

CARITAS, AMICITIA, AND THE IDEAL READER:

1 Paulinus of Nola's Reception of Augustine's Early Works

Paulinus of Nola's reception of Augustine's early works stands as a watershed event in Augustine's career as a writer. Not only because Augustine recognized in Paulinus the kind of reader he would have for his works, but also because Paulinus would become instrumental in the dissemination of Augustine's works. How Paulinus came to play this role is the subject of what follows. The process is a relatively simple one. And it revolves around notions of *caritas*, the bond of Christian unity, and Paulinus's solicitations to be invited into Augustine's friendship. The early correspondence¹ between Paulinus of Nola and Augustine signal the emergence of Augustine into the wider world of Christian discourse, beyond the narrow confines of Roman Africa, with implications for Augustine's international stature, the expansion of his reading public, and his reputation. Paulinus wrote his Ep. 3 to Alypius (=Augustine, Ep. 24) after Paulinus had received a gift from Alypius containing five books written by Augustine. Several letters would soon follow. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on Augustine, Ep. 24 (=Paulinus, Ep. 3, written to Alypius) and Epp. 25, 27, and 30 exchanged between Augustine and Paulinus.

I. Augustine the Writer

We have long become accustomed to Augustine's overwhelming presence in the late fourth and early fifth century that it is easy to overlook what a turn of events Paulinus of Nola's reception of Augustine's early works contributed to Augustine's career as a writer and the cultivation of Augustine's reading audience beyond Africa. True, Augustine had always had a group of readers for his works. This much can be said about the Cassiciacum dialogues: all of them, with the exception of the *Soliloquia*, were dedicated to specific individuals: *Contra Academicos* to Romanianus, *De beata vita* to Manlius Theodorus, and *De ordine* to Zenobius (the recipient also of Augustine's Ep. 2).

¹ For Augustine's letters I refer throughout to CSEL 34¹ and 34². I have adopted the following translation. *St. Augustine: Letters*, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 12 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1951). Henceforth FC 12.

The works began or completed in the immediate post-baptismal period (*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, *De libero arbitrio* I, *De quantitate animae*) do not contain any dedicatory epistles like *Contra Academicos*, *De ordine*, and *De beata vita*. By the time Augustine returned to Tagaste and settled into his retirement, he had identified the Manichaeans, his former co-religionists, as the primary focus of his work. So in addition to his own studies he wrote to persuade those who were Manichees or were sympathetic to Manichaean teaching. His *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (389) gives indication of an emerging circle of friendly readers who also inspired him to write. The audience for the most part is local. Augustine completed his *De vera religione* in 390 to fulfil a promise made to his friend Romanianus. There are no indications that Augustine's works had received any circulation beyond the provincial confines of Roman Africa.

Augustine's forced ordination at Hippo-Regius in 391 suggested the emergence of a wider audience, in so far as he had become a public figure. But Hippo was not the place he would have expected to make his reputation in the Catholic world, if that had been part of his calculation when he returned to Africa. The people of Hippo seemed acutely aware of this, construing his tears at their vote by acclamation as a sign of his displeasure at being chosen for a lowly community as theirs.²

Beyond both Hippo and Tagaste, there was Carthage, and that group of devout souls who gathered around Aurelius the bishop. Here is where Augustine's wider audience begins to emerge. Through his own efforts Augustine would have the center of gravity of the African church perched on an axis between Hippo and Carthage. The ecclesiastical council held at Hippo in 393 under the auspices of Aurelius of Carthage was in part an acknowledgment of Augustine's influence even at this early stage in his ecclesiastical career. He had all but called the council (see Augustine, Ep. 22.4). When he wrote his *Expositio quarundum propositionum ex epistula apostoli ad Romanos* in 394 he claims to have been putting together the fruits of conversations he had had with some of the brothers in Carthage (*Retractationes* 1.22.1). The request from the brothers that he put into writing the answers he had provided to their questions after they had read the Epistle to the Romans together shows the emergence of part of Augustine's reading public. In a manner similar to the encouragement he received to write his *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, Augustine's resourcefulness was now taken for granted. He had become a *doctor*, a

² Augustine mentions this in *Sermo* 355.

teaching authority for the Catholic communities of Carthage, Hippo, Tagaste and those cities affiliated in some way with the circle of Aurelius of Carthage.

Augustine's circle of readers also included those whom Augustine himself cultivated. This undoubtedly broadened the boundaries of his readership, and may be noted in the efforts he made to send his writings to one Caelestinus. Caelestinus may or may not have solicited them. He had received the works, it appears, because either he had promised or Augustine expected him to be a critical reader. The overwhelming impression one gets is that Augustine sought from Caelestinus comment and criticism. In Letter 18, Augustine demanded that his books be returned as soon as possible. Although Augustine began the letter by expressing his sense of longing for Caelestinus, "Oh how I wish I could speak with you at length," Augustine soon turned to demand his books:

I have written to you and had no answer. I sent you my books against the Manichaeans – the ones I had finished and corrected – but I have not had any indication of your impression of them or your criticism of them. So, now, I must ask them back and you must send them back. I ask you to do so at once, with your comments, for I especially want to know what you make of my writings, and what you think is needed as a weapon for overthrowing that fallacious belief.³

What are the books Augustine has in mind here? Certainly the first work against the Manichaeans was the *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* that he began soon after his baptism in 387. He would not finish its companion piece, the *De moribus Manichaeorum* until 389, after his return to Africa. To speak of "books against the Manicheans" means that Augustine had in mind at least the *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* and either the *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* or the *De moribus Manichaeorum* or both. The *De vera religione* was not, strictly speaking, against the Manichees.

Prior to Paulinus's overtures, Augustine's output can be tracked along a line mostly shaped by the exigencies of his African location. Between his forced ordination in 391 and his retreat at Tagaste until Easter 392 (Ep. 21.4) Augustine did not compose any new works. *De utilitate credendi*, he most certainly wrote after Easter 392, when he returned to Hippo to resume his position as priest. Later that year, on 28th August, he participated in a public disputation with Fortunatus, the Manichee. The following year found him speaking at the Council

³ Augustine, Ep 18.1 (CSEL 34¹, 45). FC 12, 43.

of Hippo (*De fide et symbolo*), and in 394 he would write his studies on both Paul's Epistle to the Galatians and to the Romans. The interests and concerns of the local communities prevailed. Augustine was reading Paul alone and in the company of other brothers at Hippo and Carthage.

Significantly, there are no indications of any previous ecclesiastical contacts beyond those of Roman Africa. Paulinus surprised him. It is also noteworthy that there are no indications of any epistolary contacts between Augustine and Ambrose or Simplicianus and the first letter he received from Paulinus of Nola. This makes Paulinus's gesture all the more remarkable for the prospects it intimated. Interestingly, Augustine would initiate his own contacts with Jerome about the same time that Paulinus came to his attention. Jerome probably did not know Augustine existed. When Jerome compiled his list of famous men in his *De viris illustribus*, from the time of Christ's passion to the 14th year of the reign of Theodosius, Jerome began with the apostle Peter and concluded with himself. Augustine was not among the "famous men". This means that as late as 392/393⁴ Jerome knew next to nothing about Augustine or his writings. Jerome's words in his preface could easily put off those like Augustine who had been left out of this "who's who". In a mildly cantankerous mood, Jerome defended his choices and omissions. He did not believe he had to be held accountable for obscure writers he knew nothing about. He had tried to be comprehensive. Those who remained hidden should not blame him for their obscurity.

If, however, some of those who down to the present continue to write have been passed over by me in the present volume, they should blame themselves rather than me. For from what I have not read I could not know the ones who are hiding their own writings, and what as perhaps known to others remained unknown to me in this corner of the earth. Certainly, when they become illustrious by their writings they will not heave any deep sighs because of any losses through silence.⁵

⁴ J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 174.

⁵ *Saint Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, trans. Thomas P. Halton. The Fathers of the Church, vol 100 (Washington, DC.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 1-2.

Jerome had not read anything from Augustine, and in any case, Augustine was not among those who concerned him. This would soon change. Augustine's Ep. 28, which Jerome never received, even as it circulated in Africa, gives some indication of Augustine's own entry into this wider world. Augustine writes in Ep. 28 that he owes his knowledge of Jerome's physical appearance to Alypius, "now a blessed bishop, but even then worthy of the episcopate."⁶ Alypius had been to Palestine and had had the opportunity to see Jerome. The importance of Alypius's visit to Jerome has largely been overlooked,⁷ though it is critical for assessing how Augustine came to enter this wider world of Christian interaction and the emerging debates and controversies surrounding Jerome and his critics.

The reasons why Alypius went to Palestine are not given by Augustine in Ep. 28. Alypius's visit undoubtedly brought him into contact with aspects of Christian culture in the East that he could only have imagined prior to his pilgrimage. We can surmise that Alypius had wanted to see Jerusalem, learn of Jerome's work as biblical scholar, perhaps bring back some books, see Eastern monasticism for himself, etc.

Alypius returned home before Julianus Paulinus of Nola's emissary visited Carthage. When Paulinus wrote his first letter to Alypius, Alypius was already a bishop. Dennis Trout writes that Paulinus initiated contact with Jerome in spring or early summer 394.⁸ The letter from Paulinus to Jerome is not extant, but Jerome's reply, Ep. 53, is. Jerome invited Paulinus to come to Bethlehem, and offered advice on the sort of life Paulinus should desire to live and what kinds of studies would aid that life. It appears from Jerome's response that Paulinus had asked for guidance in interpreting scripture and direction in organizing his studies. Paulinus would write a second letter that elicited a reply in Jerome's Ep. 58. By then Paulinus had made his dramatic renunciation and had subsequently being ordained. Whether or not this had anything to do with the advice he received in Jerome's first letter is not clear. What is clear is that his choice was not exactly Jerome's recommendation. He professed the life of a monk, and yet had also accepted ordination into the priesthood. In one sense, Paulinus had compromised his vocation as a monk, as far as Jerome was concerned, though the monk of Bethlehem went out of his way to

⁶ Augustine, Ep. 28.1 (CSEL 34¹, 104). FC 12, 93.

⁷ Cf. Mark Vessey, "Conference and Confession," 213.

⁸ Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 92.

commend Paulinus's manner of life.⁹ Jerome certainly had had more years living the life of a monk in Bethlehem. But it was Paulinus's renunciation, not Jerome's, that was making the rumor mills of the Roman aristocracy.

Vigilantius, Paulinus's courier to the East arrived in Palestine in spring 395. He would become embroiled in the Origenist controversy, making Paulinus's relationship with Jerome and the Eastern churches somewhat terpid. Is this what urged Paulinus to look elsewhere for fraternity? And why Aurelius, Alypius and Augustine? What did Paulinus see that others in Italy had not seen? Or did Paulinus simply cast his net wide? Trout suggests that after his initial exchanges with Jerome, Paulinus desired others of less strident and stringent views.¹⁰ There may be something to this, though it seems doubtful. While Jerome does not hide his preferences in his two letters to Paulinus, he is at his most solicitous and deferential. The biting wit that Jerome unleashes on others is nowhere to be found in his first two letters to Paulinus. Jerome too was impressed by what Paulinus had done, only he wished Paulinus to be more thorough in the disbursement of his property.¹¹

In any case, it was Paulinus who initiated the contacts. Paulinus's intentions may have varied considerably between what he expected from Jerome who was already well established and what he sought in Aurelius, Alypius, and Augustine. Paulinus did not know any of these provincials. His references to the monastic communities at Tagaste, Hippo-Regius, and Carthage give indication of the introductory nature of his knowledge of Augustine's world. But as Paulinus entered Augustine's world he would play an important role in bridging the distance that separated Augustine from the Italy Augustine had abandoned a few years before. Paulinus would not only become one of the few people outside the narrow confines of Roman Africa to come into the possession of Augustine's early works, he would become the conduit through which Augustine's literary output flowed outward toward Italy and beyond.

⁹ Jerome, Ep. 53.11.

¹⁰ Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 203, 227.

¹¹ J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome*, 192-194, suggests more cunning and calculation in Jerome's rhetoric in his two letters to Paulinus than seems warranted.

II. Paulinus of Nola and the Africans

Before Paulinus's overture to Alypius it does not appear that Augustine had formed any notion of him. There are indications that Augustine may have heard of Paulinus during the Milanese period which came to an abrupt end when Augustine was converted in August 386. Alypius hints in one of his letters that he had heard of Paulinus's name at Milan, but his words also imply that he did not know him in person. When Paulinus emerged in the mid 390s he did so as a witness of a most astonishing event. Trout begins his most recent work on Paulinus thus:

In the year 394, probably at Barcelona sometime in the late summer or autumn, the Christian senator and noted poet Meropius Pontius Paulinus renounced his secular past and his extensive properties to live for Christ rather than for the world. Paulinus, then in his early forties, had been preparing for the moment for some time. Some five years earlier he had moved away from his estates and friends in Aquitaine and retired with his Spanish-born wife, Therasia, to their properties south of the Pyrenees. Although increasingly attracted to ascetic ideals and already engaged in the formulation of a new Christian poetics, in Spain Paulinus continued at first to live the life of a respectable aristocratic retreat, or *otium liberale*, that he had known in Aquitaine. In late 394, however, yielded to the forces that had been pushing him toward rapture with his social and intellectual past. The spiritual, emotional, and artistic journey of the Spanish years culminated in a *geste spectaculaire*, a sensational rejection of the world in favor of a monastic calling still nascent in the empire's western provinces.¹²

I have cited this extended opening paragraph in Trout's study for the way in which it paints in broad strokes the apparent originality of Paulinus's renunciation. As word of the event spread, Trout argues, different personalities in the world of the late fourth century sought to claim Paulinus' story as an *exemplum* for their own purposes, among them Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.¹³ In Augustine's case the unfolding of the reception can be tracked with remarkable accuracy, given the letters exchanged between Paulinus and the circle of Augustine.

The extant letters only give as a portion of what actually must have been exchanged, given all the allusions to other letters that we do not possess. It is not necessary, however, to follow Pierre Courcelle's

¹² Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2-10.

elaborate conjectures in order to gain some sense of how and what Augustine made of Paulinus and vice-versa.¹⁴ It should also be noted that Paulinus may well have seen this interaction in a much wider context, as involving a circle of devout souls in Roman Africa who were gathered around Aurelius the bishop of Carthage. There are enough references to Aurelius in Paulinus's letters to suggest that he too was part of this new circle to which Paulinus had endeared himself or sought to belong.

Who initiated the correspondence depends on the view one takes on how Paulinus participated in the dissemination of the story about his renunciation. It is safe to say that not long after the event happened there were rumors of it, from what we gather from one of Augustine's letters (Ep. 31), which was not the first or even the earliest in the correspondence. Augustine did not have to depend on those rumors. Paulinus initiated the contacts, sending letters seeking instruction and advice. He sent couriers bearing letters of introduction to monastic centers in the East and to bishops in North Africa.

Julianus, the courier Paulinus sent to Carthage, would eventually meet Alypius.¹⁵ Julianus returned to Paulinus with a letter from Alypius. Paulinus's Ep. 3 (=Augustine, Ep. 24) followed upon Julianus's visit. Paulinus described Alypius's letter as "filled with the light of your sanctity that we seemed not so much to learn as to recognize your love for us, since doubtless that love flows from Him who chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, in whom we were made before we were born, because He made us and not we ourselves, who made also what is to be."¹⁶

Paulinus continued, in language of almost classic predestinarian theology: "Formed therefore by His foreknowledge and power to a likeness of will and a unity of faith or a faith of unity, we are joined by a love which has preceded acquaintance, so that, before actually meeting, we have known each other by the revealing force of the Spirit."¹⁷ This pastiche of biblical passages continues.

We give thanks, therefore, and we rejoice in the Lord, because, being one and the same, He produces His love in His own, everywhere on the earth, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, whom He pours out on all flesh by the stream of the river, making joyful His city, among

¹⁴ Pierre Courcelle, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire. Antécédents et Postérité* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1963), 559-607.

¹⁵ Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 101.

¹⁶ Augustine, Ep. 24.1 (CSEL 34¹, 73). FC 12, 66.

¹⁷ Augustine, Ep. 24.1 (CSEL 34¹, 73-74). FC 12, 66.

whose citizens He has set you on the apostolic seat, as a leader, with the princes of His people, and has lifted us up also who were cast down, and has raised the needy from the earth, and deigned to enroll them in your band.¹⁸

At Carthage Julianus had been privileged to meet Aurelius the bishop. Already Paulinus perceived Carthage, Tagaste and Hippo as the three centers of a confraternity or collegium of clerics. He was anxious to be included. Alypius had requested a copy of a work by Eusebius that he described as dealing with recent or contemporary events (*historia temporibus*). This gives the appearance that there was already some contact between Alypius and Paulinus prior to Paulinus's first letter to Alypius. Paulinus claims not to have been able to comply with the request made of him by Alypius because he did not have the volume with him. However "at your suggestion, I looked for it at Rome and found it with our relative, Domnio, that holy man, who doubtless obliged me the more readily because I said it was for you."¹⁹

Did Domnio already know Alypius or had he come to know of Alypius only after Paulinus received Julianus back from Carthage? It seems that Alypius was relying on his previous contacts in Rome, and had apparently given a description of two people in Rome to whom Paulinus could turn for help in having the work copied. Alypius had, after all, being in Rome prior to Augustine's arrival there in 383, and had served in capacity in which he could have books copied at less expense if he had wanted to (*Confessions* 6.10.16). Alypius had made the request for Eusebius's work at the same time that he gave Julianus a collection of Augustine's books. Alypius suggested to Julianus that the work could possibly be obtained in Rome, probably because Alypius already knew that it was in circulation there. Paulinus acknowledges following through on Alypius's suggestion. He found a copy of the work in the possession of one of his relatives. Paulinus went so far as to have the work brought to Carthage for Alypius.

As you had told me where you would be, I wrote, as you advised, to that venerable member of your circle, our father Aurelius, and asked him, if you should be staying at Hippo Regius, to be so kind as to send our letters to you there, and also the manuscript copied at Carthage. We asked those holy men, Exodius and Comes, whom we recognized by their own kindness and your description, to do the copying personally, so that our relative Domnio would not have to be without his

¹⁸ Augustine, Ep. 24.1 (CSEL 34¹, 74). FC 12, 66-67.

¹⁹ Augustine, Ep. 24.3 (CSEL 34¹, 75). FC 12, 68.

volume too long, and you could keep the one sent you, without the necessity of returning it.²⁰

This exchange of books had of course been initiated by Alypius who, in the manner of a disseminator of Augustine's works, had sent five books of Augustine's to Paulinus with Julianus. Paulinus had gotten more than he could have imagined. "We have received, as a special sign of your love (*dilectionis*) and regard (*sollicitudinis*), the work, complete in five books, of that holy man perfected in the Lord Christ, our brother Augustine, and we so admire and look up to it that we believe it was divinely inspired (*ut dictata diuinitus*)." Emboldened, Paulinus "ventured to write to him, taking for granted that you will make excuses for our inexperience and recommend us to his love, as also to all the saints."²¹ Julianus had not encountered Augustine. Paulinus would not wait long to introduce himself to Augustine (Augustine, Ep 25), now that he had in his possession the works of Augustine that Alypius had sent along. Paulinus was equally anxious to know about Alypius and the circumstances surrounding his conversion, and sought other stories of worldly renunciation. The reasons may be difficult to discern, but a surmise can be made. Paulinus wanted to compare stories, it seemed. He sought others of like mind and vocation who could be companions along the "narrow path" of renunciation he had chosen.

In one of his letters to his longtime friend Sulpicius Severus (c. 363-420), Paulinus explained the manner of his life to Severus in unmistakable terms, at a time when it appears that Severus was having trouble explaining himself to others who found their renunciations troubling. "You write that you are taking pains to explain my course and your own," Paulinus observed.²² "But what will you do if you fail to persuade the men who argue with you about God's work, not for their instruction but for your destruction? First you will blush, and then you will grow pale, as though you are defending a worse cause. Dislodged from your position, you will stumble on the way of the Lord, and slip back from heaven and earth, once you destroy what you have built."²³

²⁰ Augustine, Ep. 24.3 (CSEL 34¹, 75). FC 12, 68.

²¹ Augustine, Ep. 24.2 (CSEL 34¹, 74). FC 12, 67.

²² Paulinus, Ep. 1.4 (CSEL 29, 4). *The Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola*, translated and annotated by P. G. Walsh, Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 1 (Westminster, MD.: The Newman Press, 1966), 31. Henceforth ACW 1.

²³ Paulinus, Ep. 1.4 (CSEL 29, 4). ACW 1, 31-32.

Severus was to have no doubts about what was at stake. Those who pretended to care so deeply about him as to wonder about his renunciation of the world were to be tolerated like an enemy within one's household.

The identity of the inquirers to whom you must render an account greatly affects the issue. If a man comes in eagerness to learn and admits his ignorance, sprinkle upon him the seed of the faith, reveal God's commandment. If he embraces the word, thou has gained a brother for the Church and a sheep for Christ. But the bud which sprouts from the good seed may be imperfect. If the enemy of our heavenly Master has oversown cockle by night amongst the wheat, the pernicious blade and the barren crop will have to be separated from the good produce at the time of the harvest... If your inquirer is such, avoid him and keep him away from your conversation and your sight, so that if he cannot be healed by your faith, he may not wound you by his lack of it.²⁴

Paulinus advises Severus "to realize what you are longing for when you seek to render an account to men such as these unbelievers."²⁵ It should not be surprising, then, what importance Paulinus attached to those who were bishops in the church. He commended Alypius in his office as an overseer over the Lord's pasture "as a watchful shepherd keeping unsleeping guard."²⁶ Paulinus wanted to know more though, and avered that "by your renunciation of the world (*abdicatione saeculi*) and repudiation (*repulsa*) of flesh and blood you have made to yourself a desert (*desertum*), where you are separated from the many, but called among the few."²⁷ Paulinus may not have known much about Alypius's past, but he seemed to guess from what had been related to him by Julianus and from Alypius's letter to him some sense of what Alypius's circumstances as a priest were. He presses for more details, adding a proviso that seemed to raise the importance of Alypius's own life to the level of the general history of the church itself. In return for the gift of Eusebius's *Chronicle* (*de cunctis temporibus historiam*) he was having copied for Alypius, he expected to be offered a history of Alypius: a *Vita Alypii* (*tuae sanctitatis historiam*) in return for the *historia temporum*.

I ask one thing of you, since you have filled me with such great love of you, unworthy as I am and not daring to hope for so great honor,

²⁴ Paulinus, Ep. 1.4 (CSEL 29, 4). ACW 1, 32.

²⁵ Paulinus, Ep. 1.6 (CSEL 29, 5). ACW 1, 33.

²⁶ Augustine, Ep. 24.2 (CSEL 34.75). FC 12, 67.

²⁷ Augustine, Ep. 24.2 (CSEL 34.75). FC 12, 67-68.

that, in return for this general history, you would give me the details of your own history, such as: 'Of what race are you? from what home? and called by so great a lord, set apart by what impulses from your mother's womb, did you go over to the mother of the sons of God, rejoicing in her offspring, by renouncing flesh and blood, and how were you admitted to the royal and sacerdotal race?'²⁸

Paulinus does not hide that fact that these questions reveal him at his most curious and perhaps even intrusive, though he implies that this is somewhat consonant with Alypius's own desire to establish what sort of life Paulinus may have had at Milan prior to Alypius's own arrival there. Paulinus too now wants to know if Alypius was converted under Ambrose: "I admit that I am somewhat curious to learn what you hinted at finding out about the name of our lowliness at Milan when you first went there, for indeed, I should like to know you wholly, and I should think it is a matter of personal joy if you were received into the faith by our worthy father Ambrose, or even consecrated to the priesthood by him, for then we should seem to have the same father in God."²⁹ As Paulinus would go on to claim, he traced his own priestly lineage to Ambrose, not because he had been converted under Ambrose or made priest by him, but because "I have been nourished in the faith by my constant love of Ambrose and now I am supported by him in the priesthood."³⁰ Paulinus points out that he was baptized by Delphinus at Bordeaux "and ordained priest, suddenly, by the pressure of popular demand, at Barcelona by Lampius."³¹ And although he lives in various places, Paulinus claims that Ambrose counts him among his priests (*ipsius presbyter censear*).

How soon Alypius came to know of Paulinus's story after his forced ordination in Barcelona on 25th December 394³² is not clear from any of the extant letters. Paulinus assumed Alypius knew almost nothing, hence the mini biography about where he was baptized and ordained. Paulinus's first letter was sent when Paulinus was no longer in Barcelona, where he had been made a priest. The letter originates from his country estates in Campania, near enough to Rome for Paulinus to be able to look for Eusebius's work among his friends and relatives.³³

²⁸ Augustine, Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 34¹, 76). FC 12, 68-69.

²⁹ Augustine, Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 34¹, 76). FC 12, 69.

³⁰ Augustine, Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 34¹, 76). FC 12, 69.

³¹ Augustine, Ep. 24.4 (CSEL 34¹, 76). FC 12, 69.

³² Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 94.

³³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 116.

Now in Campania, Paulinus reclaims his links to Ambrose. For all of Ambrose's sense of ecclesiastical politics, it is curious how little he recognized in Augustine what the young professor of rhetoric would become. Ambrose advertised Paulinus's conversion and renunciation.³⁴ There is no evidence that Ambrose saw such drama in Augustine's conversion in August 386 and his baptism at Easter 387. Augustine had received his baptism under Ambrose alright. But there is hardly a word from Ambrose to suggest that Augustine stood out from among those who came to Ambrose for direction.³⁵ So perhaps Augustine was simply one of the many. Once Augustine left Milan that world was apparently lost on him as well. Paulinus had cast his net wide in his attempt to enter into the friendship and fraternity of the Africans. For Augustine, who had turned his back on so much that beckoned in the aristocratic circles in Milan, Paulinus's overture could not have been more surprising. And for a writer still trying to find a critical readership Paulinus's overture could not have been more timely.

With a penchant for biblical allusion and symbolism, Paulinus quickly drew the boundaries of fraternal charity. Using the language of the bonds of love, Paulinus claimed a community of brothers and friends bonded by Christ's love (*caritas*), though he had laid no eyes on Alypius or any members of the circle of Aurelius of Carthage. Paulinus could assume all this because, as he put it, the love which binds us "flows from Him who chose us before the foundation of the world, in whom we were made before we were born, because He made us and not we ourselves, who made also what is to be."³⁶ Paulinus's citation of Ephesians 1.4-5 and Psalm 99.3 here almost anticipate the theme with which Augustine would later begin his *Confessions*. Paulinus also approached Alypius in the guise of a new and untested member of the royal race of Christ's priests. That recognition allowed Paulinus to underscore his own unworthiness as a neophyte compared to Alypius: Alypius is the saint, Paulinus the toiler who seeks his help.

That you may know everything about me, you must know that I am a long-standing sinner, not so long ago brought out from darkness and the shadow of death, that I have breathed the spirit of his life-giving

³⁴ Ambrose, Ep. 58.1-3 (CSEL 82, 180-181). Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 3.

³⁵ Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 66-68, on Ambrose's claims about those who came from Africa to be consecrated by him.

³⁶ Augustine, Ep. 24.1 (CSEL 34¹, 73). FC 12, 68.

air, that I have not so long ago put my hand to the plow and taken up the cross of the Lord, and I hope to be helped by your prayers to persevere to the end.³⁷

“Visit us by your letters (*uisita litteris tuas*),” he writes, “and lead us forth into the light in which you live ...”³⁸ Paulinus goes on to conclude his letter by mentioning his affection for the brothers gathered in the monastic communities at Carthage, Tagaste, Hippo Regius, and “in all your parishes.” How much of these sites were merely place names to Paulinus is not clear, if in fact Julianus had only visited Carthage. Paulinus did not want to leave anyone out: So not just those monks or parishes mentioned but “in fact, in all the places known to you throughout Africa, where they serve the Lord as Catholics.”³⁹ Paulinus attempts to create a sense of Catholic community: “Let us know you.” “Visit us through your letters,” etc. The letters would duly come.

III. Paulinus and Augustine: Caritas and Amicitia

Paulinus's Ep. 4 to Augustine (=Augustine, Ep. 25) would follow soon after, in late 395, most likely before winter 395/396.⁴⁰ After the salutation, Paulinus's letter began with two important words: *Caritas Christi*. There would be no mistaking what motivated Paulinus's desire for friendship. Paulinus proceeded on the same point that his previous letter to Alypius had begun: on the bonds of fraternal charity which existed between the unknown correspondents because they were united by the love of Christ in the unity of a shared faith. This, Paulinus claims, “lends us confidence to set aside awe of you to write to you.”⁴¹ Paulinus emphasized again his own lowliness as a newly ordained cleric. Paulinus now possessed the five books written by Augustine that Alypius had sent to him through Julianus. Paulinus would proceed to speak of being bound to Augustine all the more for that reason. For the love of Christ “binds you also to me in my innermost fibers, especially through those works of yours which I now have in five books.”⁴² The accolades begin. Paulinus describes Augus-

³⁷ Augustine, Ep. 24.5 (CSEL 34¹, 76-77). FC 12, 69.

³⁸ Augustine, Ep. 24.5 (CSEL 34¹, 77). FC 12, 69.

³⁹ Augustine, Ep. 24.6 (CSEL 34¹, 77). FC 12, 70.

⁴⁰ Joseph T. Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism* (Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1977), 189.

⁴¹ Augustine, Ep. 25.1 (CSEL 34¹, 78). FC 12, 70.

⁴² Augustine, Ep. 25.1 (CSEL 34¹, 78). FC 12, 70-71.

tine's books as "overflowing with scholarly authority and sweet with heavenly honeycomb-medicine and nourishment for my soul."⁴³ The gift from Alypius is not only instruction for Paulinus, but "for the profit of the Church in many cities."⁴⁴ Without even being asked, Paulinus had indicated his desire to spread the "word according to Augustine." As if to suggest that he saw Augustine as his master, tutor, and guide, Paulinus wrote that "these, then, are the books I now have to read (*nunc libros lectioni habeo*), in these I find my pleasure, from them I take food, not that which perishes, but that which produces the substance of everlasting life ..."⁴⁵ Paulinus would go on to speak in a catena of biblical citations and allusions, all meant to portray Augustine as an uncommon gift to the church universal:

O true salt of the earth, whereby our hearts are preserved against the wickedness of the world! O light worthily placed upon the candlestick of the Church, fed with the oil of gladness from the seven-fold lamp, giving forth light to Catholic cities far and near, how you dispel the dense darkness of heretics and by the force of your brilliant language free the light of truth from the clouds of darkness!⁴⁶

After praising Augustine as the light of the church expelling by his brilliance the darkness of heresy, Paulinus goes on to speak about how much he already thinks he knows Augustine because of the reading of his books:

You see, beloved brother, esteemed and looked up to in Christ our Lord, how intimately I know you, with what respect I admire you, with what great love I embrace you, as I daily rejoice in the converse of your books and feed on the breath of your mouth. Rightly do I call your mouth a pipe of living water, and the source of an unending fount, because Christ has become in you a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.⁴⁷

Paulinus writes about his soul thirsting as parched ground, desiring to be inebriated (*inebriari*) by the spring which preceeds from Augustine (*tui fluminis*).⁴⁸ Paulinus calls the five books sent by Alypius Augustine's "Pentateuch against the Manichaeans." And he considers them the necessary weapons he needs against the enemies of

⁴³ Augustine, Ep. 25.1 (CSEL 34¹, 78). FC 12, 71.

⁴⁴ Augustine, Ep. 25.1 (CSEL 34¹, 78). FC 12, 71.

⁴⁵ Augustine, Ep. 25.1 (CSEL 34¹, 78). FC 12, 71.

⁴⁶ Augustine, Ep. 25.1 (CSEL 34¹, 79). FC 12, 71.

⁴⁷ Augustine, Ep. 25.2 (CSEL 34¹, 79). FC 12, 71.

⁴⁸ Augustine, Ep. 25.2 (CSEL 34¹, 79). FC 12, 71-72.

the church. "You have armed me well against the Manichaeans."⁴⁹ He asks for more: "if you have prepared other weapons against other enemies of the Catholic faith, I beg you to supply me with them from your armory, and not to refuse me the armament of justice, for our enemy, who has a thousand harmful arts, must be attacked with as many kinds of weapons as he uses snares against us."⁵⁰ For a controversialist, these are encouraging words. For any writer of Augustine's sensibilities, Paulinus's interest in Augustine's writings provided added motivation.

Augustine's audience is about to move beyond the provincial confines of Roman Africa back to the Italian mainland that he had deserted in 388. The almost seven years between Augustine's return to Africa and Paulinus's letter to him had seen Augustine through many changes. He had abandoned Italy and a successful career in Milan, the seat of the empire. Now his writings were being solicited by a man whose renunciations were causing a stir.⁵¹ Augustine had heard the rumblings. He would now embrace Paulinus in the manner of an admirer who could well imagine what it must have felt for Paulinus to embark on the path that he was now on.

If, at this early stage in their correspondence Paulinus stood every much the admirer, it would not be for long. No amount of Paulinus's self-deprecation could conceal the remarkable nature of his renunciation and the extent to which Augustine could read in those very words Paulinus chose to speak of himself the patterns of Christian practice Augustine had come to admire. Paulinus's recognition and acknowledgment of his prevailing difficulties only endeared him to Augustine. While some of Paulinus's rhetoric seems formulaic, the style in which he presented it could not be discounted so easily, if one knew something of the life he had abandoned and the new life he had embraced. Again, Paulinus emphasized the newness of his renunciations and ordination, the very things he had mentioned in his letter to Alypius. Once again, he speaks about needing guidance, teaching, and prayers. And again he speaks of their common vocation.

If you consider the office we both hold (*officium commune*), you are my brother, but in maturity of mind and experience, you are my father, although in years you are younger than I, because hoary-haired prudence has advanced you in your youth to the maturity of one who has served in the ranks of the elders. Warn me, then, and strengthen me in

⁴⁹ Augustine, Ep. 25.2 (CSEL 34¹, 79). FC 12, 72.

⁵⁰ Augustine, Ep. 25.2 (CSEL 34¹, 79). FC 12, 72.

⁵¹ Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 3-4.

sacred letters and spiritual studies, new-born as I am, as I have said, and inexperienced, by reason of long dangers and frequent shipwrecks; you who have long since taken up your stand on solid earth, receive me with open arms, that we may, if you will allow, sail together into the harbor of salvation.⁵²

Notice how similar these sentiments are to those expressed by Augustine only eight years before in 386, soon after his conversion, in the epistolary introduction to his *De beata vita*, written at Cassiciacum in the Milanese countryside. To Manlius Theodorus Augustine had presented himself in a similar persona. Not as a cleric writing to another cleric, but as a philosophical dilettante writing to a seasoned philosophical mind, with the expectation that Theodorus would become Augustine's *magister*. Augustine too had appropriated the language of sailing into harbor, when describing his conversion, and had assured Theodorus that while he knew his destination, there were still obstacles to contend with.

Augustine gives no indication that Manlius Theodorus accepted the solicitation. So notwithstanding the praise he heaped on him in the *De ordine* the desire to find in him the master who would guide Augustine's studies seemed to have remained unfilled. Augustine had assumed that given their joint interests and their mutual attraction to Ambrose's preaching Manlius Theodorus was the right person to provide encouragement and friendly criticism of Augustine's philosophical studies at Cassiciacum. That nothing seems to have come of it, suggests that, for all of Augustine's hopes, Theodorus may have thought differently.

Augustine may have misjudged the Milanese. In any case, once Augustine retired his professorship and returned to Africa, the Italian years quickly receded into his past. He had abandoned Italy, and with it, virtually all the connections he had made in those years, except for those he had brought with him from and to Africa. His teaching in Milan had been one of the obstacles towards *otium*. He returned to Africa unburdened. Augustine could least expect a life of acclaim. He adopted the self-designation of a "servus Dei," intent possibly on a life of relative obscurity. Augustine could not have guessed that within a few years of his return he would be an ordained priest. Still less could he have imagined that a decade after his conversion in Milan he would become a bishop in a place like Hippo, with considerable influence among the Catholics in Africa.

⁵² Augustine, Ep. 25.3 (CSEL 34¹, 81). FC 12, 73.

The philosophical leisure he had sought after his conversion and retirement, would be anything but that. Peter Brown's evocative description of Augustine's "lost future" touch on these issues.⁵³ But did Augustine think of his life in these terms? After all, when he called himself a "servus Dei," Augustine was signaling a particular way of life. Could he possibly have lived this life apart from the turbulent world of the Catholic communities around him? Could a *servus Dei* conceive of an *otium philosophiae* that was not deeply tinged with a peculiarly Christian interpretation of true philosophy (*vera philosophia*)? Had Augustine not indicated this much in his epistolary introduction to Manlius Theodorus in *De beata vita* when he spoke about the religious nature of the philosophy in which he now walked (*De beata vita* 1.5)? And how much this had lightened his load?

As we saw earlier, Paulinus also spoke of being unburdened in this introductory letter to Augustine, picking up the theme of shipwreck, as he continued in the language of a sea expedition. "I have tried to lighten myself of baggage (*sarcinis*) and burdensome garments (*uestimentis onerantibus*), that by the command and help of Christ, free of fleshly entanglements and anxiety for the morrow, I may swim out of the stormy sea of the present life, where our sins, like howling monsters, try to cut us off from God."⁵⁴ As years before Augustine spoke discretely about feminine problems in *De beata vita*, Paulinus now speaks tactfully about burdensome garments and fleshly entanglements. Augustine understood Paulinus almost instinctively. Paulinus writes about so much that Augustine knew so well: "Not that I boast of having achieved this, although if I could glory, I should glory in the Lord, who must accomplish what is present to us to will; but my soul still covets to long for the accomplishing the will of God, I who still desire to desire!"⁵⁵

Paulinus juxtaposes language about longing for perfection with thoughts about the God who makes such willing and desiring possible. In characteristic fashion, Paulinus continues in a chain of biblical citations, allusions, and inferences, building up a portrait of himself as a neophyte in the company of Augustine and Alypius, who are seasoned masters not only as baptized believers but also as members of the privileged "race" of "princes" (*princeps*) of God's people. Paulinus would like to believe that he is not being presumptuous on

⁵³ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 146-157.

⁵⁴ Augustine, Ep. 25.4 (CSEL 34¹, 81). FC 12, 73.

⁵⁵ Augustine, Ep. 25.4 (CSEL 34¹, 81-82). FC 12, 73-74.

his part in attempting to enter into Augustine's friendship. For Paulinus, it is partly a matter of necessity, because he has been called into this fraternity by the Lord. And he is certain that as wise as Augustine is, he would not mind to "consent to the humble." Alypius's personal example had served as a foretaste. Paulinus expected no less from Augustine. "He certainly has given you a personal example of loving us before he knew us, beyond our deserving, because he was able to see us by loving, and to reach out to us by conversing, even when we were unknown to him, and separated by the remoteness of our country or the intervening sea, and this he did by the spirit of true affection which speaks and is poured abroad everywhere."⁵⁶

Paulinus turns to Alypius's effort in engendering love for Augustine, again reiterating the kind of affection that can be cultivated in someone who is not known and the manner in which such love extends itself. Alypius, he observes, "gave us the first proofs of his affection (*prima affectus sui*), and the pledges of your love (*documenta caritatis tuae*)" by the books he sent along. He did more. "He made a great effort to have us love your Holiness in no ordinary way, not only because of his words, but through our own fuller knowledge of your eloquence and faith, and we believe that he has been equally intent on having you love us in return, in imitation of him."⁵⁷

With great tact, Paulinus asked to be included into Augustine's friendship. If Augustine had any hesitation about entering into Paulinus's friendship he would have to take his cues from Alypius. Not only because of what Alypius had said to Julianus and written to Paulinus about Augustine, but also because Paulinus now stood before Augustine as a reader, student, and knowing listener of Augustine's own words. Because of the love Alypius had already demonstrated in inviting Paulinus into his friendship, Augustine was already a part of Paulinus's world. And so Paulinus sent a loaf of bread "as a token of our unity and our love." For Augustine to ignore or overlook Paulinus's gesture would be to discount what already was obtained between Paulinus and Alypius, to say nothing of what impact Augustine's books had had on Paulinus.

To have known anything of Paulinus' story would have been fascinating enough for Augustine. After all, Augustine had been celebrating in his own life a pattern of renunciation which had begun when he was himself at the center of the Roman world. In Paulinus, a

⁵⁶ Augustine, Ep. 25.5 (CSEL 34¹, 82). FC 12, 74-75.

⁵⁷ Augustine, Ep. 25.5 (CSEL 34¹, 83). FC 12, 75.

patrician among patricians, as it were, Augustine now had a correspondent, student, and admirer who not only sought Augustine's friendship but was inviting Augustine back into that company he had left years before, this time under terms in which Augustine would not find regrettable. Augustine did not miss the opportunity, though for a moment it appeared to Paulinus that Augustine might have been dragging his feet. Before Augustine's response could reach him, Paulinus wrote again: Ep 6 (=Augustine Ep. 30). Augustine would write Ep 31 in reply, even as he hoped that Paulinus would have by then received his previous Ep. 27.

How anxious Paulinus must have been for this contact with Augustine is evident in Paulinus's personal dissatisfaction with the delay in hearing from Augustine. The courier who bore the first letter to Augustine had not returned. A second missive to Augustine, therefore, became necessary. Augustine could not miss the simple fact that he was being sought after with the utmost sincerity.

Some time ago, my dearly beloved brother in Christ the Lord, although I realized that you were unacquainted with me, and that you were absent and engaged in your holy and pious labors, I made haste to approach you by letter, embracing you with my whole heart in a brotherly and intimate conversation. And I believe that, by the favor of the Lord, my words were delivered into your hands; but as the messenger whom I had sent before the winter set in to deliver greetings to you and others, equally dear to God, has not yet returned, I can no longer delay this duty or restrain my very ardent longing for a word from you. Therefore, I am now writing a second time, if my former letter deserved to reach you, or a first time, if it did not have the good fortune of being put into your hands.⁵⁸

Paulinus did not want Augustine to judge his affirmations of love as a matter of duty or courtesy: "do not weigh our love for you by duty alone (*officiis solo*) or by the time of the arrival of letters."⁵⁹ Paulinus did everything to endear himself to Augustine.

"From the first time I knew you in your works against the Manichaeans, through the kindness of the venerable bishops, Aurelius and Alypius, the love for you was so deeply rooted in me that I seemed not so much to take on a new friendship as to renew a long-standing affection. Now at length I write to you, unskilled in word, perhaps, but not in love, and recognize you mutually in spirit through the interior man."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Augustine, Ep. 30.1 (CSEL 34¹, 123). FC 12, 109.

⁵⁹ Augustine, Ep. 30.2 (CSEL 34¹, 123). FC 12, 109.

⁶⁰ Augustine, Ep. 30.2 (CSEL 34¹, 123-124). FC 12, 109.

This stands in some contrast to what Paulinus could say about his former teacher Ausonius. Ausonius sought to question the nature of Paulinus's new manner of life.⁶¹ The exchanges between Paulinus and Ausonius seem to have soothed over their differences, even though a gap remained.⁶² It was not too long after the exchange of letters and poems between Paulinus and Ausonius over the nature of their friendship and the role of the Muses in their respective lives that Paulinus entered into his interaction with Augustine. Paulinus had to justify himself to Ausonius. To Augustine there was no such need. The contrast is palpable.

In Augustine Paulinus believed he had found someone who could foster the very sensibilities that he found in himself. Paulinus's overtures were far from perfunctory. They were not simply conducted along the protocols of classical notions of *amicitia*. Paulinus rarely used the word *amicitia* in the aftermath of his renunciations, except to qualify it as human friendship (*humana amicitia*) in contradistinction to another kind of friendship, true friendship inspired by the love of Christ (*caritas Christi*).⁶³ Paulinus took liberties, liberties he believed warranted by the bond of unity that already existed between himself and Augustine as members of the same body: the body of Christ. "It is not strange, then, that we should be together, though apart, unacquainted yet well known to each other, since we are members of one body, we have one head, we are refreshed by one grace, we live by one bread, we walk by one road, we live in the same house."⁶⁴ Paulinus pressed the unity of faith and the bonds of Christian fraternity. On the basis of these, he could implore and plead to be invited into Augustine's company and friendship. As he had stated in his previous letter to Alypius, he was the toiler who sought the help of the expert. But he was a toiler who also believed that he was tilling in the same soil that Augustine was laboring: "in everything that we are, we strive for the future by the full hope and faith which sustains us in the present; we are equally one in the spirit and in the body of the Lord, and we should become nothing if we fell away from the One."⁶⁵

⁶¹ Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 78-89.

⁶² Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 33-36.

⁶³ Joseph T. Lienhard, "Friendship in Paulinus of Nola and Augustine," *Augustiniana* (1991): 279-296; reference is to pp. 285-289.

⁶⁴ Augustine, Ep. 30.2 (CSEL 34¹, 124). FC 12, 109-110.

⁶⁵ Augustine, Ep. 30.2 (CSEL 34¹, 124). FC 12, 110.

The fact of being absent and yet claiming to be present was a prospect that both Augustine and Paulinus appreciated. As literate men and consummate letter writers, they understood what this meant. Better yet, they could cherish putting themselves into other people's hearts in a way that mere letters as inscriptions on parchment or wax tablets could not communicate. Just about this time Augustine himself had noted in his Ep. 28 to Jerome (which never reached Jerome) that he had formed a physical impression of the monk in Bethlehem because of Alypius's description of him, "for after he had seen you and I had seen him at his return, I confess that you were made almost present to me by his description." Augustine adds that even before Alypius returned from Palestine, "while he was still seeing you, I saw you, too, through his eyes."⁶⁶ As far as Augustine was concerned, Alypius always carried a part of Augustine with him. "Anyone who knows us will say that we are two in body but one in mind, at least so far as perfect agreement goes and faithful intimacy; not in merit, however, in which he excels."⁶⁷ A trusted and dear friend like Alypius could make Augustine present to Jerome, as well as bring back impressions of Jerome as if Augustine himself had beheld him.

Failing the presence of a trusted friend, a beloved courier was not such a terrible second best. Paulinus of Nola believed he had just such emissaries in his "beloved sons" Romanus and Agilis who were dispatched with his second letter to Augustine. Through them he hoped for some personal impressions of Augustine in the absence of a personal visit. "What insignificant thing does bodily presence deprive us of, except that satisfaction which feeds the eyes, always looking of temporal rewards?"⁶⁸ Paulinus asked. He had no intention of discounting the longing for another's presence, because bodiliness is among the gifts of the resurrection life promised to believers. And for this very reason, he wished "the grace of God might allow us this benefit, so we might see your face even in the flesh."⁶⁹ In the event that Augustine could not come – which Paulinus seemed to take for granted – he expected Romanus and Agilis, "our other self," to return with tokens of Augustine. Paulinus hoped the two would be able to "feel the effects" (*affectu*) of Augustine's love (*tuae caritatis*) and communicate something of that to Paulinus. At the least, Paulinus

⁶⁶ Augustine, Ep. 28.1 (CSEL 34¹, 104). FC 12, 93-94.

⁶⁷ Augustine, Ep. 28.1 (CSEL 34¹, 104). FC 12, 94.

⁶⁸ Augustine, Ep. 30.3 (CSEL 34¹, 124). FC 12, 110.

⁶⁹ Augustine, Ep. 30.3 (CSEL 34¹, 125). FC 12, 110.

expected a letter in return: "If you wish to make use of them to enrich me with the gift of grace which is entrusted to you, you can do so safely. For I should like you to know that they are one heart and one soul in the Lord with us."⁷⁰

Could Augustine resist Paulinus's overtures? Hardly. Paulinus's two letters would have been impossible to ignore, even if Augustine had any intentions of resisting this invitation to friendship from so notable a figure as Paulinus. Augustine's first response, which Paulinus had not received before he penned his second letter to Augustine, rendered any anxieties Paulinus may have had about the delay inconsequential. Augustine would reply to Paulinus's second letter all the same.

Augustine's first response revealed a good deal. He had in all likelihood read Paulinus's letter to Alypius. For he mentions reading "your letters," most certainly the two (Augustine, Ep. 24 & 25) written to Alypius and Augustine, respectively. Augustine also mentions that the brothers have read them and "rejoice unceasingly and exceedingly over the rich and excellent gifts of God which are yours."⁷¹ That Paulinus was being received not only by Alypius and Augustine but into the fraternity of those gathered around them shows how Paulinus had entered the imagination of those servants of God (*servi Dei*). Augustine draws attention to the profound impression Paulinus had made on the brothers through his letters.

As often as they read them they carry them away, because they are carried away when they read. The sweet odor of Christ which they distil, their fragrance, is something beyond telling. When those letters present you to us so that you are almost seen, how they arouse us to seek you! For they make you clearly visible and desirable, and the more they show your presence among us, in some sort, the more they make it impossible for us to bear your absence. In them all love you and wish to be loved by you, while God is praised and blessed because by His grace you are such as you are.⁷²

Paulinus's story had within it the very elements of the exceptional. Among a circle of men who had also come to recognize in Alypius and Augustine's renunciations models worth imitating, Paulinus's self-portrait in his letters engendered the dearest of affections. The brothers remained impressed. Augustine himself could not conceal his good pleasure.

⁷⁰ Augustine, Ep. 30.3 (CSEL 34¹, 125). FC 12, 110.

⁷¹ Augustine, Ep. 27.2 (CSEL 34¹, 97). FC 12, 88.

⁷² Augustine, Ep. 27.2 (CSEL 34¹, 97). FC 12, 88.

Augustine began his letter as if writing to an acquaintance whose friendship he had long sought. Augustine's opening, while bordering on the normal courtesies expected in such literary and ecclesiastical exchanges, still manages to reveal Augustine's fascination. Paulinus had breached a divide that could not be gainsaid. Augustine took note. That Paulinus was asking to be included into the circle of Augustine's intimate friendship was more than Augustine could have elicited from his station at Hippo. Augustine was well on his way back to Italy. Not in person, and no longer as an ambitious young rhetorician, but in an epistolary and literary persona that would be hard to ignore, all the same.

IV. The Ideal Reader: An Instant Friendship

Augustine begins Ep. 27 by addressing Paulinus as "good sir" (*bone uir*), as if somewhat mindful of Paulinus's pedigree. "O good sir and good brother, you have been hiding from my heart. And I tell it to endure your still hiding from my sight, but it scarcely obeys me; in fact, it does not obey me at all."⁷³ Augustine speaks of an unbearable feeling in his heart, a torment in his innermost being. His opening sounds overly effusive, but the sentiments are no less true on that account. Augustine found a way to speak of both his longing and his suffering as engendering something good in him because, like the expectation for the heavenly Jerusalem "the more impatiently we wait for it, the more patiently we bear all things on account of it."⁷⁴ So he suffers because he has not laid eyes on Paulinus but his suffering consoles him: "In this state of mind, my grief consoles me not by being assuaged, but by being embraced."⁷⁵ Grief for one who is not known might appear overstated. But not for Augustine who, like Paulinus, believed he had some intimation of the other's inner self through his letters: "Do not reprove me, I beg of you, from the height of that holier gravity in which you excel, by saying that I cannot properly grieve because I do not know you, when you have laid open to my gaze your soul, your very innermost self."⁷⁶

In much the same way that Paulinus had praised Alypius's letter and Augustine's books Augustine speaks about the sweetness of Paulinus's letters. It was Augustine's turn to say Paulinus's letters "overflowed with milk and honey" (*lac et mel*). Augustine also drew

⁷³ Augustine, Ep. 27.1 (CSEL 34¹, 95). FC 12, 87.

⁷⁴ Augustine, Ep. 27.1 (CSEL 34¹, 96). FC 12, 87.

⁷⁵ Augustine, Ep. 27.1 (CSEL 34¹, 96). FC 12, 87.

⁷⁶ Augustine, Ep. 27.1 (CSEL 34¹, 96). FC 12, 87-88.

attention to Paulinus's "simplicity of heart" (*simplicitatem cordis tui*).⁷⁷ If Paulinus's simplicity elicited awe and deference, his chaste union with his wife Therasia, turned Augustine toward the allegorical. "There, the cedars of Libanus are laid on the ground, there they are joined by the thongs of love to be the material of the Ark, and are incorruptibly floated on the waters of this world; there glory is despised that it may be acquired, and the world given up that it may be held; there, the little ones or even the growing children of Babylon are dashed against a stone; that is, the vices of disorder and worldly pride."⁷⁸

Augustine continued to comment on Paulinus's letters: "those letters, letters of unfeigned faith, letters of high hope, letters of pure charity." Augustine is here recalling one of his favorite passages from the pastoral epistle 1 Timothy 1.5 as a gloss for the treble invocation of faith, hope, and love found in 1 Corinthians 13.13. Augustine refers to 1 Timothy 1.5 frequently because it represented for him the simplicity of true Christian devotion and the goal of Christian instruction and learning: love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.⁷⁹ He credited all these qualities to Paulinus. Augustine asks rhetorically whether Paulinus's letters are alluring (*blandiores*) or full of fervor (*ardentiores*)? enlightening (*luminosiores*) or fruitful (*fecundiores*)?⁸⁰ "It is amazing," he writes, "that they should bring us, so to speak, both abundant showers and fair weather. I ask how this can be, or how I can repay you for those letters, except by being wholly yours in Him to whom you wholly belong?"⁸¹

Augustine finds himself confronting a familiar problem, an old nemesis: how to respond to praise from others. In his Ep. 22 to Aurelius of Carthage in between his forced ordination and his resumption of his duties as priest in Hippo, Augustine spoke of the difficulties that attend human praise: "it is a great thing not to rejoice in the honors and praises of men," he notes at one point.⁸² He openly admitted to Aurelius that he constantly had to wage this battle because "I cannot always put away my pleasure in praise when it is offered."⁸³

⁷⁷ Joseph T. Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Asceticism*, 128-151 underscores the simplicity of Paulinus's theology and spirituality.

⁷⁸ Augustine, Ep. 27.2 (CSEL 34¹, 98). FC 12, 89.

⁷⁹ See, for example, *De doctrina christiana* 1.40.44.

⁸⁰ Augustine, Ep. 27.3 (CSEL 34¹, 98).

⁸¹ Augustine, Ep. 27.2 (CSEL 34¹, 98). FC 12, 89.

⁸² Augustine, Ep. 22.8 (CSEL 34¹, 60). FC 12, 56.

⁸³ Augustine, Ep. 22.8 (CSEL 34¹, 61). FC 12, 57.

On the threshold of an episcopal vocation Augustine felt this danger intensely. The sense of unease and anxiety always impelled Augustine towards the desire to unburden himself even further. He wished he could reveal himself to Aurelius over the many things about his past and present dealings with others over which he claims to have wept much. This yearning for confession of some sort was predicated on Augustine's concern that "if we are praised because of God," as far as possible, "we be such before God as they believe us to be, and that the praise be referred to God, since all that is praiseworthy is His gift."⁸⁴ If, on the other hand, the praise is undeserved "either because they believe us to be what we are not, or credit us with a good that comes from God, or extol qualities which we possess or even abound in, but which are not praiseworthy,"⁸⁵ then we need to correct those who offer such praise.

Augustine could no more question Paulinus's good will than he could discount everything that Paulinus had written about him and the works Alypius had sent to Paulinus. Attempting to be "wholly yours in Him to whom you wholly belong" was Augustine's way of coming to terms with the praise offered by Paulinus in his letters to Alypius and Augustine. "I must not think too of myself when I pray myself back to you, for fear of being proved to disbelieve you."⁸⁶ Augustine steers a middle course: "I will not believe myself to be such as you think, because I do not know, but I will believe myself to be loved by you, and that I fully understand and experience. In that way I shall not be bold in my own regard, nor ungrateful to you."⁸⁷ This allows Augustine to receive Paulinus's adulation while also keeping himself in check, lest he thinks too highly of himself. In return, Augustine offers himself wholly to Paulinus. If that proves to be otherwise than Paulinus expects, then Paulinus should be inspired to pray that Augustine will become as Paulinus thinks him to be. Then Augustine might "deserve to be such as you think he is."⁸⁸

As Augustine proceeds, he offers a well developed theory of the burdens of friendship and the bonds of love which create the conditions not only for the beginnings of friendship but for the sustenance of true friendship, which among other things includes criticism and correction. Augustine also mentions the expectation that

⁸⁴ Augustine, Ep. 22. 8 (CSEL 34¹, 61). FC 12, 56-57.

⁸⁵ Augustine, Ep. 22. 8 (CSEL 34¹, 60). FC 12, 56.

⁸⁶ Augustine, Ep. 27.3 (CSEL 34¹, 98). FC 12, 89.

⁸⁷ Augustine, Ep. 27.3 (CSEL 34¹, 99). FC 12, 89.

⁸⁸ Augustine, Ep. 27.3 (CSEL 34¹, 99). FC 12, 90.

those who are invited into one's friendship might become, for love's sake, what one wishes them to be. If Paulinus is in any way disappointed in what he receives in return, he would at least be moved by his love of Augustine to wish and pray that his new friend would become what he loves in him.

Paulinus's solicitations of friendship and fraternity opened a new possibility. Here was a patrician turned renunciate who had read the so-called Pentateuch against the Manichaeans with charity, enthusiasm, and profit, when they came into his hands. Not only was he enthusiastic, he also seemed to embody a simplicity of faith at once alluring and fruitful. When Paulinus indicated in his letter to Augustine that he had read Augustine's books with pleasure, Augustine could easily imagine Paulinus as his ideal reader. Augustine proceeded to supply all of his available works to Paulinus.

The timing was nearly perfect. Romanianus, Augustine's former patron, was on his way to Rome. He would be both courier and librarian. "The one who brings this letter to your Excellency and your excelling Charity is one who is exceedingly dear to me, and one of my most intimate friends from my early youth. His name is in the book *On Religion*, which your Holiness has read with pleasure, as you have said in your letters."⁸⁹ Augustine digresses for a moment to dwell on the likely praise that Romanianus would offer of him when he meets Paulinus. The warning is in keeping with Augustine's desire to keep the accolades within their appropriate bounds. And so Augustine writes: "I should like you not to believe this intimate friend of mine, if he happens to say anything in praise of me." He continues:

I have noticed that he is often mistaken in his judgment, not from any propensity toward lying, but through the bias of his affection, and because he thinks I have received gifts, which I merely yearn to receive from the Lord with the open mouth of my heart. And if he does this to my face, you could imagine how much more likely he is, in his enthusiasm, to make statements in my absence that are more flattering than true.⁹⁰

Augustine asks Paulinus to overlook Romanianus's high estimation of him and instead recognize that so much of Romanianus's praise of Augustine is nothing more than great affection that tends towards the inordinate. The drift into self-depreciation is unmistakable though slight, since Augustine has already acknowledged Paulinus's

⁸⁹ Augustine, Ep. 27.4 (CSEL 34¹, 99). FC 12, 90.

⁹⁰ Augustine, Ep. 27.4 (CSEL 34¹, 99). FC 12, 90.

praise without necessarily discounting what truth might be entailed in it.

It was serendipitous that Romanianus was a relative of Alypius. So not only would he be welcome because of Augustine's recommendation as "the one who has sent him to you, even such a one as I."⁹¹ But also, as Augustine would add later, because Paulinus's love of Alypius should make Romanianus even more beloved in Paulinus's eyes.⁹² Augustine goes on to describe the library that Romanianus has of his works, his offer of that stock to Paulinus, his expectations of Paulinus, and his hopes for an ongoing dialogue about what is contained in those books.

Given Paulinus's charitable spirit, Augustine wished he would become a critical reader of his works. And as Augustine entrusted both Romanianus and his son to Paulinus, it remained for Augustine to entrust himself and his books to Paulinus's critical reading.

[Romanianus] will make a store of my books available to your estimable zeal, for he has everything I have written, either to those outside the Church of God or to the brethren. But, when you read, my holy Paulinus, let not the words which truth speaks through my weakness so carry you away that you pay less attention to what I say of myself; for, while you eagerly drink in the good and true things which are granted me to say as agent, you may neglect to pray for the mistakes and sins which I commit. In those parts, then, of my writings, which rightly displease you, I am to be seen; but in those other parts, which rightly please you because they are the gift of the Spirit, which you have also received, He is to be loved, He is to be praised, with whom is the fountain of life, and in whose light we shall see light, without obscurity, and face to face, but we see in a dark manner. In the things, then, which I have uttered of the old leaven I judge myself with sorrow as I read and recognize them; but in those which I have spoken by the gift of God, of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, I tremble with joy. What, then, have we that we have not received?⁹³

That the heart may not be at variance with the tongue: this is Augustine's prayer as he winds down this long passage. He wants to be praised, if praise be given, for that which is truly from God.

Previously, Augustine had mentioned that for those parts of his writings which might be displeasing to Paulinus Augustine took all the

⁹¹ Augustine, Ep. 27.4 (CSEL 341, 99). FC 12, 90.

⁹² Augustine, Ep. 27.5 (CSEL 341, 100-101).

⁹³ Augustine, Ep. 27.4 (CSEL 341, 99-100). FC 12, 90-91.

blame. Whenever Paulinus approved, he was to see whatever Augustine was able to do as merely the result of God's doing. He asked for friendly criticism: "As you are going to read many of my writings, your affection will be more precious to me if you will correct those points which displease you and as a just man reprove me in mercy, for I do not fear to have the oil of such a one as you fatten my head."⁹⁴

It is not as if Augustine sought to discount his own standing by elevating Paulinus's status as a Christian thinker. The more important concern was to hear what others who could be trusted for their sincerity and judgment had to say about his works. The much earlier Ep. 18 to Caelestinus entailed something of this sort. Augustine was so disappointed in not hearing from Caelestinus that he demanded that his books be returned. If Caelestinus would not read the books and offer criticism there was no point having them.

Ep. 18 makes it clear that in cultivating an audience Augustine sought critical readers who would offer the sort of criticism without which a writer cannot gauge the quality of his or her work. Augustine extended this privilege to Paulinus in recognition of Paulinus's stated enthusiasm and awe for what Paulinus had already found in the so-called Pentateuch against the Manichaeans that Alypius had sent along. Moreover, as I have suggested previously, Paulinus's desire to be included in Augustine's friendship broke the mold of Augustine's provincialism. Augustine's world was now expanding again to include the Italy he had abandoned when he renounced the world. The friendly criticism of Paulinus would alert Augustine to how relevant and perspicuous his works were to a wider world, beyond the boundaries of Roman Africa. Augustine himself may have known how relevant his writings were to current concerns. Paulinus's words would be added proof.⁹⁵

Paulinus's desire for Augustine's friendship and his reception of Augustine's works lay the groundwork for the re-emergence of Augustine into the wider Christian world beyond Roman Africa. Sending the major works he had written up till that time to Paulinus

⁹⁴ Augustine, Ep. 27.6 (CSEL 34¹, 102). FC 12, 93.

⁹⁵ François Decret, "De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum Livre II – De Moribus Manichaeorum," in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum. De quantitate animae di Agostino d'Ippona* (Palermo: Edizioni "Augustinus", 1991), 59-119. Decret suggests that *De moribus Manichaeorum* was written with an eye towards Manichaean auditors. Augustine seems to have a larger audience in view, not least other Catholics who might be tempted by the pretenses of Manichaean teaching.

(minus the ones Paulinus had already received from Alypius) began a process of transmission and wider dissemination of Augustine's works. While Jerome was proving difficult, Augustine found in Paulinus a most receptive audience.

Before receiving Augustine's Ep. 27, however, Paulinus, as we noted earlier had sent a second letter (Paulinus, Ep. 6 = Augustine, Ep. 30). In responding to Ep. 30 Augustine revealed so much of what he had come to make of Paulinus's story and to what extent he found in Paulinus a model of Christian perfection he had long sought to cultivate in himself and engender in those around him. It is in Ep. 31 that Augustine's most revealing statements about Paulinus's renunciation of the world can be found.

When Romanus and Agilis arrived at Hippo as emissaries bearing Paulinus's second letter to Augustine, they stood before Augustine as two people who could make Paulinus known to Augustine in a way that a letter could not. For, as Augustine himself would acknowledge, the two carried Paulinus in their hearts, and revealed him to the brothers gathered around Augustine by what they said and related about Paulinus's manner of life. Rumor and hearsay could be set aside. The two trusted friends bore witness to something stupendous. Augustine was in awe. "We received with great joy in the Lord the holy brothers Romanus and Agilis, as if they were another letter of yours, but one hearing and repeating your words, and a most sweet part of your presence, such as to make us long more eagerly to see you."⁹⁶

Augustine wondered just how it could have been possible to learn all that they had learned from Romanus and Agilis from letters. "For, they had so much joy in the telling – something that could be found in no written page – that we read with indescribable joy, from their faces and eyes as they spoke, how deeply you were imprinted in their hearts."⁹⁷ And of this fact of being imprinted in the hearts of our fellow human beings, Augustine would have much to say about the advantages it confers over the written word.

There was also this further advantage, that any given page, whatever good things may be written on it, does not gain thereby, although it may be unrolled for the benefit of others; but this letter of yours, namely, this fraternal soul, were read in their conversation, so that, the more fruitfully it was inscribed by you, the more blessed it appeared

⁹⁶ Augustine, Ep. 31.2 (CSEL 34², 2). FC 12, 111.

⁹⁷ Augustine, Ep. 31.2 (CSEL 34², 2). FC 12, 111.

to us. Therefore, by carefully gathering up all the details about you, we have copied that letter into our hearts in imitation of their good fortune.⁹⁸

It is difficult then to read Peter Brown's assertion that "Paulinus was a cold and lonely man. He was content to recreate among his new Christian correspondents a form of 'instant' friendship that was free of the labour (and the dangers) of long acquaintances, an intimacy of like souls that bye-passed the embarrassment of self-revelation, and emphasis on the spirit, that rather poignantly denied the yearning of the body for the physical presence of his friends."⁹⁹ On any reading of Paulinus's overtures to Alypius and Augustine, Brown's description seems out of place. Certainly Paulinus's first two letters to Alypius and Augustine, respectively, assumed that a friendship could be established with little difficulty. The basis of that assumption, however, rested on a clearly understood notion of the bonds of love that united Christians and bound them to each other. If Paulinus could not assume this, then perhaps there was little to be said of the claims of fraternity and love which the Christian religion spoke of.

Paulinus not only initiated these highly epistolary friendships, but he pursued them by sending couriers and personal emissaries to affirm the bonds which had been assumed and established by the exchange of letters. If there was any attempt by Paulinus to keep these friendships on a literary level, it was lost on Alypius, Augustine, and those gathered around them. Augustine offers an interesting description of how he and his confreres would not let Romanus and Agilis leave so quickly. For the more they wanted to leave, because seeking to fulfil the charge Paulinus had given them, the more "vividly they portrayed you to us." And in doing so "they showed how dear you are to them."¹⁰⁰

Both Paulinus and Augustine assumed that such an "instant" friendship could be entered into, if we are to use Brown's phrase. Augustine cited words from Paulinus's second letter to Augustine to make the point: "we are members of one body, we have one head, we live by one bread, we walk by one road, we live in the same house. Why, then, should we not use the same words?" Augustine then went on to say: "I suppose you recognize that these words are from your letter. But, why should they be your words rather than mine, since they are certainly true, and they proceed from our union with the same

⁹⁸ Augustine, Ep. 31.2 (CSEL 34², 2). FC 12, 112.

⁹⁹ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 160-161.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, Ep. 31.3 (CSEL 34², 3). FC 12, 112.

head?"¹⁰¹ To the incredulous Augustine has only this to this: "who could doubt that we are strengthened by one spirit, except he who does not feel (*nisi qui non sentit*) the love which binds us together (*nobis dilectione uinciamur*)?"¹⁰²

No doubt an epistolary friendship has the advantage of an ideal that is far from the case when people know each other in person. But the friendship Paulinus and Augustine entered into did not remain epistolary. For they both believed that in the hearts of their friends and the couriers who represented them to each other they came to know each other as well. If Paulinus's epistolary contact with Augustine achieved nothing else, it brought Augustine out of the provincialism that threatened to engulf him when he retired his chair in rhetoric and abandoned Milan for his native Tagaste in Roman Africa. After welcoming the patrician Paulinus into his friendship, Augustine would no longer remain the provincial. Paulinus would not only become one of Augustine's most prominent readers but the link between Augustine's works and a wider world. When we take into account what "luck" Augustine was having with his writings to people like Caelestinus (Ep. 18. c. 390) we can appreciate what Paulinus's comments about devouring Augustine's books meant to Augustine.¹⁰³ Paulinus, in many ways, fit Augustine's expectations of what a good or ideal reader should be.¹⁰⁴

Villanova

F. B. A. ASIEDU

¹⁰¹ Augustine, Ep. 31.3 (CSEL 34², 3). FC 12, 112.

¹⁰² Augustine, Ep. 31.3 (CSEL 34², 3). FC 12, 113. (slightly emended)

¹⁰³ My view differs somewhat from Mark Vessey, "Conference and Confession: Literary Pragmatics in Augustine's 'Apologia Contra Hieronymum'," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 175-213.

¹⁰⁴ See Augustine, *De utilitate credendi* 4.10-5.11.