend it, for I preferred that you should approve me for the promptitude of my gift, rather than for my scrutiny of someone else's work. Farewell.

How different is the tone of Augustine's presentation of "aliqua scripta nostra", "some of my writings", to Jerome, with a request for careful criticism buttressed by quotations from the Psalms:

Sane idem frater aliqua scripta nostra fert secum. quibus legendis si dignationem adhibueris, etiam sinceram fraternamque severitatem adhibeas quaeso. non enim aliter intellego, quod scriptum est: "emendabit me iustus in misericordia et arguet me; oleum autem peccatoris non inpinguet caput meum" [Ps. 140, 5], nisi quia magis amat obiurgator sanans quam adulator unguens caput.<sup>63</sup>

The same brother is carrying some of my writings with him. If you care to read them, please apply a sincere and fraternal strictness to them. For I understand by the scriptural passage "the just man shall correct me in mercy and chastise me; but let not the oil of the sinner enrich my head" precisely that the constructive critic displays more love than a flatterer anointing one's head.

These Christian literary connections support a living, burgeoning tradition: the works exchanged are not monuments, but works in progress, and the act of their exchange reinforces the sense of community which the texts of the letters themselves create and maintain.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> TLL VI, 1.1268 lists "fraudi est" as a legal term ("illicere ... fallendo"), and cites this passage.

<sup>63</sup> Augustine, Letter XXVIII, 6. Note, further to this comparison, that Augustine is sending his own work, Symmachus someone else's (and that of an author long dead). Late Roman aristocratic mores considered the unsolicited gift of one's own work as verging on vulgar self-advertisement: see Symmachus, Letter I.XIV, exhorting Ausonius to send him a copy of his Moselle.

<sup>64</sup> See Vessey, Ideas of Christian Writing, on building up a Christian community of writing and response to scripture: epistolary exchange is very much part of this process. Sadly, the continuation of the correspondence between Augustine and

Paulinus is a typical participant in this Christian literary community. Sulpicius sends him a work for historical emendation (which Paulinus, feeling unequal to the task, passes on to the better-qualified Rufinus); Paulinus returns some nugae, a natalicium and his panegyric on Theodosius.<sup>65</sup> Augustine sends Paulinus his own de libero arbitrio, and requests in return Paulinus' contra paganos<sup>66</sup> and some books of Ambrose "adversus nonnullos imperitissimos et superbissimos, qui de Platonis libris dominum profecisse contendunt", "against some exceptionally ignorant and arrogant people, who argue that the Lord profited from Plato's books".<sup>67</sup> The adnotatio of Paulinus' own letters sent by Sanctus and referred to in the introduction offers particularly interesting evidence for the creation through letters of a devotional textual tradition: drawing up an adnotatio involves an acknowledgement that the author whose works are listed is authoritative in some sphere; here, it is accompanied with a gift of hymns, which reinforces the suggestion that the acknowledged authority is spiritual.<sup>68</sup>

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Jerome cited here is not a luminous example of this free exchange.

<sup>65</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXVIII, 5-6.

<sup>66</sup> Whatever this is: Sister Wilfrid Parsons, the translator of Augustine's correspondence, suggests here Paulinus, Poem XXXII; however, Green's analysis of the poem amounts to a dismissal of its authenticity: Green, Poetry, pp. 130-131.

<sup>67</sup> Augustine, Letter XXXI, 8. The books of Ambrose referred to do not apparently survive. For other instances of books sent with letters, see Augustine, Letter LXXXII, 35 (a request for Jerome's interpretatio de septuaginta); Jerome, Letter LVIII, 8 (Paulinus has sent him too his panegyric on Theodosius). Sometimes, of course, the letters more or less amount to books themselves: so with Jerome, Letter LIII to Paulinus.

<sup>68</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLI, 1. Paulinus responds with some embarrassment: "nam vere prope omnium earum ita inmemor eram, ut meas esse non recognoscerem, nisi vestris litteris credidissem" (as cited in the Introduction). But see further below on

This burgeoning Christian tradition of textual exchange is supplemented by other, non-literary, gifts -- like the panis Campanus above -- which are more obviously symbolic in their binding together of the Christian community. For example, camel-hair pallia are exchanged. In one case this prompts from Paulinus an associative disquisition on the salutary effects of the prickly hair, and on its reminder of Elijah, John the Baptist, David: the Christian community, not just at present, but historically, is thus seen as being connected by such gifts.<sup>69</sup> Even Jerome is not unaware of the significance of such offerings: “*palliolum textura breve, caritate latissimum senili capiti confovendo libenter accepi et munere et muneris auctore laetatus*”, “I gladly received the little cloak, thin-woven but deep-napped with love, to warm an old man’s head, delighted by both gift and giver”.<sup>70</sup> And the significance of exchange for the broader Christian community is clearly seen in Paulinus’ return gift to Sulpicius of a tunic, which -- “*addo ...adhuc pretio eius et gratiae*”, “I am adding to its spiritual value” -- had been given to him by Melania the Elder on her recent visit. Later, he also sends to Sulpicius a “*partem particulae de ligno divinae crucis*”, “a tiny little splinter from the wood of the divine cross”, from the same source.<sup>71</sup>

Such gifts, therefore, not only extend the meaning and significance of the written

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the spiritual function of letters.

<sup>69</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIX, 1. On Paulinus’ associative patterns of thought see Chapter 3 below.

<sup>70</sup> Jerome, Letter LXXXV, 6 (to Paulinus). Likewise, Sulpicius sends pallia to Paulinus, Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Tunic: Paulinus, Letter XXIX, 6; splinter of the Cross: Paulinus, Letter XXXI, 1.

letter, but also prompt a shimmering of symbolic association which may be supposed to extend far beyond the purely verbal. But there is also a more important extension of the letters' meaning:

sic hic deus in tua caritate nobis abundans non solum litteris tuis nos sed et tabellariis benedicit visitat pascit inluminat, utroque nobis aperiens thesaurum bonum cordis tui ...<sup>72</sup>

Thus God, who abounds for us in your love, blesses, visits, sustains and enlightens us not only with your letters but also with their carriers: with both, he opens to us the wholesome treasury of your heart ...

The enormous role played by the carriers of the letters in the entire nexus of communication, to which the written fragments are our only surviving testimony, should never be overlooked -- though the fact that two studies, those of Gorce and of Perrin, exhaust the list of modern surveys of the subject suggests that the significance of the letter-carriers has in fact been often overlooked.<sup>73</sup> Gorce is more interested in the mechanics of delivery, and in anecdotal information on the letter-carriers, than in the implications for communication as a whole; the following remarks serve effectively as addenda to the work of Perrin.

The simple fact that we often know the names of the letter-carriers gives some indication of their importance (though Perrin shows that Paulinus is far more assiduous in

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<sup>72</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 2 (to Sulpicius).

<sup>73</sup> The excellent study of Michel-Yves Perrin, "Courriers", has already been mentioned in the introduction. (This article also contains useful appendices with a chronological table of Paulinus' letters and a prosopography of their carriers.) See also Denys Gorce, Les voyages, l'hospitalité, et le port des lettres dans le monde chrétien des IV<sup>e</sup> et V<sup>e</sup> siècles (Paris 1925), pp. 205-247. For comparison with the dissemination of letters in the early Christian church, see S. R. Llewelyn, New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity vol. 7 (Sydney 1994), pp. 1-57 (with supporting evidence from recent papyri).

naming his carriers than any of his contemporaries<sup>74</sup>); further, respondents may expressly greet former carriers in subsequent letters.<sup>75</sup> In purely functional terms, the opportune presence of a carrier may prompt a letter: visitors from Lérins remind Paulinus that Eucherius and Galla are in ascetic retirement there, and provide the occasion for an epistolary greeting.<sup>76</sup> (Conversely, in a letter of Symmachus, two letters received simultaneously from Ausonius prove that he lacked a baiulus, not voluntas.<sup>77</sup>) Sometimes the opportunity to write is more forcibly created: Paulinus tells Victricius of Rouen how God provided a long-desired occasion for writing when he met with Paschasius, a deacon from Rouen, in Rome, and continues:

sed fatemur violentiam nostram, qua illum de urbe ad sanctitatem tuam  
redire cupientem, quamvis festinationem piam iustissimi desiderii  
probaremus, tamen in tuo amore complexi Nola perduximus ...<sup>78</sup>

But I confess the violence with which I embraced him in my love for you  
and inveigled him to Nola when he wished to return from Rome to your  
holiness, even though I applauded the pious urgency of his extremely  
reasonable desire ...

A carrier may likewise hasten a letter's conclusion. A letter from Paulinus to Augustine contains a typically self-deprecating acknowledgement of this: the carrier, Quintus, is eager to return from the tenebrae of Paulinus to the lumen of Augustine, and "instantiam eius in litteris exigendis etiam haec epistola lituris quam versibus crebrior loquitur", "this letter bespeaks his urgency in exacting correspondence, with more frequent erasures than

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<sup>74</sup> See "Courriers", 1026-1027, with statistical table at 1046-1047.

<sup>75</sup> Augustine, for example, sends greetings especially to Romanus and Agilis in Letter XLII; they had brought him Paulinus, Letter VI.

<sup>76</sup> Paulinus, Letter LI, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Symmachus, Letter I. XXVIII.

<sup>78</sup> Paulinus, Letter XVIII, 1.

lines”.<sup>79</sup> Carriers may also shape the narrative of letters, suggesting topics for inclusion or reminding the writer of details. The carrier Cardamas insists that Delphinus, the bishop of Bordeaux who baptized Paulinus, wishes to hear reports of things which are happening “circa [v]os ... in domino”; and so Paulinus adds, giving circumstantial detail unusual for him, “sciat veneratio tua sanctum fratrem tuum papam urbis Anastasium amantissimum esse humilitatis nostrae”, “your reverence should know that your holy brother Pope Anastasius is extremely affectionate towards my humility”.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Paulinus decides to include in a letter to Sulpicius the verses inscribed in his unfinished church at Fundi, above all because “in huius absida designatam picturam meus Victor adamavit et portare tibi voluit...”, “my Victor particularly loved a picture delineated in its apse, and wanted to bring it to you...”.<sup>81</sup> It can be no coincidence that the two carriers involved here -- Cardamas and Victor, respectively -- are the two most frequently used by three of Paulinus’ most frequent correspondents: the relationship with the carrier is of crucial importance to the nature of the letters. Sometimes an entire letter is even initiated by its carrier, as when Victor asks Paulinus to write to former colleagues of his in the

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<sup>79</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 8. See also Letters XLIII, 1 (to Desiderius) and L, 1 (to Augustine). Jerome too submits to the insistence of a carrier, Letter CXII, 1 (to Augustine); and there is an engaging example from Augustine’s correspondence with Paulinus: “carissimus frater Celsus cum rescripta repeteret, debitum reddere festinavi, sed vere festinavi ...” (Augustine, Letter LXXX, 1; my emphasis).

<sup>80</sup> Paulinus, Letter XX, 2; in paragraph 3 of the same letter, Cardamas again prompts the inclusion of circumstantial information -- that Venerius, the new bishop of Milan, has written to Paulinus.

<sup>81</sup> Letter XXXII, 17. It is, incidentally, of interest that “bringing” the picture to Sulpicius must, in the context, refer to bringing back a verbal account and the verses with which the picture is inscribed, not a copy of the picture itself. Chapter 3 explores further the relationship between words and images for Paulinus.

military to urge them on in Christian conversion.<sup>82</sup>

But these are the least important aspects of the carriers' role in epistolary exchange. The importance attached to the choice of a carrier, and the anger ensuing when it emerges that such a choice has been made poorly, are our first hints of their wider significance. Paulinus begins his letter to Jovius by reflecting on the business of using Christian carriers to send a letter to a pagan. Paulinus does not wish to pass over the opportunity of writing: he loves writing to Jovius "per viros religionis", "through men of the Faith", and feels that it would give quite the wrong impression if he didn't -- as if Jovius were shunned by holy men, or didn't approve and study Christianity. Jovius should welcome the letter because of the carriers, not vice versa; and Paulinus concludes that the choice of carriers is particularly appropriate to his current purpose:

apte autem visa est ad id quoque huiusmodi tabellariorum persona congruere, ut aliquid de pristina illa epistola responderem tibi, quam tu ad illas mihi litteras, quibus manifestum divinae potestatis in elementis et curae circa nos beneficium praedicaveram, retulisti.<sup>83</sup>

Anyway, the character of carriers of this type seemed to correspond fitly to the purpose of making some response to you about that original letter which you returned to those letters of mine, in which I had proclaimed the clear beneficence of divine power in the elements and of divine care for us.

This "beneficence of divine power" has already been proven when Paulinus' earlier letter ("argentum illud sancti commercii", "that silver of a sacred trade") was saved from a shipwreck and its delivery ensured. Paulinus seems to be indicating that the use of Christian carriers to take the letter to Jovius is in itself part of the proof of God's involvement in the world -- and palpably extends the divine concern towards Jovius.

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<sup>82</sup> Paulinus, Letters XXV and XXV\*. Letter XXVI also seems to have been prompted by Victor.

<sup>83</sup> Paulinus, Letter XVI, 1.



In one letter, Paulinus gives explicit instructions to Sulpicius on choosing his carriers. It is important that the carriers should be drawn from among those close to him, both literally and spiritually:

Neque sat habeas occasionibus cunctis revisere, nisi et pueros tuos mittas nec solum de famulis sed et de filiis sanctis, quorum benedicta in domino prole laetaris, eligas tabellarios, quorum oculis nos videas et ore contingas.<sup>84</sup>

Nor should you be content to see them again on every occasion, unless you send your own people and choose letter-carriers not only from your servants but also from your holy sons -- the offspring, blessed in the Lord, in which you rejoice -- with whose eyes you may see us and in whose speech you may draw near to us.

The trust reposed in a carrier is so great that Sanemarius, carrying a letter to Amandus at Bordeaux, is given the duty of performing offerings in memory of Paulinus' parents: this, it seems, is part of proving his suitability for ordination by Amandus:

...vobis in domo domini serviat delegatis ad parentum nostrorum memoriam obsequiis, ut per religiosam servitutem obtinere firmam libertatem sub vestra defensione mereatur.<sup>85</sup>

...let him help you in the house of the Lord with the funeral rites designated for the commemoration of my parents, so that through his pious service he may deserve to obtain certain freedom under your protection.

The Symmachan idea of epistolary patronage has been extended to guarantee the carrier inclusion, not in a secular, but in a spiritual community;<sup>86</sup> but the mission entrusted to Sanemarius also shows his importance in a context far beyond his immediate function. A certain letter of Paulinus speaks particularly, though obliquely, to the theme of trust: it is

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<sup>84</sup> Letter XI, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Letter XII, 12.

<sup>86</sup> We may recall again Matthews on Symmachus: "his letters were primarily intended not to inform but to manipulate, to produce results". "Letters of Symmachus", p. 64.

an extended meditation on desirable and undesirable characteristics in men, transparently prompted by the contrast between Marracinus inspiritualis, the original carrier of the letter, who has reneged on his duty of delivery, and Sorianus spiritalis, who has taken on the task. It is not enough that the letter should simply have arrived, by whatever means: Paulinus' sense of spiritual continuity between himself and Sulpicius has, it seems, been severed, and his vivid anger at the failure of the original carrier is directly proportional to his high estimation of the spiritual responsibilities of the carrier. We see the necessity of preserving -- or, in this case, reasserting -- this spiritual continuity at the close of the letter, where Paulinus requests that Sulpicius should receive Sorianus "quasi a te missus mihi venerit", "as if he had come to me sent by you", as if he were Sulpicius' own carrier and spiritual confrère. Thus God passed on Sulpicius' letters through him "et te ignorante", "even though you were unaware of it": the spiritual continuity was broken, but the substitute carrier was still performing the work of God and striving to reconnect the correspondents.<sup>87</sup> It is when the relationship of absolute trust fails that we see how much is expected of a carrier.

The most celebrated example of a mistaken choice of carrier must be Vigilantius, whom Paulinus had sent with his first letter to Jerome.<sup>88</sup> After Vigilantius has delivered Paulinus' letters, Jerome pursues him with a furious letter of his own:

credidi sancti Paulini presbyteri epistulis et illius super nomine tuo non putavi errare iudicium et, licet statim accepta epistula asunarteton sermonem tuum intellegerem, tamen rusticitatem et simplicitatem magis

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<sup>87</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXII; quotes from paragraph 3. This notion of spiritual continuity between correspondents seems to be the result of Paulinus' expansive conception of the self, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>88</sup> David Hunter has recently written on this disastrous relationship: see "Vigilantius of Calagurris: Holy Relics and Holy Clerics in Late Fourth-Century Gaul", forthcoming.

in te arbitrabar quam vecordiam. nec reprehendo sanctum virum -- maluit enim apud me dissimulare, quod noverat, quam portitorem clientulum suis litteris accusare ...<sup>89</sup>

I believed the letters of holy Paulinus the priest, and didn't think that his judgement of your reputation could err; and though as soon as I had received the letter I recognized that your manner of speaking was incoherent, I thought it was your roughness and lack of education rather than insanity. I don't blame the holy man -- he preferred to pretend to me that he didn't know what he knew, rather than to lay charges in his own letters against his letter-carrier and minor protégé ...

This letter goes on to reveal the considerable sense of betrayal when a carrier criticizes one of those between whom he is relaying letters -- because, of course, the delivery of a letter involves making one's home in the respondent's community for some time while waiting for an answer. Jerome reminds Vigilantius of a particular episode:

Recordare, quaeso, illius diei, quando me de resurrectione et veritate corporis praedicante ex latere subsaltabas et adplodebas pedem et orthodoxum conclamabas.<sup>90</sup>

I ask you to remember that day, when you leapt up from my side while I was preaching about the true resurrection of the body, and stamped your feet and acclaimed<sup>91</sup> me as orthodox.

This is why the choice of carrier is so crucial: he will live and eat with the community; he will participate in its daily spiritual round; on occasion, mention is even made of the

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<sup>89</sup> Jerome, Letter LXI, 3. This is assumed to be the same Vigilantius against whom Jerome later penned his Contra Vigilantium (see PL XXIII, cols. 353-368). To Paulinus, Jerome has merely hinted, rather disingenuously, at his response to Vigilantius' sudden departure, "qui cur tam cito profectus sit et nos reliquerit, non possum dicere, ne laedere quempiam videar ...". Jerome, Letter LVIII, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Letter LXI, 3 again. The point of the "orthodoxy" comment is that Jerome has been engaged in heated debate with the Origenists on precisely the subject of resurrection; Bynum sees his attack on Vigilantius as related to this debate. See Caroline Walker Bynum, The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (New York 1995), pp. 86-94, esp. pp. 92-93.

<sup>91</sup> TLL IV. 70 cites this passage under the senses "simul clamo aut valde clamo", of which either would be apt here; though conclamo is intransitive, it often takes an internal object, which throws interesting light on the close relationship to it of "orthodoxum".

carrier nursing the writer through an illness.<sup>92</sup> The ongoing involvement of carrier with community is well exemplified by the case of Cardamas, whose commitment to monastic simplicity is somewhat imperfect and who consequently provokes a running joke in the letters of Paulinus to Delphinus and Amandus, who send him. His behaviour at table prompts particular comment, though Paulinus is later pleased to report that he has become so accommodating “ut nec holuscula nec pocula nostra vitaverit”, “that he avoided neither our humble vegetables nor our minimal drinks”, as his face and figure will show -- unless there is any backsliding on the way home!<sup>93</sup> Victor, on the contrary, who brings the letters from Sulpicius, cooks meals so very meagre as to excite playfully despairing comments: “panes illos tribulationis imitatus est”, “he imitated bread -- the bread of tribulation”!<sup>94</sup> But he also nurses Paulinus, and prompts him to exclaim: “servivit ergo mihi, servivit, inquam, et vae mihi misero, passus sum ...”, “so he served me, I repeat, he served me, and -- wretched me! -- I allowed him to ...”.<sup>95</sup> Victor it is who swiftly becomes the trusted inmate of both Paulinus’ and Sulpicius’ houses, and who both effects and guarantees the spiritual continuity of their correspondence. It is significant that we can discover little about him personally from the letters: he seems to have been a monk; but in general his deeds or words are recorded either because they are

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92 Examples: Letter XXIII, 6: Victor teaches Paulinus to eat more simply and sparingly. Letter XVIII, 2: Paschasius nurses Paulinus; Letter XXIII, 5: Victor anoints Paulinus with oil.

93 Reports on Cardamas are contained in Paulinus, Letters XIV, XV, XIX, and XXI; the quotation is from Letter XIX, 4. Though “pocula” is not technically a diminutive, it seems to me that, by pairing it here with “holuscula”, Paulinus is emphasizing their similarity and playing with the notion of abstemiousness: hence my choice of translation.

94 Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 6.

95 Letter XXIII, 4.

spiritually exemplary or prompt spiritual reflection, or because they enhance the communication between Paulinus and Sulpicius.

Enough has been said to indicate how intimately a carrier would have become involved in the daily life of his respondents. Moreover, his involvement with the community might extend over several months: for example, Paulinus apologizes to Sulpicius for keeping Victor with him for the entire spring and summer one year.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, a trusted, frequently-used carrier like Victor will end up splitting his time more or less equally between the two respondents. The carrier's message therefore ends up consisting partly in his entire comportment while he stays with the correspondent. He represents the one who has sent him, and much may be inferred from his actions. Thus Victor adds to the blessings of letters and gifts from Sulpicius with "contubernio spiritali" and "corporeo famulatu", "spiritual fellowship and bodily service"; Paschasius is the "speculum spiritale", the "spiritual mirror" of Victricius' virtue.<sup>97</sup> The case of Paschasius further illuminates that of Marracinus and Sorianus discussed above: it appears that it is of particular importance to address a correspondent through a carrier in close contact with him, and Paulinus begins his letter to Victricius by rejoicing that after so long God had granted "occasio nobis ad venerandam sanctitatem tuam scribendi per domesticum fidei et eum potissimum fratrem, qui in domino tuus pariter et noster esset", "an opportunity for me to write to your reverend holiness through a servant of the faith, and especially through that brother, who is equally yours and mine in the Lord".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXVIII, 3.

<sup>97</sup> Paschasius: Letter XVIII, 2; Victor: Letter XXIII, 3.

<sup>98</sup> Letter XVIII, 1.

Of course, the effect of this on the nexus of communication is immense. For the carrier does not just speak for his sender by behaviour, but in words, sometimes again in conversations lasting over weeks or months.<sup>99</sup> There are often references to the verbal accounts of the carrier supplementing the written text of the letter.<sup>100</sup> In at least one instance, the material letter is declared to be redundant, as God has provided as carrier Ianuarius “per quem, etiamsi non scriberemus, omnia, quae circa nos sunt, posset sinceritas tua tamquam per viventem atque intelligentem epistulam noscere”, “through whom, even if we didn’t write, your truthfulness could come to know everything which is happening here as if through a live and comprehending letter”.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, the carrier is often described as a “second letter”. Augustine again provides a good example:

sanctos fratres Romanum et Agilem, aliam epistulam vestram audientem voces atque reddentem et suavissimam partem vestrae praesentiae ... suscepimus.<sup>102</sup>

We have received the holy brothers Romanus and Agilis, your other letter which hears voices and answers, and the sweetest part of your presence.

The carrier thus performs an extraordinarily liminal role. He is an independent agent, and comments are passed on him as such; but he is also representative of

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<sup>99</sup> “En véritables lieu-tenants de leur père en ascèse, [les porteurs de lettres] peuvent représenter, au sens le plus fort du terme, leur mandat auprès du destinataire de la lettre.” Perrin, “Courriers”, 1034; my emphasis. Perrin goes on to discuss the implications of this “representation”, drawing some similar conclusions to mine on the self in Chapter 4.

<sup>100</sup> For example, Paulinus, Letter XXXI, 1: “frater Victor, inter alias operum tuorum et votorum narrationes ...”.

<sup>101</sup> Augustine, Letter CLXXXVI, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Augustine, Letter XXXI (to Paulinus and Therasia); this passage is discussed further in c. 4. For a similar idea see Jerome, Letter LIII, 11 (to Paulinus): “habes hic amantissimum tui fratrem Eusebium, qui litterarum tuarum mihi gratiam duplicavit referens honestatem morum tuorum ...”.

something beyond himself. At the most literal level, he represents his sender and his community. But the relationship goes further than representation, and this is revealed in the language consistently used to describe it. Thus Paulinus can say that carriers “non ...a me alieni forent tecum manentes”, “could not be remote from me while they are staying with you [Sulpicius]”.<sup>103</sup> Carriers are commended to Augustine “ut nos alios”, “like other selves”:

per hos, si quo me gratiae quae tibi data est dono remunerari voles, tuto facies. sunt enim, velim credas, unum cor et una in domino anima nobiscum.<sup>104</sup>

If you wish to repay me with any gift of the grace which is bestowed on you, you may safely accomplish it through them. For please be assured that they are of one heart and spirit with us in the Lord.

Victor first comes to Paulinus from Sulpicius “in nomine dei tuaque persona”, “in the name of God -- and representing you”. Occasionally the carrier even participates in another persona: Victor again is described as the formula of saints Martin and Clarus, and Paulinus protests later in the same letter that he has allowed himself to be served by him “ut minimam saltem guttulam de sacris Martini actibus delibarem”, “so that I may taste just the tiniest drop from the sacred deeds of Martin”.<sup>105</sup> There is something more powerful than representation here: the carrier is patently assigned great vicarious significance. The patterns of thought beginning to emerge from the letters of Paulinus apparently delight in overthrowing the obvious boundaries set by embodiment in favour of a spirituality of integration and paradox: such patterns are particularly thrown into relief by the liminality of the carriers. This will be explored further in Chapter Four; for the time being, it suffices to observe that a carrier is very far from being a mere

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<sup>103</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXVII, 2.

<sup>104</sup> Paulinus, Letter VI, 3.

<sup>105</sup> Both persona instances are from Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 3.

mechanism, or a transparent relay of others' words.

Given the role of the carriers, Paulinus' letters could never, whatever their subject matter, be described as "private" letters in the modern sense.<sup>106</sup> The written text is open-ended; it is constantly supplemented by the carrier's words and behaviour. Therefore, as one might expect, the audience is open-ended too. Certainly, letters are not written only for their explicit addressees. At times, there are references to others' reception of the letters. Paulinus fears lest the "filii prudentes" standing around may laugh when his foolish questions to Augustine are read out.<sup>107</sup> Certainly, Augustine has given him reason to expect that his letters will be read in his community as a whole: his first letter to Paulinus asserts

legi ... litteras tuas fluentes lac et mel, praeferentes simplicitatem cordis tui ...Legerunt fratres et gaudent infatigabiliter et ineffabiliter tam uberibus et tam excellentibus donis dei, bonis tuis.

I have read your letters which flow with milk and honey and portray your heart's simplicity ...The brothers have read them, and they rejoice continually and inexpressibly at your virtues, such rich and exceptional gifts of God.

and closes:

fratres non solum qui nobiscum habitant et qui habitantes ubi libet deo pariter serviunt, sed prope omnes, qui nos in Christo libenter noverunt, salutant, venerantur, desiderant germanitatem, beatitudinem, humanitatem tuam.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> So, for the Middle Ages, Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections* p. 11: "In view of the way in which letters were written and sent, and also of the standards of literacy in the Middle Ages, it is doubtful whether there were any private letters in the modern sense of the term".

<sup>107</sup> Paulinus, *Letter* L, 1.

<sup>108</sup> Augustine, *Letter* XXVII, 2 and 6 respectively. Of the valedictory passage, we may note that this is an elaboration of what seems to be a peculiarly African formula: "Omnes nostri qui nobiscum sunt te amant et salutant et videre desiderant". See A. A. R. Bastiaensen, "Le cérémonial épistolaire des chrétiens



Not only the brothers who live with us, and those who live elsewhere and serve God in the same way, but almost everyone who has joyfully come to know us in Christ greets, reveres, and longs for your brotherhood, sanctity, and humanity.

But the open-endedness of the audience does not, of course, eliminate altogether the significance of the specific addressee. Hence, on one occasion Paulinus feels impelled to explain (in this instance, to Amandus) why he is not sending a letter to the fratres -- which implies that one would have been expected, even though the fratres would have formed part of the audience for Amandus' letter itself.<sup>109</sup> This illustrates neatly that despite the general urge to collectivity, individuation is not rendered obsolete: a caveat that bears, once again, on Paulinus' conception of the self.

So the audience of a letter will almost definitely extend to the recipient's community; but it will probably be far greater. It is clearly expected that a letter will be to some degree an open document, and that its circulation will extend far beyond the original addressee. This must be the context of Augustine's explanation of Alypius' reticence on his life history: he fears lest an ignorant person should read it and infer that his gifts were not divinely given, but his own -- "non enim abs te solo illa legerentur", "for [the letter] would not be read only by you".<sup>110</sup> Later, Augustine quotes an extended section of a letter of Paulinus back to him, insisting that no apology is necessary:

cur enim non etiam isdem verbis uteremur? agnoscitis enim, credo, haec

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latins", Graecitas et Latinitas Christianorum Primaeva Suppl. II (Nijmegen 1964), 7-45 (index 89-90). Compare too Augustine, Letter XXXI, 9: "fratres quoque omnes nobiscum domino servientes tam id faciunt, quam vos desiderant, tam vos desiderant, quam vos diligunt, et tam diligunt, quam estis boni."

<sup>109</sup> Paulinus, Letter XV, 3. The passage will have been as much for the fratres as for Amandus. Have other such letters to the fratres been lost?

<sup>110</sup> Augustine, Letter XXVII, 5.

esse ex epistula vestra. sed cur potius haec vestra sint verba quam mea, quae utique quam vera sunt, tam nobis ab eiusdem capitis communione proveniunt?<sup>111</sup>

For why should we not also use the same words? For I think you recognize that these are from your letter. But why should they be your words rather than mine, since, inasmuch as they are true, they come to us from our sharing the same head?

Augustine also quotes verbatim, again to Paulinus, a passage from a letter sent by Paulinus to Sulpicius<sup>112</sup> -- fascinating evidence for wide further dissemination, as well as for readers beyond the addressee, since this text has made its way from South Italy to central France to North Africa. This bespeaks an expected lack of ownership of the text once disseminated, which corresponds with the idea of an open-ended audience. Clearly, the writer cannot control either the process of reception or the attribution of the text once it has been sent out; and nor should he need to, given the desire to enact the dictum that Christ “est caput corporis Ecclesiae”, “is the head of the Church’s body”,<sup>113</sup> of which all are limbs. If all share the same head, the notion that anyone should exclusively own the Christian message which he has passed on must be nonsense. In this context, Jerome’s obsession with the apparent misdirection of Augustine’s early letters to him becomes particularly out of place: at one stage he concludes rudely, “et hoc a me rogatus observa, ut, quicquid mihi scripseris, ad me primum facias pervenire”, “and take note of this request, that you should make sure that whatever you have written to me gets to me first”.<sup>114</sup> This must be explained by his equally obsessive, and anachronistic, concern for

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<sup>111</sup> Augustine, Letter XXXI, 3. This passage neatly foreshadows my two subsequent major themes: the communion of friendship and of the self.

<sup>112</sup> Augustine, Letter CLXXXVI, 40.

<sup>113</sup> Col. 1, 18.

<sup>114</sup> Jerome, Letter CV, 5. The same letter has begun testily, after stating the unreliability of the carriers, “quae cum ita sint, satis mirari nequeo, quomodo ipsa

individual authorship -- a concern which is obviously redundant in the context of such open-ended mores of communication. Writers such as Paulinus appear to be attempting to dissolve the classical sense of authorship and its cohesion with textual authority, while Jerome is reinstating such a sense with a vengeance, adding to the notion of authority not just personal authorship, or ownership, of a text, but authenticity in the form of orthodoxy.<sup>115</sup>

The idea of a letter being implicitly directed to a far wider circle than its immediate addressee is unsurprising, given the copious internal evidence that the letters were sustaining and reinforcing a widespread Christian network. Despite the lack of detail in Paulinus' accounts of events which is so bitterly lamented by social historians, the names of other members of the Christian community are repeatedly mentioned to give a distinct, if unelaborated, image of extensive contacts. Paulinus, writing to Romanianus, tells the news, just learnt in letters from Aurelius, Alypius, Augustine, Profuturus and Severus, that they are now all bishops. (In this case he does give a few more details, of Augustine's irregular election as co-bishop with Valerius.)<sup>116</sup> A letter

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epistula et Romae et in Italia haberi a plerisque dicatur et ad me solum non pervenerit, cui soli missa est ...". Letter CV, 1.

<sup>115</sup> This point was first suggested to me by a passage in Mark Vessey, "Erasmus' Jerome: The Publishing of a Christian Author", Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook 14 (1994), 62-99; relevant passage p. 77. This refers to Michel Foucault, who traces the modern idea of the exclusivity and superiority of authorship back to Jerome's processes of categorization in De Viris Illustribus: "It seems ... that the manner in which literary criticism once defined the author ... is directly derived from the manner in which Christian tradition authenticated (or rejected) the texts at its disposal." "What Is an Author?" in Textual Strategies: perspectives in post-structuralist criticism ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca 1979), pp. 141-160; quote from p. 150.

<sup>116</sup> Paulinus, Letter VII, 1. It is perhaps no coincidence that this unusually factual letter is preserved in the Augustinian corpus, not the Paulinian (see Introduction, esp. text to note 50).

from Ambrose to Sabinus, Bishop of Placentia (modern Piacenza), is primarily designed to tell the dramatic tale of Paulinus' and Therasia's conversion and renunciation of wealth, and goes on to muse on the effect of this spectacular gesture on the "proceres viri" of the empire.<sup>117</sup> When Paulinus writes his consolatio to Pammachius for the death of his wife, he specifies that he has gathered "tui maeroris indicium", "the news of your grief", from the writings of Olympus.<sup>118</sup> Sometimes, for all the geographical dispersion of the correspondents, the effect borders on the claustrophobic. Jerome hears from Domnio about a monk at Rome attacking his Adversus Jovinianum (and counter-attacks him in a letter to Paulinus): this is the same Domnio who has the copy of Eusebius which Alypius requests from Paulinus at the beginning of their correspondence.<sup>119</sup> The literary network mentioned earlier is, of course, extended through letters; and epistolary contacts are also set up to further the network, as when Paulinus intimates to Venerius, the new bishop of Milan, that there is an opportunity to write to Delphinus. From numerous further examples we may single out an instance from Jerome, in which ostensible reinforcement of the Christian network takes a somewhat backhanded form. A letter to Augustine and Alypius, dated to around 419, ends "sancti filii communes Albina, Pinianus et Melania plurimum vos salutant", "the holy son and daughters whom we share, Albina, Pinian and Melania send especial greetings to you". It was only about two years earlier that a spate of anxious letters from Augustine to this very trio had tried to explain away the débâcle in which his congregation at Hippo had tried to empress Pinian

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<sup>117</sup> Ambrose, Letter VI. XXVI, 1-3 ("proceres viri" from 3: "haec ubi audierint proceres viri, quae loquentur!").

<sup>118</sup> Paulinus, Letter XII, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Some details in Trout, Secular Renunciation p. 68. Jerome, Letter LIII, 7 counter-attacks the monk; Paulinus, Letter III responds to Alypius' request for a copy of Domnio's Eusebius.

into the priesthood.<sup>120</sup>

At times, it is the choice of contents for the letters which makes it clear that they are intended for an audience greater than the specific addressee. Part of the consolatio to Pammachius on the death of his wife Paulina takes the form of an extended description of a feast for the poor given in her memory at the basilica of Saint Peter's.<sup>121</sup> Paulinus assures Pammachius that "tua virtus tristitiam tegit", "your virtue has buried grief", and that he knows this rather than guesses it because "opera tua hoc de te contestantur et me conperta loqui cogunt", "your deeds bear witness to this fact about you and, once discovered, compel me to speak out". Paulinus goes on to describe the scene in Saint Peter's -- "videre enim mihi videor", "for I seem to see it" -- notwithstanding the fact that for him, this is merely hearsay. Something more complex is involved here than merely describing to Pammachius an episode for which his correspondent was not only present, but the instigator. Part of the consolatory message is clearly to rehearse the virtue of Pammachius' actions, placing them in a public context through approving reportage and thereby both ratifying them and ensuring their wider dissemination. That a wider dissemination is visualized, even for a letter with so "private" a theme, is intimated by an apostrophe following Paulinus' reflection on the divine rewards for Pammachius of his almsgiving: "Poteris, Roma, illas intentas in apocalypsi minas non timere, si talia semper ederent munera senatores tui", "O Rome, you wouldn't have to fear those threats laid out in the Apocalypse, if your senators always produced such gifts".<sup>122</sup> Apparently, this is not just a consolatio for Pammachius; it serves also as a hortatory letter for those of his

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<sup>120</sup> Jerome, Letter CXLIII, 2; Augustine, Letters CXXIV-CXXVI.

<sup>121</sup> Paulinus, Letter XIII, 11 ff.

<sup>122</sup> ibid., 15.

own senatorial class who might chance to read it.

A similar extension from “private” to “public” material is seen in the first letter of Paulinus to Victricius of Rouen.<sup>123</sup> Once again, the letter revolves around an account of the addressee’s own actions. This letter rehearses at some length the circumstances of Victricius’ conversion, of his triumphs at Rouen, and so on, in part retelling the story of Victricius’ own De Laude Sanctorum. The expectation must have been that Victricius would circulate this to a wider audience as a quasi-hagiographical endorsement by Paulinus of his activities. The first three paragraphs of the letter might be labelled “personal”, with their tale of impressing the letter-carrier Paschasius from Rome to Nola, and of his subsequent care for Paulinus when sick; but the closing paragraphs tie in this episode to the glorificatory themes of the letter: Victricius, the “martyr vivus”, is the

formula omnibus perfectae virtutis et fidei; sicut et frater Paschasius ostendit, in cuius gratia et humanitate quasi quasdam virtutum gratiarumque tuarum lineas velut speculo reddente collegimus.<sup>124</sup>

pattern for all of perfect virtue and faith; just as brother Paschasius showed: in his grace and humanity we inferred something like outlines of your virtues and graces, as if in a mirror’s reflection.

Clearly the letter was intended for circulation as a whole, unified by the notion of Victricius, and by extension Paschasius, as a “pattern for all”, and thus once again challenges our expectation of the division between the private and the public.<sup>125</sup>

This is not to say that these correspondents do not have a notion of the private and public, but merely that their content is different, and that the two are differently

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<sup>123</sup> Paulinus, Letter XVIII.

<sup>124</sup> Letter XVIII, 10; “martyr vivus” at Letter XVIII, 9.

<sup>125</sup> Fabre reaches a similar conclusion: Saint Paulin de Nole, pp. 233-35.

constructed in relation to each other. We may recall the “forensis”/“domesticus” distinction of Symmachus.<sup>126</sup> Sometimes, Paulinus seems to echo Symmachus’ distinction, with the “public” represented by a life of service to the state: thus he describes to Sulpicius his withdrawal to Campania as the pursuit of “otium ruris”.<sup>127</sup> But this is probably an ironic description: as Fontaine has observed, “Le mot d’otium a presque exclusivement, chez Paulin, une valeur négative: il est oisiveté, et non loisir.”<sup>128</sup> Paulinus better describes his practice in his longer verse letter to Ausonius: “vacare vanis, otio aut negotio,/ et fabulosis litteris/ vetat...”, “[God] forbids one to give time to useless things, either in leisure or business, and mythical writings”.<sup>129</sup> “Otium” and “negotium” are here, it seems, dissolved and dismissed together. In his letters, Paulinus seems consciously to be attempting to make the distinction between public and private irrelevant ; inasmuch as he does invoke the private, he tries, as it were, to eradicate its privacy, to make it something generally available and relevant and shared.<sup>130</sup>

There are two further extended hagiographical narrationes in the letters of Paulinus, both addressed to Sulpicius Severus. One provides context for Paulinus’ gift to

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<sup>126</sup> See text to footnote 15 above.

<sup>127</sup> Paulinus, Letter V, 4: “...nec rebus publicis occupatus et a fori strepitu remotus ruris otium et ecclesiae cultum placita in secretis domesticis tranquillitate celebravi...”.

<sup>128</sup> See Jacques Fontaine, “Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes dans la spiritualité des grands propriétaires terriens à la fin du I<sup>er</sup> siècle occidental”, reprinted in idem, Études sur la poésie latine tardive d’Ausone à Prudence (Paris 1980), pp. 241-265; quote from p. 255.

<sup>129</sup> Poem X, 33-35.

<sup>130</sup> This notion is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Sulpicius of a fragment of the true cross, and tells the tale of its discovery by Helena, mother of the emperor Constantine.<sup>131</sup> But its purpose in the letter is also to serve as a basis for spiritual reflection: Sulpicius is invited to meditate on the faith of the latro crucified alongside Christ, who believed in Christ's resurrection even before it happened. The other narratio is essentially a Vita of Melania the Elder. Paulinus is sending to Sulpicius a tunic given to him by Melania during her recent stay (as mentioned above), and he observes flatteringly that "te dignior visa est, cuius fides illi magis quam noster sanguis propinquat", "it seemed more worthy of you, whose faith brings you closer to her than my kinship does".<sup>132</sup> Victor, bringing letters and gifts from Sulpicius, has coincided with Melania at Nola. At this point the flow of the letter breaks off for a dramatic exclamation and an extended simile in the epic style, which is sufficiently unusual to bear quotation at some length:

at quam tandem feminam, si feminam dici licet, tam viriliter Christianam!  
quid hoc loco faciam? vetat fastidii intolerabilis metus voluminibus adhuc  
addere; sed personae dignitas, immo dei gratia postulare videtur, ut  
commemorationem tantae animae praegressus non raptim omittam et  
paulisper ad eam tibi narrandam, velut navigantes si aliquem in litore  
locum spectabilem videant, non praetervehuntur, sed contractis paululum  
velis aut remigio pendente pascunt oculos intuendi mora, ita sermonis mei  
cursum detorqueam, quo etiam inlustri illi materia et eloquentia libro tuo  
vicem aliquam videar reddere, si feminam inferiorem sexu virtutibus  
Martini Christo militantem prosequar, quae consulibus avis nobilis  
nobilior se contemptu corporeae nobilitatis dedit.<sup>133</sup>

But what a woman she is -- if she may be called a woman, when she is so manfully Christian! What should I do here? Fear of intolerable boredom forbids me to add to these rolls; but the dignity of her person, or more precisely the grace of God seems to demand that, having advanced to commemoration of so great a spirit, I should not cursorily pass over it, and should twist aside the course of my narrative for a little to tell you about

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<sup>131</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXXI, 3-6.

<sup>132</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIX, 5; the Melania narratio runs from cc. 5-14 (the end of the letter).

<sup>133</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIX, 6.



her, just as people sailing don't pass on by if they see some beautiful spot on the shoreline, but reef the sails a little or ship their oars and feast their eyes in a contemplative pause; and in this way I may make some return for that book of yours, illustrious in subject-matter and style -- if I may describe a woman, inferior in sex, as fighting for Christ with the virtues of Martin, a woman ennobled by her consular forebears<sup>134</sup> who made herself yet nobler with her contempt for worldly nobility.

This paragraph performs several functions. The exclamation serves to introduce, with appropriate pomp, Melania herself at the beginning of her vita, and to reflect on her unusual -- even unnatural -- holiness. The rhetorical deliberation acts as a half-serious apologia for the forthcoming exercise in hagiography, while at the same time drawing particular attention to it, both through ostentatiously contravening the traditional modus of a letter and through introducing the grandiose simile. The culmination of the paragraph compares this exercise explicitly with Sulpicius' own hagiographical Vita Martini; and the two tales are clearly linked once again at the end of the letter:

Non tuli, frater, ut te ista nesciret. ut gratiam in te dei plenius nosceret, tuo te illi magis quam meo sermone patefeci. Martinum enim nostrum illi studiosissimae talium historiarum ipse recitavi.<sup>135</sup>

Brother, I couldn't bear that she shouldn't know you. For her to come to know the grace of God in you more fully, I laid you open to her in your own words rather than mine. For I myself read aloud to her our "Martin", since she is extremely keen on stories of that type.

It is apparent once again that Paulinus is not writing only for Sulpicius, any more than Sulpicius wrote "Martinum nostrum" only for Paulinus: a wider audience is certainly envisaged. Here is further proof that a letter, though it may contain "personal" material, far from necessarily corresponds in any respect with a modern definition of the "private".

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<sup>134</sup> Melania's grandfather, Antonius Marcellinus, was consul in 341; if PLRE is correct that she married Valerius Maximus, then her father-in-law was also a consul (in 327). See PLRE I, 592-593 and stemmata 20 and 30.

<sup>135</sup> ibid., 14. The emphasis of "ipse recitavi" is interesting: it must imply that normally such readings would be performed by another member of the community (and hence bears further witness to an essentially communitarian way of life).

Through its blending of levels which modern readers tend to separate, this letter and those discussed above also challenge categories of genre. The tales of Melania and Victricius are not hagiography tout court, any more than they are private messages: generic labels are clumsy in this epistolary form which represents not so much a conscious combining of genres as an habitual subversion of categories.

This accounts for the difficulty, in the discussion of epistolary norms earlier in this chapter, in mustering observances of conventions for letters rather than merely allusions to them: though the correspondents are very much aware of these conventions, they as often as not choose to contravene them. This bears witness to the way in which Christian writers are beginning to forge a new role for their letters, to create something very different from those of their pagan contemporaries -- though they are perhaps as yet unsure precisely what that role is to be. Hence the difficulty of schematically separating treatises -- or, for that matter, hagiography -- from letters. (Augustine, for example, defies the distinction: "...rescribe, ut vel epistulis vel libris, si adiuverit deus, ad omnia respondere curemus", "write back, so that if God assists me I may carefully respond to everything, either in letters or treatises".<sup>136</sup>) But it is in collections of letters like those of Paulinus that we see the role of the Christian epistolary medium evolving.

All this begs the question of what the writers did see as the purpose of their letters. For the case of Symmachus, Bruggisser gives a succinct formulation: epistolary contacts functioned on three levels: "faire exister la relation [entre amis]", "faire fonctionner la relation", and "faire fructifier la relation" (through the process of

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<sup>136</sup> Augustine, Letter CXXXVIII, 20 (to Marcellinus). In general, literary forms in late antiquity do not respond well to genre distinctions.

commendatio).<sup>137</sup> But this, though true also for Christian epistolographers of the time, is very far from being a complete account. The role of letters historically in the church -- from the letters of the New Testament to the issuing of canons in epistolary form -- had been too important for them now to be reduced to the status of mere "visiting cards".<sup>138</sup>

I would like to posit that the process of the composition and circulation of letters - indeed, the entire nexus of communication around a letter -- becomes for Christian writers a quasi-sacramental activity. This phenomenon was briefly, but aptly, remarked upon by Gorce: "Pour les gens conquis à l'idéal ascétique, tout est conçu -- cela va de soi -- en fonction de la vie intérieure, et les contingences humaines n'ont de valeur que dans la mesure où elles s'y rapportent de quelque manière".<sup>139</sup> In the City of God, Augustine explains the notion of a sacramental activity in the context of his account of sacrificium not as something physically and literally performed, but as a constant dedication of one's life to God: "Sacrificium ergo visibile invisibilis sacrificii sacramentum, id est sacrum signum est," "so a visible sacrifice is the sacrament, that is, the sacred sign, of an invisible sacrifice".<sup>140</sup> For Paulinus, the letters are an outward and visible sign of the invisible connection in Christ between those who write and those who receive and read

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<sup>137</sup> Bruggisser, Symmaque, p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> Term from Matthews, "Letters of Symmachus", p. 62.

<sup>139</sup> Les Voyages p. 199 (my emphasis).

<sup>140</sup> City of God X, 5. J. de Ghellinck comments that sacramentum in post-Nicene writers -- especially Augustine -- has two meanings: (1) a sacred rite; (2) "celle de signe ou de figure, comportant un élément secret ou mystérieux qui requiert explication": Pour l'histoire du mot "sacramentum" Vol. I: Les Anténicéens (Louvain/Paris 1924), pp. 14-15. The latter meaning is obviously relevant to my observations here, though there is little of "explication" in Paulinus, who seems to take the sacramental function of letters for granted.

them.

In its sacramental function, the text of the letter is not just a bearer of information or of spiritual advice: it is itself a spiritual offering and a basis for general meditation and reflection. On the most elementary level, this is shown by the fact that requests for prayers from the correspondent (and often his or her wider circle) become a regular component of the letters. Sometimes this will be more or less the unique function of the letter: in one letter to Paulinus, Augustine makes the request for prayer his priority after an explanation of the brevity of the letter: “nunc ergo, quod soleo, rogo, ut, quod soletis, faciatis: oretis pro nobis”, “so now I ask what I usually do, that you should do what you usually do: please pray for us”.<sup>141</sup> It is the sacramental aspect of the letters which makes explicable the composition of so brief a note, and its despatch all the way from Hippo to Nola: if the primary purpose of the letter is to serve as a tangible sign of an invisible communion between writer and recipient, the length of the letter will be insignificant -- and a request for prayers will form the most appropriate possible contents.

Certain aspects of the letters adumbrate the assertion that their function is sacramental. First, the nature of the writing and reading of the letters: one needs peace to do justice to reading a letter, just as one needs otium to compose it. Paulinus writes to Augustine:

fateor tamen venerandae unanimitati tuae non potuisse me volumen ipsum, statim ut acceperam, Romae legere. tantae enim illic turbae erant, ut non possem munus tuum diligenter inspicere et eo, ut cupiebam, perfrui, scilicet ut perlegerem iugiter, si legere coepissem.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Augustine, Letter LXXX, 1.

<sup>142</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 1.

But I confess to your reverend unanimity that I couldn't read that package at Rome, as soon as I had received it. For the crowds there were so huge that I couldn't peruse your gift with care and enjoy it as I wished -- that is, to read it through without interruption, if I had begun to read.

Jerome too finds peace a desideratum, claiming in a letter to Paulinus:

testis est enim conscientiae meae dominus, quod ab ipso procinctu et interpretationis exordio supra dicta necessitas me retraxit; et scis ipse non bene fieri quod occupato animo fiat.<sup>143</sup>

For the Lord is witness to my conscience, that a necessity beyond words drew me back from the actual preparation and beginning of interpretation; and you know yourself that what is done with a preoccupied mind is not done well.

Elsewhere, Paulinus makes explicit why this repose is necessary for the reception of letters:

Accepimus litteras sanctae affectionis tuae, quibus iubes nos in epistolis, quas ad te facimus, aliquem praeter officium<sup>144</sup> de scripturis adicere sermonem, qui tibi thesaurum nostri cordis revelet.<sup>145</sup>

I have received the letters of your affectionate holiness, in which you command me to supplement the obligatory content in the letters I'm writing to you with some discussion of the scriptures, to reveal to you the treasury of my heart.

The "officium" alone will fulfil the sacramental function; but some commentary on the scriptures (or words resonating with them, to describe something closer to Paulinus' actual practice) to further the spiritual closeness of the correspondents will reinforce the invisible offering. Reflecting on the necessity of peace of mind for detecting the hidden divinity in things, Paulinus tells Sulpicius that truth only manifests itself to one in a state of vacatio; God, because he is God, is available to be seen by all, but "deum in Christo vel Christum in deo esse non videt occupatus et curarum terrestrium nube circumdatus",

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<sup>143</sup> Jerome, Letter LXXXV, 6.

<sup>144</sup> Hartel prints "officii" here: it is hard to determine on what grounds, as the far more natural "officium" is securely attested in the manuscript tradition (LM).

<sup>145</sup> Paulinus, Letter X, 1 (to Delphinus).

“someone who is preoccupied and surrounded with a cloud of earthly cares does not see that God is in Christ or Christ in God”.<sup>146</sup>

The writing and reading of these letters is itself a spiritual activity. There are passages which suggest the practice of meditating on the letters:

ita ego hanc epistulam in tui sermonis retractatione contexam et voluptatem meam referam, nihil tibi largiens, nec votum erga te meum potius quam de te experimentum loquar. expresserunt enim mihi faciem cordis tui litterae tuae, illae litterae spei bonae, litterae fidei non fictae, litterae purae caritatis.<sup>147</sup>

So let me weave this letter in memory of your words, and recount my pleasure, while bestowing nothing on you; I shall not speak of my prayer for you, but of my experience of you. For your letters expressed to me the appearance of your heart -- those letters of good hope, letters of unfeigned faith, letters of pure love.

As we see here, the language of the letters, in particular, bespeaks their spiritual function. The power of language is vividly felt: “sermo ...viri mentis est speculum”, “words are the mirror of a man’s mind”.<sup>148</sup> Phrases describing the reception of letters in the language of spiritual refreshment abound. The passage from Paulinus’ letter to Augustine quoted above continues with the statement that he reined in his mental hunger for the letters, certain that when devoured they would bring satiety, until he was completely at liberty “ut in deliciis epistulae tuae spiritalibus ab omne faece curarum et suffocatione turbarum liber epularer”, “to feast on the spiritual delights of your letter, free from every sordid

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<sup>146</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIV, 19; note the closeness in sense, in the passage quoted, of “seeing” to “knowing (that)”.

<sup>147</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLIV, 2 (to Aper and Amanda). Note the use of the tricolon from I Cor. 13. Augustine, Letter CXXX to Proba is explicitly a text for meditation.

<sup>148</sup> Paulinus, Letter XI, 11.

worry and the stifling crowds".<sup>149</sup> Similar examples are widespread, often expressed in the same extravagantly imagistic language: the writer may have his thirst refreshed by his correspondent's words; his "bones are fattened"; the words are a light to his feet.<sup>150</sup> Once again, the letter to Augustine contains a particularly vivid image:

...quotienscumque litteras beatissimae sanctitatis tuae accipio, tenebras insipientiae meae discuti sentio et quasi collyrio declarationis infuso oculis mentis meae purius video ignorantiae nocte depulsa et caligine dubitationis abstersa.<sup>151</sup>

Whenever I receive letters from your most blessed holiness, I feel the darkness of my foolishness struck aside, and, as if the salve of plain speaking<sup>152</sup> had been poured into the eyes of my mind, the night-time of my ignorance is driven away and the shadow of doubt wiped off, and I see more clearly.

All these images are firmly lodged in biblical reference -- including that of the eye-salve, which is rooted in Revelation (Rev. 3, 18). The significance of this active integration of biblical imagery into epistolary language will be explored in Chapter Three; for now, it suffices to note the way in which it constantly reasserts and reinforces the sacramental nature of the letters.

The composition of letters in which the sacramental function is paramount is practised more consistently by Paulinus than by any other writer of Latin letters in late

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<sup>149</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 1. The expression which I have paraphrased as "mental hunger" is "avidae ... mentis esuriem".

<sup>150</sup> Examples: "dew from God", Paulinus, Letter XIX, 3; "bones are fattened", Letter XIV, 1 (from Eccli. 26, 16 -- not 26, 13 as in Hartel); "light to feet", Letter XLV, 1 (from Ps. 118, 105).

<sup>151</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 1.

<sup>152</sup> TLL V, 1. 182 s.v. "declaratio" lists this passage under the sense "manifestatio" rather than "explicatio": whereas I have translated in accordance with the latter, the sense here may well hinge on the availability of both interpretations, given that the context embraces both text and illumination.

antiquity. This may reflect the tradition of cultivated aristocratic otium from which Paulinus par excellence derives,<sup>153</sup> with a spiritualization of the aristocratic habit of forming and maintaining connections by letter; it may be an accident of preservation -- though clearly Paulinus was renowned for the writing of such letters in his own lifetime. But other writers participate at times in the sacramental nature of epistolography, even if they may also use letters for more prosaic purposes.<sup>154</sup> Bruggisser observes of the letters of Symmachus that “la perfection technique du message est ...elle aussi message”.<sup>155</sup> For Paulinus, one may substitute for the initial phrase “la perfection spirituelle”; and this is the most important part, indeed, the point, of the letter’s message.

This chapter has explored the “nexus of communication” that surrounded the letters which are our textual remnants of that nexus. The idea of epistolary exchange has been expanded to embrace the whole network of writers, bearers, and recipients of letters, of the words and gifts exchanged both literally and spiritually, of written and oral and non-verbal communication. In the next chapter, I wish to argue that this entire nexus of communication is instrumental in the development, reinforcement, and extension of the Christian community in late antiquity. Above all, I wish to explore the way in which ideas about Christian friendship are introduced and enacted in the letters.

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<sup>153</sup> See again Fontaine, “Valeurs antiques et valeurs chrétiennes”.

<sup>154</sup> As remarked in the Introduction, the great range of form and function in the surviving letters of Augustine -- from those dealing with the minutiae of church administration to extended treatments, expressly for meditation, of religious themes -- is a case in point.

<sup>155</sup> Bruggisser, Symmaque, p. 3.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **AMICITIA AND CARITAS CHRISTI**

Abripiui vel potius subripiui et quodam modo furatus sum memet ipsum multis occupationibus meis, ut tibi scriberem antiquissimo amico, quem tamen non habebam, quam diu in Christo non tenebam. nosti quippe, ut definierit amicitiam 'Romani', ut ait quidam, 'maximus auctor Tullius eloquii'<sup>1</sup>. dixit enim et verissime dixit: 'Amicitia est rerum humanarum et divinarum cum benivolentia et caritate consensio'<sup>2</sup>. ...ita fit, ut, inter quos amicos non est rerum consensio divinarum, nec humanarum esse plena possit ac vera. necesse est enim, ut aliter, quam oportet, humana aestimet, qui divina contemnit, nec hominem recte diligere noverit, quisquis eum non diligit, qui hominem fecit. proinde non dico: 'Nunc mihi plenius amicus es, qui eras ex parte', sed, quantum ratio indicat, nec ex parte eras, quando nec in rebus humanis mecum amicitiam veram tenebas.<sup>3</sup>

I have torn myself away -- or rather, sneaked off and in some way stolen myself away from my many preoccupations, in order to write to you, my oldest friend, whom I still did not have as a friend as long as I did not hold you in Christ. You surely know how the man someone called "Tully, the greatest originator of Roman eloquence" defined friendship. For he said, and with absolute truth: "Friendship is a benevolent and loving accord in matters human and divine". ...So it is the case that there could not be full and true accord in human matters between friends who have none in the divine. For one who despises the divine would necessarily rate human things differently from how he should; and whoever does not love Him who made man could not know how to love man rightly. So I do not say: "Now you are more fully a friend to me, who were so formerly only in part", but, as the reasoning points out, you used to be not even partly a

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<sup>1</sup> Lucan, Pharsalia VII, 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Cicero, Laelius VI (20).

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, Letter CCLVIII, 1 and 2. He expresses a similar opinion in the Confessions, describing with hindsight a youthful friendship: "Sed nondum erat sic amicus, quamquam ne tunc quidem sic, uti est vera amicitia, quia non est vera, nisi cum eam tu agglutinas inter haerentes tibi caritate diffusa 'in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum' ...". Conf. IV. 4. 7. From his earliest work, however, Augustine is insistent on the importance of friendship: in the midst of directives for combining Philosophy and the "lex Dei" in life, he says: "in omni autem vita loco tempore amicos aut habeant aut habere instent". De Ordine II, 8 (25).

friend, when you didn't even have a true friendship with me in human matters.

The exact date of this letter of Augustine, and the identity of the Marcianus to whom it is addressed, are not known, though the letter may be guessed to have been written quite early in Augustine's bishopric.<sup>4</sup> However, the letter is significant for its succinct exploration of the main concerns of Christian friendship in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Augustine takes as his starting point the famous definition of amicitia from the Laelius of Cicero -- "est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benivolentia et caritate consensio", "for friendship is nothing other than a benevolent and loving accord in all things, divine and human" <sup>5</sup> -- only to offer a critique of its central elements: how, he asks, can there be consensio in human affairs if there is no corresponding consensio concerning the divine? For Christ is all-permeating: one cannot think rightly about earthly matters unless this is acknowledged, and hence there is no true division between "res divinae" and "res humanae". A friendship in the secular realm which does not acknowledge the pervasiveness of Christ is not a part-friendship, but no true friendship at all.

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<sup>4</sup> Marcianus may be Marcianus 14 in PLRE I. 555-556, who was proconsul of Africa in 393/4. As the authors admit, the evidence seems tenuous; but the proconsul did receive five letters from Symmachus, so could conceivably have come into contact with Augustine via Ambrose, also a correspondent of Symmachus, during Augustine's time in Milan.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, Laelius VI (20). Note the slight differences from the version in Augustine, who is, we may conclude, as usual quoting from memory. For Augustine's use of Cicero's ideas on friendship, see Tarsicius J. van Bavel, "The Influence of Cicero's Ideal of Friendship on Augustine", in Augustiniana Traiectina (Paris 1987), 59-72; this contains useful further bibliography on the subject. Van Bavel argues for more continuity of thought between Augustine and Cicero than I shall allow here; interestingly, however, he remarks on Augustine's consistent inversion of the Ciceronian "divinarum humanarumque" in using the extract here.

Paulinus too expresses the emptiness of human friendship without Christ:

dudum enim, ut procul dubio recognoscis, Sancte frater, diligere coepi te; et dilexi iugiter, quamquam non ista dilectione quae Christi est, sed illa familiaritatis humanae amicitia, quae blandimenta in labiis habet et radicem in cordibus non habet, quia non est fundata super petram quae non aedificatur in Christo.<sup>6</sup>

For, brother Sanctus, I began to love you a long time ago, as you undoubtedly realize; and I have loved you continually -- though not with that love which relates to Christ, but with that friendship of human acquaintance, which has charm on the lips and no root in the heart, because what is not built in Christ is not based on a rock.

Paulinus and his associates saw themselves as participating in an entirely new notion of friendship, reinterpreted through their faith. But to explore the significance of the Christian reinvention of ideas of friendship, we must first look at their classical antecedents to get a sense of the extent of the change.

The tradition of philosophical discourse on friendship was strong in classical antiquity, a natural product of philosophical schools concerned with the question of what it might mean to lead a good life in the fullest sense, a *beata vita*.<sup>7</sup> (We may note in

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<sup>6</sup> Paulinus, *Letter* XL, 2 (to Sanctus and Amandus). Note here the use of the prosaic term “familiaritas”: Paulinus elects to use it or its cognates several times elsewhere in his correspondence, for example at *Letters* IV, 2 (“familiariter”), VI, 1 (“alloquio ... familiari”). This is of particular interest in the light of the debate about the terminology of Christian friendship, discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent recent discussion of the Greek tradition on friendship, see A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford 1989). I do not discuss the Greek antecedents of Roman thought on friendship here, as they were not generally available to the Latin writers of the fourth century; for a glimpse at what would have been known of the Greek tradition, see the polemical summary of Greek positions on friendship in *Laelius* XIII (45) to XVI (59); and the contents of the *Laelius* are themselves, of course, more generally informed by Greek tradition. On Paulinus’ knowledge of Greek, Courcelle is scathing: “Tout au plus lui arrive-t-il de se reporter très rarement à la Septante et de citer des étymologies ou des mots grecs très courants. ...Il est l’ennemi de la culture grecque, parce qu’il la connaît bien mal.” Pierre Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (Paris 1943), p. 133.

passing that Augustine's first completed dialogue was entitled De Beata Vita.) For Western writers in the fourth century, this tradition was encapsulated above all by Cicero's Laelius, which is referred to directly or indirectly with remarkable frequency. Ausonius, for example, recalls to Paulinus the renowned friendship between Laelius and Scipio as analogous to their own.<sup>8</sup> The tone of the Laelius is an idiosyncratic mixture of the ideal and the pragmatic. The work starts from the common-sense assumption that amicitia consists in a bond of advanced sympathy between two or more -- but not many -- people. Early on in the dialogue, Laelius claims of his friendship with Scipio:

quocum mihi coniuncta cura de publica re et de privata fuit, quocum et domus fuit et militia communis, et id in quo est omnis vis amicitiae, voluntatum studiorum sententiarum summa consensio.<sup>9</sup>

With him I held a common concern for public and private affairs, with him I shared both household and military service, and that in which the full force of friendship resides, the most perfect accord of wills, enthusiasms, and opinions.

He moves swiftly on to decide that amicitia can only exist between boni -- though, he argues, we should not be too highfalutin about our definition of the bonus,<sup>10</sup> but take it to mean a characteristic combination of moral virtue and social position (like the English "gentleman"). As the dialogue progresses, it is precisely the moral qualities of the friends that emerge as most important: a number of practical challenges to friendship are tested against the ideal, and in each case the solution is found in the virtus of the parties. So

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<sup>8</sup> Ausonius, XXVII. XXIV, 36-37: "nos documenta magis felicia, qualia magnus/ Scipio longaevique dedit sapientia Laeli". For other reminiscences of the Laelius, see Augustine, Letter LXXIII, 4 (to Jerome) -- enemies may serve us better than friends: compare Laelius XXIV: 90 -- and Symmachus, Letter I.XXXVII (to Ausonius), on fides.

<sup>9</sup> Cicero Laelius IV (15). J. G. F. Powell's concern to play down the idea of sharing households (he translates here "I was associated with him ... at home") seems to me to be completely misplaced. See his Commentary (Warminster, 1990), p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> Cicero is here reacting against the Stoic tradition that only the truly sapiens can be bonus -- which, he argues, ends up eliminating everybody.

pronounced is this ethical bias that Cicero begins his conclusion -- effectively a peroration in the mouth of Laelius -- with the words, “virtus, virtus inquam ...et conciliat amicitias et conservat”, “virtue -- virtue, I repeat -- both brings together friendships and preserves them”.<sup>11</sup>

Once again, it is Augustine who offers an explicit refutation in Christian terms of Cicero’s ideas.<sup>12</sup> His Letter 155 to Macedonius opens with the statement, reminiscent of his letter to Marcianus, that true amicitia cannot exist unless one is first an amicus veritatis. Thus, although philosophers have said much about friendship in their search for the beata vita, how can they say anything worthwhile if they think that they have gained it through their own virtues, and “non ab illo fonte virtutum”, “not from the actual wellspring of virtues”?<sup>13</sup> Again, the ethical aspects of friendship are central, but their application redrawn, as Christian notions of the beata vita supplant the Ciceronian. Similarly with the question of the res publica: Augustine plays on the ambiguity of application when he says “Quoniam vero te rei publicae scimus amatorem...”, “since, indeed, I know that you are a lover of the republic”, but he settles firmly for the sense of

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<sup>11</sup> Friendship can only exist between boni: Laelius V (18), reiterated at XVIII (65). Conflict with the interests of the res publica: XII (40). Friendship arises from love of the virtus displayed in its object: VIII (28). Peroration: XXVII (100).

<sup>12</sup> For Augustine’s use of and relationship with Cicero, see Harald Hagendahl, Augustine and the Latin Classics (Göteborg 1967), pp. 35-168 for testimonia and pp. 479-588 for discussion.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, Letter CLV, 1 and 2. The Ciceronian work explicitly referred to is the Tusculan Disputations: paragraph 3 contains extensive echoes of Tusc. V. 110-117. For full details of the citations in this letter, see Hagendahl, Augustine and the Latin Classics, testimonia 300, 302, and 328.

the res publica caelestis at the end of the letter.<sup>14</sup> (This was a particularly relevant sphere of reflection for Macedonius, who at the time of the letter (c. 414) held the post of vicarius Africae; it ought, however, to have been redundant, as the exchange of letters took place round the gift of the first three books of the City of God!) Augustine summarizes his inversion of the Ciceronian position by stating that we should pray for virtus in this life and the beata vita in the next; and “in hac vita virtus non est nisi diligere quod diligendum est”, “there is no virtue in this life except for loving what ought to be loved”.<sup>15</sup> So he proceeds to a discussion of the first two commandments, which, as we shall see, are crucial to Christian thought about friendship and its importance.<sup>16</sup>

I have spent so long with Augustine’s redrawing of Cicero on friendship because it seems to me that a similar reassessment is present in the thought of Paulinus, though it is never so explicitly discussed. A further preliminary question seems to be begged by this discussion: namely, if the boundaries of friendship are so radically reconceived, what becomes of the classical terminology of friendship?

Caritas, used more or less interchangeably with the more classical dilectio, was

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<sup>14</sup> “rei publicae ...amatorem”, Letter CLV, 7; the heavenly republic, 17. Augustine exploits similar ambiguity in the word civitas: does it refer to Carthage or to the “civitas Dei”? “hoc nobis velimus, hoc civitati, cuius cives sumus; non enim aliunde beata civitas, aliunde homo, cum aliud civitas non sit quam concors hominum multitudo”. Letter CLV, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Summary: Letter CLV, 9; quotation from 13.

<sup>16</sup> The “first two commandments”, for Augustine as for Paulinus, are not the first of the ten in Ex. 20, but those revealed by Christ as most important in Marc. 12, 30-31: “...diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex tota mente tua, et ex tota virtute tua. Hoc est primum mandatum. Secundum autem simile est illi: Diliges proximum tuum tanquam teipsum. Maius horum aliud mandatum non est.”

from early on adopted as an appropriate translation of the New Testament agape, and remained the primary term for Christian love at this period. Pétré says aptly of caritas, “La caritas n’est plus un sentiment simplement humain, c’est une vertu, la plus haute des vertus, celle qui configure l’homme à Dieu”.<sup>17</sup> However, her study treats caritas Christi only as an objective phrase, as “love of Christ”, not as the blend of the objective and the subjective phrase, “Christ’s love”, that her comment implies.<sup>18</sup> (In fact, the diminution or dissolution of boundaries of subjectivity and objectivity are of crucial importance in early Christian thought, as will be discussed below.) While caritas, then, was particularly associated with Christ, the phrase amicitia Christi was not, to my knowledge, ever used at this period: it is certainly not present in the letters of Paulinus. The received wisdom has long been that the terms amicus and amicitia were blighted by political connotations -- although P. A. Brunt, in a renowned article, strove to counter the idea that amicitia and factio are equivalent, insisting that amicitiae could be both political and personal, and that insofar as they were political, they were not factional but fluid. However, the terms of the article as a whole imply that the political was more pervasive than he allows, since it is clear that amicitia could only exist among the gentlemanly élite of politically active citizens.<sup>19</sup> Yet the term amicitia itself is far from being eliminated from Christian usage. We have seen above its conscious reworking by Augustine; and Paulinus uses it in

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<sup>17</sup> For a study of caritas, its evolution and uses, see Hélène Pétré, Caritas: étude sur la vocabulaire latin de la charité chrétienne (Louvain 1948): this quote from p. 354.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this blend of objective and subjective love is clearly envisaged in the Gospels: see Joh. 15, 12: “hoc est praeceptum meum, ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos”. The passage is very important for ideas of friendship, which it goes on to discuss directly: note especially, “vos autem dixi amicos, quia omnia quaecumque audivi a Patre meo, nota feci vobis”, Joh. 15, 16.

<sup>19</sup> See Brunt, “Amicitia in the Late Roman Republic”, PCPS 191 N. S. 11 (1965), 1-20.

parallel with caritas in his own second letter to Augustine: “dominus enim testis est ...ut nobis non novam aliquam amicitiam sumere, sed quasi veterem caritatem resumere videremur”, “for the Lord bears witness ...that we are apparently not just taking some new friendship upon ourselves, but, as it were, resuming a time-honoured affection”.<sup>20</sup> Fabre claims that Paulinus always uses amicitia and its cognates in the sense of human, not divine, bonds, and systematically seeks to explain away the counter-examples; but this smacks of special pleading.<sup>21</sup> Both Fabre’s discussion and that of Konstan, who has recently supported his conclusions,<sup>22</sup> seem to me to have the wrong emphasis: what is remarkable is that Christian writers continue to use the words amicus and amicitia at all, given the availability of other options -- particularly the more obviously Christian frater and its cognates. It seems more accurate to say that amicitia is used where there is primary emphasis on the human bond; on the few occasions when it is used uniquely of human connexions it tends to be qualified by humana.<sup>23</sup> So in a letter to Eucherius and

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<sup>20</sup> Paulinus, Letter VI, 2. On Paulinus’ violation of the sequence of tenses here, following a present indicative verb with an imperfect subjunctive, see Chapter 1, note 22.

<sup>21</sup> Fabre’s discussion of the vocabulary of friendship: Saint Paulin de Nole, pp. 142 ff. Counter-examples to his claim that amicitia is always used in the sense of human, not divine, bonds: pp. 150-152.

<sup>22</sup> David Konstan, “Problems in the History of Christian Friendship”, JECS 4 (1996), p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Carolinne White reaches a similar, though less specific, conclusion at the end of her discussion of Fabre’s terminology: “...Paulinus did not feel that the use of the word amicitia was anathema in Christian circles: while caritas is applied exclusively to the love in Christian relationships, amicitia can be used of either secular or Christian friendships”. White, Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century (Cambridge 1992), p. 159. For comparison, Luigi Franco Pizzolato gives a sophisticated account of the interdependence of caritas and amicitia in the thought of Augustine: “Interazione e compenetrazione di amicizia e carità in Sant’Agostino”, Forma Futuri: Studi in onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino (Turin 1975), 856-67.



Galla, where it is contrasted with divine grace:

non enim humana amicitia sed divina gratia invicem nobis innotuimus et conexi sumus per viscera caritatis Christi.<sup>24</sup>

For we have come to know each other not through human friendship but through divine grace, and we have been bound together through the vitals of Christ's love.

A letter to Sulpicius quite clearly uses amicitia twice within the same paragraph of friendships both before and after the commitment of the friends to Christ: “ubi amicitia vetus?”, “where is our old friendship?”, is answered with “pro parentibus et fratribus et amicis tu nobis factus a domino es ... tota non fictae amicitiae fide sedulus”, “you have been made by the Lord into a substitute for us of parents, brothers and friends, assiduous in the total trust of an unfeigned friendship”. The same letter also uses the still more prosaic necessitudo with an explicitly spiritual application: “a familiaritate carnali ... in aeternam necessitudinem affectu potiore mutavit”, “[Christ] has changed [our bond] from fleshly association into an eternal intimacy with more powerful affection”.<sup>25</sup> As we shall see, for Paulinus and his correspondents there came to be no such thing as a friendship without divine involvement; and the sense of amicitia was stretched accordingly.

Christian writers, then, are aware of the classical tradition of thought on friendship, yet seek self-consciously to revise it; the most significant locus of revision comes in the relationship between personal friendships and the divine.<sup>26</sup> This is

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<sup>24</sup> Paulinus, Letter LI, 3. See also Letter XL to Sanctus and Amandus, quoted in text to note 6 above.

<sup>25</sup> Amicitia: Paulinus, Letter XI, 3; necessitudo, Letter XI, 2; it is also used at paragraphs 3 (with the qualifier “corporalis”) and 4. We may note that there is no entry for necessitudo in Blaise.

<sup>26</sup> The most “self-conscious” revision comes in Paulinus’ letter-exchange with Ausonius, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

especially clearly seen in the letters of Paulinus, which repeatedly engage in the assertion and negotiation of the bonds between friends and their relationship with Christ.<sup>27</sup>

The whole process of the formulation and enactment of Christian friendship is intimately bound up with the manner in which epistolary relations were sustained. We have already discussed the “sacramental” nature of the letters, and remarked on the ceremonial of delivery, of the contact between correspondents and letter-carriers, of the sending of gifts. We have also discussed more practical aspects of the composition and delivery of letters, and seen the way in which this process is characteristically creative and continuous. Now we begin to turn towards the metaphysical implications of that process.

I alluded in Chapter One to Christian writers consciously forging a new role for their letters; inextricably involved with this is the forging of a new notion of friendship. The very fact that epistolary relations are fundamental -- rather than an adjunct -- to Christian friendship shows how far we have come from the classical tradition. Letters are no longer merely a substitute for the presence of the friend; they become a crucial constitutive part of the expression of friendship. By this, I mean that contact through letters -- ideally, at any rate -- comes to be considered as superior to the enjoyment of the physical presence of the friend. This leap is certainly never made in the classical tradition of thought on friendship, which tends to be caught in the tension between the obvious quotidian good of close friendships as a contributing factor in the summum bonum and

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<sup>27</sup> The letters of Paulinus form “the most complete expression of the Christian ideal of friendship”: Brian Patrick McGuire, Friendship and Community: the Monastic Experience 350-1250 (Kalamazoo 1988), p. 66.

the philosophical ideal of self-sufficiency and contemplation.<sup>28</sup> Paulinus simply steps aside from this problem to posit a notion of friendship that, while continuing to value the human bond, is actually better sustained in the friend's absence. The spiritual connection through letters actually supplants the literal connection of friends, expressed in classical authors by the desire to share a house and every aspect of public and private life.<sup>29</sup> It seems that, for Paulinus, this solution may have developed out of a combination of the deepening of his Christian sympathies and a very real sense of being rejected by many of his former associates. Letter XI to Sulpicius, in which he discusses the changing nature of their amicitia, contains the following passage:

amici mei et proximi quondam mei nunc a longe steterunt; et sicut fluvius decurrens et ut fluctus pertransiens, sic transeunt me et in me forsitan confunduntur et erubescunt, ut scriptum est, venire ad me; facti sunt mihi qui prope longe et qui longe prope.<sup>30</sup>

My friends, and those who were once closest to me, have now taken up positions far off; and like a river running through and a wave washing over, they pass me by and are, perhaps, confused at me and are embarrassed, as has been written, to come to me; those who are close to me have become far away, and those who are far away, close.

The first line quotes Psalm 37, 12; but this passage resonates most strongly with Ephesians: "Nunc autem in Christo Iesu vos, qui aliquando eratis longe, facti estis prope in sanguine Christi", "But now in Christ Jesus you, who were once far off, have been made close in the blood of Christ" (2, 13). It is interesting that Paulinus elaborates the passage with its antithesis: for him, association with Christ has driven some away as well as bringing others closer; and in his letters, particularly those to Sulpicius, we see him

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<sup>28</sup> The locus classicus for this tension is Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: the image of the solitary striving for theoria put forward in Book X is directly at odds with that of philia as a good in Book VIII; and the tension remains unresolved.

<sup>29</sup> As in the quote from Laelius IV (15) above.

<sup>30</sup> Paulinus, Letter XI, 3.

striving to bring meaning to this situation. It is by taking seriously the sense of “in Christo Iesu” that he succeeds in doing so.

Once again, spiritual symbolism prevails. Indeed, paradoxically, the very fact of absence becomes significant, for it enables the spiritual and the physical to be seen in their true relationship.<sup>31</sup> Paulinus writes to Sebastianus that the bridging of the distance between them is a gift of God:

ipse dominus deus noster donavit nobis licet longo intervallo distantibus  
appropinquare tibi in dilectione...<sup>32</sup>

Our Lord God himself has granted that we might approach you in love,  
even though we are a long distance apart...

The process of spanning a separating distance through love alone is here configured as a gift of God. So too in the consolatory letter to Pammachius:

cucurri igitur in siti desideriorum ad te, mi frater in Christo unanime atque  
venerabilis, et si me vicissim intueris animo, tecum esse me totum videbis  
et senties. nam si verum illud est sensu nos potius videre et audire, certe  
adsum tibi et potiore mei parte, qui animo ad te venerim, quo nisi  
adsumus, ubi et corpore intersumus, praesentiam non probamus, vacua  
nostri imagine mentis absentia. quamobrem signatum amicitiae munus  
inpendi aptumque nostra fide feci, ut te spiritali aditu visitarem.<sup>33</sup>

And so in the thirst of my desires I have run to you, my concordant and  
revered brother in Christ; if you in turn look upon me with your spirit, you  
will see and feel that I am entirely with you. For if the claim is true that  
we see and hear more powerfully with that sense<sup>34</sup>, I am certainly present

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31 There is a resonant twentieth-century parallel in Rose Macaulay's Letters to a Friend, ed. Constance Babington Smith (2 vols.: London 1961 and 1962), in which the voyage of spiritual discovery is clearly enabled by physical separation.

32 Letter XXVI, 1.

33 Letter XIII, 2.

34 I note that “animo quam sensu” has been conjectured here (by Sacchinus in his Antwerp edition of 1622) as a replacement for the rather awkward “sensu” tout court. However, in support of the reading of the MSS., see Augustine Retr. III, 2

to you, and in my more effective part, when I have come to you in spirit. After all, if we were not present in spirit when we are together in body, we would not declare it truly “presence”, in the empty absence of our mind’s image. Hence I have laid out the sealed gift of friendship, and by our faith made it fit for me to visit you by a spiritual approach.

The disadvantage of physical separation becomes, once again, a spiritual advantage, as Paulinus can be present to Pammachius in his better part (“potiore ...parte”): the “imago mentis” becomes the guarantor of the friend’s presence -- and is no less accessible from afar. Moreover, the “signatum amicitiae munus” suggests an analogy with the sealing of a letter, and reinforces the conception of the letters as the vectors of spiritual friendship. -- It may also be noted in passing that there is here another instance of the explicit adaptation of the word amicitia to a more spiritual sense; and this is to a correspondent who, being still very much involved in public affairs at Rome, would have been vividly aware of its Ciceronian sense.<sup>35</sup>

Linked with this spiritual interpretation of separation is a strong sense of the ritual of connection as it is played out in the letters. The adjective unanimis, seen at the

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3 (on De Ordine): “Verum et his libris displicet mihi ... quod non addebam: corporis, quando sensus corporis nominavi”. This clearly implies that, to a developed Christian sensibility, sensus may be physical or spiritual -- hence my addition of “that” to the translation.

<sup>35</sup> There is a further instance of this adaptation a little later in the same letter: “in veritate, qua stamus in Christo, expressum his tibi litteris animum meum suscipe, nec volo amicitiam nostram tempore metiaris.” Chris McDonough has pointed out to me that the refusal here to measure the friendship in temporal terms strengthens the negative invocation of the classical tradition, in which the length of standing of a friendship was considered of great importance. On Pammachius and Roman tradition: he was a “leading Roman senator” and proconsul, though where is not attested (certainly, though PLRE suggests Africa, there is little space left for him in the list provided by T. D. Barnes, “Proconsuls of Africa, 337-392” Phoenix 39 (1985), 152-153); it will be remembered that his response to the death of his wife Paulina was a vast almsgiving ceremony at St. Peter’s -- very much the response of a wealthy public figure drawing on traditions of euergetism. For a fuller prosopography, see PLRE I, p. 663; for traditions of euergetism, see Paul Veyne, Bread and Circuses, abridged Oswyn Murray; translated Brian Pearce (Harmondsworth 1990).

beginning of the extract above, is frequent in Paulinus' letters, especially in passages reflecting on his friendship with the recipient; and its cognate noun unanimitas is often used as an honorific -- naturally so in examples like the letter to the Christian Pammachius, but also in the letter to the pagan Jovius: this is particularly interesting in view of the fact that, as Bastiaensen has pointed out, "unanimitas tua" was formerly an "appellation mutuelle confraternelle des évêques", and suggests, as with amicitia, the extension of an accepted range of meaning to embrace both Christian and non-Christian spheres.<sup>36</sup>

The implications of the idea behind unanimitas are taken very seriously. Two phrases from the epistles of St. Paul are repeatedly quoted or drawn upon (often in combination) to express the simultaneous connectedness and unity of the Christian community: "quoniam sumus invicem membra", and "ita multi unum corpus sumus in Christo, singuli autem alter alterius membra".<sup>37</sup> We are all members of one body; and it is through Christ, or often expressly through the caritas Christi, that we are connected.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Jovius as "unanimitas tua": Letter XVI, 1. On the rise of such abstract nouns as terms of address in the fourth century, see Bastiaensen, "Cérémonial épistolaire", p. 43 f., from which the quote is taken. See also the discussion of Perrin, "Courriers", pp. 1039-1041, who rightly dwells upon the significance of the word unanimitas in Paulinus.

<sup>37</sup> These citations are from Eph. 4, 25 and Rom. 12, 5 respectively. I Cor. 12, 12 should also be remembered: "Sicut enim corpus unum est, et membra habet multa, omnia autem membra corporis cum sint multa, unum tamen corpus sunt: ita et Christus." Similar in import is the passage from John's gospel quoted earlier (n. 18), especially "ego sum vitis, vos palmites" (Joh. 15, 5).

<sup>38</sup> See Wayne A. Meeks, The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul (New Haven 1983), pp. 89-90, on the use of the "body of Christ" metaphor by the early Christian communities. Meeks attributes Paul's emphasis on love (particularly in the well-known excursus of I Cor. 13) to a desire "to reinforce the cohesion of the group". Augustine radically revised Paul's notion of community, changing a socially specific idea into a more general, symbolic one: to explore this revision lies beyond the scope of this study, but we surely see a

Examples of this conjunction of thoughts are superabundant in the letters of Paulinus: I select here only a few of the most densely expressed versions. First, a continuation of the above-quoted train of thought in the letter to Pammachius:

Hac igitur te caritate complexus ita veneror ut membrum Christi, ita diligo ut commune membrum meum. quomodo enim non una mens, quibus una fides? quomodo non unus animus, quibus unus deus? ac per hoc quomodo diversum pectus sit in affectione tolerandi, quibus corpus unum est in compage credendi?<sup>39</sup>

So having embraced you with this love, I revere you as a member of Christ, and I love you as my own limb.<sup>40</sup> For how could we not have one mind, when we have one faith? How could we not have one spirit, when we have one God? And accordingly, how could our hearts be divided in feeling what must be borne [the pain of Paulina's death], when we have one body in the union of belief?

Second, an instance in which Paulinus is justifying the sending of an unsolicited letter to Victricius, for which purpose he has diverted Victricius' deacon from Rome to Nola. The sense of oneness in the Christian community is powerfully invoked, again in explicit connection with spatial displacement:

nam etsi regionum intervallis corporaliter disparemur, spiritu tamen domini, in quo vivimus et manemus, ubique effuso coniuncti sumus, ut unius corporis membra et cor unum et unam animam habentes in uno deo.<sup>41</sup>

For even if we are physically disunited by the intervening lands, yet we are joined by the spirit of the Lord which suffuses everything and in which we live and stay, and as members of one body we have one heart and one soul in the one God.

Finally, an example may be drawn from the correspondence of Paulinus and Sulpicius, in

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parallel process in Paulinus' rereading of Paul.

<sup>39</sup> Letter XIII, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Literally, I think, "a common limb of mine", which strengthens still further the case for unity in Christ.

<sup>41</sup> Letter XVIII, 1. The passage immediately preceding this, which elaborates in considerably greater detail the metaphysical implications of this thoroughgoing notion of community, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

which Paulinus tactfully emphasizes not the unity of the body but the diversity of the limbs:

Itaque de ipsius domini verbis nostras pariter ac tuas pende rationes, ne vel tibi ut inpedito diffidas vel nobis ut iam liberis congratuleris, divisiones esse gratiarum [I Cor. 12, 4]<sup>42</sup> et mensuras donationum, quas ut in corporis sui membris unus atque idem dispensator operatur deus, diversa in suo corpore distinguens placitis membra muneribus, sed corpus unum ex diversitate membrorum struens, ut hinc quoque gratia sacri corporis augeatur...<sup>43</sup>

And so, ponder my behaviour<sup>44</sup> and yours with respect to those words of our Lord himself, that graces are divided up and gifts measured out, so that you may not be diffident about yourself as encumbered [with worldly possessions] or congratulate me for now being unencumbered, since one and the same God disposes these gifts among the members of his body, marking out different members in his body for appropriate gifts, but constructing a single body from the diverse group of limbs, so that from this too the grace of the sacred body might be increased...

This emphasis on the differences between the limbs is, however, very much an ad hominem adaptation. In general, Paulinus' use of the "invicem membra" motif revolves around similarity and community. It is notable that the honorifics most commonly used by Paulinus emphasize friendship, sanctity, and unanimity. The superscriptions, textually unreliable though they may be,<sup>45</sup> are good ad hoc indicators: "dilectissimus", "beatissimus", and "venerabilis" are with "unanimus" by far the most frequent adjectives applied to the addressees. Paulinus almost never uses words directly indicating title or status: the one exception as printed, "Augustino episcopo" in Letter XLV, is extremely ill attested in the manuscripts; and he never uses "episcopus" of himself.

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<sup>42</sup> Note that this leads up to the crucial passage quoted in n. 37 above.

<sup>43</sup> Letter XXIV, 2. Walsh solves the awkward displacement of the quotation by inserting an introductory imperative: "Remember that ...". Walsh, Letters II, p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> Blaise supplies "manière d'agir" s.v. ratio 5, which seems apt here.

<sup>45</sup> See text to Chapter 1, n. 5.



The logical progression from the idea that “we are all members one of another” led to the facet of Christian friendship that modern commentators have often found most surprising: it was considered capable of arising instantaneously. Paulinus makes this connection explicit at the beginning of what was to be a lifelong correspondence with Augustine:

nec mirum, si et absentes adsumus nobis et ignoti nosmet novimus, cum unius corporis membra simus, unum habeamus caput, una perfundamur gratia, uno pane vivamus, una incedamus via, eadem habitemus domo.<sup>46</sup>

Nor is it any wonder if, even when we are absent, we are present to each other and know each other though unknown, since we are members of one body, we have one head, we are suffused with one grace, we live by one bread, we tread one way, we inhabit the same house.<sup>47</sup>

It is not irrelevant that the initiation of the correspondence has been explicitly attributed to caritas Christi:

Caritas Christi, quae urget nos et absentes licet per unitatem fidei adligat, ipsa fiduciam ad te scribendi pudore depulso praestitit ...<sup>48</sup>

The love of Christ, which stimulates us and binds us together through the unity of faith even though we are apart, that very love has driven away diffidence and offered the confidence to write to you ...

The friendship between Paulinus and Augustine was not apparently considered by either of them to be vitiated by the fact that they never actually met. This was, as stated above, in striking contrast to the mores of classical amicitia.<sup>49</sup> We may note that Augustine was

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<sup>46</sup> Letter VI, 2.

<sup>47</sup> This last idea seems to be a pleasing expansion of the classical desideratum that friends should live together: Augustine and Paulinus live together in the house of the Lord.

<sup>48</sup> The first words of Letter IV, 1. Paulinus continues (IV, 2): “Vides, frater unanime admirabilis in Christo domino et suspiciende, quam familiariter te agnoverim ...”.

<sup>49</sup> See Laelius IV (15).

already beginning to revise these mores by 386, when he chose, instead of a party of the like-minded, an extraordinarily disparate group of people to withdraw to Cassiciacum for discussion and meditation upon Christian themes.<sup>50</sup> This seems to have been an attempt simply to overlay Christian directives (here, the inclusive implications of such tenets as “sumus invicem membra”) on classical mores of friendship; and its failure involved his acknowledgement that this could not be done, and that instead the mores had to be completely rethought.<sup>51</sup> A similar intellectual move, if in a less well-documented form, seems to have been made by Paulinus. Such was the transformation wrought by Christianity.

As members of one spiritual body, one must spiritually be aware of other parts of that body: Paulinus refers to the faith “qua accorporamur in Christo Iesu domino nostro”, “through which we are bodily assimilated to Jesus Christ our Lord”.<sup>52</sup> Hence to strike up a new friendship is only to give outward expression to a pre-existing relationship: in his first letter to Alypius, Paulinus writes, “accepimus ... litteras tantam nobis sanctitatis tuae lucem adferentes, ut nobis caritatem tuam non agnoscere, sed recognoscere videremur”, “we have received letters that impart to us so great a light of your holiness that we seemed not to make the acquaintance of your love, but to renew our knowledge of it.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Augustine describes this attempt himself in Confessions IX; see also the account of Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (London 1967), pp. 115-127.

<sup>51</sup> I gave a paper, “Did Women Have a Beata Vita?”, which discussed this development in Augustine’s thought, at the 1997 International Medieval Congress at Leeds.

<sup>52</sup> Letter IV, 1 again.

<sup>53</sup> Paulinus, Letter III, 1. Compare Letter VI, 2 (to Augustine), quoted above: “... ut nobis non novam aliquam amicitiam sumere, sed quasi veterem caritatem resumere videremur”.

In some sense, too, the spiritual friendship, as opposed to amicitia humana, will not be subject to the normal patterns of development over time, for it stands as a permanent spiritual symbol. Paulinus expresses this in a letter to a new correspondent, Florentius:

Laetamur in domino visitatos nos litteris sanctitatis tuae et provocatos, ut qui neque notitiae tuae prius gratiam gesseramus nunc repentino dei munere plenam tuae tamquam veteris amicitiae fiduciam sumeremus. “vinum”, inquit, “est amicus: veterescet, et cum suavitate bibes eum” [Eccli. 9, 15]<sup>54</sup>. ecce istam prophetae sententiam superavit sanctitas tua, quae tam perfecto diligere nos coepit affectu, ut inveteratae nobis dilectionis suavitatem in prima huius foederis novitate reddiderit...<sup>55</sup>

I rejoice in the Lord to have been visited by the letters from your Holiness, and summoned forth, so that, having previously not even had the favour of your acquaintance, now by the sudden gift of God I have taken on the full pledge of what seems like an old friendship with you. “A friend,” he says, “is wine: he matures, and you shall drink of him with delight.” Behold, that dictum of the prophet has been surpassed by your Holiness, who have begun to love me with so perfect a sentiment that you have given me the delight of a well-aged love in the first youth of this bond ...

The preceding verse in Ecclesiasticus illuminates Paulinus’ revisionism: “Ne derelinquas amicum antiquum; novus enim non erit similis illi”, “Do not desert an old friend; for a new one will not be like him”. Paulinus, on the contrary, is arguing that a new friend is not like an old friend, he is, miraculously, an old friend. Just as a friendship may begin instantaneously, so it no longer needs to develop and mature.

We see in situations like this how critical to Christian friendship is every aspect of epistolary exchange. Above all, the sense of continuous participation in a matrix of Christian communication, which is created and sustained by the letters and their carriers,

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<sup>54</sup> I have here emended Hartel, who reads, “vinum ... et amicus veterescet, et cum suavitate bibes eum”. The substitution of “est” for “et”, and the re-punctuation, avoids the problem of two nouns governing the singular “veterescet” and the double referent for “eum”, while moving closer to the sense of the passage in Ecclesiasticus. The confusion of “est” and “et” could have been easily made in the manuscripts, though Hartel reports no variant.

<sup>55</sup> Letter XLII, 1. Note another “Christian” use of amicitia.

feeds into the notion of being members of one body; so does the tendency to symbolic thought which confounds recipient as friend with recipient as both member of the church and membrum Christi, and creates the “sacramental” properties of letters. Moreover, there is the growing attachment of spiritual significance to spatial separation, with the sense that it is by the grace of God that its disadvantages are transcended. The delivery of letters becomes the ritual through which spatial separation is negotiated.

At first sight, the desiderata for friendship are less demanding than those of the classical tradition, if a friendship may be instantaneously generated and thereafter conducted only in letters; but they are the logical concomitants of a belief that communion in the spiritual sphere is superior to that in the physical. In practice, this principle is sometimes assented to rather grudgingly (as we shall see further in the chapter on the self), but the idea remains and is frequently adverted to.

In the case of friendship, the primacy of the spiritual sphere is particularly emphasized by the imperative to love supplied by the first two commandments as reported in Mark.<sup>56</sup> As we have seen, Augustine discusses the first two commandments explicitly in the context of friendship in his letter to Macedonius;<sup>57</sup> and he reverts to them in the letter to Marcianus with which I began this chapter:

haec duo si mecum firmissime teneas, amicitia nostra vera ac sempiterna  
erit et non solum invicem nos sed etiam ipsi domino sociabit.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Marc. 12, 30-31 and n. 16 above.

<sup>57</sup> Augustine Letter CLV, 14 ff. Amusingly, this quotation is supported with the tag from Terence (“homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto”) that was later to become the mantra of secular humanism.

<sup>58</sup> Augustine, Letter CCLVIII, 4. This passage is immediately preceded by direct quotation of the relevant two commandments, followed by their connection with

If you keep these two in firmest faith with me, our friendship will be true and everlasting, and will unite us not only with each other but also with our Lord himself.

The imperative to love, and its connection with the spiritual sphere, is, of course, famously endorsed by Paul in I Corinthians: “Sectamini caritatem, aemulamini spiritualia”, “Follow love, imitate spiritual things”.<sup>59</sup> But it is Christ himself who sets the pattern for expansive love. All *amicitia* relates to Christ: this, of course, is the central element in Christian friendship which has so far been skirted around. This point has, to a remarkable degree, been passed over or minimized in previous discussions -- even that of Fabre, who acknowledges the omission in his closing words:

...cette affection [for his friends] ...a finalement soutenu et nourri sa pensée, comme elle a soutenu et nourri, plus haut que toute affection humaine, et hors de portée, cette fois, de nos analyses, son amour pour son Dieu.<sup>60</sup>

Yet Christ is -- or should be -- inseparable from Christian friendship. Cassian expressly invokes him as a pattern for *vera amicitia*.<sup>61</sup> Augustine's definitions, as we have seen, all add Christ as the crucial element; and Paulinus, though as usual avoiding the dogmatic, writes to Sulpicius of their love for each other:

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the Ciceronian definition of *amicitia*: “in illo primo rerum divinarum, in hoc secundo rerum humanarum est cum benivolentia et caritate consensio”.

<sup>59</sup> I Cor. 14, 1. This immediately follows the well-known passage on “fides, spes, caritas”, which concludes: “maior autem horum est caritas”.

<sup>60</sup> Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole*, p. 393. Both McGuire in *Friendship and Community* and White in *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* also fail to discuss this crucial aspect of Christian friendship.

<sup>61</sup> Cassian, *Conference* XVI, 6. I do not make further reference to Cassian in this discussion of Christian friendship, largely because I think that McGuire is correct to observe that Cassian's *De Amicitia*, which treats mainly of the resolution of disputes and the control of anger in a monastic context, would be better entitled *De Concordia in Claustro*: hence it concerns only a subdivision of my theme here. See *Friendship and Community*, p. 79.

sed tamen in hanc, qua modo interventu dei nectimur, copulam per consuetudinem illius familiaritatis inolevimus, ut diligendo nos et in infideli via fideliter diligere etiam spiritaliter disceremus, quia tam religiose nos semper uterque dileximus, ut ad nostram inter nos dilectionem nulla adici posset affectio nisi caritas Christi, quae sola omnem sensum affectumque supereminet.<sup>62</sup>

But we have grown into this bond, by which we are now joined with God's mediation, through the habit of that intimacy, so that by loving each other we might learn, even on the path of faithlessness, to love faithfully and even spiritually: for we have always loved each other so devotedly that no affection could be added to the love between us except for the love of Christ, which alone surpasses every affection one can feel.

The claim that “nulla adici posset affectio nisi caritas Christi” would be quite extraordinary in its claims for affection prior to conversion, were it not for a passage later in the same letter: “nihil habemus nisi Christum, et vide, si nihil habemus qui omnia habentem habemus”, “we have nothing except Christ; and consider whether we, who have the one who contains everything, really have nothing”.<sup>63</sup> In the light of this addition, it appears that the claim that only “caritas Christi” could be added to the relationship between Paulinus and Sulpicius is paradoxical, and perhaps even ironic: there can be nothing to connect them except “caritas Christi”. There could be no clearer expression of the complete centrality of Christ for Paulinus.

Christ is utterly pervasive in the letters of Paulinus; yet his relationship to other themes is expressed in such an imprecisely associative manner that it is hard to pick out salient passages through which to discuss the nature of his centrality. But a few claims may be securely supported. Even at the stage of his dispute with Ausonius, Paulinus'

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<sup>62</sup> Paulinus, Letter XI, 5. Contrast Augustine's more rigorous treatment of pre-conversion love which opens this chapter.

<sup>63</sup> Letter XI, 14.

theology was already strongly Christocentric.<sup>64</sup> We have already discussed the issue of members of the church being configured as limbs of Christ's body. It becomes clear that this is far from an idle metaphor. In accordance with the metaphor, the members of Christ's church must work together in unity:

quia scissura ... in corpore esse non potest [I Cor. 12, 25], cui caput Christus est, quem communem sibi apicem una membrorum suorum compago comitatur. quae quoniam sibi discrepare non possunt, curramus pariter, ut adprehendamus omnes sine aemulatione invidiae cum aequalitate victoriae, ut sicut in contentione currendi labor Christi sumus, ita in perveniendi fine Christi triumphus esse possimus et benedicat nos in corona anni benignitatis suae.<sup>65</sup>

For there cannot be division in the body whose head is Christ, the shared summit which accompanies a single conjunction of his own limbs. Since these cannot be at odds among themselves, let us run together, so that we may all understand, without the rivalry of envy and with an equal victory, that just as in the effort of running we are the work of Christ, so in the goal of arrival we shall be able to be the triumph of Christ and he shall bless us at the crown of the year of his loving-kindness.

The image of running is derived from I Corinthians,<sup>66</sup> but Paulinus has made one significant alteration: according to Paul, only one man receives the prize, and the passage forms part of an exhortation to be that one man; in Paulinus' interpretation, we shall all gain the prize, in community in Christ and through our membership in his body. As both "labor Christi" and "triumphus Christi" we work through him and he through us; our goal is Christ and we are his. The idea is that it is in action that Christians become the "labor Christi". The conception is utterly processual: in the process of running, one becomes a

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<sup>64</sup> See *Poems* X and XI, especially X, 278-end. Michael Roberts suggests that Paulinus is fashioning in *Poem* XI a "Tityrus Christianus": "Paulinus Poem 11, Virgil's first *Eclogue*, and the limits of *amicitia*", *TAPhA* 115 (1985), 271-282; but his argument is based on an interpretation of only a small part of the poem.

<sup>65</sup> Paulinus, *Letter* XXIV, 15. The whole letter is unusually specific about Paulinus' views of Christ and his role in the life of a Christian.

<sup>66</sup> I Cor. 9, 24 ff.: "Nescitis quod ii qui in stadio currunt, omnes quidem currunt, sed unus accipit bravium?"

process, the labor; in arrival, one does not receive the prize of Christ but simply is that prize.

This paradox of divine/human reciprocity through process is achieved by “*imitatio Christi*”, the imitation of Christ that is at the core of Paulinus’ theology and of his interpretation of how to conduct himself in this life and achieve a “*beata vita*” in the next.<sup>67</sup> “*Quomodo aliter*”, he demands of Sulpicius, “*putas Christum sequendum nisi lege qua docuit et forma quam praetulit?*” -- “How else do you think that Christ is to be followed except by the law with which he taught and the template which he proffered?”<sup>68</sup> (Though Paulinus also offers in the same letter an unusual permutation of this precept: “*imitando enim imitatore Christi pervenimus ad imitationem dei*”, “for by imitating the imitator of Christ we shall attain the imitation of God”. The “*imitatore Christi*” here appears to be Paul, which is of particular interest in view of the revision of Paul documented above.<sup>69</sup>) It is in a letter to Augustine that Paulinus clarifies what is implicit elsewhere in his correspondence: how the *imitatio Christi* is above all to be achieved.

Quae autem virtus hanc in nobis efficit mortem nisi caritas, quae “fortis est ut mors” [Cant. 8,6]? sic enim oblitterat nobis et perimit hoc saeculum, ut inpleat mortis effectum per affectum Christi, in quem conversi avertimur ab hoc mundo et cui viventes morimur ab elementis huius mundi.<sup>70</sup>

What virtue brings about this death in us other than love, which “is strong as death”? For thus it erases for us and destroys this world, so as to fulfil

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<sup>67</sup> Examples of *imitatio Christi*: Letters XII, 8 and XXIV, 9.

<sup>68</sup> Paulinus, Letter XI, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Letter XI, 7. The “*imitatio Pauli*” is perhaps less surprising given that the passage cited here, I Cor. 15, 49, resonates closely with Paulinus’ general concerns: “...sicut portavimus imaginem terreni, portemus et imaginem caelestis”.

<sup>70</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 5.



the effect of death through the affection of Christ:<sup>71</sup> converted to him, we are turned away from this world, and living for him, we die to the elements of this world.<sup>72</sup>

Paulinus makes of humans and their human life a palimpsest on which the love of Christ is written: it is love through which the salvific death to the world is to be effected, love of Christ and of others in Christ. Thus we return to the first two commandments, but with an entirely Christocentric twist. Paradoxically, the reenactment of the Law of the Old Testament through Christ becomes the quintessential expression of the Spirit of the New.<sup>73</sup> Loving friendship towards other Christians is not a way to achieve assimilation with Christ: it is the way. The active practice of Christian friendship is a crucial part of living a virtuous Christian life: Augustine observes epigrammatically that only good amores make good mores (as opposed to good habits of life creating virtuous desires: a sort of inverted Aristotelianism).<sup>74</sup> Hence the enormous importance both of Christian friendship itself and of its maintenance through letters. Hence the spiritual significance attached to the writing and reception of letters themselves. It can now be seen how truly they contribute to the “development, reinforcement and extension of the Christian community” (as described in Chapter One).

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<sup>71</sup> The use of the phrase “affectum Christi” here encapsulates precisely the blending of the subjective and objective genitives which I discussed above: it refers both to our affection for Christ, and to Christ’s for us.

<sup>72</sup> An echo of the ideas in Col. 2, 20: “Si ergo mortui estis cum Christo ab elementis huius mundi, quid adhuc tanquam viventes in mundo decernitis?” Compare too Act. 14, 14.

<sup>73</sup> The spiritual “circumcisio in corde” as opposed to the literal “circumcisio” of the Old Testament is originally stated in Paul -- “circumcisio cordis in spiritu, non littera” (Rom. 2, 29) -- and is frequently adverted to in the letters of both Paulinus and Augustine. See for example in Paulinus, Letter L, 3 (to Augustine); Letter XX, 1 (to Delphinus), which is discussed in Chapter 4, text to note 17.

<sup>74</sup> Augustine, Letter CLV, 13.

This reveals another characteristic of Christian friendship: whereas classical notions of friendship centred on exclusivity -- one could sustain a true amicitia with two or three friends at most -- the Christian ideal bespeaks a functional inclusivity.<sup>75</sup> Paul's dictum "quoniam sumus invicem membra", combined with the first and second commandments and taken as a design for friendship, implies that amicitia should ideally embrace every individual member of the church of Christ.<sup>76</sup> The realization of this is crucially bound up with the manner of delivery of the letters. We have already seen how letters were written for the eyes not just of those expressly addressed, but of the communities in which they lived and of anyone in the wider Christian community into whose hands the letter might fall. This extended implicit audience naturally both created and was created by an inclusive notion of amicitia. It is not that personal bonds of friendship (in a more traditional, exclusive and individuated style) cease to be important, but that potential bonds of friendship with the broader Christian community come to be considered as equally important.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> I choose the qualifier "functional" because the Christian notion of inclusivity seems to me to be sharply different, in practice, from attempts in the Hellenistic period to develop a theory of universal philia in the face of Aristotelian partialism. See Julia Annas, "Aristotelian political theory in the Hellenistic period" in André Laks and Malcolm Schofield, Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy, Proceedings of the Sixth Symposium Hellenisticum (Cambridge 1995), 74-94, esp. pp. 84-85.

<sup>76</sup> Van Bavel discusses Augustine's arrival at this conclusion in "The Double Face of Love in St. Augustine. The Daring Inversion: Love is God", in Congresso Internazionale su S. Agostino nel XVI centenario della conversione (Rome 1987) III, pp. 81-102.

<sup>77</sup> It may be fruitful to compare with this observation Catherine Osborne's recent discussion of the way in which love characterizes Trinitarian bonds in the thought of Augustine: Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love (Oxford 1994), c. 9, esp. pp. 214-16. "For Augustine, I am suggesting, it is possible to describe as love some kind of tendency that causes us to enter into loving relationships" (p. 215; my emphasis).

The ideal participants in Christian amicitia are, then, the whole community of the Christian church. The question then arises: can amicitia include women as well as men? Certainly, several women were playing prominent roles in the church at this period<sup>78</sup> (and we may note that the “sexus minor” is given equal billing in the iconographic programme for Paulinus’ baptistry!<sup>79</sup>). Paulinus’ own attested circle includes, besides his wife Therasia, Melania the Elder, Paulina the wife of Pammachius (and daughter of Jerome’s follower Paula), Amanda the wife of Aper, and Galla the wife of Eucherius, who lived with him close to the monastery at Lérins.<sup>80</sup> Equally certainly, classical theories of amicitia tacitly agree that the superior form of friendship can only exist between men (who alone can be boni). It seems that, once again, a certain gulf exists between theory and practice, a certain tension between conditioned assumptions and Christian logic. There seems to be no inherent or stated reason why women should not be included -- indeed, James McEvoy observes, in his useful survey of the subject (and argument for its centrality), “the ancient ideal [of friendship] had been devised by men for a male world; Augustine’s rule had little in it that could not be put into the feminine

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<sup>78</sup> The bibliography on the subject of women in the early church is extensive and increasing. Those working in the area today are perhaps particularly indebted to the pioneering work of Elizabeth Clark and Kari Borresen; some of the evidence has been recently reviewed by Gillian Cloke, This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450 (London/New York 1995).

<sup>79</sup> See Poem XXVIII, 20-27; “sexus minor”, l. 26. The treatment of the martyrs is particularly interesting: “martyribus mediam pictis pia nomina signant,/ quos par in vario redimivit gloria sexu”, ll. 20-21.

<sup>80</sup> Letters XXXVIII, XXXIX, and XLIV are addressed to Aper and Amanda; Letter LI to Eucherius and Galla. Melania’s story is told in Letter XXIX; Letter XIII is the consolatio to Pammachius on the death of Paulina.

form".<sup>81</sup> It is just that in practice they very seldom are.<sup>82</sup>

There is little direct discussion of the subject; but, in the cases where friendship is offered to women, the offer tends to be made on male terms. This is the conclusion of Elizabeth Clark in her study of the issue: women become acceptable as friends to the degree that they deny their femaleness through ascetic suppression of their sexual characteristics.<sup>83</sup> Melania the Elder -- who is the only woman without a male consort who is alluded to in the letters of Paulinus<sup>84</sup> -- is a case in point. She is typically referred to by Paulinus as Melanius; in one instance he emphasizes this transsexual attribution with "benedicta Melanius". He also praises her with the words "sexum evacuat fides", "her faith cancels out her sex".<sup>85</sup> A rather confused passage on the status of women in

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81 " 'Philia' and 'Amicitia': the Philosophy of Friendship from Plato to Aristotle", Sewanee Mediaeval Colloquium Occasional Papers (1985), 1-24; quote from p. 16.

82 I note with some amusement that this is precisely the opposite conclusion to that formulated a century ago by Gaston Boissier: "En théorie, l'Église traite assez mal les femmes; elle se défie de leur légèreté, elle accuse leur faiblesse. ... Dans la pratique, on tient grand compte d'elles ... et, pour tout ce qui tient à la science de salut, on leur reconnaît des droits égaux." La Fin du Paganisme: étude sur les dernières luttes religieuses en occident au quatrième siècle (Paris 1894), II. 80.

83 See "Friendship between the sexes: classical theory and Christian practice", in Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations, Studies in Women and Religion II (New York/Toronto 1979), 35-106. Augustine seems to me to be the exception to this rule, at any rate in his correspondence, and I gave a paper to this effect at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford 1995): "Women's Letters and Lettered Women: the Evidence from St. Augustine".

84 The only contemporary woman, that is; there is an extended account of the discovery of the true cross by Helena, mother of the emperor Constantine, in Letter XXXI, 4 f.

85 For "benedicta Melanius" and "sexum evacuat fides", see Paulinus, Letter XXXI, 1 (to Sulpicius). "Melanius" again: Letter XLV, 2 and 3 (to Augustine).

general looks forward to the ultimate dissolution of masculinity and femininity in Christ, “in quo nec masculus nec femina sumus [Gal. 3, 28]”, but concludes that in the present world the hierarchy of gender should be maintained.<sup>86</sup>

The only extensive comment on a specific woman in the letters of Paulinus is made of Amanda, wife of Aper:

illic et coniunx, non dux ad mollitudinem vel avaritiam viro suo, sed ad continentiam et fortitudinem redux in ossa viri sui, magna illa divini cum ecclesia conjugii aemulatione mirabilis est, quam in tuam unitatem reductam ac redditam spiritalibus tibi tanto firmioribus quanto castioribus nexibus caritas Christi copulat, in cuius corpus transistis a vestro.<sup>87</sup>

There too is your wife, who does not bring her husband to indulgence or greed, but brings back restraint and strength into his bones; that great woman is miraculous for her imitation of the divine marriage with the church, and the love of Christ, into whose body you have been transformed, joins her to you, led back and received into your unity, with spiritual bonds as firm as they are chaste.

Paulinus goes on to praise Amanda for taking care of Aper's secular affairs so that he can devote himself more fully to a spiritual life. Two observations may be made about this. First, Amanda is praised not for her own spiritual achievement, but for furthering her husband's -- that is, for taking an appropriately subordinate position to the endeavour of true value. Second, this passage of praise is almost identical to that addressed to Therasia by Augustine some years earlier.<sup>88</sup> As we have already observed, this would not have

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<sup>86</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 24.

<sup>87</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLIV, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Augustine, Letter XXVII, 2. Despite the similarities, a comparison of the two passages in fact yields fascinating results concerning the different emphases of the two men. The passage in Augustine reads: “videtur a legentibus ibi coniunx non dux ad molliem viro suo, sed ad fortitudinem redux in ossa viri sui, quam in tuam unitatem redactam et redditam et spiritalibus tibi tanto firmioribus, quanto castioribus nexibus copulatam officiis vestrae sanctitati debitis in te uno resalutamus.” Paulinus has expanded the “dux/redux” antithesis with, respectively, a vice and virtue specific to Aper and Amanda's situation. More

been considered as invalidating the sentiments of admiration; on the contrary, to echo another's words takes the logic of "invicem membra" to its ultimate extent. But it is of material importance in considering whether the relationship within a celibate marriage might amount to amicitia.<sup>89</sup> Much has been made of Augustine's praise of Therasia; but, as the index to CSEL says, "praeterea non memoratur nisi in inscriptionibus", "otherwise she is not mentioned except in the superscriptions [to the letters]".<sup>90</sup> Moreover, Augustine's very praise takes the form of justifying the collapse of Therasia's identity into that of Paulinus: "in te uno resalutamus", "in return, we salute her in you alone...". Christian reasoning might seem to demand a far more expansive notion of marriage; but it seems that the role of women, even in such marriages as that of Paulinus and Therasia, remained essentially subordinate, and praised insofar as it was so. This may be illustrated specifically from Paulinus' letters: he makes Therasia his co-signatory in 11 out of 45 possible instances in the letters; however, the only passage in the prose works in which she is referred to by name is in a prayer to Clarus composed for inscription in Sulpicius' basilica.<sup>91</sup> Although the relationship between husband and wife was

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importantly, (1) Paulinus adds the typological comparison to the marriage of Christ and ecclesia; (2) he shifts the syntax of the latter half of the sentence to make the caritas Christi, instead of himself, the subject; (3) he expands the caritas Christi reference with an allusion to Aper's assimilation into Christ's body. His manipulation of Augustine's original thus corresponds exactly with the issues I discuss in this chapter and the following one; it also suggests that Paulinus is quoting from memory and unconsciously altering Augustine to reflect his own concerns.

<sup>89</sup> This issue has recently been raised by White, Christian Friendship, pp. 159-161; she appears to feel that a celibate marriage may amount to amicitia (p. 161).

<sup>90</sup> CSEL LVIII, p. 325.

<sup>91</sup> Letter XXXII, 6. However, she is also clearly referred to at Letter V, 19, to Sulpicius: "conserva in domino mea fraternitatem tuam quo veneratur affectu salutatur".

occasionally referred to as amicitia, it was fundamentally unequal and, except on certain pastoral issues, generally ignored.<sup>92</sup> The call of Saint Paul for wives to be subject to their husbands, as the husbands to Christ (as at Eph. 5, 22-23), was always more to the forefront than the Christ in whom male and female was to be dissolved.

Paulinus acknowledges freely the presence of women in the Christian community; he propounds a rationale of all-embracing friendship which logically should include those women. But it is for his male friends that a lavish rhetoric of friendship is reserved. Most lavish of all is the rhetoric bestowed upon Sulpicius by Paulinus.

Quid extorques, ut te plus amemus? crescere summa non recipit. si potest mare superfluere obices suos et quaecumque naturalem plenitudinem servant incrementum temporale sentire, potest et caritas in te nostra cumulari, quam suo fine conplemus, cum te sicut nosmet ipsos diligamus. itaque ut cubitum ad staturam nostram adicere, sic amoris tui cumulum facere non possumus; desideriis tamen modum nullum ponimus.<sup>93</sup>

Why do you extort that I should love you more? Plenitude does not accept increase. If the sea can overflow its bounds and whatever has a natural fullness can experience growth over time, then there can also be increase in my love for you, which [at present] I fill to its brim, since I love you as myself. And so, just as I cannot add a cubit to my height [Matt. 6, 27], neither can I increase my love for you; yet I place no boundary on my desires.

It is no coincidence that the motif of impossibilities or adynata, reflecting the extremes of

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<sup>92</sup> See Gillian Clark, " 'The bright frontier of friendship': Augustine and the Christian body as frontier", in Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity ed. Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (Brookfield, VT 1996), 217-29; and compare Paul Veyne on late Roman marriage as friendship between superior and inferior partners, A History of Private Life (Cambridge MA/ London, 1992), I. 37 and 45.

<sup>93</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIII, 1. This sort of language may be readily compared with even the most affectionate of Cicero's letters to show how far we have come from the classical tradition. See, for example, Cicero's letter to his dying freedman Tiro, Fam. 16. 5.

the writer's love, is to be found also in Latin love poetry<sup>94</sup> – although Paulinus, typically, elaborates it with a biblical allusion. Paulinus' language to Sulpicius of loving friendship is often strikingly passionate. The combination of this with the fact that more letters are preserved from Paulinus to Sulpicius than to any other single recipient has led to considerable exploration of the psychological trajectory of their relationship, most notably by Fabre.<sup>95</sup> Fabre portrays an originally close friendship marred by Sulpicius' failure to visit Paulinus, first in Barcelona, then at Nola; after the explosive demand quoted above, the friendship cools, and remains more detached until their deaths. This scenario has proved extremely compelling, and has been repeatedly rehearsed.<sup>96</sup> Here I would like, as a "case study" of Christian friendship, to present a rather different reading of their interactions. This will be based on my observations about Christian friendship in the preceding pages.

The critical issue in the friendship between Paulinus and Sulpicius is the one with which we opened the chapter, that of the nature of friendship before and after conversion. This correspondence is extraordinarily instructive in supplying a view both of the new rhetoric of friendship and of the tensions it entailed in practice. The two had been

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<sup>94</sup> The *locus classicus* is Virgil *Eclogue* VIII, 53 ff., though the force is there reversed to "anything is possible now I have been betrayed in love". The *Eclogues* were certainly familiar to Paulinus; however, Hartel's identification of an allusion to *Eclogue* I, 11 at *Letter* XVII, 4 seems far-fetched. For *adynata* more generally, see Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 94-98.

<sup>95</sup> Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole*, pp. 282-337.

<sup>96</sup> McGuire goes so far as to entitle his section on Paulinus "Paulinus of Nola: Friendship as Disappointment"; *Friendship and Community*, p. 66. Even White, who wishes to emphasize the love of Paulinus for Sulpicius, echoes this opinion: *Christian Friendship*, p. 152. The interpretation seems to have been long-lived: in a fifteenth-century manuscript of Paulinus' letters (Hartel's *U*), Ausonius' reproachful poem "Quarta tibi haec..." (Green XXVII. XXI) is attributed to Sulpicius.



intimates in what they both now regarded as a former life (from which unfortunately no letters or similar documents now survive<sup>97</sup>): in the first surviving letter from Paulinus to Sulpicius, written from Barcelona in early 395,<sup>98</sup> Paulinus says “abscidatur ut inutilis dextera a corpore tuo, qui tibi in Christi corpore non cohaeret”, “let the man who does not join with you in Christ’s body be cut off from your own body like a useless right hand”.<sup>99</sup> There is more in the same vein; and the letter ends with a plea to Sulpicius to come to him. The next letter complains of Sulpicius’ absence, but seeks consolation in terms which will by now be familiar:

Et excusandum putasti, frater dilectissime, quod ad nos non ipse venisses secundum sponsonem tuam expectationemque nostram? tu vero potiore tui parte quam qua manseris, solo corpore domi residens, voluntate ad nos et spiritu et sermone venisti; quamquam ne corporaliter quidem penitus afueris, quando in pueris tuis sancta in domino tibi servitute conexas corporis ad nos tui membra venerunt.<sup>100</sup>

And do you think that you ought to be excused, my most beloved brother, for not having come to us yourself as you had promised and we had hoped? It’s true that you did come to us with a more effective part of you than that which remained, since you stayed at home only in body, while you came in volition and spirit and conversation; although indeed you were not even entirely absent physically, since the members of your body came to us in your servants, joined to you in the Lord with holy service.

First, Sulpicius was spiritually present, through his letters and the volition which they represented; second, he was even partially present physically, through the presence of his

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<sup>97</sup> There are only the allusions in Sulpicius Severus’ Vita Martini to Paulinus being cured by Saint Martin of a disease of the eyes at Vienne, and later being held up by the saint as exemplary for his renunciation: Vita Martini 19. 3 and 25. 4-5 respectively.

<sup>98</sup> That is, between his ordination on Christmas Day 394 and his departure for Nola in April 395.

<sup>99</sup> Paulinus, Letter I, 5. See Matt. 18, 8 for the origins of this figure, and compare also Marc. 9, 44. See also the text to Chapter 4, note 61.

<sup>100</sup> Paulinus, Letter V, 1. For the distinctive phrase “potiore ... parte”, compare “potiore mei parte” in Letter XIII, 1, discussed above.

letter-carriers. The latter claim we shall explore further in the chapter on the self. As for the first, it is clear that once again we are confronted with the tension between the physical and the spiritual, the symbolic and literal forms of communication. (This tension is vividly felt also by Augustine at the beginning of his correspondence with Paulinus: he demands ironically, “Vellem tamen scire, utrum hanc absentiam corporalem vos patientius quam nos facilius toleretis”, “so I would like to know whether you can bear this physical absence with a patience corresponding to my ease”.<sup>101</sup>) It is the negotiation of this tension that gradually effects the change of tone in the letters of Paulinus to Sulpicius. The difficulty, but the necessity, in Christian friendship is to progress from the literal, intuitive models of friendship to that which recognizes spiritual communion as supreme.<sup>102</sup> This progression is, surely, particularly difficult to realize when one has established a prior friendship with one’s counterpart. Hence Paulinus’ celebrated requests for Sulpicius to visit, including the renowned outburst, “Et invitando te et expectando defessi sumus”, “I am fed up with inviting you and waiting for you”.<sup>103</sup> But these requests are interspersed with passages of extravagant tribute to the friendship of Sulpicius:

In domino deo Iesu Christo sentio et in te potissimum munere et verbo dei laetus exorior, quia “amico fideli nulla est comparatio” [Eccli. 6, 15] ... “quid retribuemus domino nostro praeter omnia quae retribuit nobis” [Ps. 115, 12], pro hac etiam gratia, qua te nobis et in saeculari prius amicitia dilectissimum, in suis quoque rebus, quod incomparabilis pretii ducimus,

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<sup>101</sup> Augustine, Letter XXXI, 4.

<sup>102</sup> Fabre does note this change, summarizing in his index “efforts vers une amitié plus désincarnée et plus purement spirituelle”; but he sees this as an effect, not a cause, of Paulinus’ frustration at stages in the correspondence.

<sup>103</sup> Paulinus, Letter XVII, 1.

individuum comitem atque consortem spiritali germanitate conexuit?<sup>104</sup>

In the Lord God Jesus Christ I am aware of the gift and word of God, and in you especially I experience them with joy, because “there is no comparison to a faithful friend” ... “What shall we return to our Lord for all that he has bestowed upon us”, and particularly for this grace, through which he has bound you to me, both formerly, when you were most beloved to me even in secular friendship, and now too in his own affairs, which we think precious beyond compare, when you are an exceptional companion and comrade in spiritual brotherhood?

Paulinus attempts to capture the symbolic value of his friendship for Sulpicius later in the same letter:

...illud in te speciale nobis donum est, quod praedestinos nos invicem nobis in caritate Christi iunctissima prioris quoque vitae amicitia signavit, adhuc eorum, quae nunc per Christum avertimur, amatores.<sup>105</sup>

That [property] in you is a particular gift to me, that an exceptionally close friendship in our former life as well marked us out as predestined for each other in the love of Christ, and we still love those things towards which we are now directed through Christ.

Their friendship prior to conversion is here configured as a foreshadowing of their true love in Christ -- just as the Old Testament foreshadows the New; indeed, as the Old Testament is redirected in the new light of Christ. This symbolic reading of friendship seems to me to gain its final statement, and resolution, at the end of the letter with whose initial rhetorical demand I began this section:

diligitur autem et in nobismet ipsis, quia ipse dixit hoc signum fore discipulorum suorum, si diligenter invicem dilectione qua ipse dilexit nos, id est ut cor unum et unam animam habeamus in Christo et id quisque proximo suo faciat, quod sibi fieri cupit.<sup>106</sup>

But he is loved even between ourselves, because he himself said that this would be a sign of his disciples, if they felt for each other the love with

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<sup>104</sup> Paulinus, Letter XI, 1. Several paragraphs expressing similar sentiments culminate in the passage quoted above: only the caritas Christi could be added to their love for each other.

<sup>105</sup> Letter XI, 5.

<sup>106</sup> Paulinus Letter XXIII, 47.

which he loved us,<sup>107</sup> that is, that we should have one heart and one soul in Christ, and that each one should treat his neighbour as he wishes to be treated himself.

The secular friendship of Paulinus and Sulpicius has been reinvented as a symbol of Christ's love, and of their status as his disciples; their Christian friendship is the revealed fulfilment of its original promise. *Amicitia* in classical terms had been a pragmatic mixture of reciprocal obligation and affective state; Christian *amicitia* interpreted affective states in terms of spiritual symbolism, and used the logic of spirituality to presuppose affective states. The symbolic level was all-pervasive.

Thus the development of the friendship between Paulinus and Sulpicius represents a progression from the literal to the abstract. Such a progression was facilitated by the counter-intuitive<sup>108</sup> nature of much of Christian thought. It was also far from unique: the interpretative progress documented in Augustine's *Confessions* moves, likewise, from the literal to the abstract. In my next chapter, I shall explore some of the configurations of doctrine that make this progression necessary, and some of the patterns of thought that make it possible, as evinced in the letters of Paulinus.

First, however, I must add a brief coda on the so-called "friendship" of Paulinus with Felix. There has been an extraordinarily persistent perception that Paulinus, disillusioned with human friendships, turned instead to an ideal friendship with his patron saint.<sup>109</sup> Fabre bases this perception particularly on the way in which Paulinus refers to

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<sup>107</sup> Note that this echoes the passage at Joh. 15, 12, cited at n. 18 above, which emphasizes the blend of subjective and objective love.

<sup>108</sup> This notion is explored further in Chapter 3.

<sup>109</sup> This notion first aired, to my knowledge, by Fabre, *Saint Paulin de Nole* pp. 339-389; pursued by White, *Christian Friendship*, pp. 161-163: "Paulinus ... portrays

Felix in the first two Natalicia (Poems XII and XIII), the annual poems which he wrote for the saint's feast day; White prefers to emphasize Natalicium XIII (Poem XXI). In the first two Natalicia, however, the language of friendship is simply not present: Felix is invoked with "o pater, o domine", and referred to as "praesul" -- language appropriate to a hierarchical relationship.<sup>110</sup> This tone continues throughout the Natalicia; nor do we find the elaborate reflection on the love of Paulinus for Felix that we have come to expect from the letters. Where such language does intrude -- and it does so only occasionally -- it is used of the relationship of Felix with Christ: he is the "sodalis" of Christ, he is "Christo carissime".<sup>111</sup> Christ is the "amicus" of Felix while Paulinus is his "famulus" and "alumnus".<sup>112</sup> In fact, the terms amicitia and amicus are nowhere used of Paulinus' relationship to Felix. Certainly, we continue to see the pervasiveness of Christ; but as we have observed, Paulinus' theology is entirely Christocentric. The relevance of Christ is adumbrated in Poem XV:<sup>113</sup> "nonne unus in omni/ Christus adest sancto?" -- "Surely the one Christ is present in every saint?" Christ remains all-penetrating for Paulinus; but there is a hierarchy of the earthly and celestial, where he and Felix naturally stand in

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their relationship not as one-sided devotion to the memory of the dead but as the Christian friendship par excellence."

<sup>110</sup> "o pater, o domine": Poems XII, 10 and XIII, 5; "praesul": Poem XIII, 26.

<sup>111</sup> Poem XXI, 195 and 345. In the latter instance, we may note that the full invocation is: "nunc ad te, venerande parens, aeterne patrone,/ susceptor meus et Christo carissime Felix...". Once again, therefore, the language used of Felix is entirely hierarchical.

<sup>112</sup> Poem XXI, 355-56.

<sup>113</sup> Poem XV, 257-258 = Natalicium 4.

different places. Hence the language of patronage remains appropriate,<sup>114</sup> despite the fact that he and Felix can both be said to be suffused with Christ.

There is a further objection to Fabre's thesis in the dating of the Natalicia, for the early poems, which he considers as containing protestations of friendship to Felix, pre-date the supposed rift with Sulpicius: the first was written for the feast day of St. Felix in January 395 (following the dating of Trout and Fabre), around the same time as the first surviving letter to Sulpicius and before the removal of Paulinus to Nola; the second, presumably, a year later. How, then, could one consider the relationship with Felix the perfect friendship to which Paulinus turned for consolation?

These comments do, however, help finally to emphasize what was a crucial aspect of Christian friendship for Paulinus: that he considered it as subsisting between those who were equals in God's eyes. He never uses hierarchical language in addressing those whom he considers to be his friends: it runs entirely counter to every precept of Christian friendship.<sup>115</sup> The only hierarchy which he acknowledges, on renouncing

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<sup>114</sup> On the saint as patronus, see Peter Brown, The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity (Chicago 1981), chapter 3, esp. (on Felix) pp. 59-60.

<sup>115</sup> See my observations on the language of the superscriptiones, text to note 45 above. Fabre's reading of the Felix/Paulinus relationship, however, explains why he is so erroneously insistent that Paulinus made friends only with those in whom he acknowledged some superiority; for this makes the anomaly of the relationship with Felix less glaring. We do not have the evidence to support even his milder conclusion: "à la base de toutes ses amitiés, il y a un sentiment d'admiration". Saint Paulin de Nole, p. 387. However, Konstan, "Problems", has just revived this idea, arguing that adopting a stance of humility instead of equality towards a friend was one of the principal things which distinguished Christian from classical modes of friendship (p. 100). This, while essentially more sympathetic, still fails to take into account the consistency with which Paulinus claims equality in attachment if nothing else.

classical modes of thought, is that of the spiritual to the temporal; and it is to the realization of their interrelationship in the expression of Paulinus that we now turn.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **IMAGO TERRENA AND IMAGO CAELESTIS**

As we have seen, an overarching theme is emerging in treating of the letters of Paulinus of Nola and of his circle of correspondents: the question of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal realms, and hence between symbolism and literalism. The friendship expressed in the letters is literally an emotional connection between two or more human beings; but it is also, and more importantly, a connection which symbolizes God's love for humans in the love they bear each other and Christ himself. The letters themselves are not merely written artifacts; they are part of an entire system of communication which is once again laden with symbolic value. Even the physical displacement of the correspondents and the process of travelling between them is coming to be assigned symbolic value. The texts of the letters and the process of delivery are exalted by an ongoing spiritual extrapolation from the literal circumstances.

How are the ideas expressed by which the spiritual becomes superior to the physical, while the physical is taken as capable of implying the spiritual? How, indeed, is the idea realized that the "letter" (as segment of correspondence or as semiotic unit) is never sufficient, but always merely a small part of a greater "nexus of communication"? I would like to contend that these connections are made possible essentially through the figural use of language and figural modes of thought, through techniques of imagery and visualization. In this chapter I wish to explore the role which figuralism and imagistic thought play in Paulinus' correspondence, and to begin to suggest how they might be



effective in uniting the temporal and spiritual realms.

It seems most appropriate that the first stage in this exploration should be to investigate the way in which Paulinus describes or alludes to material, as opposed to imaginary, objects. (By “imaginary”, I mean those represented in the imagination rather than in material reality.) Here we have an obvious starting point, for Paulinus’ descriptions of his building projects at Nola have long been a celebrated source for art historians of the period.<sup>1</sup> A letter to Sulpicius contains an extended discussion of the new basilica which he is constructing to interconnect with the old basilica of Felix at Nola, along with a brief allusion to further construction at Fundis.<sup>2</sup> This letter may be supplemented with passages from Poems XXVII and XXVIII, the ninth and tenth Natalicia respectively;<sup>3</sup> the three works all date from the same period, 403-404, and describe the same improvements.

The first notable aspect of these descriptions is that Paulinus displays relatively little interest in describing material objects as such. We gather that he has built a new basilica interconnecting with the old one; that he has paved over a sterile kitchen garden

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<sup>1</sup> See Rudolf Carel Goldschmidt, Paulinus’ Churches at Nola: texts, translations and commentary (Amsterdam 1940); Helena Junod-Ammerbauer, “Les constructions de Nole et l’esthétique de Saint Paulin”, REAug XXIV (1978), 22-57: she, however, dismisses Poem XXVIII as merely representing Christian epigram. The argument below leads to the conclusion that this is probably a false distinction.

<sup>2</sup> Description of building at Nola: Letter XXXII, 9-16; it abuts on the old basilica of Felix, 13. The building at Fundis: Letter XXXII, 17 (introduced with “Egrediamur iam Nolana hac basilica et in Fundanam transeamus”).

<sup>3</sup> The descriptive passages are hard to isolate with precision, as they tend to be interspersed with moral extraction and commentary; but Poem XXVII, 345-595 and the whole of Poem XXVIII seem to be broadly relevant.

to make a marble courtyard adorned with fountains; and that he has built a new baptistry (which Poem XXVIII is written to dedicate); but he gives us very few hints of their exact construction or their topological relationship to each other. We have, for example, few allusions to building materials or to details of design;<sup>4</sup> when Paulinus does occasionally focus on a sustained and specific description, it seems to be more for symbolic purposes than for conveying any precise architectural content. The description of the courtyard within the cloisters is a case in point. The fact that it connects the three buildings (the old and new basilicas and the martyrium) is so emphatically dwelt upon that an allusion to the Trinity must surely be intended.<sup>5</sup> Paulinus seems particularly reticent when his accounts are compared with the exuberant description of the -- purely imaginary -- Temple of Wisdom by his contemporary Prudentius, which vibrates with colour and form.<sup>6</sup> There is no colour in Paulinus' accounts. He does, however, evince a consistent concern with light: words such as "splendor" and "nitor" and their cognates are abundant; so too "illustrare", "lucidus", and "lumen": "aperta per arcus/ lucida frons bifores perfunderet intima largo/ lumine...", "the gleaming façade, which is revealed through the arches with their double doors, suffuses the interior with a flood of light."<sup>7</sup> Although we

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<sup>4</sup> Building materials: Poem XXVII, 385 refers to "biiuges laqueari et marmore fabri"; Poem XXVIII, 14 to decorations in "marmore pictura laquearibus atque columnis". The ceiling is made to look like ivory, Poem XXVII, 389.

<sup>5</sup> Poem XXVIII, 28-52. Note similarly the Trinitarian significance -- "alta/ lege sacramenti" -- drawn from the three entrances of the martyrium, and, once again, the symbolism of one body with Christ as the head in the multifarious but united constructions on the site: "etsi culmina plura/ sint domibus structis, sanctae tamen unica pacis/ est domus...". Poem XXVII, 455-62; quotes from 455-56 and 459-61.

<sup>6</sup> Prudentius, Psychomachia, 804-887. A typical extract from his description: "Ingens chrysolitus nativo interlitus auro/ hinc sibi sappirum sociaverat inde beryllum,/ distantesque nitor medius variabat honores." (vv. 854-856).

<sup>7</sup> Poem XXVII, 373-75. See also especially lines 377-79, 387-88, and 496-97.

do not know the exact construction of the church, we do know how it was lit:

in ligno mentitur ebur, tectoque superne  
pendentes lychni spiris retinentur aënis  
et medio in vacuo laxis vaga lumina nutant  
funibus, undantes flammæ levis aura fatigat.<sup>8</sup>

Wood simulates ivory, and lamps, hanging high above from the roof, are held by bronze cables; in the middle of the space, lights nod to and fro on free-swinging ropes, and a light breeze agitates the wavering flames.

Moreover, the somewhat reprehensible episode in which the hovel of a colonus in the compound is burned down, and attributed as a miracle to Felix, all revolves around light for the basilica:

...namque patentis  
ianua basilicæ tuguri brevis interiectu  
obscurata foris in cassum clausa patebat.<sup>9</sup>

... for when the basilica was open, its door stood vainly open as if closed, darkened from the outside by the little hovel in the way.

We shall see as this chapter develops that this emphasis on illumination aptly reflects a more general concern of Paulinus with sight -- and, correspondingly, with blindness<sup>10</sup> -- and a desire to see things in a fitting manner.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Poem XXVII, 389-392.

<sup>9</sup> Poem XXVIII, 66-68. Textually, this is an extremely vexed passage. I have preferred "foris" (attested in the MSS.) to Hartel's incomprehensible "fores". This, however, involves the new problem of artificial lengthening before the caesura. There is, unfortunately, no comment on this practice in Green's treatment of Paulinus' hexametric caesurae: see Green, Poetry, pp. 114-115. I have also strained the sense of the participle "clausa": Paulinus presumably liked the paradoxical juxtaposition of "clausa patebat", but to try to reproduce this in the English is to make the passage even more confused.

<sup>10</sup> Note, for example, that in Poem XXVIII he describes the huts as "foedo/ obice prospectum caecantia" (65-66).

<sup>11</sup> For a practical instance of the symbolic value attached to sight in the fourth century, see Margaret Miles on the issue of inclusion in the Mass. Catechumens withdrew to side rooms for the communion itself: "Visual participation made the

A second aspect of Paulinus' descriptions is particularly noteworthy for my purposes here. He alludes, famously, to the pictorial cycle in his basilica, and explains why he has chosen to have it painted:

forte requiratur quanam ratione gerendi  
sederit haec nobis sententia, pingere sanctas  
raro more domos animantibus adsimulatis.  
accipite et paucis temptabo exponere causas.  
quos agat huc sancti Felicis gloria coetus,  
obscurum nulli; sed turba frequentior hic est  
rusticitas non cassa fide neque docta legendi.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps you may ask on what rationale this decision possessed me, to paint the holy dwellings in an unusual manner<sup>13</sup> with the pretence of living creatures. Listen, and I will try briefly to explain the reasons. Everyone knows what crowds the glorious reputation of Saint Felix gathers here; but the greater part of the throng here are peasants, of earnest faith but not trained to read.

Paulinus has already observed that these pictures should nourish the mind for reflection:

"qui videt haec vacuis agnoscens vera figuris/ non vacua fidam sibi pascit imagine mentem", "the person who sees these things and recognizes the truth in the bare figures, feeds his own faithful mind on no empty image".<sup>14</sup> But in spite of his concern that the

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difference between outsider and member". Image as Insight. Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture (Boston 1985), p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Poem XXVII, 542-548.

<sup>13</sup> As the century progressed, this type of project became less of a "mos rarus": in the early 420s, the nave of Sta. Maria Maggiore in Rome was decorated with Old Testament scenes on one side and New Testament on the other. (For a description, see Emile Mâle, The Early Churches of Rome tr. David Buxton (London 1960), pp. 65-66.) Paulinus preferred to decorate his old basilica from the New Testament and his new one from the Old: "est etenim pariter decus utile nobis/ in veteri novitas atque in novitate vetustas..."! (Poem XXVIII, 174-175.)

<sup>14</sup> Poem XXVII, 514-15. I take "vacuus" to mean "available [to the viewer] for interpretation" -- being, until interpreted, of open reference -- not "empty" tout court, hence my choice of translation for the "vacuus"/ "non vacuus" contrast.

unlettered should be reminded by pictures of the sacred purpose of their visit, Paulinus goes on to specify that these pictures should be appropriately explained with tituli, captions probably of verse couplets or quatrains, “ut littera monstret/ quod manus explicuit”, “so that the letter may show what the hand has set forth”.<sup>15</sup> The peasants, it seems, may point out these tituli and read them aloud to each other. It is very striking that even when the depictions are expressly directed at the unlettered, Paulinus cannot envisage material images without an explanatory or illustrative text.<sup>16</sup>

This textual orientation becomes even more apparent in the prose letter which describes Paulinus’ building projects to Sulpicius. Paulinus barely comments on the constructions as such; instead, his descriptions serve primarily to situate the extensive verses placed at strategic points around the basilica, which he then proceeds to quote in full. These verses, dogmatic as well as descriptive, are clearly intended to direct the reader both on his literal progress round the church and on his spiritual progress through Christian doctrine. It seems that in some way for Paulinus these inscriptions are the church; they are certainly, as he describes it to Sulpicius, its most prominent feature.

Another feature of the basilica hints at a use for these texts.

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<sup>15</sup> Poem XXVII, 584-585. Tituli are raised to a literary mode in the contemporaneous Dittochaeon of Prudentius, which displays in compressed form the characteristics of imagistic typological allusion which will be discussed later in the chapter. We may perhaps infer that the tituli in Paulinus’ basilica were of similar nature. On the Dittochaeon, see Renate Pillinger, Die Tituli Historiarum oder des sogenannte Dittochaeon des Prudentius (Vienna 1980).

<sup>16</sup> The importance of the written text for Paulinus is well expressed in a sidelong remark: “sed de hac absida aut abside num magis dicere debuerim, tu videris; ego nescire me fateor, quia hoc verbi genus nec legisse reminiscor”. Having never read -- not heard -- that case of the word “apse”, he is uncertain how it should be correctly constructed. Letter XXXII, 17.

cubicula intra porticus quaterna longis basilicae lateribus inserta secretis orantium vel “in lege domini meditantium” [Ps. 1, 2], praeterea memoriis religiosorum ac familiarum accomodatos ad pacis aeternae requiem locos praebent. omne cubiculum binis per liminum frontes versibus praenotatur ...<sup>17</sup>

Four chapels have been placed within the colonnades on each<sup>18</sup> of the long sides of the basilica as a retreat for those praying or ‘meditating on the law of the Lord’: they provide places particularly suited to remembrance<sup>19</sup> of the saints or family members so that they may rest in eternal peace. Each chapel is marked out with two verses on the front of the lintel ...

Paulinus does not give us these verses; but we may infer that they would have formed suggestive starting points for the prayer or meditation in these little oratories.

These examples of Paulinus’ extensive textual supplementation of material objects<sup>20</sup> bespeak a theory of reading in which the creative emphasis lies on the active response of the reader. The architectural structures or pictures fade into the background when set alongside the textual commentary upon them, which is in turn intended merely

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<sup>17</sup> Letter XXXII, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Goldschmidt, Churches, translates “quaterna” simply as “four”; but its specific distributive sense seems to me more likely, not least because “binis” later in the passage is undoubtedly distributive (“two verses over each door”). Walsh, Letters II, 146, also prefers the distributive sense.

<sup>19</sup> TLL VIII, 670 s.v. memoria offers “de actione reminiscendi” and suggests equivalence to “recordatio”: this is the sense which I have preferred here, contra Walsh, Letters II, 146, who translates “funeral monuments”. Although TLL VIII, 682 attests this sense in two other passages of Paulinus (Letters XVII, 2 and XXXII, 13), it seems to me quite clear from the context that the use here is in the contemplative rather than the material sense.

<sup>20</sup> A further telling example from the description of the building: though we are told almost nothing about the design of the martyrrium, Paulinus writes a few lines on each of the martyrs whose relics are enclosed within it. Poem XXVII, 406-439.

as a starting point for private meditation.<sup>21</sup> The technique with which these images are displayed, and the response provoked in the reader/viewer, forms a marked contrast to classical ecphrastic technique. Paulinus guiding Nicetas past the pictorial programme in his portico recalls, quite probably by design,<sup>22</sup> the progress of Aeneas past the paintings of the Trojan War in Dido's temple to Juno;<sup>23</sup> but the differences between the two are instructive. In both cases, the viewer within the poem moves past a sequence of paintings which depict narratives already familiar to him -- in the case of Aeneas, from (purported) personal experience; in the case of Nicetas, from his knowledge of the Bible. These narratives are also presumed by the writers of the poems to be familiar to their readers: in the case of Virgil's readers, from the Homeric and post-Homeric epics; for Paulinus', from, once again, the Bible. The distinction, therefore, between reader and fictive viewer is already blurred in Paulinus' text, where the two are both drawing on the same extra-textual source of reference, while it remains sharply drawn in Virgil's. The contrast between the two ecphraseis is accentuated by their different purposes in their respective contexts. The pictures in Virgil, alluding to selected episodes in the Trojan War, are introduced primarily to show us their effect on Aeneas and to provide a

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<sup>21</sup> Note too the expressly exemplary purpose of the pictorial programme in the basilica: "sanctasque legenti/ historias castorum operum subrepat honestas/ exemplis inducta piis...". Poem XXVII, 589-591.

<sup>22</sup> Note especially the phrase "animum pictura pascit inani" at Aeneid I. 464: Paulinus picks up this very particular use of "pascit", this time with "mentem" as object, at Poem XXVII, 515; he refers at the beginning of the section to the images as "picturas", line 511 (again at line 516); the "pictura ... inani" of Virgil may well have suggested Paulinus' "vacuis ... figuris", commented on in note 14 above.

<sup>23</sup> Paulinus, Poem XXVII, 511-41; Virgil, Aeneid I. 456-93.

dramatic preparation for and juxtaposition with the first entrance of Dido.<sup>24</sup> Aeneas' response to the pictures is made firmly within the context of the poem: he takes them, not as a call to action, but as a stimulus to grief, and reflects on them with the famous lament, "sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt", "[here are] tears in the nature of things, hearts touched by human transience".<sup>25</sup> The reflection which Paulinus expects his pictures to prompt is, however, of a very different nature. Not only is their aim avowedly, as we have seen, the instruction of the uneducated and the edification of the formerly ignorant; the pictures also invite the fictive viewer, and by implication the actual reader, to form moral judgements on their content and hence to instigate a certain, virtuous, course of action. Paulinus breaks off from his comparison of Ruth and Orpah to exclaim:

nonne, precor, toto manet haec discordia mundo  
parte sequente deum vel parte ruente per orbem?  
atque utinam pars aequa foret necis atque salutis!<sup>26</sup>

I ask you -- doesn't this strife remain in the whole world, with one faction following God and the other rushing through the world to destruction?  
And would that the parties of death and of salvation were equal!

Virgil's ecphrasis, and the response of his fictive viewer to the depictions, is confined entirely within the economy of the poem and its textual referents. Paulinus' account, by contrast, is not textually circumscribed, but by stimulating reflection not only in the fictive viewer but also in the readers, expects to extend its effect beyond the textual into an active response in the world outside the text.

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<sup>24</sup> See the exposition of R. D. Williams, "The Pictures on Dido's Temple (*Aeneid* I. 450-93)", *CQ* N. S. 10 (1960), 145-51; reprinted in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's "Aeneid"* ed. S. J. Harrison (Oxford 1990), 37-45. Williams, however, fails to remark on the way in which the "decrecendo" of the sequence to a portrait of the heroine Penthesilea, the "bellatrix" and "virgo" who "audet... viris concurrere", prepares the scene with aptness and irony for the entrance of Dido.

<sup>25</sup> *Aeneid* I. 462; I have used here the translation of C. Day Lewis (London 1952).

<sup>26</sup> *Poem* XXVII, 537-539.



This expectation of active response to texts should not surprise, for at this period much of Christian practice was beginning to revolve around this type of response. Cassian expressly provides instruction in techniques of meditation.<sup>27</sup> The impetus behind the burgeoning genre of hagiography forms a very practical example of active reading: the writing of the lives of saints takes for granted that literature may inspire and mould life.<sup>28</sup> We should remember that in the prototypical saint's life, the Life of Antony, the starting point for his ascetic existence is his response to a biblical text:

...intravit in ecclesiam, et accidit ut tunc Evangelium legeretur, in quo Dominus dicit ad divitem: si vis perfectus<sup>29</sup> esse, vade, et vende omnia tua quaecunque habes, et da pauperibus, et veni, sequere me, et habebis thesaurum in coelis. Quo audito, quasi divinitus huiusmodi ante memoriam concepisset, et veluti propter se haec esset scriptura recitata, ad se Dominicum traxit imperium: statimque egressus, possessiones quas habebat vendidit.<sup>30</sup>

...he went into the church; and it happened that at that moment the Gospel was being read, in which the Lord says to the rich man: 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all you possess, and give it to the poor, and come, follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven' [Matt. 19, 20]. When Antony had heard this, as if he had divinely received a previous memory of this type, and as if the passage had been read out on his account, he took the Lord's command to himself: he went straight out of the church, and sold the property which he possessed.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Cassian, Conference X, 10.

<sup>28</sup> See Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar", Representations I (1983), 1-25.

<sup>29</sup> My emendation from "perfeleus", printed by Migne.

<sup>30</sup> Life of Antony, 2, quoted in the translation of Evagrius which would probably have been the version known to Paulinus: PG XXVI, 835-976.

<sup>31</sup> This scriptural passage was also, of course, important for Paulinus: Letter XXIV, 5 ff. (to Sulpicius) provides an extended discussion of ideas around it. The primary goal of Joanna Summers' study, Paulinus of Nola ... and the Renunciation of Wealth, is to establish the details of Paulinus' response to this text on both a practical and a theoretical level. She concludes that Paulinus' renunciation of wealth did little to affect his position: "The loss of property did not pose a problem for a man who continued to rely on past sources of authority,

We may also note the rising importance of preaching in the period, from which great collections of sermons survive<sup>32</sup>: again, to craft and to respond to a sermon involves drawing close connections -- consciously or not -- between cognitive activity and action, mediated by the individual reception of the text. Finally, the developing practice of biblical commentary shows again the importance of text and of active response to it, in this case in literary form.<sup>33</sup>

To return to Paulinus' own circle, Augustine, in particular, espouses the importance of an active response to scriptural texts: he ends an unusually lengthy letter, addressing a number of scriptural questions posed by his old friend Honoratus, with an exhortation to get into the habit of reading holy scripture and, through meditation and prayer, to be taught its meaning not by any man but by God:

sed ama etiam ecclesiasticas legere litteras et non multa inuenies, quae requiras ex me; sed legendo et ruminando, si etiam pure deum largitorem bonorum omnium depreceris, omnia, quae cognitione digna sunt, aut certe plurima ipso magis inspirante quam hominum aliquo componente perdisces.<sup>34</sup>

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education, friendships and his new-found status within the church" (p. 405).

<sup>32</sup> Augustine's sermons, for example, fill two volumes of Migne (PL XXXVIII-XXXIX) -- and this does not include such works as the Enarrationes in Psalmos; more sermons were discovered in 1990 by François Dolbeau, and have recently been surveyed by Professor Henry Chadwick in "New Sermons of St. Augustine", JThS 47 (1996), 69-91. Unfortunately only one sermon of Paulinus himself survives: entitled "De Gazophylacio", it is printed by Hartel as Letter XXXIV.

<sup>33</sup> See Vessey, Ideas of Writing; he points out that a more apt phrase might be "ideas of reading-and-writing" (intro., p. xv): the active response to the Bible is critical.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, Letter CXL, 85. For Honoratus as an old friend of Augustine's, see De Utilitate Credendi I. 13. On Augustine's approach to reading, see now Brian Stock, Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of

But enjoy reading Christian writings, and you will find few things to ask of me; but by reading and pondering, if you also pray candidly to the God who bestows all good things, you will learn through and through everything which is worth knowing -- or certainly more things -- with the inspiration of God himself rather than with reminders from any man.

He is prepared to implement this approach to scripture in the most unlikely situations: he gives the same advice in a letter to the young girl Florentina, who is so young and unsure of herself that her mother has written to Augustine on her behalf to ask for scriptural instruction.<sup>35</sup> In both cases, this advice involves abrogation of the human authority to which the appeals for interpretation are made in favour of divine illumination through direct appeal to God. This is the express conclusion of *De Magistro*,<sup>36</sup> and lies also behind the philosophical discussion at the end of the *Confessions*:

Ita cum alius dixerit: 'hoc sensit, quod ego', et alius: 'immo illud, quod ego', religiosius me arbitror dicere: 'cur non utrumque potius, si utrumque verum est? et si quid tertium et si quid quartum et si quid omnino aliud verum quispiam in his verbis videt, cur non illa omnia vidisse credatur, per quem deus unus sacras litteras vera et diversa visuris multorum sensibus temperavit?'<sup>37</sup>

And so, when one person says: "He [Moses] meant the same as I do", and another says, "No, the same as I do", I think it more Christian to say: "Why not both, if each is true? Indeed, if anyone sees a third meaning and a fourth and some completely different truth in these words, why should we not believe that Moses saw all these things when the one God, through him, organized holy Scripture to appear in true and diverse aspects to many people's senses?"

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*Interpretation* (Cambridge Mass./London 1996).

- 35 Augustine, *Letter* CCLXVI, 4: "Proinde tanto me certius, tanto solidius, tanto sanius gaudere scias de fide et spe et dilectione tua, quanto minus indigueris non tantum a me quicquam discere sed ab ullo prorsus hominum."
- 36 *De Magistro* 38: "de universis autem, quae intelligimus, non loquentem, qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus veritatem ...", which is Christ.
- 37 Augustine, *Confessions* XII. 31 (42).

The paradoxical corollary to this emphasis on the textual -- both the text of the Bible and the responses to it in spoken or written form -- is, therefore, a reiteration of the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal realm. The meditative or prayerful response of the individual is given authority over the interpretation of human mentors precisely because it entails a looking inwards to God.<sup>38</sup>

Given this paradox of a distaste for the literal coupled with close attention to “the letter”, it is not surprising that Paulinus baulks at the idea of providing Sulpicius with a literal representation -- in this case, a portrait of himself. He complains that Sulpicius is clearly doting on him “tamquam avus circa serum nepotem”, “like a grandfather on a late-born grandson”,<sup>39</sup> and continues:

quid enim tibi de illa petitione respondeam, qua imagines nostras pingi tibi mittique iussisti? obsecro itaque te per viscera caritatis, quae amoris veri solatia de inanibus formis petis? qualem cupis ut mittamus imaginem tibi? terreni hominis an caelestis? scio quia tu illam incorruptibilem speciem concupiscis, quam in te rex caelestis adamavit. ...sed pauper ego et dolens, quia adhuc terrenae imaginis squalore concretus sum... utrimque me concludit pudor: erubesco pingere quod sum, non audeo pingere quod non sum; odi quod sum et non sum quod amo.<sup>40</sup>

What response should I make you for the petition in which you ordered me to have my portrait painted and sent to you? And I beseech you by the depths of my love, what compensation for true love are you seeking from hollow appearances? What sort of image do you want me to send to you? The image of the earthly man, or the heavenly one?<sup>41</sup> I know that you eagerly desire that incorruptible form, which the heavenly king loved so

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<sup>38</sup> Not a conclusion which appealed to Jerome: for his insistence on the need for exemplars see Chapter 1, note 34.

<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the metaphor derives from Paulinus' rejection of Ausonius' claims: Ausonius XXVII. 25, 119 appeals to Paulinus with “mea maxima cura”, used by Venus at Aeneid I. 678 of Ascanius -- her grandson.

<sup>40</sup> Letter XXX, 2; the “late-born grandson”, Letter XXX, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Compare I Cor. 15, 49.

deeply in you. ...But I am poor and wretched, for I am still congealed in the filth of my earthly image... Shame hems me in on either side: I blush to paint what I am, I don't dare to paint what I am not; I hate what I am, and I am not what I love.

Several things about this passage are remarkable. First, there is the clearly expressed dualism of the spiritual and temporal images, and the hierarchy in which they are placed. Worse, to send a portrait would be to send an image of an image, the “*imago terrena*”, a shameful and pointless exercise. Second, the passage forms one of the few clear indications in Paulinus’ letters that he was aware in more than the vaguest way of neo-Platonic thought, for it recalls the passage with which Porphyry elects to begin the Life of Plotinus, in which Plotinus refuses to authorize the painting of a portrait of himself, asking: “ ‘Is it not enough to carry about the simulacrum that nature has put around me, that you ask me also to consent to leave behind me a more enduring simulacrum of a simulacrum, as though it were some work for public show?’ ”<sup>42</sup> (Significantly, the attempts of both men to remain unportrayed are confounded: Carterius steals a sketch of Plotinus by memorizing his face while attending his lectures; Paulinus is depicted by Sulpicius in his baptistry at Primuliacum.<sup>43</sup> This only serves to emphasize the hollowness of portraiture: how far removed from any reality, earthly or spiritual, will be an “eidolou eidolon” not even ratified by the presence of its object as a sitter?) Third, there is the explicit connection between the practice of loving and the formation of a more spiritual

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<sup>42</sup> Porphyry, Life of Plotinus I. I quote from the translation of M. J. Edwards (deleting a “that” after “enough”, which is presumably a misprint), in “A Portrait of Plotinus”, CQ 43 (1993), 480-490. This article forms an extremely interesting point of departure for seeing the similarities and differences between Plotinus’ position and that of Paulinus. “The portrait”, writes Edwards, “... is a symbol of the illusory world of sense above which Platonism strives to raise the soul” (p. 481) -- very much the context of Paulinus’ argument here.

<sup>43</sup> Life of Plotinus I; Paulinus, Letter XXXII, 2.

self, in which Paulinus depicts himself as woefully incomplete.<sup>44</sup> The literal representation is irrelevant, compared with the spiritual self towards which Paulinus is striving.<sup>45</sup>

The letter proceeds to a consideration of the paradoxical possibility of being simultaneously blind and sighted, starting from the passage of Genesis after Adam and Eve have eaten of the tree of knowledge: “*aperti sunt oculi eorum* [Gn. 3, 7]”, “and their eyes were opened”. Paulinus continues:

*ora ergo, mi frater, ut utrumque in me operetur dominus, caecet videntem meum, ne videam vanitatem, et inluminet non videntem, ut videam acquitates.*<sup>46</sup>

So pray, my brother, that the Lord may effect both things in me: that he blind my seeing eye, to prevent me from seeing vanity, and that he enlighten the eye that does not see, so that I may see justice.

Once again, the idea of representation is, quite naturally, associated with sight; but it is only the spiritual version of seeing that Paulinus finds important. He ends the letter with the statement that God has painted his image “*non in tabulis putribilibus neque ceris liquentibus, sed ‘in tabulis carnalibus cordis’* [II Cor. 3, 3] *tui*”, “not on tablets that perish or on wax that melts, but on the fleshly tablets of your heart”. This ultimate preference for the spiritual over the literal image has also introduced the epistolary description of

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<sup>44</sup> This connection is in fact brought out even more clearly in the passage omitted after “*adamavit*”. Later, Augustine quotes the “*erubesco*” passage back to Paulinus to show a similar awareness of himself as profoundly sinful -- an example both of the memorability of Paulinus’ epigrammatic words and of the extensive dissemination of his letters. Augustine, *Letter* CLXXXVI, 40.

<sup>45</sup> This again recalls a remark of Edwards’: “For anyone who adhered to [Platonism] in late antiquity, matter was the formless half-reality at the vanishing-point of truth and understanding,” “Portrait”, p. 487. For more on the ethical relationship between *similitudo* and *imago*, see the discussion of Paulinus, *Letter* XXIV, 9, in Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Letter* XXX, 5. “*aperti sunt oculi eorum*” from the same letter, 4.

Paulinus' basilica with which we started: Paulinus undertakes it "ut in hoc quoque nostra coniunctio figuraretur, quae iungitur animis et distat locis", "so that in this too may be configured our connectedness, which joins us in mind while we are physically separated".<sup>47</sup> The purpose of the description of the basilica is not to create an image of the church itself, but a figura -- almost a visual testimonial -- of Paulinus' and Sulpicius' love. In fact, when there is an extended passage in the letters of Paulinus describing things or events, it is always inserted expressly to serve an abstract, spiritual purpose: so, for example, the consolatory description of Pammachius' almsgiving at St. Peter's -- which, it will be remembered, was not even witnessed by Paulinus.<sup>48</sup>

Paulinus also seems to have no doubt that memory operates by means of mental images. His denial of a portrait to Sulpicius continues:

hic etiam, si tantus amor est visibilia quoque captare solatia, poteris per magistras animi tui lineas vel inperitis aut ignorantibus nos dictare pictoribus, memoriam illis tuam, in qua nos habes pictos, velut imitanda de conspicuis adsidentium vultibus ora proponens.<sup>49</sup>

Here too, if you so love to grasp at visible sources of comfort, you will be able to describe me, even to painters who are inexperienced or who don't know me, through the guiding outlines in your mind, laying before them your memory, in which you hold a depiction of me, just like a face to be copied from the visible countenance of a sitter.

Memory contains a visual image so clear that it can apparently be imparted verbally to a third party; yet Paulinus feels that a portrait of his external self would be irrelevant.

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<sup>47</sup> Letter XXXII, 10.

<sup>48</sup> Letter XIII, 11-15. The passage begins: "videre enim mihi videor tota illa religiosa miserandae plebis examina ...". The description of the arrival at Nola of Melania the Elder, which will be discussed later in the chapter, is another primary example.

<sup>49</sup> Letter XXX, 6.

More generally, there obtains in the letters of Paulinus an anomalous situation whereby material images are eschewed, while the language in which spiritual ideas are expressed remains unabashedly imagistic and symbolic. How is this to be accounted for?

To seek an answer at the most general level, a recent remark by J. J. O'Donnell on Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana is illuminating:

Most readers have accepted Augustine's assertion that the literal sense is prior to the allegorical, but the most unsettling thing about the book is the way it really suggests the exact opposite: that figurative use of language is natural, and the desire to take figurative language literally is a disordered interpretation conditioned by seeing texts on a page, where irony and metaphor can leak away.<sup>50</sup>

In De Doctrina Christiana, Augustine is more engaged with developing a systematics of representation, while Paulinus responds very directly to figurative language. My contention is precisely that for Paulinus the "figurative use of language is natural",<sup>51</sup> and that through it, despite the limitations of the written word, which can appear to fix meaning and demolish nuance, irony and metaphor do not leak away, but can be constantly and vividly present. It remains to explore what, for Paulinus, is meant by "figurative use of language", and how it seems to affect his connections of thought. This is of necessity a somewhat question-begging exercise, as, while it is immediately

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<sup>50</sup> Review of R. P. H. Green (ed. and trans.), Augustine: On Christian Doctrine (Oxford 1995): Bryn Mawr Review 96.3.15. Compare a comment of Jas Elsner, discussing the same issue from an art historian's angle: naturalism has "no natural [sic!] psychological or physiological priority". Elsner, Art and the Roman Viewer: the Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity (Cambridge 1995), p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> This also resonates with an observation of Averil Cameron: "If it is the nature of ultimate truth to be hidden, it will be revealed only through signs, linguistic or otherwise; in other words, Christian language and Christian rhetoric will be of their very essence figural." In Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse (Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London 1991), p. 159.



apparent that Paulinus fills much of his letters with material which does not immediately seem valid or justified by context, and whose function is decidedly unfamiliar, it also assumes that we can at least begin to analyze and explicate such use of language in conventional, communicable terms.<sup>52</sup>

Two things above all are accomplished by the figurative use of language and the imagistic connections of thought which we see throughout the letters of Paulinus. First, the paradoxes through which Christianity expresses itself are best captured and most fruitfully juxtaposed by the use of images. Second, with any specific image or idea there comes a matrix of associated images, and hence an extraordinarily wide and fluid potential for the assigning of meaning. It has not generally been appreciated that Paulinus' catenae of biblical allusion and imagery have any purpose beyond the cosmetic. Even a sympathetic commentator writes: "Unfortunately Paulinus does not always discipline his literary talent, and at times what starts as a fruitful biblical meditation degenerates into a riot of dissonant metaphors and extravagant conceits".<sup>53</sup> But by refusing to restrict patterns of thought to linear processes, Paulinus finds it possible to achieve a far greater level of associative simultaneity.

Let us first study in more detail the delight in paradox that is so characteristic of Christian writings of this period, and not least of the letters of Paulinus<sup>54</sup> -- a delight that

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<sup>52</sup> However, the validity of written criticism of music, for example, is not vitiated by the fact that there will always remain something which music alone can express and words cannot.

<sup>53</sup> Walsh, Letters I, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Averil Cameron has done much to highlight the importance of paradox within fourth-century Christian discourse in Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire, especially Chapter 5, "The Rhetoric of Paradox": "A great deal of Christian

should hardly surprise, as Christ himself had chosen to teach in parables, but whose development reaches a remarkable level of sophistication in the fourth century. Paulinus uses paradox in a number of ways. An obvious application arises when it is used to capture especially significant moments and persons. So, for example, the potential conversion of Licentius is characterized in paradoxical terms: “vincetur vel invitus ... ne mala victoria vincat, si maluerit in perniciem suam vincere quam pro salute superari”, “he will be won over, even though he doesn’t wish it, lest he should win by an evil victory, if he prefers winning for his damnation to being overpowered for his salvation”.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, paradox encapsulates a Christian emperor: Paulinus has gladly undertaken the work of his panegyric “ut in Theodosio non tam imperatorem quam Christi servum, non dominandi superbia sed humilitate famulandi potentem, nec regno sed fide principem praedicarem”, “so that in Theodosius I might preach not the emperor so much as the servant of Christ, endowed with power not through the arrogance of domination but through the humility of service, a prince by virtue of his faith, not his realm”.<sup>56</sup> Paulinus’ delight at the personification of paradox overflows in his description of the arrival of Melania the Elder at Nola. She is dressed in dark rags and riding a pony; she is surrounded by richly clad senators on caparisoned horses: “vidimus dignam deo huius mundi confusionem, purpuream sericam auratamque supellectilem pannis veteribus et nigris servientem”, “we have seen this world rightfully confounded for God: purple

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discourse ... necessarily attempts to express the paradoxical, to describe in language what is by definition indescribable. ...Not simply the status of propositions about God, but the very nature of language were at issue” (pp. 156-157, my emphasis). Cameron’s specific examples are primarily drawn from the discourse surrounding the Virgin Mary, and virginity more generally, and hence have little overlap with the material adduced here.

<sup>55</sup> Letter VII, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Letter XXVIII, 6.

silk and gilded trappings doing obeisance to old black rags".<sup>57</sup> The abstract moral is dwelt upon in the letter: temporal poverty bespeaks -- and yields -- spiritual riches.

We may note the way in which this mode of expression complements, yet surpasses, the classical love of antithesis.<sup>58</sup> But for Christians of this period there is a far more pronounced scope of relevance: the way in which paradoxical expression echoes the paradoxes enacted in the life of Christ and in his message. Northrop Frye remarks on "the linguistic fact that many of the central doctrines of ... Christianity can be grammatically expressed only in the form of metaphor. Thus: Christ is God and man; in the Trinity three persons are one ..." and so on; he goes on to instantiate the "use of concrete paradox that enlightens the mind by paralyzing the discursive reason".<sup>59</sup> In the letters of Paulinus we are looking at the results of absorbing this way of thought utterly into one's patterns of expression.

A striking example of such absorption occurs at the conclusion of one of Paulinus' letters:

ergo illum amemus, quem amare debitum est. illum osculemur, quem  
osculari castitas est. illi copulemur, cui nupsisse virginitas est. illi  
subiciamur, sub quo iacere supra mundum stare est. propter illum

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<sup>57</sup> Letter XXIX, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Antithesis was, of course, particularly beloved of the rhetorical tradition: see A. D. Leeman, Orationis Ratio: the stylistic theories and practice of the Roman orators historians and philosophers (Amsterdam 1963) ad locc.

<sup>59</sup> Northrop Frye, The Great Code (reissued: Harmondsworth 1990), p. 55. Frye's emphasis.

deiciamur, cui cadere resurrectio est. illi conmoriamur, in quo vita est.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, let us love him: to love him is a duty. Let us kiss him: to kiss him is chastity. Let us be joined to him: to have married him is virginity. Let us be subject to him: to lie beneath him is to stand above the world. Let us be thrown down because of him: to fall for him is resurrection. Let us die with him<sup>61</sup>: in him is life.

It is by the paradoxical use of mundane images that the spiritual is evoked. The antitheses designedly suggest the limitations of language in its descriptive and referential functions, and by implication the limitations of conventional forms of rational analysis: the reader is thrown up against the possibility of something beyond language. This phenomenon of mundane paradox, widespread in the letters of Paulinus, reflects and extends the ideas of Christian friendship explored earlier, in which paradoxically inverted expectations become guarantors of the friendship's spirituality.

We may observe parenthetically that there are immense possibilities for witty juxtaposition and self-parodying expression in the pursuit of paradox and metaphor, and that these possibilities are not lost on Paulinus. One might have thought that Sulpicius' request that Paulinus should write inscriptions for his basilica would demand a certain lapidary seriousness; but the verses suggested for the baptistry end:

Hinc senior sociae congaudet turba catervae;  
Alleluia novis balat ovile choris.<sup>62</sup>

At this point, let the older crowd of the initiated throng rejoice too;

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<sup>60</sup> Letter XXIII, 42. The expression of ideas in extravagant paradoxes has persisted throughout the Christian tradition, especially in its more metaphysical thinkers: this passage calls to mind one from John Donne: "Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I/ Except you' enthrall mee, never shall be free,/ Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee." Donne, Holy Sonnets XIV.

<sup>61</sup> TLL III. 1936 s.v. commorior cites this passage under "mori simul cum aliquo (tam proprie quam in imagine)".

<sup>62</sup> Letter XXXII, 5.

“Alleluia!” bleats the fold with its new choirs.

And Paulinus affects a tone of horror at the potential juxtaposition of his own portrait in the baptistry with that of Saint Martin:

Sed in eo metuo, ne operibus tuis, quibus iniqua viarum saecularium dirigis et clivosa conplanas, ex illo, de quo semper conqueror affectu in nos tuo, salebram offensionis inmiscuas, quod splendoris devotionis in Christo tuae titulos nostris nominibus infuscas et iustis laboribus hanc iniquitatem inseris, ut locum sanctum etiam vultibus iniquorum polluas.<sup>63</sup>

But I am afraid that because of your affection for me, of which I always complain, you may combine a horrible stumbling-block with the work in which you straighten the uneven parts of earthly ways and smooth the hilly ones, by darkening the radiant tituli that bespeak your devotion to Christ with my name, and introducing into your worthy labours the sinfulness of polluting the sacred place with the actual face of a sinner.

Note too the joking application of the scriptural reference in “iniqua ... dirigis et clivosa conplanas”: the allusion to the “vox clamantis in deserto”, the “voice of the man crying out in the wilderness”, implies that Sulpicius is preparing his baptistry as a “way” to Christ -- and that the figural presence of Paulinus will ruin the progress.<sup>64</sup> However, after more in this vein -- “nonne tu lactis et fellis poculum miscuisti?” “Surely you have mixed a cup of milk and bile?” -- Paulinus comforts himself: obviously Martin’s face is there as an example, and his own as a terrible warning!

There is a further delightful instance of Paulinus’ wit in Letter 23, to Sulpicius. This is the longest of Paulinus’ surviving letters, and takes the form of an extraordinarily extended imagistic meditation on biblical aspects of the theme of hair -- a conceit prompted by the fact that the letter-carrier Victor, in the course of serving Paulinus, has

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<sup>63</sup> Letter XXXII, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Compare Isa. 40, 3-4.

cut Paulinus' hair.<sup>65</sup> At one stage, Paulinus exclaims, "sed ut totam de capillis texamus epistolam ...", "but, to weave the whole letter from hair ...".<sup>66</sup> And he does.

Instead of giving piecemeal examples of Paulinus' complex use of images in his thematic meditations, I propose to explore a single, longer extract in some depth; for it is precisely in their extended form that these imagistic *catenae* are so remarkable. It seems that Paulinus was renowned in his circle for these thematic meditations: it is possible to infer that Delphinus, for example, regularly requested letters in this form.<sup>67</sup> The following is taken from the above-mentioned letter to Sulpicius; this intensity of imagistic association is maintained for nearly 50 paragraphs of Hartel's text:<sup>68</sup>

Summa igitur ope enitamur ita nos comparare, ut divini capitis, quod nobis per gratiam dei Christus est, crines et aurum esse mereamur. ex ipso enim capite pullulat illa caesaries, de qua scriptum est: 'capillatura eius ut greges caprarum' [Cant. 4, 1]. et bene illorum potissimum animalium nomine designantur greges Christi, quorum maxime usus in lacte est, quia omnis qui credit deum Christum totam trinitatis plenitudinem in eo, quem pater 'unxit spiritu sancto' [Act. 10, 38], fide pietatis amplectitur. et ideo ipsa 'mater omnium viventium' [Gen. 3, 20], Christi corpus ecclesia, suco pietatis exuberat, et 'bona ubera eius super vinum' [Cant. 1, 1]. in quo opinor significari, quod dulcior sit libertas gratiae in lacte misericordiae quam in vino iustitiae legis austeritas. 'littera enim', inquit, 'occidit', vides censurae merum; 'spiritus autem vivificat' [II Cor. 3, 6], vides uberum munus et lactis effectum. sed hoc, ut tu mavis intellegi, semen

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<sup>65</sup> Victor, and his personification of Martin in his services to Paulinus, is discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>66</sup> Letter XXIII, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Certainly, as noted in Chapter 1, Paulinus begins one letter to him: "Accepimus litteras sanctae affectionis tuae, quibus iubes nos in epistulis, quas ad te facimus, aliquem praeter officii de scripturis adicere sermonem, qui tibi thesaurum nostri cordis revelet." There follows an association of images round the idea of the thesaurus and of laying up treasure (drawing on Matt. 6, 19-20): Letter X, 1.

<sup>68</sup> It seems that this was lengthy even for medieval readers: in four of the six manuscripts of Paulinus' letters, a division is made in Letter XXIII between chapters 9 and 10.

detur,<sup>69</sup> quo prima nascentium multa coalescit. bona igitur ubera, quae ‘pastor bonus, qui pro ovibus animam suam posuit’ [Ioh. 10, 11], illis inulsit infantibus, de quorum ore perfecit laudem sibi, ut destrueret inimicum boni et defensorem mali.

Ex harum caprarum gregibus erat ille vir gregis, qui parvulos Christi nondum aptos solidiori cibo teneris lactabat alimentis, quibus dicebat: ‘lacte vos potavi, non esca; nondum enim poteratis, sed nec adhuc potestis’ [I Cor. 3, 2]. cum autem huius lactis alimonia creverimus, firmatis primum fidei conceptione vestigiis adolescemus in robur iuventae, et confirmata per fidem caritatemque patientia levabimus manus nostras in actionem robustiorem operibusque virtutum velut cibo fortiore vivemus, ut efficiamur et illi crines, de quibus scriptum est: ‘crines eius abietes nigrae sicut corax’ [Cant. 5, 11] id est corvus, sed bonus iste corvus nec ille ad arcam revertendi inmemor, sed ille pascendi prophetae memor, cui bene comparantur illarum abietum aemuli crines, de quibus dicit: ‘abietes bonae et nigrae, adducetes naves Tharsis’;<sup>70</sup> unde nunc corax iste non noctis sed luminis corvus est, cuius colore speciosi crines sunt ideo ‘sancti, genus regale et sacerdotale’ [I Pet. 2, 9], quibus divinum caput ut ostro gloriae suae purpurat, quia et iuvenalis gratia in huius praecipue coloris capillo florentem vestit aetatem.<sup>71</sup>

So let us strive with the greatest effort so to prepare ourselves, that we may deserve to be the hair and the gold of the divine head, which is, by the grace of God, our Christ. For from that very head sprouts the hair, of which it is written: ‘his hair is like flocks of goats’. And the flocks of Christ are particularly aptly denoted by the name of those animals whose greatest use is for milking, because everyone who believes that God and Christ and the whole fullness of the Trinity are in him whom the Father has anointed with the Holy Spirit is embraced by the faith of piety. Likewise, the actual ‘mother of all living things’, the church which is the body of Christ, abounds in the milk of piety, and ‘her breasts are good beyond wine’. This, I think, means that the freedom of grace in the milk of

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<sup>69</sup> This is an extremely vexed line. Hartel reads “hoc, ut tu mavis intellegi, semini detur”, which is attested in none of the manuscripts. Walsh emends, again without manuscript support, to “sed hoc ... serum indicetur”. I have used here the reading of O; the rest (bar M, in which the sentence is missing -- though Hartel, mysteriously, gives an alternative spelling in M for “multa”) read “...ut tu magis intellegis emendetur”. Gillian Clark has suggested to me that Paulinus’ image here is of the (male or female) seed, which triggers the transformation of maternal blood into milk: she cites Aulus Gellius 12.1, and Favorinus’ argument for the influence of paternal seed on maternal milk, in support. This is by far the best explanation of this passage which I have come across.

<sup>70</sup> Hartel gives III Reg. 5, 8 and II Paral. 9, 21 as origins for this composite quotation; but neither is very close, and neither, interestingly, mentions the colour black: this seems to be Paulinus’ own addition.

<sup>71</sup> Letter XXIII, 27-28.

mercy is sweeter than the harshness of the Law in the wine of justice. 'For the letter', he says, 'kills' -- the wine of condemnation, you see; 'but the spirit gives life' -- the gift of the breasts and the effect of milk. But this, as you prefer it to be understood, may be given as the seed, with which the first milk of the newborn is formed. So the breasts are good on which the good shepherd, who laid down his life for his flock, suckled those children from whose mouths he perfected praise for himself, that he might destroy the enemy of good and defender of evil.

That herdsman was from flocks of these goats, that man who suckled on soft foods the little ones of Christ who were not yet fit for more solid nourishment; he would say to them: 'I have given you milk to drink, not food; you used not to be capable of eating it, and you still are not'. But when we have grown, through the nourishment of this milk, we shall progress to youthful strength with our footsteps first strengthened by the conception of faith, and, our endurance affirmed through faith and love, we shall raise our hands to more powerful action, and we shall live on the stronger food, as it were, of virtuous deeds, so that we too may become the hair, of which it is written: 'his hair is fir-trees black as the corax' -- that is, the raven, but the good raven: not the one who forgot to return to the ark, but the one who remembered to feed the prophet, to whom is aptly compared the hair like fir-trees, of which scripture says: 'good black fir-trees, bringing the ships to Tarshish'; so now that corax is not the raven of night but of light, and hair made beautiful by its colour is therefore 'sacred, of royal and priestly descent' -- hair which empurples the divine head as with the dye of its own glory, because a young man's grace clothes the flower of youth in hair of this colour above all.

There are three main scriptural strands whose interpretative resonance is interwoven through the first of these paragraphs. The first derives from the Song of Songs, the song of the anonymous bridegroom to his beloved, commonly interpreted as the song of Christ to ecclesia, the church.<sup>72</sup> The second is the image of Christ as head of the church, intermingled with images of the head of the bridegroom/Christ, and of his hair. The third is the image of the milk of the goats -- introduced through the bridegroom/Christ's hair "like flocks of goats" -- which represents in turn the milk of the church, of Christ, and of the New Testament and its spiritual interpretation of the old law. Each of these strands develops and extends the available matrix of reference in a manner

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<sup>72</sup> For the history of interpretation of the Song of Songs, see E. Ann Matter, The Voice of My Beloved: the Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity (Philadelphia 1990).



which is simultaneously elusive and startlingly vivid. They also resonate backwards and forwards in the context of the letter, as well as outwards to their scriptural origins. So, for example, when first the hair of the bridegroom is equated with gold, this looks back to the previous paragraph, where the bridegroom's golden hair (Cant. 5, 11) is said to be the gold from which the coin of the saints is struck: hence the desire to become such hair. Paulinus then introduces the hair "like flocks of goats", and proceeds to develop that image: the milk-yielding goat also represents the Church; the milk of mercy produced by the Church is superior to the wine of the old Law -- encapsulating once again the pivotal letter/spirit antithesis. The implicit contrast also embraces the dichotomy of ecclesia and synagoga, the Church of the New Testament as opposed to the Synagogue of the Old (though at the same time, of course, synagoga is also the typos of ecclesia). The typos of Christ as the head whose body is the Church (as at Eph. 1, 22-23), which also runs through this paragraph, is the image which we saw to be so critical to the notion of Christian friendship, a particularly happy resonance in the context of a letter to Sulpicius. At the end of the passage the typos of Christ the good shepherd is also introduced; if my interpretation of the confused penultimate sentence is correct, we have an image of milk combined with spirit/seed to create a life-giving force for the flock of the good shepherd - - "life-giving" both literally, physically, and as a metaphor of salvation.

The second paragraph continues the image of shepherd and goats; but now the shepherd is not Christ, but Paul, linked with Christ as being from among the flocks of Christ who received the salvific milk as well as himself articulating an ongoing tradition of nourishing the faithful with spiritual milk ("I have given you milk to drink..."). Paul is identified as chosen by God from the "goats" -- the Jews, who are to be separated at Judgement Day from the Christian sheep; but the goats as the bridegroom/Christ's hair are still a present image, reinforcing the integrated interpretation of Old and New

Testaments. The milk represents the nourishment of the spiritually immature (the “milk” of the New Covenant still echoes behind the image); more solid food represents the good deeds on which they will grow strong, while the phrase “the conception of faith” recalls the earlier image of the seed generating the new-born children and the milk on which they are suckled. Those who thus become strong through virtuous deeds become the hair like “fir-trees black as the corax” -- we may remember that Paulinus had undertaken to weave this entire letter from hair<sup>73</sup> -- once again, the hair of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs. This time it is evoked in its blackness, the blackness of the virtuous raven who fed Elijah in the wilderness, not of the vicious raven who failed to return to Noah after the Flood; and the potential virtue of blackness is supported with an allusion to the goodness of the black firs used for ship-building. Paulinus brings this passage to a close with a flourish: blackness is light (which also resonates with Cant. 1, 4, “nigra sum, sed formosa”); and it may be elided with the sacred colour purple, and the sheen of a young man’s hair -- returning again to the youth and beauty of the bridegroom/Christ.

This is an excellent example of the sheer bravura of Paulinus’ imagistic display. Similar complex connections of thought, drawn through symbolically significant images, continue throughout this and many of his letters. The extremely dense style of the passage also immediately draws attention to the way in which the idea of active reading must be further developed: for such writing is incomprehensible without considerable knowledge, not just of the Bible, but of the tradition of its typological interpretation.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See text to note 66 above.

<sup>74</sup> On typological interpretation, see Leonhard Goppelt, Typos: the typological interpretation of the Old Testament in the New, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids MI 1982; first published 1939). The fullest study of this overall tradition remains, to my knowledge, that of Henri de Lubac, Exégèse Médiévale: les quatre sens de l’écriture 4 vols. (Paris 1959-1964). Beryl Smalley provides a convenient

But this does not wholly capture the difference from the way in which readers such as Paulinus would have responded to the classical texts through which they had been educated: many classical texts, after all, require likewise an appreciation of complex intertextual relationships for their satisfactory interpretation. The difference seems rather to lie in the expected psychology of reading: the sense of the text, not as an end in itself, but as a conduit, however imperfect,<sup>75</sup> of a truth that lies beyond the textual.<sup>76</sup> These works demand a reader who is highly educated within an appropriate matrix of reference, but as a means to an end: to equip him or herself to look beyond the letter to the spirit, beyond the literal to the spiritual. This runs exactly counter to the explicit message of Paulinus' letters: the fiction actively sustained is of an unintellectual programme of ascetic behaviour, whereas his prose style presupposes a great deal of Christian erudition; but here again, we see Christian paradox in practice.<sup>77</sup>

The expectation of active reading is well exemplified by the independent way in

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summary at the beginning of The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford 1952). See also the recent study, heavily influenced by the readings of Northrop Frye, by Tibor Fabiny, The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature (Basingstoke/London 1992).

- <sup>75</sup> This surely is one of the reasons why so much commentary on the material aspects of texts survives from the fourth century: because of reflection on the limitations of texts as "conduit". (See, for example, Evaristo Arns, La technique du livre d'après saint Jérôme (Paris 1953).) Augustine's reflections on signs, and on the limitations of language, in such works as De Doctrina Christiana and De Magistro would have been prompted by the same concern.
- <sup>76</sup> Giselle de Nie is at present developing ideas on the psychology of reading in a far more sophisticated fashion than I am currently equipped to do: see especially her "Word, image and experience in the early medieval miracle story", in Language and Beyond, ed. A. Remael et al. (forthcoming: Amsterdam 1997).
- <sup>77</sup> Cameron, Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire, p. 155, remarks on this type of practical paradox in fourth-century Christianity.

which Paulinus deals with typological signification. In the above passage, the phrase “in quo opinor significari”, “in which, I think, is signified...”, is not idly used. As observed earlier, the logic of active reading serves to endorse the validity of individual interpretation, and now and then Paulinus will self-consciously depart from a traditional reading in order to substitute his own. An excellent example of this occurs in another letter to Sulpicius: he adverts to the image of Jacob wrestling with the angel, and continues,

in quo tametsi principaliter sacramenti salutaris praefiguratio esse videatur ... attamen in huius nostri nunc ratione sermonis eatenus usurpanda videtur historia, quatenus imaginem evangelicae praeceptionis operata est, ut illo videlicet exemplo intellegamus non posse nos esse idoneos ad congregiendum deo, cui utique congregimur, cum verbum eius implere nitimur et in virtutes divinas imitatione ipsius praevalere conamur.<sup>78</sup>

In this, even though generally it may be seen as a prefiguration of the sacrament of salvation, in the current rationale of my argument it seems that the story should be used insofar as it creates an image of the evangelistic precept, that plainly by that example we may understand that we, as ourselves, cannot be fit to meet with God, but that we certainly do meet with him when we strive to fulfil his word and try by imitating him to excel in divine virtues.

Like Augustine, Paulinus consistently shows an awareness of the multiplicity of meanings in the images he employs: witness his distinction between the good and bad ravens. More extravagantly than Augustine, however, he is also inclined to assign meaning in symbolic terms which draw upon typological figures: so, in the letter under scrutiny, he is at pains to explain how a soul may be both black and good:

Sed et nunc eruditae ad apostolicam fidem animae abietes sunt nigrae et bonae; nigrae vero iam non de peccato, ut puto, magis quam adhuc vel de inhabitatione corporea vel de exercitationis internae quasi bellico pulvere vel pulverulento sudore nigrantes; bonae tamen propter spiritalem etiam in noctibus corporum conversationem.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Letter XXIV, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Letter XXIII, 30. Notice another formula denoting departure from traditional interpretation in “ut puto”.

But now too souls formed to the apostolic faith are good black fir-trees; they are really black not, I think, from sin, but from still being blackened by their bodily habitation, or by the martial dust, so to speak, of internal struggle, or by dusty sweat; and they are good because of the spiritual way of life of their bodies even at night.

“Etiam in noctibus” is presumably inserted to emphasize that night’s association with blackness does not mar the soul.<sup>80</sup> The explanation of black as good also once again calls on Cant. 1, 4, “nigra sum, sed formosa”, and the context of the Song of Songs invoked earlier in the letter.

In recent years, more attention has been paid to the way in which the visual arts of late antiquity expect to elicit such a complex and educated response than to similar uses of figuralism in literature. John Onians initiated the exploration of the rise at the time of non-literal tendencies in viewing: he goes so far as to state that “The vitality of Christianity depended partly on its insistence that people should disregard the evidence of their eyes”.<sup>81</sup> Michael Roberts has espoused a contrary position: “In late antiquity what seems to have happened is that the referential function of language/art lost some of its preeminence; signifier asserts itself at the expense of signified.”<sup>82</sup> However, it seems clear to me that exactly the opposite trend is in play: the signified is if anything far more important than before (being of the spiritual realm), but its relationship with the signifier is negotiated differently, in a non-literal manner. To attempt a detailed comparison of the

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<sup>80</sup> Compare “non noctis sed luminis corvus”, Letter XXIII, 28 above.

<sup>81</sup> Onians, “Abstraction and Imagination in Late Antiquity”, Art History 3 (1980), 1-24; quote from p. 20. A notable development of the subject for the Eastern tradition: Herbert Kessler, “‘Pictures Fertile with Truth’: How Christians Managed to Make Images of God Without Violating the Second Commandment”, Journal of the Walters Art Gallery 49/50 (1991/92).

<sup>82</sup> Roberts, The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity (Cornell 1989), p. 72.

traditions of expression in the visual arts and the literature of late antiquity lies beyond the scope of this study, but a few general comments may validly be made.

The representational art of the period shows a marked preference for abbreviated scenes -- for a compressed, summary account of a Biblical theme in a single mise-en-scène as opposed to an extended sequential narrative account.<sup>83</sup> We see this particularly on the sarcophagi of the fourth century and the ivory tablets of the first half of the fifth;<sup>84</sup> on the fourth-century ivory casket known as the Brescia lipsanoteca; and on the renowned carved doors from the church of Santa Sabina in Rome (c. 430).<sup>85</sup> This type of scheme bears a startling similarity to Paulinus' allusive use of typological motifs: likewise, a single mode or moment or aspect of a narrative is fixed upon, thereby not only hinting at its own narrative context but, through typological resonance, recalling others. Moreover, although it does not always seem to be the case, such abbreviated scenes are often juxtaposed in such a manner as to suggest parallels between them. There is an excellent example of this in a set of panels from an ivory casket of c. 420-430, now

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<sup>83</sup> See the description of Erich Dinkler in Kurt Weitzmann ed., Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century (New York 1979), pp. 396-448.

<sup>84</sup> For a comprehensive survey of Roman sarcophagi, see Giuseppe Bovini and Hugo Brandenburg, Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage, Vol. I: Rom und Ostia, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann (Wiesbaden 1967). The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus has been studied with particular thoroughness: see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (Princeton 1990). For the ivory tablets, see Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters (Mainz 1976).

<sup>85</sup> Brescia lipsanoteca: see André Grabar, Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins (Princeton 1968), plates 333-337; detail in Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten, Tafel 57 Nr. 107. Doors of S. Sabina: Grabar, Christian Iconography, plates 195 and 338-339.

in the British Museum, London.<sup>86</sup> Two of them are particularly dense in imagery. On the first, Christ carries his cross against a twofold background, a depiction of Pilate washing his hands and of Peter with the cock who crowed three times: the two images are unified by their grim symbolism of the denial of Christ. On the second, the death by hanging of the sinner Judas is juxtaposed directly with the death by crucifixion of the redemptive Christ. The other two panels form a neatly contrasted pair: the Marys at the tomb suggests despair at the death of Christ; the portrayal of doubting Thomas, the absolute affirmation of his resurrection. These are my own interpretations; but André Grabar has elucidated a similar programme of interactive juxtaposition for the doors of S. Sabina: though their original placement is doubtful, “there are obviously pairs of panels ...[whose] form and content make them like the two leaves of a diptych.” He takes as an example two panels directly comparing the miracles of Moses with those of Christ: for example, the provision of quails and manna for the children of Israel in the desert parallels the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.<sup>87</sup>

We see in the example of the ivory panels and of the doors of S. Sabina how crucial a role the Bible performs as the textual intermediary providing the link between the images; a further example shows how the resonances of the mediating text may be even more complicatedly realized. This example is drawn from a bowl of the period.<sup>88</sup> It bears only two images: the three Hebrews leaving the fiery furnace and Joseph escaping

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<sup>86</sup> Volbach, Elfenbeinarbeiten, Tafel 61 Nr. 116.

<sup>87</sup> Grabar, Christian Iconography; quote from p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> Fourth century, Tunisia, earthenware (now in Mainz). See Weitzmann, Age of Spirituality Item 415, pp. 464-465; the commentator remarks on the “visual parallelism between Joseph’s flight and that of the Hebrew youths”, as well as the “thematic parallelism” between the two images.

from Potiphar's wife. The connection between them remains obscure unless one resorts to an account of the tempting of Joseph in The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, an apocryphal development of biblical themes and a text known to Origen and Jerome, in which Potiphar's wife -- or the lust which she inspires -- is described as a "burning flame".<sup>89</sup>

It is particularly relevant to the writings of Paulinus that a textual intermediary between percipient and image should be required for the full interpretation of visual symbolism: we have already seen how his strongly textual emphasis in comprehension of the visual arts may be contrasted with his vividly imagistic style of writing.<sup>90</sup> Jas Elsner has recently argued that "In exegetic terms images do what texts cannot. ...The instantaneous, non-diachronic nature of the image (what should perhaps be called its iconicity) collapses the totality of these narratives and narratives about narratives into a single space and time".<sup>91</sup> But I wish to argue that this is precisely what texts were able to do, because of the mental equipment and intellectual customs of their writers and readers. (Indeed, Elsner tacitly admits that this is so by using the biblical exegesis of Gregory of

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<sup>89</sup> From the "Testament of Joseph on Self-Control", II. 2: "...and I struggled with a shameless woman who was urging me to transgress with her; but the God of Israel my father protected me from the burning flame". The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, ed. M. de Jonge (Leiden 1978), p. 145. For Jerome and Origen's knowledge of the text, see intro., pp. xxx-xxxi.

<sup>90</sup> Henry Maguire is at present emphasizing the importance of textual directives to the viewer of Byzantine mosaics, contra the emphasis of Onians on the active initiative of the viewer (talk: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, March 1996); it seems to me that these alternatives are far from mutually exclusive -- indeed, that they are complexly interrelated.

<sup>91</sup> Elsner, Art and the Roman Viewer, pp. 119-120. Despite my disagreement with this specific extract, the two cardinal points of Elsner's study seem to me to be extremely valuable: his emphasis on the participation of the viewer in interpretation; and his consistent appreciation that, for Christian art, the artistic endeavour served as a starting point for spiritual reflection, not as an end in itself.



Nyssa to “read” the programmes of the mosaics of the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai.) The matrix of imagistic association around particular images or ideas -- as we saw in the long passage from Paulinus quoted above -- allows for non-linear and, indeed, synchronic patterns of thought.<sup>92</sup> Such techniques of suggestive juxtaposition force us to rethink assumptions about narrative continuity.

For that matter, we have to ponder the validity of a sharp distinction between the textual and the imagistic. Certainly, we tend to think of images as somehow prior to texts, more pristine; for Paulinus, it seems to have been the other way around: the “pristine” source of the Bible prompted a flow of images which could be textually or visually expressed -- or both, as we saw in the iconographic programme of his basilica. The virtue of images lies precisely in their lack of subordination to any literal sense; at the same time, they evoke a nimbus of textual association.

Transmuting the relationship between the textual and the imagistic is part of realizing the inherence of the spiritual in the temporal, because of the imaginative power of visualization that has to be called upon to make that transition.<sup>93</sup> Imagistic thought was in some degree essential to the paradoxical doctrines of Christianity, for such thought had the capacity to make logically incompatible ideas cohere. But the meditative

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<sup>92</sup> Margaret Miles has remarked on the same phenomenon in discussing the fourth-century symbolism surrounding baptism -- as rebirth, as enlightenment, as cleansing: “These interpretations visually work together as adding to and glossing one another, although they may, if analyzed verbally, seem contradictory. ...[They] were visually presented simultaneously, enriching one another as aspects of a fundamentally ineffable experience...”. From *Image as Insight*, p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> See again Giselle de Nie on the subject of creative visualization in Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus: “Iconic Alchemy: imaging miracles in late sixth-century Gaul”, forthcoming in *SP*.

and creative practices of reading and viewing which grew up around such patterns of thought went far beyond the functional to produce a worldview in which symbolic and spiritual connections were considered more real than literal ones, and in which the literal was only accorded significance in proportion to its evocation of such spiritual connections. Paulinus' use of images is not, as has traditionally been thought, mere redundant embellishment, but is fundamental to the expression and practice of his faith. We have already seen how such a worldview could transform a simple exchange of letters or declaration of friendship into a symbolically significant statement about participation in the Christian community. In my final chapter, I shall explore the implications of this worldview for its participants' notions of self.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **HOMO INTERIOR**

All the principal themes explored in the preceding chapters impinge on the idea of the self -- of how a person configures and situates him or herself in the world. If spiritual bonds are superior to and in some sense more real than physical ones, what implications does that have for the relationship of mind to body as constitutive parts of a person? If connections of thought revolve around imagery and visualization, how does a person relate to the unvisualizable, or in other words, the divine? If a friend is conceived of as another self, then what is that self? And if letters are circulated within a far-flung community configured as "members of one body" by people who are in the strongest possible sense representing their dispatchers, what are the implications for personal identity?

It may be objected that to speak of "the self" and of "personal identity" for this period is to import to it anachronistic psychologies -- particularly in the absence of a specific vocabulary for the concepts. A general defence against this type of objection was offered many years ago by Marrou: "Un mot, une idée, sont des instruments d'analyse; ils peuvent être d'invention récente, mais la réalité qu'ils permettent d'isoler peut avoir existé depuis bien longtemps."<sup>1</sup> This "réalité" has often, in connection with ideas of the self, proved more elusive than might be supposed, given the pervasive and often-repeated

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique (Paris 4th ed. 1958), p. 549. Marrou is defending the importation of "l'idée de culture" to a study of late antiquity.

assumption that only in the early modern period did the “self” or the “individual” emerge as concepts which could be isolated and interrogated. David Aers has recently supplied a delightfully polemical attack on this idea.<sup>2</sup> He vigorously counters the notion that “All [medieval] writing was a version of the simplest homiletic exemplum in its representations of human beings”, exposing this idea as the product of a search for “master narratives”, which demands the creation of an antithetical state out of which the narratives may be said to have their beginning. Although his aim is to prove that it is meaningful to speak of subjectivities in the late medieval period, his argument (which ties “the subject” especially to Christian penitential practice) is also valid for late antiquity, and indeed insists that “The place to which anyone seeking to write a history of interiority and the subject must return is St Augustine’s Confessions”.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, as works like the Confessions show, what has come to constitute our vocabulary of personhood is in fact nascent at this period. The concept of a friend as another self was expressed, with a remarkable lack of ambiguity, through the use of personal pronouns. So in the renowned account of Augustine’s early, prematurely-terminated friendship:

Mirabar enim ceteros mortales vivere, quia ille, quem quasi non  
morituum dilexeram, mortuus erat, et me magis, quia ille alter eram,

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<sup>2</sup> “A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the ‘History of the Subject’”, in David Aers ed., Culture and History 1350-1600. Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing (Detroit 1992), pp. 177-202. I am grateful to Andrew Taylor for drawing my attention to this article.

<sup>3</sup> Quotes from Aers, “Whisper”, pp. 181 and 182 respectively. The phrase “homo interior” was already in circulation: so Rom. 7, 22: “condecorator ... legi Dei secundum interiorem hominem (kata ton eso anthropon)”. Paul’s usage revolves round the relation of the “interior” to the spiritual and the “exterior” to the carnal, discussed below.

vivere illo mortuo mirabar.<sup>4</sup>

I was amazed that other mortals were living, because he, whom I had loved as if he were not going to die, was dead; and I was still more amazed that I was alive while he was dead, because I was another he.

Similarly, Ambrose (again in the context of death, this time that of his brother) speaks of having lost “*melior mei portio*”, “the better part of myself”.<sup>5</sup>

But a more specialized vocabulary was also emerging. Early Christian thinkers, for example Tertullian and Hippolytus, use the terms persona or prosopon in their original grammatical or dramatic sense -- as a participant in, or subject of, conversational exchange -- as Pierre Hadot says, “sans véritable contenu conceptuel”.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, at least since the second century Institutiones of Gaius, which draw a distinction between persona, res, and actio, the word persona had been enshrined in Roman legal tradition: here persona seems to mean something like “human agent” (as legal subject), without

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, Confessions IV. 6. 11. Augustine goes on to echo Horace (Carm. I. 3. 8) with the words that his friend was “half his soul”, and to suggest, “et ideo forte mori metuebam, ne totus ille moreretur, quem multum amaveram” -- a thoroughgoing example of the interpermeability of selves, which will be discussed below.

<sup>5</sup> Ambrose, De Excessu Fratris I, 6. Both Augustine and Ambrose are richly aware of the classical precedents for this type of expression -- which in its turn suggests that it is equally valid to speak of a “sense of self” in the classical period, even if that sense is rather different from that evinced in Christian writers. See now Christopher Gill, Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy (Oxford 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See Pierre Hadot, “De Tertullien à Boèce: le développement de la notion de personne dans les controverses théologiques”, in Ignace Meyerson ed., Problèmes de la Personne, Colloque du centre de recherches de psychologie comparative XIII (Paris 1973), pp. 123-134; quote from p. 128. This section of my argument is indebted to his account.

entailing any comment on interior processes.<sup>7</sup> However, by the fourth century the terms persona and prosopon were taking their place in trinitarian theology, and being used to refer to Christ as an incarnate manifestation of an essential, but incorporeal, unity.<sup>8</sup> In a world profoundly concerned with the negotiation of its relationship with the divine, it was a small and logical, but nonetheless significant step from this usage to using persona to express the mixture of spiritual and corporeal in everyone. John Rist points to the precise moment in Augustine's writing at which this transition is made: in letter 137, of 411, for the first time he uses persona to express the body/soul relationship:

Sic autem quidam reddi sibi rationem flagitant, quo modo deus homini permixtus sit, ut una fieret persona Christi, cum hoc semel fieri oportuerit, quasi rationem ipsi reddant de re, quae cotidie fit, quo modo misceatur anima corpori, ut una persona fiat hominis.<sup>9</sup>

So some people demand that we give them an account of how God could be mixed with man so that the single persona of Christ should result, when this only needed to happen once, as if they could give an account of the thing which happens daily: how a soul may be mixed with a body, so that one human person should result.

Besides the specific details of the constitution of persona, a generalized sense of interiority indisputably obtains. The first exchange between Augustine and Paulinus reveals a non-specific sense of the body-soul relationship which is thrown into relief by the process of negotiation of distance. There is in these letters a strong sense of the

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<sup>7</sup> For Gaius' Institutiones, see W. M. Gordon and O. F. Robinson trans., The Institutes of Gaius, Texts in Roman Law (Ithaca NY, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Hadot, "De Tertullien à Boèce", p. 129; the origins of persona/prosopon "furent oubliées au profit d'un sens ontologique".

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, Letter CXXXVII, 11. Rist draws attention to this passage in Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized (Cambridge 1994), p. 100. Contrast I Cor. 15, 44: "Si est corpus animale, est et spiritale"; but the passage goes on to make clear that, for Paul, the earthly and spiritual properties are still entirely separate: "Igitur, sicut portavimus imaginem (eikona) terreni, portemus et imaginem caelestis" (I Cor. 15, 49).

potential for spiritual communication, but at the same time a sense that such communication is incomplete without a more conventional familiarity with the “homo exterior”. Paulinus approaches Augustine with an appeal to the power of spiritual communication: “denique nunc etsi sermone, non tamen tamquam et affectu rudes scribimus teque vicissim in spiritu per interiorum hominem quasi recognoscimus”, “in short, I am now writing, perhaps in unburnished language, but not accordingly with unburnished affection, and, as it were, recognizing you spiritually through the inner man”;<sup>10</sup> and Augustine memorably replies:

O bone vir et bone frater, latebas animam meam. Et ei dico, ut toleret, quod adhuc lates oculos meos; et vix mihi obtemperat, immo non obtemperat. ...Quo modo ergo non doleam, quod nondum faciem tuam novi, hoc est domum animae tuae, quam sicut meam novi?<sup>11</sup>

Oh noble man and noble brother, you have been hidden from my soul. And I ask it how it could bear that you are still hidden from my eyes; and it scarcely submits -- no, it does not submit to me. ...So how could I not grieve that I don't know your face -- that is, the house of your soul, which I know like my own?

Augustine refuses to relinquish his sense that extra familiarity is granted by knowledge of his correspondent's physical appearance; in fact, he was to continue throughout his life to treat the body as necessarily part of the self, and to wrestle with the theological consequences.<sup>12</sup> The later correspondence with Paulinus provides two palmary examples

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<sup>10</sup> Paulinus, Letter VI, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, Letter XXVII, 1. For a joking application of this outer/inner dichotomy, see Paulinus' tribute to the dreadful cooking of the letter-carrier Victor: “verum spiritalis coquus interiorum hominem cibare doctior, quo destrueret escam gulae, non siligine nobis pultes sed farina confecit aut milio”, Letter XXIII, 6.

<sup>12</sup> See Rist, Augustine, p. 94: “From the time of his conversion, Augustine wished to maintain both that it is man's soul which is created in the image of God, and that man himself is some kind of composite of two substances, a soul and a body” (Rist's emphasis). Later, Augustine came to emphasize Eph. 5, 29: “Nemo enim unquam carnem suam odio habuit”: to reject the body would be “a desertion of the love for the body which God has intended” (p. 110). This emphatic embrace of

of this attitude. In a letter of 404, he expresses a wish to talk (“conloqui”) with Paulinus, “tamquam si praesens praesenti inter dulces loquelas obderem”, “as if with each of us present I were enveloped in delightful conversation”; and later still, answering (c. 414-416) a barrage of theological queries from Paulinus, he exclaims, “...atque utinam praesens de me ista quaesisses! ... cum enim interrogando disputas, et quaeris acriter et doces humiliter”, “...and I wish you had been present to ask me these things! ... for when you debate through questions, you ask with precision and you teach with humility.”<sup>13</sup>

Paulinus shows a similar anxiety actually to see his prior acquaintances in his early correspondence. His pressing invitations to Sulpicius -- “et invitare non desinam. veni ad nos ...”, “I shan’t stop inviting you. Come to me...”<sup>14</sup> -- have already been discussed in chapter two, where it was argued that subsequently the longing for the physical presence of his friend was resolved by reinventing the friendship as existing on a purely spiritual plane. An intermediate stage of this process is seen in a letter to Delphinus of early 401, in which Paulinus attempts to console himself (a “tenue solatium”) for the absence of his former mentor with an exercise in spiritual visualization. Delphinus’ appearance is conjured through meditation while writing: “ut dum ad affectionem tuam litteras facimus, toto in faciem tuam corde defixi subito te obliviscamur absentem...”, “so that while I am writing to your dear self, as I concentrate

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the body, made in the context of his debate with the Manicheans, surely also formed for him a significant stage in his own move away from Manicheism.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, Letters LXXX, 2 and CXLIX, 23 and 34 respectively.

<sup>14</sup> Quote from Letter XI, 4.



entirely in my heart on your image I suddenly forget that you are absent ...".<sup>15</sup> But

Paulinus moves on to reiterate the superiority of spirit to body:

itaque hac eadem lege, qua verior circumcisio quae in corde quam quae in carne concisio et praesentia firmior quae spiritu quam quae corpore iungitur et cohaeret sibi, semper tecum sumus tuque nobiscum.<sup>16</sup>

And so by this same law, in which a circumcision in the heart is more true than a cut<sup>17</sup> in the flesh, and a spiritual presence is stronger than that which is physically joined and fused, we are always with you and you with us.

For Paulinus, the spirit is always and unequivocally superior to the flesh in the configuration of the self, and as time goes on the corporeal becomes increasingly insignificant in comparison with the spiritual and symbolic. In later instances of negotiating physical absence the shift to spiritual interpretation has actually been realized. Of Victricius' failure to make the journey from Rome to Nola to see him, Paulinus writes:

fateor enim me huius boni damno non solum contristatum sed et confusum fuisse; numquam enim magis mihi ipsi, ne dicam aliis, manifestata fuerant peccata mea, quam quod mihi de tam proximo "vultus tui lumen" [Ps. 4, 7] inviderant.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Paulinus, Letter XX, 1. He says a little earlier that even if his burning thirst for Delphinus is not slaked, "tamen proposita interioribus oculis conspectus atque conloquii tui imagine mitigamus".

<sup>16</sup> Paulinus, Letter XX, 1 again.

<sup>17</sup> TLL IV. 63 notes that concisio is characteristically associated with circumcisio, and cites, alongside the above passage, Paulinus, Letter L, 3, to Augustine (erroneously cited as from Augustine rather than to him): "...non glorianti in concisione carnis, sed in circumcissione cordis". This is Goldbacher's text, where Hartel's merely repeats "circumcissione": in support of Goldbacher's reading, we may note that once again circumcisio is paradoxically appropriated to the spiritual context. The scriptural text that lies behind this is, of course, the locus classicus of Rom. 2, 29, and Paul's "circumcisio cordis in spiritu, non littera".

<sup>18</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXXVII, 1. Note the persistent sense of place within a community that prompts the aside "ne dicam aliis".

For I confess that I wasn't just thoroughly saddened by the loss of this blessing, but actually brought up short; for never have my sins been made more apparent to me -- not to mention other people -- than by begrudging me the "light of your countenance" from one so near.

It is typical that a physical circumstance should be interpreted as spiritual direction. The presence or absence of Victricius is seen in entirely symbolic terms: his journey to Nola would have been significant, not as an opportunity for a meeting in the flesh, but as a benediction and an affirmation for Paulinus. Paulinus concludes that "etiam si ad nos usque venisses, aequae tamen a sanctitate tua longe fuisset", "even if you had come right up to me, I would still have been a long way away from your holiness":<sup>19</sup> the symbolism of spatial displacement is more important than the fact.

While soul was always considered superior to body, the relationship of the one to the other was not necessarily one purely of hierarchical domination. Augustine wrote to Paulinus on the subject of the efficacy of prayer for the dead in De Cura Pro Mortuis Gerenda: although he argued that the outer show of prayer was less important than the "invisibilis voluntas et cordis intentio", "the invisible will and inclination of the heart", he went on to add:

...et nescio quomodo, cum hi motus corporis fieri nisi motu animi praecedente non possint, eisdem rursus exterius visibiliter factis ille interior invisibilis qui eos fecit augetur, ac per hoc cordis affectus, qui, ut fierent ista, praecessit, quia facta sunt crescit.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXXVII, 1 again. Walsh, Letters II, p. 178, renders "even if you had come at all...", which destroys the antithesis. The ambiguity of "a sanctitate tua" (title or quality?) seems to me to be entirely intentional. This utterly spiritual interpretation of the significance of a journey contrasts sharply with Paulinus' first request to Sulpicius for a visit, in which the journey is to be speeded by personal love: "...quid de spatio agam? si nos desideras, via brevis est; longa, si negligis." Letter I, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda, V. 7.

...and in some way, although these physical movements could not be made without being preceded by some movement of the soul, that invisible interior which made them is intensified in its turn by those actions made externally visible, and through this the eager disposition of the heart, which preceded these things so that they should happen, increases because they have been done.

Here, therefore, a powerful reciprocity between inner and outer was envisaged: the actions of the body, though inferior to the volitions of the soul, may yet improve the soul's virtuous disposition.

In fact, the bodily part of the self is taken very seriously: we have already seen that this is so in the metaphorical sense by which Christians are members of Christ's body; but it is also true in terms of the personal and individual appreciation of the body. Daniélou has a sophisticated and utterly convincing reading of this valorization of the corporeal: he traces it to the central Christological problem of how the infinite (*aperigraptos*: the uncircumscribed) is to become personal -- or the divine human. Only in the fourth century, he argues, does trinitarian theology begin to develop to address this, "où on dissociera le concept de personne, c'est-à-dire de l'individu concret subsistant, de celui de limitation ...". By this paradoxical process Christ may be realized as simultaneously both divine (and therefore infinite) and personal; and reciprocally, "le 'personnel' prend pied ...dans l'être absolu".<sup>21</sup> It is against the background of this newly realized fluidity of the human self that we should read the texts of late antiquity.

Another important area of theological debate, that concerning the resurrection of

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<sup>21</sup> J. Daniélou, "La notion de personne chez les Pères grecs", in Meyerson ed., *Problèmes de la Personne*, pp. 113-121; both quotes from p. 117. Though his emphasis is different from that of Hadot in the same volume, nevertheless the shape of his analysis is the same: the fourth-century wrestling with the problem of the incarnation brought with it a new appreciation of the nature of, and potential for, the physical, human self.

the body, was significant for ideas of how the body related to the soul. It was generally agreed that the self which was to be resurrected was not equivalent to the soul alone: Christ's resurrection had been corporeal, and therefore the body of Christians must in some way be involved when they too come to be resurrected. The practical details of this bodily resurrection were found to be inordinately complex, and were hotly debated; but it was indisputable that positive value must be assigned to the body if that was the form in which Christ had chosen to rise. Caroline Bynum has recently chronicled, in the context of a grand study of medieval ideas surrounding bodily resurrection, the near-obsession with physical continuity of the fourth-century Fathers; Augustine inherited this mantle, and "His repeated emphasis on the yearning of the separated soul for body ... becomes an important component of the medieval notion of flesh as essential to personhood."<sup>22</sup> It was in fact Paulinus who wrote to Augustine -- again in their earliest exchange -- that only the fruit of the "oculi temporalium expectatores" was denied them in correspondence; he adds:

quamvis ne corporalis quidem gratia temporalis in spiritalibus dici debeat, quibus etiam corporum aeternitatem resurrectio largietur ...<sup>23</sup>

...although not even corporeal grace should be called transitory in spiritual contexts, in which resurrection will bestow everlasting life on bodies too...

Augustine's position on this issue became if anything more inclusive of the body in the course of his life.<sup>24</sup> In his Retractationes, he made it clear that he had revised the early opinions on resurrection expressed in his second treatise, De Beata Vita:

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<sup>22</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (New York 1995). Section on Augustine and resurrection, pp. 94-104; quote from pp. 100-101. Bynum gives a full account of the debates and preoccupations which I have merely alluded to above.

<sup>23</sup> Paulinus, Letter VI, 3.

<sup>24</sup> So Rist's discussion in Augustine, cited in n. 12 above.

displicet autem illic ... quod tempore vitae huius in solo animo sapientis dixi habitare beatam vitam, quomodolibet se habeat corpus eius... . Quae sola beata vita dicenda est, ubi et corpus incorruptibile atque immortale spiritui suo sine ulla molestia vel reluctance subdetur.<sup>25</sup>

But in that work, it bothers me that I said that the blessed life resided in the wise man's mind alone during this life, in whatever state the body might be ... This alone should be called the blessed life, when the incorruptible and immortal body shall be subject to its own spirit without any revulsion or resistance.

Augustine's views on physical resurrection are, of course, set out most fully in the final book of the City of God;<sup>26</sup> the details of these need not concern us here, but there is one aspect extremely relevant to an epistolary focus. While time is to be obliterated in the heavenly state, it is clear from his discussion that spatial displacement is not: <sup>27</sup> distance is spiritually transcended.<sup>28</sup> This seems to bear out our conclusions about the spiritual significance of the negotiation of distance in letters, for it implies that in a spiritual context distance is not sufficiently important to merit dissolution.

Meanwhile, although we may infer that Paulinus took an orthodox position on the question of physical resurrection, he preferred to avoid discussion of the issue. When Augustine asks his opinion, he responds, "at ego de praesenti vitae meae statu ut magistrum et medicum spiritalem consulo...", "but I am seeking your advice as a teacher

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<sup>25</sup> Augustine, Retr. II, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, Civ. XXII, especially chapter 29.

<sup>27</sup> "...videatur et per corpora in omni corpore quocumque fuerint spiritualis corporis oculi acie perveniente directi." Civ. XXII. 29, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Though, naturally, neither category is relevant for God himself: "Non enim quia dicimus Deum et in coelo esse, et in terra ... aliam partem dicturi sumus eum in coelo habere, et in terra aliam: sed totus in coelo est, totus in terra; non alternis temporibus, sed utrumque simul, quod nulla natura corporalis potest." Civ. XXII. 29, 3.

and spiritual doctor about the present state of my life...”, as he aims to die the (symbolic) death of the gospel voluntarily before reaching the “*carnelem resolutionem*”, “dissolution of the flesh”.<sup>29</sup>

But for Paulinus the inner/outer dichotomy is not always resolved into the relationship of body to soul, in which both are, at least potentially, benign partners in the creation of the self. He is if anything more likely to evoke another set of associations, the value-laden contrast of things of the flesh with things of the spirit that was to become in Western thought the characteristic configuration of the body/soul relationship. He calls on this idea when he rejects Sulpicius’ request to him to have his portrait taken:

utinam compleatur in me verbum illud evangelici Symeonis, ut fiat mihi Christus “in ruinam et resurrectionem” [Luc. 2, 34], ruina exteriori meo et interiori resurrectio, ut cadat in me peccatum, quod anima cadente consistit, et exurgat ille immortalis, qui cecidit exurgente peccato. exterioris enim status interioris casus est, et ideo quando “infirmatur exterior, qui intus est renovatur de die in diem” [II Cor. 4, 16].<sup>30</sup>

May that word of Simeon in the gospel be fulfilled in me, that Christ should become a “destruction and resurrection” to me, a destruction to my outer self and a resurrection to my inner, that sin, which endures while the soul perishes, might perish in me, and that immortal self may rise up, which has perished with the rising of my sin. For the outer self upright is the downfall of the inner, and therefore when “the outer self is weakened, what is within is renewed from day to day”.

Where I have offered the translation “self”, the Latin seems probably to be omitting a personal pronoun: the rendering “self” seems best to capture the sense, for the “exterior” here referred to is not the body as such, but the base elements in the self as represented by engagement with affairs of the world; so the “interior” represents virtuous withdrawal

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<sup>29</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Letter XXX, 5.

from the world to a realm of spiritual introspection.<sup>31</sup> This type of inwardness is that so memorably and fully expressed by Augustine in his Confessions, and it necessitates the antithetical creation of a symbolic exteriority, which though associated with is not identical to the body. This ascent to God through profoundly introspective means has been aptly dubbed by Charles Taylor “radical reflexivity”: it relies on the assumption that through introspection one may gain access not to something more perfectly personal but, ultimately, to something essentially shared.<sup>32</sup> Augustine succinctly exhorts his reader to participate in such “radical reflexivity” in order to attain truth in De Vera Religione: “Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas”, “Don’t go outwards, return into yourself. Truth lives in the inner man”.<sup>33</sup> The emphasis of such a quest falls, notably, on the process of introspection rather than on any fait accompli. Paulinus clearly espouses these means of ascent to God through introspection, though nowhere in his writings are the ideas explored with the thoroughness and intensity that Augustine brings to them. One of his clearest statements, however, may be found in the important letter to Sulpicius of 400 in which he explores at length what he sees as the foundations for a Christian life:

quare totus labor et plenum opus nobis in observantia et expoliatione cordis nostri est, cuius tenebras vel abstrusas in eo inimici latebras videre non possumus, nisi

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<sup>31</sup> Walsh renders “the outer man”, etc. (Letters II, p. 123); but “self” seems to me to make the sense clearer.

<sup>32</sup> For “radical reflexivity”, see Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge MA 1989), p. 130. Contrasting Augustine’s formulation of the self with that of Plato, Taylor writes, “this same opposition of spirit/matter, higher/lower, eternal/temporal, immutable/changing is described by Augustine, not just occasionally and peripherally, but centrally and essentially in terms of inner/outer” (pp. 128-129; “is” emphasized by Taylor; other emphasis mine).

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, De Vera Religione, XXXIX (72).

defaecato ab externarum rerum curis animo et intus ad semet ipsum converso...<sup>34</sup>

So the entirety and fulness of our work lies in the scrutiny and refinement<sup>35</sup> of our heart, in which we cannot see the hidden shadows and darkness of the enemy, unless our mind is purified from concern with outer things and turned inwards to itself...

So, two broad meanings of the inner/outer dichotomy emerge: the intuitively-available body/soul division, which is drawn upon in a wide variety of contexts; and the value-laden and symbolic dichotomy, pitting things of the flesh against things of the spirit.

But in the epistolary context a third element comes into play. The situation is not completed by the interplay of correspondents' desire to see each other in the flesh, however completely their souls may be revealed to each other -- any more than their attitude to their bodies is summed up by the negative connotations implied by "things of the flesh". It is, of course, through the letter-carriers that the negotiation of distance is effected; and it is in the context of the writers' interrelationship with their carriers that a developing idea of the self may be seen, working out the psychological implications of Christians as members of one body. When considering the exchange of letters, the framework in which the self is configured has at least three relational points, the two correspondents and the person who carries the letter between them -- who, as observed in chapter one, comes on occasion to play a significant role in the lives of both parties.

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<sup>34</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIV, 9. Paulinus expresses very similar concerns in section 11: "[rerum] cura vel amor quoniam mentis ipsius praestringit aciem et animam ab interioribus suis abductam ad exteriora sollicitat, dicit etiam nobis per prophetam: 'vacate et videte...' [Ps. 45, 11]."

<sup>35</sup> Opinions vary on text and sense for this word. Walsh, for unspecified reasons, reads "exploratione" (II, 59). TLL V, 2. 1905 s.v. exspoliatio cites this passage, and gives its sense as equivalent to circumcisio. TLL does, however, recognize that expolitio (from expolire) may have the alternative form expoliatio; and it is this sense which I have adopted here.



This claim is repeatedly confirmed by the language in which carriers are described in the letters. Paulinus uses extremely striking formulations: Victor, in a letter to Sulpicius, is “in te meus et in me tuus”, “mine in you and yours in me”; Romanus and Agilis are commended to Augustine “ut nos alios”, “like second selves”,<sup>36</sup> and Augustine responds in kind:

Sanctos fratres Romanum et Agilem, aliam epistulam vestram audientem voces atque reddentem et suavissimam partem vestrae praesentiae ... cum magna in domino iucunditate suscepimus.<sup>37</sup>

With great rejoicing in the Lord, we have received the holy brothers Romanus and Agilis, your second letter, one which hears voices and gives back the sweetest part of your presence.

The corollary to this language of complete interpenetration is expressed even in cases where the carrier is previously unknown (evincing once again the power of the spiritually pre-existing bonds of amicitia): Paschasius has been empowered to Nola to carry a letter to Victricius,

non adrogantia pervicaci sed “corde puro et fide non ficta” [I Tim. 1, 5] nostrum credentes esse quod tuum est teque ita vicissim reputaturum non ambigentes, ut illum non afuisse tibi duceres eo tempore, quo nobiscum fuisse cognosceres.<sup>38</sup>

...believing, not in stubborn arrogance but “in pure heart and unfeigned faith”, that what is yours is ours, and hence not doubting that you will think the same thing in turn, so that you should not consider him to have been away from you during the time in which you know him to have been with me.

Paulinus is astonished when Sulpicius complains that he has “usurped” the carriers: “non enim a me alieni forent tecum manentes, qui totus es meus in Christo domino, per quem sum invicem tuus ...”, “for they would not be remote from me while they remained with

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<sup>36</sup> Or “like other mes”! Quotes from Letters XXVIII, 1 and VI, 3 respectively.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine, Letter XXXII, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Letter XVIII, 1.

you, who are entirely mine in Christ the Lord, through whom I am in turn yours ...".<sup>39</sup>

The carriers are completely enveloped in the community of Christ as "membra Christi": the most specific example of this is found in an early letter to Sulpicius. The passage which remarks that Paulinus has in some way seen Sulpicius, since "the members of your body came to us in your servants", has already been noted in Chapter Two; but the precise implications of membership in the body of Christ are noted later in the letter:

nam Vigilantius quoque noster in Campania et antequam ad nos perveniret et posteaquam pervenit, vi febrium laboravit et aegritudini nostrae, quia et ipse sociale membrum erat, socio labore compassus est. denique ille catechumenus, qui necdum nostri corporis erat membrum, vulnera nostra non sensit ...<sup>40</sup>

For while our Vigilantius was in Campania, both before he reached us and after he arrived, he was afflicted with a violent fever and suffered my illness with me in a common affliction, because he was actually a common limb. As proof, the catechumen, who was not yet a member of our body, did not feel our pains ...

Michel-Yves Perrin has recently reviewed much of the evidence for Paulinus' relationship with his carriers. He comments on the way in which Paulinus combines the notion of "communion in Christ" with the classical topos of slaves as membra in the domus of their master (though this is to ignore the biblical antecedents for the idea of "membra unius corporis", which I explored in chapter two above),<sup>41</sup> and aptly observes,

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<sup>39</sup> Letter XXVII, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Letter V, 11 (passage in c. 2 is Letter V, 1). This very physical working out of the implications of the "membra unius corporis" theme is far from unique to Paulinus. For example, Augustine, in his Letter XXVIII, 1, expresses an urgent desire to see Jerome; but consoles himself with the reflection that at least Jerome has been seen by Alypius, and so in some sense by Augustine too.

<sup>41</sup> Perrin, "Courriers"; quote from pp. 1032-1033.

“En véritables lieu-tenants de leur père en ascèse, ils peuvent représenter, au sens le plus fort du terme, leur mandat auprès du destinataire de la lettre”.<sup>42</sup> Perrin concludes that the evidence invites one “à proposer l’hypothèse d’une sensibilité singulière de Paulin de Nole aux médiations personnelles entre les hommes, comme entre les hommes et Dieu”. But he takes his argument no further than this insistence on Paulinus’ particular sensitivity to interpersonal relations; indeed, at one stage he seems to assert that there is no significance beyond the rhetorical to the language used of the carriers.<sup>43</sup>

While Perrin’s gathering of the evidence is extremely useful, his conclusion stops short of acknowledging its full implications. Paulinus’ comments on the letter-carriers reveal much about how he -- and his correspondents -- conceive of themselves. The possessive pronouns used of the carriers, the claim that such possession is held in Christ or another correspondent; the idea that while with a correspondent to whom the writer is spiritually bound they cannot be truly or entirely absent; the idea that they may somehow be their despatcher’s eyes, his second letter, his other self -- indeed, “véritables lieu-tenants”: all these, if taken seriously, lead us to remarkable conclusions. They bespeak a notion of the self which, while located in individuals, is essentially unboundaried, for it is profoundly relational. The earthly aspects of the self create the individual boundaries; but it is far more important that selves may be truly interpermeable in their spiritual

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<sup>42</sup> Perrin, “Courriers”, p. 1034; my emphasis.

<sup>43</sup> Perrin, “Courriers”. Quote from p. 1044; the “rhetoric” assertion is made at p. 1042: the special place of the monastic letter-carriers and their characteristic epithet “*unanimus*” bears predominantly on “leur capacité essentielle de se conformer aux canons d’une rhétorique qui exige d’envelopper tout leur être ...”. It seems to me that this is logically inconsistent with Perrin’s overall argument: if we can make claims, based on the letters, about the importance to Paulinus of his carriers and of human interaction in general, then we must be considering that language of the letters can point to a reality beyond the rhetorical.

communion. This is how such extravagant language may be used of the carriers: they perform their role less as individuals than as extensions of the correspondents' selves.

We may observe parenthetically that a profoundly relational idea of the self seems to be paralleled in Augustine's far more philosophical development of the theme. Brian Stock, discussing Augustine's De Trinitate and its formulation of his ideas of the self, points to the term appellatio relativa, used of temporal facets of the divine, which "underpins his [Augustine's] subsequent reflections on the relational nature of self-knowledge". Stock later emphasizes the possibility that relationality and autonomy may be coexistent: "Clearly ... what one sees within oneself one sees individually, and the fact that we understand ourselves relationally does not rule out the possibility of an autonomous self".<sup>44</sup> A passage may be selected from De Trinitate to underline this point. It discusses the relationship of love and knowledge in the mind:

Mens ... amore quo se amat potest amare et aliud praeter se. Item non se solam cognoscit mens sed et alia multa. Quamobrem non amor et cognitio tamquam in subiecto insunt menti, sed substantialiter etiam ista sunt sicut ipsa mens quia et si relative dicuntur ad invicem, in sua tamen sunt singula quaeque substantia.<sup>45</sup>

The mind can also love something else beyond itself with the love with which it loves itself. Likewise, the mind does not know itself alone, but many other things too. Wherefore, love and knowledge do not exist, as it were, in subjection to the mind; but they also exist as substances, just as the mind itself does: for even if they are mutually predicated relatively, yet they each exist individually in their own substance.

In this formulation too, ideas of the self come down to the negotiation of the human and the divine: human as against divine knowledge of the self; human limitation combined with divine limitlessness.

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<sup>44</sup> Stock, Augustine the Reader, pp. 248 and 256.

<sup>45</sup> De Trinitate IX. 4 (5).

As the parallels in Augustine imply, this profoundly relational notion of the self is not uniquely linked with the circumstances of epistolary exchange. A more general connection may perhaps be made with the pursuit of a consistently and ideally communitarian form of existence in the monastic way of life.<sup>46</sup> We have already seen that this had some bearing on the formation of the new ideas of amicitia.<sup>47</sup> We may now move a step further to posit that a constant awareness of participation, not only in a literal earthly community, but in a spiritual community, imbued with symbolic significance, of people mutually striving towards a better knowledge of God, could lead to a sense of self in which personal boundaries are only of secondary importance.

A contemporary linguistic development seems to support this idea. Robert Markus has recently discussed the progress in Christian thought from the notion of a monk as a solitary individual to a communitarian ideal: he points out that from the fourth century, the qualifier anachoretēs had to be added to the term monachos -- which, after all, originally meant "solitary" -- to designate a hermit rather than a monk living in a

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<sup>46</sup> This, notably, is precisely a connection which Perrin wishes to deny: he insists that the prevalence of the adjective "unanimus" with reference to monks has little to do with "la solidarité naissante d'un ordo monastique en voie de constitution". "Courriers", p. 1042.

<sup>47</sup> It is extremely interesting that, immediately after the passage from De Trinitate quoted above, Augustine uses an example drawn from amicitia as illustration: "...relative ita dicuntur ad invicem ... sicut duo amici etiam duo sunt homines, quae sunt substantiae; cum homines non relative dicantur, amici autem relative". He does, however, go on to say that the relationship between friends is not exactly parallel to that between amor and amans: one may cease being a friend while the friend still loves, but if amor ceases loving, it ceases to be amor. (Of course, an amicus who no longer loves is no longer an amicus: the distinction seems to be that amicus, unlike homo, does not count as a substantia.)

community.<sup>48</sup> The first assumption of the Christian reader had therefore come to be that a religious life was to be pursued in communitarian form.<sup>49</sup>

It should not, then, be surprising to have found that notions of public and private for Christians in late antiquity have different content from those of today. If it is automatically assumed that the primary characteristic of the self is its relationality, then naturally a sense of privacy will be quite differently demarcated -- and, indeed, will be assigned negative value. It is the public -- indeed, the publishable -- that will be associated with the spiritual; for as nothing can be held in privacy from God, so nothing should be withheld from one's community in God.<sup>50</sup>

To say that for Paulinus the self is fundamentally relational is not just to echo Charles Taylor's famous dictum, "one cannot be a self on one's own". This, of course, remains true; but I am trying to capture something a stage more thoroughgoing than his envisaged formation of the self within ongoing "webs of interlocution".<sup>51</sup> The self is

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge 1990), pp. 66-68. He remarks on Augustine's realization, in the process of writing *De Genesi ad Litteram*, that "Sin was a retreat into privacy. ... By it [sin] all community is fatally ruptured" (p. 51); hence, the monastic community "living in concord and singlemindedness" becomes "a microcosm of the City of God" (p. 78).

<sup>49</sup> Daniélou, in his discussion of "la notion de personne", makes the pertinent observation that, at least for the Greek fathers, waiting for "libération eschatologique" replaced the desire of Greek philosophy for "libération intérieure" -- which was, after all, an essentially solitary undertaking. "Notion de personne", p. 120.

<sup>50</sup> An extension of Markus' point, n. 48 above.

<sup>51</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 36. This dictum immediately precedes a protest against the fact that "Modern culture has developed conceptions of individualism which picture the human person as, at least potentially, finding his or her own bearings within, declaring independence from the webs of interlocution which

essentially permeable to other selves, because it has been permeated by Christ; and what one is therefore depends fundamentally upon with whom one associates. Spiritual association is, of course, superior to temporal, and association with Christ superior to all; but both spiritual and temporal associations seem to work on the same model.

The implications of this are seen most radically in the context of conversion: conversion, that is, not merely to a nominal Christianity, but to the thoroughgoing commitment to a living interpretation of the Christian message which Paulinus embraced. In his letter exchange in verse with Ausonius, written around 394 just before Paulinus removed from Spain to Nola, we are fortunate to have one of the first extant literary accounts of personal conversion. (As Charles Witke writes, in his detailed study of literary aspects of the exchange, "Ausonius himself was a conventional Christian; Paulinus was learning how to be a cultural Christian".<sup>52</sup>) Here, too, are passages which contain Paulinus' most explicit account of his self-configuration subsequent to conversion.

The issue of Paulinus' apparent need to give an account of his conversion is an important one: it seems to be related both to his adoption of letters as a central mode of Christian expression and to his own self-conception. In the correspondence with Ausonius, we can read a process whereby Paulinus' decision to live a more fully

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have originally formed him/her, or at least neutralizing them." I have been much influenced by Taylor's discussion, and it has been instrumental in leading me to consider the possibility of less boundaried, more contextual notions of the self.

52 Charles Witke, Numen Litterarum: The Old and the New in Latin Poetry from Constantine to Gregory the Great, *Mittelateinische Studien und Texte* vol. 5 (Leiden/Cologne 1971), pp. 3-65; quote from p. 6. On Ausonius' "conventional" Christianity, see also R. P. H. Green, "The Christianity of Ausonius", *SP* 28 (1993): Latin Authors, 39-48.

Christian life becomes intimately, even necessarily, connected with his desire to communicate the decision. Certainly, Ausonius demands that Paulinus account for his silence -- “quis tamen iste tibi tam longa silentia suasit?” “But who is it that has urged so long a silence upon you?” -- but the fullness of his response must have been unexpected. In answer to an epistolary poem of 74 lines, Paulinus returns over 330 lines of poignant and detailed explanation and appeal (Poem 10). He does not comment explicitly on his desire to explain himself at such length; but passages in his early prose letters may hint at a motive. He asks Alypius most particularly to tell him “omnem tuae sanctitatis historiam”, “the entire history of your holiness”, including his family background and, above all, how he separated himself from his earthly mother and “crossed over” to “matrem filiorum dei prole laetantem”, “the mother of the sons of God who delights in her offspring”, Mother Church.<sup>53</sup> (The concern explicitly to change the sphere of reference of a word -- in this case mater -- is, as we shall see, paralleled in the correspondence with Ausonius.) Sulpicius, in Letter 1, is labouring to give an account “pro meo ac tuo facto”, “on behalf of my deed and yours”: what, Paulinus asks, is the point, “si non persuaseris hominibus non ad aedificationem suam, sed ad destructionem tuam tecum de opere dei disputantibus?”, “if you shan’t have persuaded the men who argue with you about the work of God not for their own edification but for your destruction?” He goes on to say: “multum interest, quinam isti sint quibus ratio reddenda sit”, “it makes a great difference who they may be to whom the account should be given” -- whether they are receptive and eager to learn, or disdainful and faithless.<sup>54</sup> And in a letter which has not been securely dated, but which may well be early (not least because

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53     Letter III, 4: the sentence begins, “Specialiter autem hoc a te peto”, “I ask this particularly from you...”. This request for a “historia” is briefly discussed in Chapter 1.

54     Letter I, 4.



the same scriptural passages as in the early letters are frequently picked out for comment<sup>55</sup>), Paulinus writes to Aper:

Laetatus sum in his quae scripsisti mihi et secundum fidem tuam, quam corde conceptam ore testatus es. si me gratia domini participem tanti spiritus faciat, spero quia in domo domini ibimus, et quae communi spe fideque percepimus pariter intuentes in facie veritatis consona exultatione cantabimus hymnum...<sup>56</sup>

I was delighted at the things which you wrote to me, including those<sup>57</sup> concerning your faith, which has been conceived in your heart, as you witnessed with your mouth. If the grace of the Lord makes me a participant in so great a spirit, I hope that we shall go into the house of the Lord, and, seeing together in the countenance of truth what we have perceived with shared hope and faith, we shall sing a hymn with harmonious joy...

It seems that giving an account of one's arrival at conversion or coming to the Christian faith is, for Paulinus, a significant part of that conversion. The Christian tradition is relayed and fortified by accounts of personal experience, because the crucial thing about such experience is that it should be shared. Adjectives evoking shared experience abound in the letter to Aper: "particeps", "communis", "consonus"; we may note too the emphatic adverb "pariter". So the sharing of a conversion narrative -- thereby enacting a participatory notion of selfhood -- becomes a component part of being a Christian. The development of the Christian self is discovered and charted. It seems that Paulinus first puts this notion into practice under the pressure of Ausonius' persistent questioning. He tries, indeed, to embrace Ausonius within this new, participatory worldview: rather than complaining of his changed way of life, Ausonius should congratulate him that "sic mea verti/ consilia, ut sim promeritus Christi fore, dum sum/ Ausonii", "that I have changed

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55 For example, that comparing stultitia and sapientia, commented on below.

56 Letter XXXVIII, 1.

57 This seems the best way of rendering the awkward "et". Hartel notes no variant readings in the manuscripts, but the usage is surprising.

my modes of thought in such a way as to deserve to become Christ's, while I still belong to Ausonius".<sup>58</sup>

Despite this conciliatory move, in his exchange with Ausonius Paulinus is already coming to see his "cultural conversion" and withdrawal as necessitating a break with the past and a rethinking of assumptions, though it is not initially a foregone conclusion that Ausonius will be rejected along with that past. (Later, perhaps in view of the failure to communicate his purpose to Ausonius, Paulinus is more uncompromising: he writes to Sulpicius, "abscidatur ut inutilis dextera a corpore tuo, qui tibi in Christi corpore non cohaeret", "let the man who is not joined to you in the body of Christ be cut off like a useless right hand from your body".<sup>59</sup>) The very detail of the account given to Ausonius, indeed, seems to be an attempt to draw him in to the participatory notions of Christianity.

quid me accusas? si displicet actus  
quem gero agente deo, prius est, si fas,<sup>60</sup> reus auctor,  
cui placet aut formare meos aut vertere sensus.  
nam mea si reputes quae pristina, quae tibi nota,  
sponte fatebor eum modo me non esse sub illo  
tempore qui fuerim ...<sup>61</sup>

Why are you laying accusations against me? If you don't like the action I take with God as agent, the originator is -- if I may -- primarily

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<sup>58</sup> Poem X, 150-152.

<sup>59</sup> Letter I, 5, in the context of Sulpicius choosing the audience to whom he should give his account of conversion. This echoes Matt. 18, 8, and is, it seems, the sinister reverse of the "membra Christi" tenet.

<sup>60</sup> Witke comments unsatisfactorily on "si fas", attributing its usage purely to a combination of tradition and metrical utility (p.51); but Paulinus must surely have been alert to the juxtaposition of pagan term and Christian God..

<sup>61</sup> Paulinus, Poem X, 128-133.

responsible, whom it pleases to shape or to change my disposition.<sup>62</sup> For if you consider as mine the former characteristics, the ones known to you, I will freely acknowledge that I am not now the same person as I was at that time ...

Given this sense of a change in values, it is no coincidence that in the early prose letters Paulinus frequently reverts to one of the cardinal passages that reflects the inversion of matters taken for granted in the world: “Nonne stultam facit Deus sapientiam huius mundi? ...quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes”, “Surely God has made foolish the wisdom of this world? ...God has chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise.”<sup>63</sup>

To return to the exchange with Ausonius, this paradoxical break with the past to ensure interconnection of selves in the present is seen at the most fundamental level in a number of ways. First, Paulinus silently signals his change by enacting a deliberate rejection of epistolary expectations. Ausonius points out that he has sent four letters to Paulinus, “officium sed nulla pium mihi pagina reddit”, “but no page returns its faithful duty to me”.<sup>64</sup> The expectations of the officium of correspondence were outlined in chapter one; though Paulinus hasn’t received Ausonius’ letters, the fact is that this officium has gone unperformed for three years (“trieteride”, as Paulinus himself terms it

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<sup>62</sup> I have chosen to translate “sensus” with the neutral “disposition” to keep its interpretation as open as possible: in this context, the word suggests a multitude of meanings: sensibilities, thoughts (or ways of thinking), self-awareness. See especially OLD s.v. sensus 6, 9, and 5.

<sup>63</sup> I Cor. 1, 20 and 27; see, for example, Letters I, 3; V, 7; XXXVIII, 1. In a very similar context of the embattled assertion of Christian values, the passage is a critical one for St. Patrick in his Confession: see Catherine Conybeare, “Re-Reading St. Patrick”, JMLat 4 (1994), 39-50.

<sup>64</sup> Ausonius XXVII. XXI, 3.

in his reply<sup>65</sup>), even though at least an annual exchange was generally expected.

Paulinus could, after all, easily have written anyway (as he apparently wrote twice in one year to Augustine at the beginning of their correspondence). However, not only does Paulinus fail to perform the officium of correspondence, he does not apologize for his silence.

Second, we see Paulinus' reappraisal of his relationship with the world of his correspondent through his deliberate -- and deliberately signalled -- changes in the semantic range of certain emotive words. Ausonius' feeling that Christian culture can be simply grafted onto the classical is perhaps encapsulated by his sudden inclusion of "celebri... frequens ecclesia vico", "a church packed with the festive village", in an otherwise conventional locus amoenus description.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, towards the end of the same poem, God the Father and Christ the Son are invoked almost as an afterthought -- and both, instead of being named directly, are alluded to by circumlocution: "certa est fiducia nobis,/ si genitor natusque dei pia verba volentum/ accipiat, nostro reddi te posse precatu...", "my faith is firm, if the progenitor and the offspring of God receive the pious words of the desirous, that you can be returned through my prayer...".<sup>67</sup> Paulinus, however, is at pains to demonstrate to Ausonius that his Christian commitment has

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65 Poem X, 103.

66 Ausonius XXVII. XXIV, 86. This is well discussed by Witke, p. 31.

67 Ausonius, XXVII. XXIII, 32ff. and XXIV, 104ff. Green prints this poem, of which two substantially different versions have come down to us, as two separate letters: a short response to Paulinus, and a more extensive and elaborate version written for public circulation and self-defence. (See Green, pp. 654-656 for an explanation.) This is contrary to Green's editorial practice elsewhere, and seems to create as many problems as it solves: to whom, for example, is Ausonius justifying himself, if not Paulinus?

changed the scope of language, and he articulates the response of Poem 10 round several resonant words used, in their former senses, by Ausonius. Ausonius accuses Paulinus of “nostri ... oblivio caeli”, “forgetfulness of our region”, and of burying in Spain his “patrios ... honores”, his “paternal [but also, of course, senatorial] honours”.<sup>68</sup> But Paulinus corrects him:

nec mihi nunc patrii est, ut vis, oblivio caeli,  
qui summum suspecto patrem, quem qui colit unum  
hic vere memor est caeli.<sup>69</sup>

Nor am I now forgetful, as you put it, of my father's region, as I look up to the highest father, and the man who worships him alone is truly mindful of heaven.

With the interposed “ut vis”, Paulinus signals directly his revision of Ausonius' words. The passage is almost impossible to translate aptly: “patrii ... caeli” combines the terms of Ausonius' two accusations -- “senatorial”/“paternal” and “region” -- to make a third term, effectively “homeland”. Yet the next line revises completely the referents of “patrii ... caeli”: it can now only refer to the heaven of God the Father -- of which Paulinus is truly “memor”. These lines are immediately followed by another attempt to embrace Ausonius within the semantic range, with a direct address to him as “pater”. Paulinus seems to be indicating a more inclusive semantic strategy -- but one in which the Christian sense is always foremost. He takes a similar approach earlier in Poem 10, again in direct response to Ausonius, who has written, “nec possum reticere, iugum quod libera numquam/fert pietas...”, “and I cannot keep silent, because free loyalty does not wear a yoke”.<sup>70</sup> Once again, owing to the multi-layered resonance of the words used, the

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68 Ausonius XXVII. XXI, 52 and XXI, 61.

69 Poem X, 193-195. Witke, I think, misses the point of the Christian appropriation of ‘caeli’ (p. 55).

70 Ausonius XXVII. XXI, 48-49.

passage is almost untranslatable: “pietas” refers to his sense of affectionate duty towards Paulinus as friend and pupil; “libera” to the unrestrained nature of that “pietas”, but also to its nature as subsisting between “liberi”, gentlemen. But Paulinus rebuffs the claim by once again consciously extending the semantic range, this time of “pietas”:

pietas abesse Christiano qui potest?  
                   namque argumentum mutuum est  
 pietatis, esse Christianum, et impii,  
                   non esse Christo subditum.<sup>71</sup>

How can affectionate duty be lacking from a Christian? For to be a Christian is evidence of piety, and likewise it is a mark of the impious not to be subject to Christ.

“Pietas” becomes the characteristic, not of gentlemen, but of all Christians -- who are, in fact, not “liberi”, but “subditi” to Christ and to his easy yoke.<sup>72</sup> Here too Paulinus goes on immediately to call Ausonius “pater”. This forms part of his response to a climactic set of claims by Ausonius, “ego sum tuus altor et ille/ praeceptor primus, primus largitor honorum”; “I am your foster-father and that first teacher, the first dispenser of honours”, to which Paulinus replies with a corresponding trio: “patrone praeceptor pater”, “patron teacher father”. The implications, at this stage, are clear: Ausonius retains a connection with Paulinus; but the words used to describe him are susceptible first to another, Christian interpretation.

Paulinus attempts to integrate Ausonius into his new, Christian sense of relationalism. At the same time, it becomes incumbent on Paulinus, in his desire to

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<sup>71</sup> Poem X, 85-88.

<sup>72</sup> As at Matt. 11, 30: “Iugum enim meum suave est, et onus meum leve”. Ausonius’ final farewell, “Discutimus, Pauline, iugum” (XXVII. XXIII/XXIV, 1), must, ironically, have brought the iugum of Christ to Paulinus’ mind, especially as Ausonius offers the description “leve ... positu”. Compare Paulinus’ epithalamium: “Christe Deus .../... moderare levi subdita colla iugo”, Poem 25, 3-4.

communicate his own position, to state his (new) self-conception. This necessitates exploring -- at any rate implicitly -- issues of individuation of selves in the context of their connectedness or relationalism. In a particularly striking passage, he strives to express his sense of the interpermeability of selves with God:

deusque nobis atque pro nobis homo  
 nos induendus induit,  
 aeterna iungens homines inter et deum  
 in utrumque se commercia.<sup>73</sup>

We have to clothe ourselves in his divinity, and for our sake he had to be clothed in our humanity; God has clothed himself in us, covenanting an eternal exchange with each other between men and God.

The extraordinarily interwoven word-order, with “deus” and “homo” embracing “nobis atque pro nobis” in the first line, and “aeterna ... commercia” embracing the entire second clause; the verbal insistence on interrelationships, with the repetition of “nobis” in reciprocal applications (“by” and “for” us) and the near-redundancy of “in utrumque se”; the resolutely singular verbs, despite the fact that both “deus” and “homo” serve as subjects (and in the case of “induendus”, require subtly different construals): all these emphasize the complex and continuous interrelationship between God and humankind.

Given the permeability of man to the divine, and vice versa, Paulinus also tries to show how he is linked with Ausonius through their mutual interconnection with God. He first pays tribute to Ausonius’ immense influence in his household, and then sets their friendship in the context of an approach to Christ through love, which enables a mutual attempt to join with Christ:

hoc mea te domus exemplo coluitque colitque  
 inque tuum tantus nobis consensus amorem est,

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<sup>73</sup> Poem X, 53-56. I am indebted to Sister Mechtild O’Mara for suggesting the subsequent translation of this extremely difficult passage.

quantus et in Christum conexa mente colendum.<sup>74</sup>

By this pattern, my household has revered and continues to revere you,  
and I have as great a feeling for your love as for Christ, who must be  
worshipped with linked minds.

This remarkable passage appears to place Paulinus, Ausonius, and Christ in an equal tripartite relationship, connected by love; and if there is a semantic shift to a more Christian sense of *colo* (which my translation implies), it is not explicitly signalled. Testimony to the levelling power of love is supplied later in the letter: “si iungor amore,/ hoc tantum tibi me iactare audebo iugalem”, “if I am yoked by love, of this alone shall I presume to boast: that I am your yoke-mate”;<sup>75</sup> but the inclusion of Christ in this level relationship seems a radical step. Can the implication be that Christ’s love -- and the love for Christ -- is found complete in all who love each other in Christ? that the same plenitude is found in the individual as in a community of individuals? Then the relationalism of selves -- at least, of Christian selves -- is a given, because all have the same plenitude in the light of their love of Christ, and yet by the same token individuation can be sustained, because each person individually loves Christ, as he them. We may compare, once again, the more explicit account of Augustine:

Huius enim templum simul omnes et singuli templa sumus, quia et omnium concordiam et singulos inhabitare dignatur; non in omnibus quam in singulis maior, quoniam nec mole distenditur nec partitione minuitur.<sup>76</sup>

For we are all his [God’s] temple together, and we are his temples individually too, because he graciously inhabits the union of all as well as individual people. He is no greater in the whole than in individuals, since he is neither increased by mass or diminished by sub-division.

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<sup>74</sup> Poem XI, 17-19.

<sup>75</sup> Again, I am indebted to Sister Mechtild O’Mara for this translation.

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, City of God X, 3.



It seems to be some such resolution of individuation with an all-embracing relationalism that Paulinus is, albeit imprecisely, envisaging at the end of his final letter to Ausonius:

...videbo corde, mente complectar pia  
 ubique praesentem mihi.  
 et cum solutus corporali carcere  
 terraque provolavero,  
 quo me locarit axe communis pater  
 illic quoque animo te geram,  
 neque finis idem, qui meo me corpore,  
 et amore laxabit tuo.<sup>77</sup>

[As long as I live,] I shall see you in my heart, and shall embrace you, everywhere present to me, in my pious mind. And when I am released from the bodily prison, and fly away from the earth, in whatever part of heaven our common father places me, there too I shall bear you in my soul, and the end which will release me from my body shall not also release me from your love.

Witke suggests that Paulinus asserts here that amicitia will last forever, while promising no letters to nourish it.<sup>78</sup> But as we have seen, the appeal to seeing a correspondent in his heart, “ubique praesentem mihi”, is far from an empty claim for Paulinus; nor is the statement of the validity of an enduring love. This passage seems to represent the final attempt to incorporate Ausonius into his new view of the world.

In the end, however, we see that Paulinus could not have sustained further communication with Ausonius. It is all too apparent that the two men’s goals in life are now incommensurable: Paulinus cannot express the sense of self generated by his conversion in terms which Ausonius can accept. Ausonius replies, “Discutimus, Pauline, iugum .../ discutimus, sed tu tantum reus”; “Paulinus, we are shattering our yoke ... We

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77 Poem XI, 55-62.

78 Witke, Numen Litterarum p. 42.

are shattering it, but you alone are responsible.”<sup>79</sup> It is of interest that the yoke image also invokes a relationality of selves, though a far less thoroughgoing one than seems to obtain for Paulinus; and it also acknowledges that under certain circumstances this relationality is no longer tenable. It is tempting to read a further line -- “*acceduntque alienae pondera librae*” -- as explicitly acknowledging that Paulinus’ scale of values has changed: the sense would then be, not just that Paulinus has shattered the yoke, but that he is now piling the weights from another, alien scale upon Ausonius.<sup>80</sup> The difference between the two men is encapsulated later in the letter. Ausonius invokes classical *adynata* to argue that if the bow of Ulysses and the spear of Achilles were easy to handle, then *mens altera* could destroy their bond; but Paulinus has shown that Odysseus and Achilles are now simply irrelevant to him -- and hence *mens altera* can destroy the bond. The series of self-corrections (for it seems that each statement about Paulinus’ state of mind revises the immediately preceding one), strengthened by repetition of “*mea*”, creates a tetracolon crescendo, building up to the mind created by and belonging to God, which is yet most truly Paulinus’ own: “*mens nova mi, fateor, mens non mea, non mea quondam, / sed mea nunc auctore deo...*”, “I have a new state of mind, I confess, not my own mind, formerly not my own, but now mine with God as its originator”.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ausonius XXVII. XXIII, 1 and 6. Even this, of course, shows their different sphere of reference in the use of the image of the yoke: Green draws our attention to Ausonius’ reminiscence of Theocritus XII, 15, while Paulinus, as has been remarked at note 72 above, is more liable to recall Matt. 11, 30.

<sup>80</sup> Ausonius XXVII. XXIII, 12/ XXIV, 26. Green says firmly of “*libra*” *ad loc.*, “not ‘balance’, but ‘weight’”, arguing that “the dominant image of the yoke continues”; but he has just glossed “*munus*” in the preceding line as “the tasks of correspondence”, so does not himself offer an entirely consistent interpretation of this ambiguous passage.

<sup>81</sup> *Poem* X, 142-143. Paulinus has directly rejected classical models at *Poem* X, 19-22: “*quid abdicatas in meam curam, pater, / redire Musas praecipis? / negant Camenis nec patent Apollini / dicata Christo pectora*”.

Paulinus' ultimate rejection of Ausonius has tended to baffle and sadden commentators, as it did Ausonius himself; but, given that Paulinus had come to believe that his Christian self was constituted in and moulded by association with his spiritual confrères and with Christ, he could not have sustained further communication with Ausonius. Ausonius wrote more truly than, perhaps, he knew, "Vertisti, Pauline, tuos, dulcissime, mores", "you have changed your ways, my sweetest Paulinus".<sup>82</sup>

Yet this correspondence sets a pattern for enacting Christian tenets in literary form as well as in life, and seems to be instrumental in creating Paulinus' view of epistolary endeavour as the heart of Christian communication. Certainly, the epistolary form provides an ongoing enacted metaphor for the self which is at once individuated and relational, in the interrelations of correspondents, carriers, and Christ. Perhaps the processual, open-ended nature of epistolary form appealed to Paulinus, rather than the firm statement expected of a treatise or commentary. Perhaps also Paulinus came to be suspicious of literary closure of meaning, and so worked hard to establish a stance which though literarily expressed is not completed by its literary expression -- paralleling his general concern with moving beyond the material realm.

As we see even from these early examples of Paulinus' thought on the Christian self, the permeability of the self is indissolubly bound up with its moral properties: hence the link drawn by Paulinus between desert and possession or permeation by Christ. The fact that the self is accessible to Christ accounts for its potential for improvement: Christ has the power "aut formare meos aut vertere sensus". In the second letter of Christian

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<sup>82</sup> Ausonius XXVII. XXI, 50.

instruction to Crispinianus, Paulinus observes that Christ has the power to make his followers “et heredes et imaginis suae conformes et gloriae participes”, “his heirs, formed to his image and participating in his glory”.<sup>83</sup>

But being formed in the image of Christ is only the starting point for the amelioration of the self. It is not the imago, but the similitudo of Christ that we must seek to achieve in our own lives. Unusually for Paulinus, he gives a clear exposition of the difference between the two:

nam et idcirco descendit ad nos, ut ad illum adscenderemus, ideo conformatus est corpori carnis nostrae, quae peccato serviebat, ut nos conformaret corpori carnis suae, quae peccatum non fecit, ut vere ad originalem gloriam reformemur, si divinam similitudinem Christi imitatione capiamus. nam in Adam solam nobis imaginem remansisse ipsa, quae opificium divinae manus narrat, Genesis ostendit, in qua similitudo cum imagine dei in ipso adhuc hominis faciendi molimine nominatur, sed capite subsequenti, quo iam factus homo tantum ad imaginem dei scribitur, similitudinem quasi peccaturo fuisse subtractam indicat profecto futuri praescientia, ut reservaretur hominibus in Christo, qui per oboedientiam pietatis suae reconciliavit patri mundum, quem inconciliaverat primi parentis inoboedientia.<sup>84</sup>

For it was for this reason that he descended to us, that we should ascend to him, and likewise he took on the bodily form<sup>85</sup> of our flesh, which was enslaved to sin, that he should make us like his fleshly body, which did not sin: thus might we be truly reformed to original splendour, if we take on the divine likeness of Christ by imitation. For Genesis itself, which tells the work of the divine hand, shows that only the image remained to us in Adam: in Genesis, the word “likeness” is used with “image of God” in the actual effort of making man [Gn. 1, 26], but, given that the point immediately follows by which man once made is only described as in the image of God, knowledge of the future declares without doubt that “likeness” had been taken away from Adam, because he was going to sin,

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<sup>83</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXV\*, 1.

<sup>84</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIV, 9 (to Sulpicius).

<sup>85</sup> Conformare is glossed at TLL IV. 249 as “similem reddere, aptare”, with three other citations in the same sense from Paulinus. I have despaired, however, of preserving the parallelism in the translation which is suggested by the Latin “conformatus est ... conformaret”.

so that it might be stored up for men in Christ<sup>86</sup>, who through his pious obedience reconciled with the Father the world which the disobedience of the first father had alienated.<sup>87</sup>

Thus the Christian's desire for himself is to move beyond the image of Christ to his likeness. Despite the importance of the imagistic, in moral improvement the image is only the starting point: the aim must be to be like Christ in every respect through imitation of him, not to be content with the superficial image. We may remember that the purpose of this letter is to alleviate Sulpicius' guilt at not having sold all he possessed (as in the passage from Matt. 19, 21). "Sane considera ipsa ... verba domini", Paulinus advises, "et videbis te principia pro fine posuisse", "ponder carefully those words of the Lord, and you will see that you have taken the beginnings for the end".<sup>88</sup> For the point of the passage is not the injunction to sell one's property -- which might be construed as imitation of Christ's image -- but Christ's final command, "et veni, sequere me", "and come, follow me". It is in the following of Christ that his similitudo is to be found.

We begin to see how this permeability of the self to Christ is bound up with the interrelations of human selves in the above-mentioned letter of instruction to Crispinianus:

quomodo autem probare possum aliter quia diligam te sicut et me, nisi idem tibi cupiam, quod mihi optimum iudicavi, id est ut renuntiantes huic saeculo et omnibus pompis et inlecebris vanitatis eius fugiamus ab ira ventura et

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<sup>86</sup> Walsh translates "men living in Christ"; but it seems to me that the phrase "in Christo" is purposely ambiguous: the potential for "likeness" may be afforded through Christ's incarnation, or through the permeability of men to Christ -- or both.

<sup>87</sup> Blaise offers an apt translation of this particular passage: "le monde que la désobéissance de notre premier père avait éloigné de Dieu". See under II inconcilio, 425. (TLL VII, 1. 998 gives merely "dolo seducere".)

<sup>88</sup> Paulinus, Letter XXIV, 5.

confugiamus ad unicam generis humani salutem, Iesum Christum ...<sup>89</sup>

For how else can I prove that I love you as myself, if not by wishing the same thing for you that I have judged best for myself, namely that we should renounce this world and all its vain display and enticements and flee from the wrath to come, and take refuge in the only salvation of the human race, Jesus Christ...

The relationship between two people is thus gauged by their common pursuit: to attempt to improve themselves by striving towards the similitudo of Christ. The injunction “et veni, sequere me” is applicable in the temporal realm too, so long as the imitatio occurs in the pattern of Christ. Certainly, Paulinus’ language in a letter to Augustine is utterly Christological:

utinam ergo sic dirigantur viae meae post vestigia tua, ut exemplo tuo solvens calciamentum vetus de pedibus meis disrumpam vincula mea et liber exultem ad currendam viam, quo possim adsequi mortem istam, qua tu mortuus es huic saeculo, ut vivas deo Christo vivente in te, cuius et mors et vita in corpore tuo et corde et ore cognoscitur...<sup>90</sup>

Thus may my paths be directed in your footsteps, so that by your example I might slip off my old shoes from my feet and burst my chains and rejoice in freedom to run the course, to attain that death, by which you have died to this world so that you may live for God with Christ living in you: his death and life are discerned in your body and heart and mouth...

This, then, is the practical function of the profound relationalism of selves: to give meaning to a life in Christ, which may be realized in part by imitation of other humans. The command “diligas proximum tuum” makes other people an essential part of the Christian life: it ends by making them also an essential part of the Christian self, by the parallelism -- fostered in Christ -- of love and imitation. Relational configurations of oneself become the proof of Christian perfectibility.

Yet, paradoxically, while the self is perfectible -- for striving towards the

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<sup>89</sup> Letter XXV\*, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Paulinus, Letter XLV, 4.

similitudo of Christ would be meaningless were it not so -- yet perfection does not lie in the power of the individual. It is only through divine grace that such perfection may be achieved. The awareness of such grace constantly impinges on the Christian's idea of self: Augustine gives a succinct expression of this sense in the final paragraph of De Trinitate:

Domine deus une, deus trinitas, quaecumque dixi in his libris de tuo agnoscant et tui; si qua de meo, et tu ignosce et tui. Amen.<sup>91</sup>

Only Lord God, God the Trinity, whatever I have said in these books from your self, may your people acknowledge it; if anything from my own self, both you and yours pardon it. Amen.

Paulinus echoes this sentiment in a letter to Sulpicius of c. 397: “quid ille miser habeat, qui se non habet? Non enim se habet qui plus de se quam de deo sperat...”, “what would that poor man possess, who does not possess himself? For he does not possess himself who expects more from himself than from God...”.<sup>92</sup> The self is only completed by the grace of God.

Grace is, by its very nature, necessarily communicable, and yet it is indivisible; as such, it forms an essential part of the model for connectedness of selves. Paulinus uses gratia to convey the idea of his connection with Victoricius through the carrier Paschasius: he has brought him to Nola “ut ... diutius quasi quadam tuae gratiae portione frueremur”, “so that we may enjoy for a little longer some portion, as it were, of your grace”.<sup>93</sup> Yet again, in such statements of relationalism, we see the Christian taste for the paradoxical conflation of the spiritual and temporal realms.

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<sup>91</sup> And see again Augustine's first letter to Paulinus, Letter XXVII, 4 (only the errors in his writing are his).

<sup>92</sup> Letter XI, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Letter XVIII, 1.

The idea of the self evinced in the letters of Paulinus represents the ultimate stage of that conflation of the spiritual and temporal in early Christian thought, an account of which has been the principal aim of this argument. As a direct result of the emphasis on the spiritual over the temporal, interiority and introspection gained dramatically in importance; at the same time, a refusal to be bound by the limits of the physical led to a far more expansive notion of innerness. With a daily religious practice that revolved around a thoroughgoing imitatio of Christ, along with an increasing feeling that this was best realized in community living, a sense of an essentially relational self developed. These ideas of the self are seen particularly clearly in letters of the period, as they bring to the fore the issues intrinsic to such self-configuration, with their constant exploration - implicit or explicit -- of the relationship of the spiritual to the temporal, of literal and symbolic communities, and of the interaction of Christians with each other and with Christ. My intention has been to try to capture some of the elements in this matrix of reference so very different from our own, and yet profoundly influential upon it. An increased appreciation of the interpermeability of the spiritual and temporal spheres has been the result.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
Blaise	Albert Blaise, <u>Dictionnaire Latin-Français des auteurs chrétiens</u> (reissued Turnhout 1993)
CP	Classical Philology
CQ	Classical Quarterly
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum (Series Latina)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
Hartel, <u>Praef.</u>	Preface to Hartel's edition of Paulinus <u>Epistulae</u> (see main bibliography)
JMLat	Journal of Medieval Latin
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
Lampe	G. W. H. Lampe, <u>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</u> (Oxford 1961)
Lewis and Short	Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, <u>A Latin Dictionary</u> (Oxford 1879)
MEFRA	Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome, Antiquité
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
OCT	Oxford Classical Text
OLD	Oxford Latin Dictionary
PCPS	Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society

PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PLRE I	A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, <u>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</u> , vol 1 (Cambridge 1971)
RBen	Révue Bénédictine
REAug	Revue des études augustinienes
RecAug	Recherches augustinienes
REL	Revue des Études Latines
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SP	Studia Patristica
TAPhA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
TLL	Thesaurus Linguae Latinae
VChr	Vigiliae Christianae
Walsh, <u>Letters</u>	<u>Letters of Saint Paulinus of Nola</u> , tr. and ann. P. G. Walsh (see main bibliography)

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