

Reading Dante's *Commedia* through Augustine's Hermeneutics of *caritas*

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to consider Dante's Christology in terms of Augustine's hermeneutical practice. This thesis examines four figures in Dante's *Commedia* who exemplify reading through proper and improper hermeneutical approaches and how their approaches are related to good and bad forms of love, which Augustine identifies as *caritas* and *cupiditas*: Francesca and Virgil from the *Inferno*, Statius from the *Purgatorio*, and Piccarda from the *Paradiso*. This thesis also examines moments in which Dante invites readers to engage with the *Commedia* hermeneutically. In applying Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, as presented in *De doctrina Christiana*, to a reading of Dante's *Commedia*, this research considers how the *Commedia* directs readers to conduct themselves toward God and neighbour in accordance with Christ's teachings. Augustine's rules for Biblical interpretation are founded on his gloss on Jesus Christ's words to love and enjoy God on God's own account and to love and enjoy neighbours in relation to God (*De doctrina Christiana* 3.10.16). Christ's commandments set the standard for Christian morality and provide the hermeneutical key to understanding Scripture and the ideal form of love that Christ himself paradigmatically exemplifies. Those who follow Augustine's rules of interpretation know that all of Scripture reveals these two commandments and offers examples of how to live Christologically in accordance with these teachings. Augustine's rules for interpretation were one of the prevailing approaches to hermeneutics in the Middle Ages and one which, when applied to a reading of Dante's *Commedia*, illuminates the same Christocentric teaching.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The primary aim of this research is to test a hermeneutical approach to Dante's *Commedia* through Augustine of Hippo's hermeneutics of *caritas* as they are presented in *De doctrina Christiana*. Two key aspects of this hermeneutical approach are the distinction between good and bad forms of love, and the relationship between good and bad forms of love and right and wrong reading. Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* are Christological because they are anchored to Christ's Double Love Commandment, which Christ himself paradigmatically exemplifies:

*Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et in tota anima tua, et in tota mente tua. Hoc est maximum, et primum mandatum. Secundum autem simile est huic: Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum. In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet, et prophetae.* (Matthew 22:37–40)

(“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind’. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.)<sup>1</sup>

In reading the *Commedia* through this hermeneutical approach, this thesis proposes that Dante's Christology can be located in the hermeneutical practices he imitates rather than in a discussion about Christ-centred passages in the *Commedia* itself. In the methodology chapter of this thesis, I discuss the details of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics and its system of interpreting and acting upon good and bad forms of love. In general terms, properly ordered love is *caritas*, which is the ideal form of love because it loves God for God's own sake, and integrates the love of creatures into the love of God. A bad form of love is

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<sup>1</sup> Parallel passages include Mark 12:30–31, Luke 10:27, and John 13:31–35. All Latin passages of Scripture are from the Vulgate, *Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. by Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado, Biblioteca de Auctores Christianos XIV, 5th edn (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1977). All English translations are from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1989).

one in which *cupiditas* blocks an individual's connection to God, or corrupts one's ability to love and engage creatures appropriately, because creatures are loved for themselves and not in the relationship to God. When the *Commedia* is read in keeping with the principles of *De doctrina*, Augustine's text illuminates how Dante's three realms of the Christian afterlife are divided by similar forms of love. The damned in the *Inferno* exemplify those who have a distorted love in which creatures are loved for their own sake and not in the relationship to God. The blessed in the *Paradiso* model the ideal form of love which is the love of God for God's sake and others in relation to God. Those in the Purgatory are in the process of turning away from the bad form of love to embrace the ideal form of love.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine's Christological model is not the definitive hermeneutical approach that could be applied to a reading of the *Commedia* to highlight the poem's Christological orientation. A reason why Augustine's hermeneutical model is appealing for this research is the impact of Augustine's work in shaping theology and hermeneutics in the Middle Ages. Another reason is Augustine's emphasis on the moral condition of readers who engage with Biblical hermeneutics. Thus, there are the two main themes that are mutually illuminated in *De doctrina* and the *Commedia*: the exemplifications of good and bad love, and the relationship between the moral condition induced by these forms of love and the ability to read through the lens of appropriate love. The *Commedia* includes figures who exemplify good and bad forms of love and the impact of that love on their moral condition as readers, such as Francesca, Piccarda, Virgil, and Statius. Equally, there are moments Dante invites readers to apply hermeneutics

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Dante's Pilgrim and Virgil do discuss forms of love at the end of *Purgatorio* 17, which I discuss in Chapter 4 section 4.4. For a substantial recent discussion on Dante's different terms on "love", see Elena Lombardi, *The Wings of the Dove: Love and Desire in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).



to a reading of the *Commedia* which are foregrounded in the lens of proper love such as the Hell Gate's inscription, the heavenly messenger's arrival at the Gates of Dis, Dante's use of Biblical references in *Purgatorio*, Dante's addresses to readers, and the Pilgrim's meditation on the Cross of Mars.

This research intersects with at least two ongoing discussions within Dante scholarship regarding Dante and Augustine, and Dante and the Bible. In the remainder of this introduction, I discuss how this work extends from these two discussions in Dante scholarship. In each of the following sections, I highlight major themes from each discussion as well as build to the current discussions regarding Dante and hermeneutics.

### **1.1. Dante and Augustine**

The aim of this research is to test a reading of the *Commedia* through the hermeneutical principles of *De doctrina* and discuss the themes mutually illuminated between the two forms of love, and the correlation between the appropriate form of love producing the proper moral condition to read through the lens of *caritas*. The foundations of this research are those scholars who have highlighted the prominence of Augustine in Dante's late medieval world, and the influence of Augustine in the *Commedia*.<sup>3</sup> Their work paved the way for exploring how Augustine's hermeneutics offer new insight into a Christological reading of the *Commedia*. Augustine was an undeniable source for the Middle Ages in terms of Biblical exegesis, commentaries, hermeneutics, and mystical reflection. Yet, Augustine's impact in Dante's work is not limited to the adoption of Augustinian

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<sup>3</sup> John Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986), and *In Dante's Wake: Reading from Medieval to Modern in the Augustinian Tradition*, ed. by Danielle Callegari and Melissa Swain (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015). Steven Botterill, *Dante and the Mystical Tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the Commedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Lino Pertile, "A Desire of Paradise and a Paradise of Desire: Dante and Mysticism", in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 148–166.

rhetorical or theological elements. As Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne note, the *Commedia* “does not simply accumulate elements of different theological traditions, but offers an original conception of the possible active and constructive relationships between them”.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this discussion covers Dante’s knowledge of Augustine, the impact of Augustine’s work in Dante’s work with special attention to the *Commedia*, and the current discussions regarding Dante and Augustine’s Biblical hermeneutics.

### 1.1.1. Dante’s Knowledge of Augustine

Starting with Dante’s knowledge of Augustine, Elena Lombardi offers insight into Dante’s familiarity with Augustine as a source, Augustine’s role in commentaries of the *Commedia*, and the potential role Augustine plays in reading the *Commedia*.<sup>5</sup> Augustine is referred to as a Doctor of the Western Christian Church for providing multiple sources on how to read and interpret Scripture and doctrinal treatises on a variety of theological issues. Lombardi says the later Middle Ages saw a resurgence in Augustine’s popularity, most notably, his *Confessiones*, *De civitate Dei contra paganos*, and *De doctrina Christiana*.<sup>6</sup> According to Lombardi and John Freccero, the *Confessiones* was viewed as *the* paradigm of medieval autobiographies and Christian conversions while *De doctrina* was the premier manual for Biblical exegetes and preachers.<sup>7</sup> Of *De doctrina*, Lombardi

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<sup>4</sup> Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne, “Introduction: Dante, Poetry, Theology”, in *Dante’s Commedia: Theology as Poetry*, ed. by Vittorio Montemaggi and Matthew Treherne (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2010), pp. 1–13 (p. 3).

<sup>5</sup> Lombardi, “Augustine and Dante”, in *Reviewing Dante’s Theology*, ed. by Claire E. Honess and Matthew Treherne, 2 vols (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), I, 175–208. See also Lombardi’s *Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae and Dante* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> See also John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St Augustine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938). Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (New York: Random House, 1960). Douglas Gray, “Saint Augustine in Medieval Literature”, in *Saint Augustine and His Influence in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Edward B. King and Jacqueline T. Schaefer (Sewanee: Press of the University of the South, 1988), pp. 19–58. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy. Vol. 2: Augustine to Scotus* (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Lombardi, “Augustine and Dante”, pp. 180–183, and Freccero, *Poetics of Conversion and In Dante’s Wake*.

says Augustine's rules for Biblical exegesis were "crucial to an understanding of medieval culture and literature, whether religious or secular, whether Latin or vernacular".<sup>8</sup>

There is no question, given the impact of Augustine in the Middle Ages, that Dante knew something of his work. However, the specifics of what Dante knew of Augustine's body of work are speculative. Lombardi wonders if Dante's knowledge of Augustine may have come from second-hand sources, such as Peter Lombard or Bernard of Clairvaux, or from his education and/or his interactions with various religious orders in Florence including the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians.<sup>9</sup> Although Dante does quote from *De doctrina* in his *Convivio* and *Monarchia*, which I return to before the end of this section, there is no way of telling whether Dante had read and quoted from Augustine directly or through others quoting Augustine. Regardless of Dante's knowledge of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics, Dante felt confident enough to try his own hand at Biblical exegesis as seen in the *Monarchia* and *Convivio*.<sup>10</sup> This is a task that requires familiarity with the rules of reading and commenting on Scripture through multiple hermeneutical senses, such as the literal, allegorical, tropological (sometimes called moral sense), and anagogical/mystical.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Lombardi, "Augustine and Dante", p. 182. Lombardi also discusses *De civitate Dei* which presents the course of human history through the lens of providential history, or God's direct influence in human history, in which Christ is the centre and fulfilment of the Old Testament's Messianic prophecy through the Incarnation. See Chapter 4 section 4.5.

<sup>9</sup> Lombardi, "Augustine and Dante", p. 183.

<sup>10</sup> Zygmunt G. Barański's seminal works on Dante and Biblical exegesis include "Dante's Biblical Linguistics", *Lectura Dantis*, 5 (1989), 105–143, *Dante e i segni: Saggi per una storia intellettuale de Dante* (Naples: Liguori, 2000), and "Dante Alighieri: Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis", in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Vol. 2, The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 561–582.

<sup>11</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. by Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

### 1.1.2. Augustine's Influence on Dante's Writing

Regarding Augustine's specific influence on the *Commedia*, Lombardi and Freccero argue Augustine's *Confessiones* provided Dante with a nuanced style of writing that is autobiographical and presents a story of Christian conversion. In addition to drawing from Augustine's *Confessiones*, Lombardi offers brief suggestive comments sketching how the *Commedia* might draw from *De doctrina Christiana* in that all three *cantica* "parallel the three Augustinian modes of interpretation", such as the literal in the *Inferno*, transitive *uti* in the *Purgatorio*, and the perfected *frui* in *Paradiso*.<sup>12</sup> In many ways, this thesis tests Lombardi's intuition that these categories are hermeneutically fruitful in terms of reading the *Commedia* Christologically. In Chapter 2, I offer a detailed discussion of these modes of interpretation from *De doctrina*. Here I will say, in broad terms, that central to Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* is his gloss of Christ's Double Love Commandment, which emphasises the appropriate measure of love owed to God and neighbours in relation to God.<sup>13</sup> Part of Augustine's system of measuring good and bad forms of love involves the distinction between things that are to be enjoyed (*frui*) and things that are to be used (*uti*).<sup>14</sup> The good form of love consists in the appropriate engagement with the *uti* and *frui*, while the bad form of love does not.

Returning to Augustine's *Confessiones*, Freccero offers several insights regarding the influence of Augustine in Dante's *Commedia*.<sup>15</sup> Freccero saw coherent and consistent patterns in the *Commedia's* poetry and theology that are

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<sup>12</sup> Lombardi, "Augustine and Dante", p. 202–207.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.3.1.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.3.1.

<sup>15</sup> Of particular interest to this current discussion are Freccero's articles "The Prologue Scene", "The Firm Foot on a Journey Without a Guide", and "The Significance of *Terza Rima*", in *Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 1–28, pp. 29–54, and pp. 258–271. Also "Shipwreck in the Prologue", "The Portrait of Francesca: *Inferno* 5", "Allegory and Autobiography", in *In Dante's Wake*, pp. 1–18, pp. 19–49 and pp. 96–115.

found in Augustine's *Confessiones*.<sup>16</sup> For instance, the *Confessiones* is the personal account of Augustine's own conversion to the Christian faith, which was modelled on the conversion story of the Apostle Paul. Freccero argues Dante took Augustine's model of spiritual conversion and fused it into the core of the *Commedia*'s narrative: "[Augustine's] autobiography is represented schematically in Dante's poem by this synthesis of Platonic allegory with traditional Biblical motifs, just as it was in Augustine's *Confessions*".<sup>17</sup> Even the *Commedia*'s use of the first-person perspective presents itself as the Pilgrim's conversion story.<sup>18</sup> This method of storytelling also allows Dante to present the Pilgrim in dual roles as the *Commedia*'s narrator and protagonist.<sup>19</sup> Freccero does not limit Augustine's influence in the *Commedia* to the *Confessiones* alone; as he says, "Christian biographies stress conformity to a Biblical pattern, even at the expense of originality".<sup>20</sup> While Augustine's *Confessiones* and Dante's *Commedia* are both original, they also fit the Biblical pattern of conversion achieved through the love and grace of God as modelled by Christ.

In a sense, Dante's Pilgrim comes to know the inner workings of God's grace and salvation offered by Christ, and illuminated in Scripture, through the same conversion experience as Augustine in the *Confessiones*. Part of Augustine's conversion paradigm is the misdirection of the protagonist down the wrong spiritual path that moves away from God and requires Divine redirection to return to the right/righteous path. Freccero says "the descent into hell, whether metaphorical as in the *Confessiones*, or dramatically real as in Dante's poem, is the first step on the journey to the truth".<sup>21</sup> This is one of the most prominent

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<sup>16</sup> Rachel Jacoff, "Introduction", in *Poetics of Conversion*, pp. ix–xvi (p. x).

<sup>17</sup> Freccero, "Allegory and Autobiography", p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Freccero, "The Portrait of Francesca: *Inferno* 5", p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Freccero, "The Portrait of Francesca: *Inferno* 5", p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Freccero, "Allegory and Autobiography", p. 97. See also Peter S. Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments: Essays in Scriptural Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Freccero, "The Prologue Scene", p. 4.

features of the *Confessiones* and the *Commedia* in which the author/protagonist must experience a moral and spiritual transformation in order to grow from arrogance to humility.<sup>22</sup> Although Freccero does not mention *De doctrina* specifically, the moral redirection from arrogance to humility as a catalyst for conversion in the *Confessiones* is also a key feature in Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*.

For Augustine, the form of good love paradigmatically exemplified by Christ has the power to redirect the moral condition of those who read Scripture and act upon *caritas*. Reading Scripture through a bad form of love does not illuminate Christ as the personification of *caritas* in Scripture, and limits the readers' opportunity to redirect their moral condition. As this thesis will argue, Francesca and Piccarda are two examples from the *Commedia* who embody how Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* can help inform the moral conditions of readers.<sup>23</sup> Francesca fails to read through the correct lens of good love and fails to read the text's warning against her lustful intentions, as well as extend the appropriate form of love to her lover and husband, resulting in their damnation, while Piccarda reads through a good form of love which directs her to a life devoted to loving God and others in relation to God. Although Piccarda was unable to fulfil her holy vows in life, she remained true to the ideal form of love outside of her cloister which granted her access to Paradise.

### **1.1.3. Dante and Augustine's Hermeneutics**

The most recent discussion on Dante and Augustine's hermeneutics is that by Simone Marchesi who says *De doctrina* was a text that Dante "most likely encountered late in life, but which often offers intriguing conceptual parallels

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<sup>22</sup> Freccero, "Allegory and Autobiography", p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.1.2.

with his works”.<sup>24</sup> As mentioned previously, Dante quotes from *De doctrina* in two of his prose works. In *De Monarchia* 3.4.6, Dante references *De doctrina* Book 3 which discusses the danger of interpreting Scripture in the *translata* (figurative) sense when it is meant to be read in the *propria* (literal) sense: *circa sensum mysticum dupliciter errare contigit: aut querendo ipsum ubi non est, aut accipiendo aliter quam accipi debeat* (one can make two kinds of error when dealing with the mystical sense: either by seeking it where it is not, or by interpreting it otherwise than it ought to be interpreted).<sup>25</sup> And in *Convivio* 1.12.1, Dante uses Augustine’s examples of natural *signa* (signs) from *De doctrina* 2:

*Se manifestamente per le finestre d’una case uscisse fiamma di fuoco, e alcuno dimandasse se là dentro fosse il fuoco, e un altro rispondesse a lui di sì, non saprei bene giudicare qual di costoro fosse da schernire di più.*

(If flames of fire were issuing from the windows of a house, and someone asked if there were a fire within, and another answered in the affirmative, I would not be able to judge easily which of the two was more deserving of ridicule.)<sup>26</sup>

These references to *De doctrina* suggest Dante was familiar with Augustine’s hermeneutical work. However, as Lombardi argues, it is impossible to determine if Dante read Augustine directly or through later authors and figures who mediated Augustine.<sup>27</sup>

The most significant feature of Marchesi’s study is what he calls the “poetics of inspiration”, which he defines as an interpretative approach that “unloads the burden of inspiration onto the reader and subordinates the author to a higher authority”.<sup>28</sup> Marchesi argues Augustine inspired Dante to write in a

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<sup>24</sup> Simone Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine: Linguistics, Poetics, Hermeneutics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 11. The Latin is from *Monarchia*, ed. by Bruno Nardi, in *Opere Minori* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1979), II, 239–503. Prue Shaw, ed. and trans., *Dante. Monarchia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 11. *Convivio* passages quoted are from *Convivio*, ed. by C. Vasoli and D. De Robertis, *Opere Minori I.2* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1988) and in translation from *Dante. Il Convivio (The Banquet). Translation with introduction and notes, and Italian verse text*, trans. by Richard Lansing (New York: Garland, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Lombardi, “Augustine and Dante”.

<sup>28</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. xii.

way that shifted away from “author-centred” hermeneutics, as seen in the *Convivio*, *Vita nuova*, and *De vulgari eloquentia*, to “reader-centred” hermeneutics, such as the *Commedia*.<sup>29</sup> For instance, in many of Dante’s earlier works he tells readers the meaning of the text, while in the *Commedia* Dante invites readers to come to their own interpretations. This opens texts to readings within and beyond the author’s intended purpose, which is another key feature in Augustine’s Biblical hermeneutics. Marchesi calls this hermeneutical practice reading through an “active lens”, which he qualifies as when readers find meaning in a text that “is more fruitful and true than the one its author encoded into it”.<sup>30</sup>

Such flexibility of interpretation is seen in Dante. For instance, in Dante’s account, Statius reads Virgil’s *Eclogues* through the widely accepted medieval tradition of Christological prophecy. Dante’s Statius applies this hermeneutic practice to his “active” reading of Virgil which, according to Statius in *Purgatorio* 20–22, led to his Christian conversion.<sup>31</sup> Marchesi says Statius “is saved on account of a conversion triggered by his hermeneutics”.<sup>32</sup> This thesis discusses how Statius’s reading of Virgil through the proper lens led to an interpretation of Virgil’s text that exceeded Virgil’s intended meaning, and how his assignment to Purgatory proves his hermeneutical approach was not only successful but the correct one.<sup>33</sup> Adding to the complexity of the episode is Virgil who, although read through an active lens, has no hope of benefiting from Statius’ applied Christological hermeneutic to receive salvation. This episode’s complex hermeneutical structure is an important example regarding how Augustine inspired the *Commedia*’s narrative structure and understanding what the *Commedia*

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<sup>29</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 108. See also Barański, “Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis”.

<sup>30</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, pp. 107–153.

<sup>32</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 131.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.2.2.



proposes hermeneutically. Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* offer moral guidance on how to live in accordance with Christ's commandments as well as a way of reading the text beyond the author's original intention to illuminate the *Commedia's* Christological orientation.

## 1.2. Dante and the Bible

Given the theological content of the *Commedia's* narrative, and the theological influences Dante incorporated into his poem, it only seems appropriate that the *Commedia* could be, as Montemaggi and Treherne say, "read through the same interpretive modes usually reserved for Scripture".<sup>34</sup> In this section, I briefly discuss the prominence of Scripture in Dante's medieval culture as the primary source of God's self-revelation, how Scripture influenced Dante's writing, and the current discussion regarding Dante and Biblical hermeneutics.

Zygmunt Barański notes that for Dante, and his medieval world, Scripture and theology are intertwined.<sup>35</sup> Dante defines theology in *Convivio* 2 as *la divina scienza* (knowledge about God) and in *Par.* 26.40–41, Dante says Scripture is "*la voce del verace autore [...] de se parlando*" ("the voice of the true Author [...] speaking of Himself").<sup>36</sup> Barański says "Dante's explicit emphasis on the equation

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<sup>34</sup> Montemaggi and Treherne, "Introduction", in *Dante's Commedia: Theology as Poetry*, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Barański, "Dante and Doctrine (and Theology)", in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, I, 9–63.

<sup>36</sup> All Italian passages of the *Commedia* are taken from *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, Edizione Nazionale della Opere di Dante Alighieri a cura della Società Dantesca (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994). English translation by Barański in "Dante and Doctrine (and Theology)", p. 23. See also Benedetto Croce, *La poesia di Dante* (Bari: Laterza, 1921). Erich Auerbach, "Figura" and "St Francis in Dante's *Commedia*", in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Meridian Books, 1944), pp. 11–76 and 79–98. Bruno Nardi, *Nel mondo di Dante* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1944), *Dante e la cultura medievale*, ed. by Paolo Mazzantini, 2nd edn (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1950), and "Filosofia e teologia ai tempi di Dante", *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Danteschi*, 1 (1965), 79–175. Charles S. Singleton, *Dante Studies 1. Commedia: Elements of Structure* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965; repr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977) and *Dante Studies 2. Journey to Beatrice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967; repr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Cesare Vasoli, "Filosofia e teologia in Dante", in *Dante nella critica d'oggi: risultati e prospettive*, ed. by Umberto Bosco (Florence: Le Monnier, 1965), pp. 47–71. Gilson, *Dante and Philosophy*, trans. by D. Moore (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) and *Dante et Béatrice: Études Dantesques* (Paris: Vrin, 1974). John A. Scott, "Dante's Allegory", *Romance Philology*, 26.3 (1973), 558–591. Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes, and Other Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) and "Tommaso d'Aquino", in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, ed. by Bosco, 6 vols (Rome:

between Scripture and theology thus unambiguously locates him among the ranks of the traditionalists”.<sup>37</sup> Counted among the traditionalists, Barański notes, is Augustine who says in *De Trinitate* 14.1: *Theologia est scientia de rebus quae ad salute hominis pertinent* (theology is a science about things that pertain to man’s salvation).<sup>38</sup> For medieval traditionalists, Dante included, Scripture is the primary source of God’s revealed truth on humanity’s salvation. Albert Ascoli argues that, for Dante, theology was a science that blended the views of God as objective truth and Scripture as *the* revelation of God as objective truth.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the acts of reading and interpreting Scripture were closely tied to the work of theologians.

Among those scholars who have discussed Dante’s use of Scripture, Peter S. Hawkins recognises the combination of Augustine’s and Scripture’s influence on the *Commedia*, and “Dante’s intense engagement with the Christian Scriptures” as a catalyst for Augustine’s model of spiritual conversion.<sup>40</sup> Hawkins claims that “Dante knew the Scriptures intimately, and in ways that suggest years of reading and study”.<sup>41</sup> Like Lombardi, Hawkins states it is impossible to know the depth of Dante’s Biblical knowledge and formal Biblical education. At the very least, Dante had a proficient knowledge of the Gospels and Psalter and the core of Paul’s letters. However, Dante’s early-fourteenth-century Florence was an

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Instituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970–1975), III, 646. Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). Joseph A. Mazzeo, “Medieval Hermeneutics: Dante’s Poetic and Historicity”, *Religion & Literature*, 17.1 (1985), 1–24. Christopher Ryan, “The Theology of Dante”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 136–152. Amilcare A. Iannucci, “Theology”, in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Lansing (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 811–815. Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante’s Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). A.N. Williams, “The Theology of the *Comedy*”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Jacoff, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 201–217.

<sup>37</sup> Barański, “Dante and Doctrine (and Theology)”, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Trinitate*, ed. by W.J. Mountain, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 50 and 50A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968). English translation by Barański in “Dante and Doctrine (and Theology)”, pp. 25–26.

<sup>39</sup> Albert R. Ascoli, “Poetry and Theology”, in *Reviewing Dante’s Theology*, II, 3–42 (pp. 10–11). Many of these points have been made and expanded upon in Ascoli’s earlier work: *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Hawkins, “Divide and Conquer: Augustine in the *Divine Comedy*”, *MLA*, 106.3 (1991), 471–482 and *Dante’s Testaments*, pp. 1–15 (p. 15).

<sup>41</sup> Hawkins, *Dante’s Testaments*, pp. 19–35 (p. 20).

atmosphere brimming with “evangelizing zeal” from the presence of monastic orders, such as the Mendicants, Franciscans, and Dominicans, to the confraternities that were accessible to religious lay persons.<sup>42</sup> The best exposure to Scripture at that time would be through the religious art, music, theatre, and sermons that permeated medieval culture.<sup>43</sup>

Keeping Dante’s medieval culture and Scripture’s cultural significance in mind, Joan Ferrante offers a brief analysis of how medieval writers, both clerics and laymen, enhanced their narrative’s message through the inclusion of Biblical citations.<sup>44</sup> Ferrante says the inclusion of Biblical citations enhanced medieval authors’ credibility and the authority of their texts.<sup>45</sup> Ferrante argues that Dante’s incorporation of Biblical references support the *Commedia*’s claims of sharing the

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<sup>42</sup> Hawkins, *Dante’s Testaments*, pp. 24–25. The religious culture of Dante’s Florence has been the subject of an ongoing Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project at the University of Leeds on “Dante and Late Medieval Florence: Theology in Poetry, Practice, and Society”, 2013, <[http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/125117/dante\\_and\\_late\\_medieval\\_florence](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/info/125117/dante_and_late_medieval_florence)> [accessed 02 May 2017].

<sup>43</sup> John Hartman, *Books of Hours and Their Owners* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977). Walter Cahn, *Romanesque Bible Illumination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). M.F. Hearn, *Romanesque Sculpture. The Revival of Monumental Stone Sculpture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Lynette R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). John Williams, *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*, The Penn State Series in the History of the Book (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Lawrence G. Duggan, “Was Art Really the ‘Book of the Illiterate?’”, in *Word and Image: An Introduction to Early Medieval Art*, ed. by William J. Diebold (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 227–251. John Lowden, *The Making of the Bibles Moralisesées* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). Thomas X. Noble, *Images, Iconoclasm, and the Carolingians*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Frans Van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Joan M. Ferrante, “The Bible as Thesaurus for Secular Literature”, in *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, ed. by Bernard Levy (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992), pp. 23–49 (p. 23). Ferrante does not include medieval chronicles which have their own tradition of using Scripture. Alan V. Murray discusses Biblical citations in the Crusader Chronicle of William of Tyre; see “Biblical Quotations and Formulaic Language in the Chronicle of William of Tyre”, in *Deeds Done Beyond the Sea: Essays on William of Tyre, Cyprus and the Military Orders. Presented to Peter Edbury*, ed. by Susan B. Edgington and Helen J. Nicholson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 25–34. Trevor Russell Smith also discusses the use of Biblical references in a chronicle from the Hundred Years War in “Ethics of Violence and War in the *Lanerost Chronicle*: Biblical Allusion and Chivalric Rhetoric”, *Bulletin of International Medieval Research*, 20 [accepted]. Both Murray and Smith note the use of Biblical quotes and apocalyptic themes to align their forces (William of Tyre’s and England’s, respectively) with the Israelites, or God’s favoured and chosen people, who do battle against the forces of evil and the Devil (the Muslims and David II of Scotland, respectively). The objective of chroniclers was to depict their forces in a positive light while demonising their opponents.

<sup>45</sup> Ferrante, “Bible as Thesaurus”, pp. 28–30.

same Divine source as Scripture as they bolstered his authoritative voice.<sup>46</sup>

Ferrante also says this is the sharpest difference between Dante and his medieval contemporaries. Such a claim places the *Commedia* on the same standing as Scripture as an inspired source and Dante on the same standing as a Biblical *auctor*.<sup>47</sup> This may explain his confidence in offering his own Biblical exegesis in such works as *De vulgari eloquentia*, *Convivio*, and *Monarchia*.<sup>48</sup> Barański argues that part of Dante's goal in imitating the Biblical style was to boost his own authoritative tone and establish himself as a medieval *auctor*.<sup>49</sup>

The idea of Dante as a medieval *auctor* is part of an ongoing discussion regarding the meaning of Dante as a “*theologus-poeta*”, or theological poet.<sup>50</sup> For Ascoli, Dante straddles the line between allegoresis (the reading of allegory) and allegory (the writing of allegory).<sup>51</sup> Ascoli distinguishes between the two as the allegory of the poets (allegoresis) and the allegory of the theologians (allegory). Freccero defines the allegory of the poets as “all of the figures and tropes a poet must employ in order to express his intended meaning”, and the allegory of the theologians he defines as “a way of interpreting a text in spite of the author's intended meaning”.<sup>52</sup> According to Freccero, Dante claims to read and interpret allegory as a poet, not as a theologian, that is to say, he engages with allegoresis. Yet, his standing as *auctor* allows for a reading *and* writing of allegory that makes

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<sup>46</sup> Ferrante, “Bible as Thesaurus”, pp. 24–26. By Biblical references, I mean direct and indirect quotes from Scripture as well as Biblical figures, allusions, allegories, and themes.

<sup>47</sup> Ferrante, “Bible as Thesaurus”, p. 31, 39 and 40.

<sup>48</sup> See Barański's “Dante's Biblical Linguistics” and “Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis”. See also Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments*, p. 24. V. Stanley Benfell, *The Biblical Dante* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011). And Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*.

<sup>49</sup> Barański, “Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis”, p. 562. See also Ascoli, “Poetry and Theology” and *Making of a Modern Author*.

<sup>50</sup> See Robert Hollander, “Dante as *theologus poeta*”, *Dante Studies*, 94 (1976), 91–136 and Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>51</sup> Ascoli, “Poetry and Theology”, p. 19. See also John Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Rita Copeland and Stephen Melville, “Allegory and Allegoresis, Rhetoric and Hermeneutics”, *Exemplaria*, 3.1 (1991), 157–187. And Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>52</sup> Freccero, “Allegory and Autobiography”, p. 105.

him equal to theologians who wrote and revealed theology through allegory.

Barański argues the *Commedia's* imitation of Scripture, paired with Dante's self-exegesis in works like the *Convivio*, works to bolster the *Commedia's* claim of sharing the same Divine inspiration as Scripture.<sup>53</sup>

Building on the *Commedia's* unique style and claim of Divine inspiration, Erich Auerbach argues Dante imitated the Biblical style through the *Commedia's* addresses to the readers which he defines as a rhetorical device similar to an apostrophe used in classical literature.<sup>54</sup> In religious texts, Auerbach says apostrophes and addresses were used by authors in order to foster solidarity, clarity, encouragement, and, in some cases, offer moral instruction between authors and their readers.<sup>55</sup> In the *Commedia*, Auerbach says Dante's addresses help validate the poem's claims of sharing the same authority and inspiration as the Biblical authors and build on his reputation as an *auctor*.<sup>56</sup> Ascoli wonders whether Dante intended to express *the same* revelation of God's truth as Scripture, or used the theological style and language to lend the *Commedia* to a reading through the same hermeneutical lens reserved for Scripture.<sup>57</sup> The combination of the *Commedia's* imitation of Scripture, in style, language, and content, *and* Augustine's conversion paradigm, as discussed by Freccero and Hawkins, lends itself to a reading of the poem through the same set of hermeneutic principles reserved for Scripture. Adding to this argument are the moments in which the *Commedia* invites readers to engage in the activity of reading and interpreting the text, as mentioned by Auerbach.<sup>58</sup> And again, there are Dante's own words in his *Epistle to Can Grande* in which Dante admits the *Commedia* is open to multiple

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<sup>53</sup> Barański, "Experimentation and (Self-)Exegesis", pp. 564–565.

<sup>54</sup> Auerbach, "Dante's Addresses to the Reader", *Romance Philology*, 7 (1953), 268–278 (pp. 269–271).

<sup>55</sup> Auerbach, "Addresses to the Reader", p. 273.

<sup>56</sup> Auerbach, "Addresses to the Reader", pp. 274–278.

<sup>57</sup> Ascoli, "Poetry and Theology", pp. 25–27.

<sup>58</sup> Auerbach, "Dante's Addresses to the Reader".

layers of interpretation, including those traditionally reserved for Biblical hermeneutics.<sup>59</sup>

Dante's use of Biblical references, that is all quotations, allusions, and figures from Scripture found in the *Commedia*, deserves consideration. Ferrante argues that Dante used Biblical references as a thematic backdrop to the three *cantiche* and "to reinforce his theological and political arguments".<sup>60</sup> While I agree with Ferrante that Dante is setting a specific mood in the *Commedia* with the inclusion of Biblical references, her discussion does not consider the Biblical context of the references Dante uses. Nor does she discuss how Dante's use of Biblical references engages with hermeneutics. Auerbach, on the other hand, points to the way in which Dante invites readers to engage with the *Commedia* hermeneutically through his imitation of the Biblical style. Christopher Kleinhenz also discusses the way Dante "incorporated the Bible into the *Commedia*".<sup>61</sup> Kleinhenz says his work aims to demonstrate "how Dante used the biblical text as an integral part of his own text to discover how meaning in the *Commedia* may be either generated or enhanced by a consideration of the larger referential context provided by the biblical tradition".<sup>62</sup>

For instance, Dante used Psalm 113 in *Purg.* 2.46–48 to draw parallels between the deliverance of the Israelites and the arrival of the penitent in Purgatory.<sup>63</sup> Kleinhenz's point is that Dante takes something that his medieval

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<sup>59</sup> Ascoli, "Poetry and Theology", p. 27. See Raffaele de Benedictis, "Dante's *Epistola a Can Grande*: Allegory, Discourse, and Their Semiotic Implications", *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 31.1 (2010), 3–42.

<sup>60</sup> Ferrante, "Bible as Thesaurus", p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, "Dante and the Bible: Intertextual Approaches to the *Divine Comedy*", *Italica*, 63.3 (1986), 225–236 (quoting p. 226) and "The Poetics of Citation: Dante's *Divina Commedia* and the Bible", *Italiana*, 1988 (1990), 1–21 (quoting pp. 2–3).

<sup>62</sup> Kleinhenz, "Poetics of Citation", p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Kleinhenz, "Dante and the Bible", pp. 226–227. See also Singleton, "*In Exitu Israel de Aegypto*", *Annual Report of the Dante Society of America*, 78 (1959), 1–24 and Dunstan J. Tucker, "*In Exitu Israel de Aegypto*: The *Divine Comedy* in Light of the Easter Liturgy", *The American Benedictine Review*, 11 (1960), 43–61. Peter Armour, "The Theme of Exodus in the First Two Cantos of the *Purgatorio*", in *Dante Soundings: Eight Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. by David Nolan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), pp. 59–99.

audience would have been familiar with and purposefully refers to it at key moments in the *Commedia's* narrative. Kleinhenz also notes that while only the first line of the Psalm is recorded in the *Commedia*, the narrator assures his readers that *every* line of the Psalm was sung so that “the reader must fill in the omitted text for himself and consider, therefore, the meaning and implications of the *entire* Psalm in both the immediate and the more general context of the poem”.<sup>64</sup> For Dante to prompt readers to complete the omitted verses suggests that there is a connection between Dante’s use of familiar Biblical passages and reader-centred hermeneutics.<sup>65</sup>

Kleinhenz’s discussions on Dante’s use of Biblical references highlights a way in which Dante directs readers to engage with and interpret the *Commedia*. Kleinhenz wrote in 1986, “further research in this (relatively speaking) underdeveloped area promises to yield many rewards and valuable critical insights”.<sup>66</sup> Kleinhenz was right; there are fruitful discussions to be had in considering the intersections between Dante’s use of Scripture in the *Commedia* and reader-centred hermeneutics. In Chapter 4, this thesis argues Dante’s Biblical references are one of the ways in which the *Commedia* invites readers to reflect on the act of reading if not engage in hermeneutical practice with the text.<sup>67</sup> Biblical references are not the only hermeneutical prompts Dante uses; the Hell Gate’s inscription and the Pilgrim’s meditation on the Cross of Mars are two moments in which the *Commedia's* invitation to reflect on the nature of reading seems more explicit.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Kleinhenz, “Dante and the Bible”, p. 227 and “Poetics of Citation”, pp. 5–6.

<sup>65</sup> Helena Phillips-Robins has done the most recent work on this point in “*Cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce*: Singing and Community in the *Commedia*”, *Italian Studies*, 71.1 (2016), 4–20 (pp. 15–16). She argues that Dante invites readers to pause in the middle of the poem’s narrative and join the penitent as they begin the next stage of their spiritual journey. Most notably through the singing of the hymns and prayers.

<sup>66</sup> Kleinhenz, “Dante and the Bible”, p. 234.

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 4 sections 4.4.

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 4 sections 4.2 and 4.5.

### 1.3. Dante and Biblical Hermeneutics

Among the most useful discussions regarding Dante and Biblical hermeneutics is that of Stanley Benfell who explores Dante's use of the Bible in the *Commedia* and speculates how Dante thought his readers should engage with Scripture for themselves.<sup>69</sup> Given Scripture's cultural and theological significance, Benfell suggests what is missing from the general discussion regarding the *Commedia* and the Bible is "the ways in which the Bible serves as a model text for Dante, hovering over the poem like God's spirit over the waters of creation".<sup>70</sup> Benfell suggests Dante used Scripture as a spiritual *and* literary source for the structure and content of his poem in the same way he used ancient texts including Virgil and Ovid.<sup>71</sup> Benfell stresses that Dante's use of Scripture as a literary source does not mean he dismissed the theological and spiritual significance of Scripture, or that he did not incorporate Scripture "in order to appropriate the Bible and its message for his own time and purpose".<sup>72</sup> Rather, Benfell echoes Ferrante's claim that Scripture was a crucial part of Dante's medieval culture.<sup>73</sup> Benfell also suggests that Dante may have wanted his readers to receive Scripture through the filter of the *Commedia*.<sup>74</sup>

Regarding Dante's own Biblical hermeneutical practices, Benfell says Dante followed the models of reading and interpreting Scripture established by the Patristics, including Augustine, who read Scripture as the guide for Christian living. Benfell says "the scriptures' meaning emerged out of an individual's

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<sup>69</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, pp. 3–18. Benfell notes specifically the works of Kleinhenz in "Dante and the Bible", "Poetics of Citation", and "Dante and the Art of Citation", in *Dante Now*, ed. by Theodore J. Cachey (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 43–61. Benfell also refers to Hawkins' work in *Dante's Testaments* and the collection of essays in Giovanni Barblan's edited *Dante e la Bibbia* (Florence: Olschki, 1988).

<sup>70</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>72</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Ferrante, "Bible as Thesaurus".

<sup>74</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 5.



existential situation, out of what the Bible meant in his or her life".<sup>75</sup> For example, in *Paradiso* 24–26, when the Pilgrim is examined by the Apostles Peter, James, and John regarding faith, hope, and charity, Peter asks the Pilgrim how he knows that the Bible is true and the Pilgrim responds that Scripture teaches readers how to turn away from sin and move toward God. Benfell says this episode is crucial to understanding Dante's own Biblical hermeneutics: "the Bible's truth value lies not in its proved correspondence to an external reality, but in the encounter a reader has with the sacred text, in which understanding and truth emerge, which ultimately change the reader".<sup>76</sup> This is perhaps where Dante stands closest to Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics as reading and interpreting Scripture are essential to living in accordance with *caritas* as exemplified by Christ. What Benfell does not touch upon is the application of the hermeneutical principles reserved for Scripture to a reading of the *Commedia*. Given the literary parallels between Scripture and the *Commedia*, and Dante's affinity for integrating Biblical themes and quoting Scripture in the *Commedia*, such a reading of the *Commedia* seems more than justified. Furthermore, Benfell's emphasis on Dante's reading and reception of Scripture in light of his medieval context supports that the hermeneutical model to be applied should be one that was prevalent in Dante's medieval era.

While Benfell builds a convincing argument for the application of a medieval hermeneutical model to the *Commedia*, he does not mention anything regarding Christ-centred hermeneutics. Ruth Chester's recent discussion on virtue is an example of the many discussions that demonstrate a correlation between Christological and moral themes addressed in the *Commedia*.<sup>77</sup> The main

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<sup>75</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 15.

<sup>76</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> Ruth Chester, "Virtue in Dante", in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, II, 211–252. See also Marc Cogan, *The Design in the Wax: The Structure of the Divine Comedy and its Meaning* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), and Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

focus of Chester's discussion is on virtue in the *Purgatorio* as it is a prominent theme and mechanism for the Pilgrim's ascent of Mount Purgatory.<sup>78</sup> If virtue is the basis for the proper interaction between God and humanity, then part of the process of purgation is to grow and be transformed in virtue.<sup>79</sup> For Chester, the quest for virtue in the *Purgatorio* is uniquely Christological.<sup>80</sup> Chester says "Purgatory is not simply a place where one learns virtue, but a place where one *becomes* virtuous".<sup>81</sup>

Chester's discussion on virtue is Christ-centred as she focuses on the issues of humanity's interactions with God, Christ as the mediator of those interactions, and how Christ directs humanity to be united with God.<sup>82</sup> Chester also examines the discussions of virtue from Augustine, which focus on Christ, in *De civitate Dei* and *De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae*.<sup>83</sup> Although Chester does not discuss *De doctrina*, her points parallel Augustine's Christological hermeneutics in *De doctrina* regarding the regulation of ethical behaviour between humanity and creation, and the ultimate goal of being reunited with God through *caritas*. Christ, as God's virtue Incarnate, demonstrates to humanity *how to be* virtuous. In following Christ's model of virtue, humanity can live to their fullest potential in virtue and connect to God in true Divine virtue.<sup>84</sup> Regarding Augustine, Chester says "the Augustinian placing of love at the centre of the God-man relationship

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<sup>78</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", pp. 225–241.

<sup>79</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", p. 225.

<sup>80</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", pp. 226–227.

<sup>81</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", p. 227.

<sup>82</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", p. 216.

<sup>83</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", p. 217–218. Chester summarises Augustine's argument as an "activation" of the relationship between God and creation, "in which the creature acts in order to bring itself closer to its creator, and the actions which it manifests are manifestations of the nature of the creator Himself" (p. 217). For example, Augustine says in *De mor. Eccl.* 15.25, *nihil omnino esse virtutem affirmaverim nisi summum amorem dei* (I hold virtue to be nothing else than perfect love of God). In other words, for humanity to be virtuous it must actively demonstrate its love for and to God. Augustine, *De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum libri duo*, ed. by Johannes B. Bauer (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1992). Translation by Richard Stothert, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

<sup>84</sup> Chester, "Virtue in Dante", p. 221. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology, 600–1300* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (London: SCM, 1992).

(those who follow Christ are ‘*dilectoribus*’) will be a vital motif that Dante carries into the rendering of this relationship in the *Commedia*.<sup>85</sup> Chester is touching on Augustine’s Christological hermeneutics from *De doctrina* without mentioning it directly.

At the heart of Augustine’s Christological hermeneutics is *caritas* which regulates and differentiates the good and bad forms of love as they are expressed in God’s relationship with humanity, humanity’s relationship with God, and humanity’s relationship with one another in relation to God. The dynamics of humanity’s relationship with God and with others appear among the relationships featured in the *Commedia* as well; in the *Purgatorio*, the penitent souls work to repair their relationships with God and neighbours and, according to Piccarda, the blessed souls are bound to God’s will through *caritas* in the *Paradiso*. Montemaggi’s latest reflections on reading the *Commedia* theologically are perhaps the closest to Augustine’s hermeneutics of *caritas* as Montemaggi explores the *Commedia*’s focus on God’s relationship with humanity and humanity’s relationship with itself in relation to God.<sup>86</sup>

Reading the *Commedia* theologically, per Montemaggi’s definition, is to read the Pilgrim’s journey as a movement from “counting God as one’s possession” to recognising God in others and acting appropriately based on that recognition.<sup>87</sup> By recognising God in others, Montemaggi says humanity has the opportunity to extend humility and *caritas* to others in the imitation of, and obedience to, the *caritas* God extends to humanity through creation and models for humanity through the Incarnation.<sup>88</sup> This is Augustine’s *regula dilectionis* which emphasises the love of God for God’s sake and integrating relationships with

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<sup>85</sup> Chester, “Virtue in Dante”, p. 222.

<sup>86</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia as Theology: Divinity Realized in Human Encounter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 8.

others into their relationship with God so that others are loved for God's sake.<sup>89</sup> The Pilgrim's journey in the *Commedia* is a transformation and realignment of his moral self in relation to God, inwardly, and through the cultivation of genuine and selfless relationships with others, outwardly.

The most important claim this thesis argues is that reading through the hermeneutics of *caritas* highlights the importance of human relationships in the light of Christ's Double Love Commandment. Christ says in Matthew 22:37–40 that God should be loved above all things, and that neighbours should be loved as one's self. Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* clarifies that God is loved above all things and enjoyed for God's sake, and neighbours are loved in light of the love owed to God. To love neighbours properly is to love God properly. Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* not only helps readers distinguish between good and bad forms of love, but also encourages acting upon good forms of love to maintain the proper order of human relationships between God and neighbours. As Christ's Double Love Commandment is the centre of this approach, and as Christ paradigmatically embodies the ideal of *caritas*, reading the *Commedia* through these hermeneutical principles reveals the poem's Christological orientation. Thus, there are two themes that emerge from this claim that are both featured in the recent works by Montemaggi and Heather Webb: the *Commedia*'s Christological orientation which can be illuminated through human relationships, and recognising how human relationships are ordered and restored through Christ.<sup>90</sup>

Regarding the Christological elements of the *Commedia*, Montemaggi argues that the poem's Christology can be examined through human

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<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 2 sections 2.3.

<sup>90</sup> Montemaggi, "In Unknowability as Love: The Theology of Dante's *Commedia*", in *Dante's Commedia: Theology as Poetry*, pp. 60–94 and *Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology*. Heather Webb, *Dante's Persons: An Ethics of the Transhuman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

relationships, especially when the Pilgrim sees Christ in others.<sup>91</sup> As Montemaggi says, the *Commedia* is “presented to us as part of an ever-growing network of manifestations of love, the epicentre of which is the love incarnated in Jesus”.<sup>92</sup> Good and bad forms of love shape human relationships. Christ, as the Incarnation of God, demonstrates for humanity how to live in the best form of love, which is *caritas*. Francesca is damned through her abuse of Paolo. Piccarda is saved through her service toward God, first, and humanity second; her actions are a clear reflection of *caritas*. It is this form of love that all the souls in *Purgatorio* strive to replicate in order to restore themselves to their full personhood, as discussed by Webb, and restore their relationships with God and others. Webb defines personhood as recognising “the dignity of the human person”.<sup>93</sup> Humanity can only achieve the fullness of their personhood when they behave in accordance with *caritas* and imitate Christ. To do so is to act in accordance with God’s design and desire for human behaviour.

Although humanity will never be able to fully comprehend God, the best humanity can hope for is to understand how God *wants* all persons to engage with each other. Again, Christ, as the Incarnation of God and *caritas* personified, is the best model for human behaviour. This is a point Augustine repeatedly calls attention to regarding his hermeneutics of *caritas*; Scripture reveals Christ as the personification of *caritas* and the paradigm of the well lived human life. To be obedient to God is to imitate Christ’s model of moral behaviour. Montemaggi argues Dante came to the same conclusion which is why the restoration of human relationships, through the proper order of God and neighbours, is a key theme of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 26.

<sup>92</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 120.

<sup>93</sup> Webb, *Dante’s Persons*, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Montemaggi, “Unknowability as Love”, p. 67.

While life in the *Paradiso* is eternal conformity and unity to *caritas* in God, Montemaggi and Webb point to the *Purgatorio* as the place where the majority of Christ's transformative work is accomplished. Montemaggi notes that in the *Purgatorio*, the souls learn what they should have learned in their earthly life so they can "prepare themselves for heavenly being by conforming their will to that of Christ".<sup>95</sup> Such opportunities to learn through practice do not exist anywhere else. Of the damned in Hell, Webb says they are no longer the persons they were in life; in many cases, the damned are caricatures of their sins rather who they once were.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, Hell and its occupants are a perverted parody of the social order as in each of the lower rings, the damned become less human and more violent. While Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics suggest *cupiditas* is the opposite of *caritas*, Webb shows how the increased violence in each of the lower circles leads to the occupant's "inability to recognise one's neighbour".<sup>97</sup>

The point of the Pilgrim's journey, Webb argues, is to "see and recognise suffering in others"; in other words, the Pilgrim must recognise and respect others in their personhood.<sup>98</sup> This objective is next to impossible in the *Inferno* but is achievable in the *Purgatorio* where the penitent willingly suffer penance. In their suffering, Christ transforms them into Christ's image. Webb says it is among those who willingly transform themselves through suffering in Christ that the Pilgrim, and the penitential souls, can be first seen in their most complete form; their individual personhood in light of God's grace and salvation.<sup>99</sup> In the *Paradiso*, there is no veil or barrier to see the blessed souls in their personhood. They are complete in light of God's *caritas* which they equally reflect back to God. Montemaggi says this is "the core of the salvific message of the *Commedia*:"

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<sup>95</sup> Montemaggi, "Unknowability as Love", p. 67.

<sup>96</sup> Webb, *Dante's Persons*, p. 91.

<sup>97</sup> Webb, *Dante's Persons*, p. 93.

<sup>98</sup> Webb, *Dante's Persons*, p. 100.

<sup>99</sup> Webb, *Dante's Persons*, p. 119.

divinity realized in human encounter: the recognition that truth *is* our ability to love others fully, in awareness of how they reflect to us the love incarnate in Christ”.<sup>100</sup> Montemaggi acknowledges that a reading of the *Paradiso* which continuously reveals Christ in the blessed souls, where the blessed souls reflect and reveal Christ back to those who see them risks “blurring the *distinction* between ourselves and God, creation and Creator”.<sup>101</sup> I would argue that adding the terms set by Augustine’s *regula dilectionis* helps make the order of human relationships clear: all human relationships must be anchored in God *first* for it is through God that *caritas* can manifest between neighbours.

Part of the Pilgrim’s journey is to recognise how human relationships are ordered and restored through Christ. In Hell, the Pilgrim can see the effects of the bad form of love in action. In Paradise, he can see how a good form of transforms and unites the will to God’s through *caritas*. It is in the *Purgatorio* where the Pilgrim learns the most about human relationships and how they can be restored. As Webb observes, “In the *Purgatorio*, we observe Dante learning to recognise persons as such, as he strives to see beyond the given biological species-sameness to embrace a neighbour in all her particularity as a person”.<sup>102</sup> The Pilgrim must learn to look beyond the vice for which these souls are punished and just recognise them as persons deserving of *caritas*.

Two case studies discussed in this thesis, and by Webb, are the vices of pride and envy as misguided/bad forms of love in the *Purgatorio*. Webb notes, “Dante thus configures pride to fit the mould of misdirected love, and in this way brings it into intimate proximity with envy”.<sup>103</sup> Webb continues to say that these groups of sinners are incapable of recognising the opportunity to extend *caritas* to

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<sup>100</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 162.

<sup>101</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 162.

<sup>102</sup> Webb, *Dante’s Persons*, p. 27.

<sup>103</sup> Webb, *Dante’s Persons*, p. 84.

their neighbours for they no longer recognise their neighbours, “but rather see each neighbour as simply ‘greater than me’ or ‘less than me’”.<sup>104</sup> This mentality was prominently displayed by Sapia in *Purgatorio* 13 who had a self-referential way of relating to others and, in her *cupiditas*, felt pride at the downfall of her perceived enemies to whom she felt superior.<sup>105</sup>

Regarding the *Commedia*'s readers, Webb says those who follow the Pilgrim's path will see how the Pilgrim's perception, or reading, of the souls he encounters changes as his journey progresses; “we as readers are progressively trained in the capacity to perceive this pervasive change and to attend to the spiritual dynamism of each individual we encounter. Transformation models transformation, both for Dante, and, potentially for the reader as well”.<sup>106</sup> Dante's readers, then, have the same charge to learn how to recognise a soul's personhood as the poem's protagonist. Webb's theme of learning how to recognise the personhood of others seems connected to the Augustinian theme of learning through moral transformation how to see/love others in relation to God. Seeing others in God is a matter of seeing them independently, as they really are, and not just extensions of others.

The majority of scholarship reviewed to this point views Dante's theology and the theology of the *Commedia* exegetically; as a movement from the outside influences to the inside of the *Commedia*'s content. Montemaggi's hermeneutical approach is among the few that propose an eisegetical reading; an analysis of the moral transformation that begins from the inside and moves to the outward expression of the inner transformation. Montemaggi says reading the *Commedia* as theology is “to explore the inextricable interconnections in Dante's poem

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<sup>104</sup> Webb, *Dante's Persons*, p. 84.

<sup>105</sup> See Chapter 4 section 4.4.

<sup>106</sup> Webb, *Dante's Persons*, p. 124.



between human interrelatedness and divinity”.<sup>107</sup> This is a fundamental principle of Augustine’s Christological hermeneutics as *caritas* reveals God through the Incarnation as well as provides humanity with a model of proper moral conduct needed to relate to God and others appropriately. For Montemaggi, Dante wrote the *Commedia* “to contribute to our salvation”.<sup>108</sup> The poem is a personal account of a Christian re-finding himself (*mi ritrovai; Inf. 1.2*) having strayed from the path of salvation and finding he cannot return to the right path alone.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the theology of the poem is an invitation for readers to follow the Pilgrim’s journey back to God, back to themselves, and back to the communities which guide and support them along the way.<sup>110</sup> I would add that Augustine’s *De doctrina* considers Scripture in the same way. Reading Scripture in order to only gain knowledge about God is to miss the opportunities Scripture offers readers to reconnect with others through loving God and loving others in relation to God.

Viewed from the perspective of restoring relationships, the *Commedia* is unapologetically Christological. Montemaggi says if the *Commedia* seems silent on Christ, “it is because the generative challenge presented to us by the *Commedia* is to recognise Christ in other human beings; to recognise that the truth of Christ is the truth of all particular human beings; to recognise others as persons in and as whom Christ himself lives”.<sup>111</sup> The Christology of the poem is found in how Dante presents human encounters; failed ones in the *Inferno*, restored ones in the *Purgatorio*, and perfected ones in the *Paradiso*. If Christians believe Christ is present in all human encounters, then it is the duty of all Christians to see Christ in others and to respond in kind. Again, this is Augustine’s point in his

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<sup>107</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 31.

<sup>108</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 27.

<sup>109</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 1.

<sup>110</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, pp. 9–30.

<sup>111</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 26. Montemaggi follows the argument made by Christian Moevs in *Metaphysics of Dante’s Comedy* that the Pilgrim and the readers need to become one with Christ to know Christ.

hermeneutics of *caritas* which stresses an obedience to *and* imitation of Christ's Double Love Commandment in relating to others appropriately. Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* says that relating to others appropriately, that is through the proper form of love, is inherently God-directed and therefore Christ-directed.

To conclude this section, and briefly summarise the current state of scholarship on Dante and Augustine, Lombardi and Freccero provide strong foundations establishing the importance and prevalence of Augustine in Dante's medieval world. *Confessiones* and *De doctrina* were two texts that saw a resurgence of circulation and popularity in the later Middle Ages. Marchesi and Montemaggi highlight the relevance of Augustine's hermeneutics as it relates to the *Commedia*'s key theme of the good and bad forms of love and moral redirection achieved through correct reading. Augustine's model of Biblical hermeneutics, as they are expressed in *De doctrina*, emphasises the importance of moral and spiritual redirection that restores humanity's relationship with God, for God's sake, and to others in relation to God through Christ's Double Love Commandment. In the next chapter, I discuss Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the forms of good and bad love, and the correlation between good and bad love and good and bad reading. Chapters 3 and 4 are split between figures from the *Commedia* who exemplify good and bad forms of love and good and bad forms of reading, and moments in which the *Commedia* offers readers the opportunity to apply a hermeneutical system to their reading of the text. The concluding chapter will assess what this thesis has achieved and where this research can go from here.

## Chapter 2

### Augustine's Hermeneutics of *caritas*

The purpose of this chapter is to review Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* and establish the lens through which Dante's *Commedia* will be read and discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. As John Freccero, Simone Marchesi, and Elena Lombardi have demonstrated, Augustine of Hippo was a major theological influence in Dante's *Commedia*.<sup>1</sup> Augustine was also a major theological resource for Biblical hermeneutics in the Middle Ages. Numerous scholars have argued that the *Commedia* can withstand, if not outright invites, a reading of the poem through the same hermeneutic principles applied to reading Scripture.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is the goal of this thesis to read Dante's *Commedia* through Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics as presented in *De doctrina Christiana*.

Augustine began writing *De doctrina Christiana* in 396/397 and paused around 400; he completed the text in 430 before his death.<sup>3</sup> Before *De doctrina's* rules for Biblical interpretation, the early church followed the hermeneutical and exegetical practices of Origen in *De principiis* (c. 3rd century) and Tyconius's *Liber regularum* (c. 382). What makes Augustine's rules for Biblical interpretation different from those of his predecessors are his distinction between the *res quibus frendum est* (things that are to be enjoyed) and the *res quibus utendum est* (things that are to be used), and how they are related to the *regula fidei* (rule of faith) and the *regula dilectionis* (the rule of love).

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<sup>1</sup> John Freccero, *Poetics of Conversion*, and *In Dante's Wake*. Simone Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*. Elena Lombardi, "Augustine and Dante", in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, I, 175–208. See Chapter 1 section 1.1 for the discussion on Augustine's presence and influence in Dante's medieval world.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Charles S. Singleton, "End of a Poem", *Hudson Review*, 6 (1953), 529–539, Stanley Benfell, *The Biblical Dante*, Ruth Chester, "Virtue in Dante", in *Reviewing Dante's Theology*, II, 211–252, and Vittorio Montemaggi, *Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology*. See Chapter 1 section 1.3. for the discussion on Dante and Biblical Hermeneutics.

<sup>3</sup> R.P.H. Green, Introduction to *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching*, trans. by Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. vii–xxiii.

Augustine's hermeneutical principles are founded on Christ's Double

Love Commandment from Matthew 22:37–40:

*Ait illi Jesus: Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et in tota anima tua, et in tota mente tua. Hoc est maximum, et primum mandatum. Secundum autem simile est huic: Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum. In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet, et prophetae.*

(Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets”.)<sup>4</sup>

Christ's Double Love Commandments says that God should be loved above all things and neighbours should be loved as one's self. Augustine quotes from the Matthean text in *De doctrina Christiana* 1.22.21: *Haec enim regula dilectionis divinius constituta est: diliges, inquit, proximum tuum tamquam te ipsum, deum uero ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex tota mente* (For the divinely established rule of love says “you shall love your neighbour as yourself” but God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”).<sup>5</sup> The Double Love Commandment also sets the standard of moral behaviour taught and demonstrated by Christ in his earthly life and ministry.

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<sup>4</sup> Parallel passages for the Matthean text are Mark 12:30–31: *et 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 tamquam teipsum* (“you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength’. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these’). Luke 10:27: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex omnibus virtutibus tuis, et ex omni mente tua: et proximum tuum sicut teipsum* (“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself”). And John 13:34–35: *Mandatum novum do vobis: ut diligatis invicem: sicut dilexi vos, ut et vos diligatis invicem. In hoc cognoscent omnes quia discipuli mei estis, si dilectionem habueritis ad invicem* (“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”). All Latin passages of Scripture are from the Vulgate, *Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatam Clementinam*. All English translations are from *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Matthew 22:39 and 37; Augustine reverses the order of the original passage. All Latin passages of *De doctrina* are taken from Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De doctrina Christiana*, ed. by Josef Martin, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 32 (Turnhout: Typographi Brepols, 1962). All English translations are by Green, *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching*.

In *De doctrina* Book 2, Augustine explains the seven-step process of holiness, the third of which links the activity of reading and interpreting Scripture to following the *regula dilectionis* as demonstrated and established by Christ:

*omnis diuinarum scripturarum studiosus, nihil in eis aliud inuenturus quam diligendum esse deum propter deum et proximum propter deum [...] Necessesse est ergo, ut primo se quisque in scripturis inueniat amore huius saeculi, hoc est, temporalium rerum, implicatum, longe seiunctum esse a tanto amore dei et tanto amore proximi, quantum scriptura ipsa praescribit. Tum uero ille timor, quo cogitat de iudicio dei, et illa pietas, qua non potest nisi credere et cedere auctoritati sanctorum librorum, cogit eum se ipsum lugere. (De doct. 2.7.10)*

(every student of the Divine Scriptures exerts himself, and what he will find in them is quite simply that he must love God for himself, and his neighbour for God's sake [...] It is vital that the reader first learns from the Scriptures that he is entangled in a love of this present age, of temporal things, that is, and is far from loving God and his neighbour to the extent that Scripture prescribes. It is at this point that the fear which makes him ponder the judgement of God, and the holiness which makes it impossible for him not to admit and submit to the authority of the holy books, compel him to deplore his own condition.)

Augustine develops a key distinction by drawing on the Matthean text; that God must be loved for God's own self and neighbours are to be loved for God's sake. Augustine's gloss to Christ's Double Love Commandment emphasises the proper order of love which begins and ends with God. This passage also says that among the first things readers learn from Scripture is the need for moral reform in the way they love, and to extend that love through moral action, to God and neighbours. Reform comes through submission to the authority of Scripture and the desire to correct their moral behaviour through their love for God and their love for neighbours in relation to God. The key point to be emphasised here from Augustine's argument is that the reading of Scripture influences the readers' moral actions which are to be rooted in Christ's Double Love Commandment. These moral actions guide readers to reform their relationships with the *res quibus utendum est* and the *res quibus fruendum est*. For Augustine, Christ is the physical manifestation of God's self-revelation in the flesh (*per* John 1:1–5 and 14) and the

primary teacher of the moral actions God commands God's people to act upon in Scripture.

For Augustine, reading Scripture in the light of Christ's Double Love Commandment reveals multiple layers of Christian truth. In the literal and tropological senses, Scripture instructs readers how to give the appropriate love owed to God and others through Christ's teachings. In the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses, Scripture offers examples of those who love God and others appropriately, as well as examples of those whose moral conditions fail to love God and others appropriately. For example, in *De doct.* 1.33.36, Augustine mentions the "arrogant" fallen angels who sided with Lucifer against God and in 2.23.35, he mentions Saul whose evil heart led him to "falsehoods" and "spiritual fornication".

According to Augustine, the primary concern of *De doctrina* is following rules of interpretation so those who read God's Word might understand what God communicates to humanity and how to teach God's Word to others:

*Sunt praecepta quaedam tractandarum scripturarum, quae studiosis earum uideo non incommode posse tradi, ut non solum legendo alios, qui diuinarum litterarum operta aperuerunt, sed etiam ipsi aperiendo proficiant.* (Prologue 1)

(There are certain rules for interpreting the Scriptures which, as I am well aware, can usefully be passed on to those with an appetite for such study to enable them to progress not just by reading the work of others who have illuminated the obscurities of Divine literature, but also by finding illumination themselves.)

In this passage, Augustine mentions passing on what has been gained through the study of Scripture and through Divine illumination. This implies that rules need to be learned and then taught to others in order to engage with God's self-revelation in Scripture appropriately, either through reading through the appropriate lens of love or moral actions through the appropriate measure of love. In *De doct.* Prol. 7, Augustine lists Biblical figures who were either in need of instruction or who passed on their knowledge to others: Moses who received

instruction from his father-in-law in Exodus 18 and St Philip who instructed the eunuch in Acts 8.<sup>6</sup> Christ paradigmatically exemplifies Biblical teachers as he is the Incarnation of God and the one who illuminates and teaches the *regula dilectionis* as the hermeneutical key for reading and understanding Scripture. Christ is also the moral standard by which readers are to live. Thus, there is a cooperative element to Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics as Scripture is the means through which God communicates the grace of salvation. Christ is the medium through which God's grace is communicated. Those who can read and receive the message of Scripture are to teach others how to read so that they may receive God's salvation for themselves. For Augustine, Scripture is a tool for establishing the proper order of relationships between God and humanity as well as providing the criteria for proper moral conduct in these relationships.<sup>7</sup>

Augustine proposes in *De doctrina* that the order of these relationships and the model for proper conduct is revealed through the hermeneutics of *caritas*.

Augustine's Christ-centred model for reading, with its emphasis on *caritas* (charity) and *cupiditas* (self-love), will shape the hermeneutical arguments of this thesis regarding good and bad forms of love. For Augustine, *caritas* is the central theme of Scripture. *Caritas* has been translated as "love", as in 1 Corinthians 13:13, but Augustine understood the term to mean the type of love Christ commanded his disciples to show toward each other through acts of selfless charity. *Cupiditas*, which can be translated as "self-love" and sometimes "greed",

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<sup>6</sup> In both examples, the reception of Biblical instruction are catalysts for moral redirection. Moses is better prepared to act as a moral leader over the Israelites in their continued journey to the Promised Land (Exodus 19). The eunuch asks St Philip to baptize him on the roadside (Acts 8:36–40).

<sup>7</sup> All things in Scripture point back to God, but Scripture is not God itself. Scripture is a thing, a tool, to be used and its purpose is to illuminate God through the illuminated and illuminating Christ. Tarmo Toom says, "Scripture is a means, an instruction, a pointer, and not the final *telos*"; *Thought Clothed With Sound: Augustine's Christological Hermeneutics in De doctrina Christiana* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), p.109. The final *telos* is, as Toom says, the destination: eternal union with the Trinity. Scripture, as a tool of instruction, cannot bring humanity to the final union with the Trinity itself; only Christ can do that. Toom calls Christ the "Inner Teacher", the one who is the most basic *signum* (sign) of God in God's self-revelation (Scripture) and who works to illuminate Scripture as a tool that points to God.

is the antithesis of *caritas* and, for Augustine, the type of love that prevents Christian charity. To better understand Augustine's complex Biblical hermeneutics, this chapter is divided into three key themes that constitute Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*: Scripture is to be read through the lens of *caritas* out of obedience to the commandments and standards set by *caritas* Incarnate, who is Christ; readers who love correctly are enabled thereby to read Scripture correctly, and vice versa; and, charitable reading consists of cooperative reading.

## 2.1. Scripture Reveals Love

As mentioned above, the *regula dilectionis* is the central Christological theme of *De doctrina*.<sup>8</sup> According to Matthew 22:37–40, the *regula dilectionis* is Christ's Double Love Commandment which is to love God above all and to love neighbours as one's self. According to Augustine, when read through the correct interpretive lens, all of Scripture reveals Christ's Double Love Commandment which is to

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<sup>8</sup> Toom offers the most in-depth analysis the Christological elements of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics. He argues the root of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics is his belief that Christ is the first and most basic *signum* of God who desired to be known and can be known despite the limitations of human understanding. In *De doctrina*, Augustine makes a Christological point in identifying Christ as a *signum* of God through the Incarnation and an authentic source of God's truth as Scripture's Inner Teacher who illuminates and imprints other *signa* in the minds of those who read Scripture. Toom notes this is a deviation from what Augustine says in *De mag.* 10.33.115 from which *De doctrina*'s Christological hermeneutics was formed: *Cum enim mihi signum datur, si nescientem me inuenerit, cuius rei signum sit, docere me nihil potest, si uero scientem, quid disco per signum?* (When a sign is given to me, it can teach me nothing if it finds me ignorant of the thing of which it is the sign; but if I'm not ignorant, what do I learn through the sign?). Toom explains that Augustine's argument is twofold: if one is ignorant of the sign, and its hidden meaning, nothing can be learned from the sign; but, if the sign, and its meaning, is known, there is nothing further learned from the sign. However, Christ, as the key hermeneutical *signum* of God's truth in Scripture, cannot be misunderstood or ignored. Thus, Christ, as the Incarnation of God, is the best and clearest *signum* to know as Christ makes all of Scripture's *signa* known to the readers. See, *Thought Clothed With Sound*, pp. 38–64. Latin from Augustine, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De magistro*, ed. by K.D. Daur, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970). English translation by Toom, *Thought Clothed With Sound*, p. 57. E. Hill explains that, for Augustine, the Incarnate Christ is the visible sign of God which should prompt, and direct, humanity to search for the other things that can be known about God; see, "Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand: Augustine's Perception of Faith", *Augustinian Studies*, 25 (1994), 51–64 (p. 55). See also, L. Alici, "Sign and Language", in *Teaching Christianity. The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. by John Rotelle and Boniface Ramsey, Vol. 1.11 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), pp. 28–53 (p. 35) and H.J. Cloeren, "St. Augustine's *De magistro*, A Transcendental Investigation", *Augustinian Studies*, 18 (1984), 21–27 (p. 26).



love God for God's own sake and to love neighbours in relation to God; this tropological lesson is made implicitly in Scripture and explicitly in Augustine's *frui/uti* distinction.<sup>9</sup> This is at the heart of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics as Christ illuminates and models the *regula dilectionis* in Scripture through his life and teachings. Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.35.39:

*Omniium igitur, quae dicta sunt, ex quo de rebus tractamus, haec summa est, ut intellegatur legis et omnium diuinarum scripturarum plenitudo et finis esse dilectio rei, qua fruendum est, et rei, quae nobiscum ea re frui potest, quia, ut se quisque diligat, praecepto non opus est.*

(The chief purpose of all that we have been saying in our discussion of things is to make it understood that the fulfilment and end of the law and all the Divine Scriptures is to love the thing which must be enjoyed and the thing which together with us can enjoy that thing (since there is no need for a commandment to love oneself.))

The primary task of his rules for interpretation in *De doctrina* is to make it known that the fulfilment and end of God's Word is to love; specifically, to love God and neighbours in the proper order and form. Christ says in Matthew 5:17, *Nolite putare quoniam veni solvere legem, aut prophetas : non veni solvere, sed adimplere* ("Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil"). And, indeed, all of the laws and prophets are fulfilled in Christ as *caritas* Incarnate, *per* Matthew 22:40. In the above passage from *De doctrina*, Augustine refers to God as *rei... fruendum est* (the thing to be enjoyed) and neighbours as *rei, quae nobiscum ea re frui potest* (the thing which together with us can enjoy the thing [God]).<sup>10</sup> These are terms associated with a larger discussion on the *res quibus fruendum est* and *res quibus utendum est*, which I discuss later in this

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<sup>9</sup> Augustine makes this distinction in *De doct.* 2.7.10, discussed in the previous section, which is refined and nuanced in his discussion of the *res quibus fruendum est*, discussed in this section.

<sup>10</sup> In *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* 30, Augustine defines something that is *frui* as a thing *quod propter seipsum expetendum est* (which is to be desired for its own sake), and something that is *uti* as a thing *quod ad aliud aliquid referendum est* (which refers to something else). Augustine, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, ed. by A. Mutzenbecher, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 44A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975). English translations from D.L. Mosher, *Augustine: Eighty-Three Different Questions*, Fathers of the Church 70 (Washington, D.C.: University of America Press, 1982). See also Helmut David Baer, "The Fruit of Charity: Using the Neighbour in *De doctrina Christiana*", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 24.1 (1996), 47–64.

section. The key point Augustine makes here is that when Scripture is read through this Christological lens, it reveals love and to whom that love should be directed; or in other words, the proper order of love.

What makes this hermeneutical approach Christological is that the love Scripture reveals is God's love for humanity. Scripture reveals God's love first through the laws and the prophets and then through Christ, the Incarnation of God. For Augustine, Christ is *caritas* personified and serves multiple roles in Scripture such as: the revelation of God in the flesh, *the* teacher of God's truth in Scripture, and *the* model of proper love extended to God, first, and neighbours as an extension of the love owed to God.<sup>11</sup> This last role is vital to the cooperative element of Augustine's hermeneutics; what Christ models for those who read Scripture which is to be followed. As Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.29.30:

*Omnium autem, qui nobiscum frui possunt deo, partim eos diligimus, quos ipsi adiuuamus, partim eos a quibus adiuuamur, partim quorum et indigemus adiutorio et indigentiae subuenimus, partim quibus nec ipsi conferimus aliquid commodi nec ab eis, ut nobis conferatur, attendimus. Velle tamen debemus, ut omnes nobiscum diligant deum, et totum, quod eos uel adiuuamus uel adiuuamur ab eis, ad unum illum finem referendum est.*

(Of all those who are capable of enjoying God together with us, we love some whom we are helping, and some who are helping us; some whose help we need and some whose needs we are meeting; some to whom we give no benefit and some by whom we do not expect any benefit to be given to us. But it should be our desire that they all love God together with us, and all the help that we give to or receive from them must be related to this one end.)

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<sup>11</sup> Toom argues that Augustine's Christological Biblical hermeneutics, as they are expressed in *De doctrina*, begins where Augustine's Christian epistemology ends in *Contra Academicos* and *De magistro*. Augustine says in *De mag.* 13.36.35, *utrum autem uera dicantur, eum docere solum* (it is He alone who teaches us whether what is said [in the Bible] is true). And in *De doct.* Prol. 8, Augustine says *Nam omne uerum ab illo est, qui ait: Ego sum ueritas* (all truth comes from Him who has said: "I am the Truth"). Thus, the two texts carry the same Christ-centred epistemological premise: God's truth is revealed by Christ alone. Toom summarises Augustine's Christ-centred epistemology from *C. Acad.* 3.5.11 (and repeated in 3.6.13), 2.3.9, and 3.19.42 into three statements: the truth is revealed, the truth is revealed by Christ, and the truth is accessible through the Incarnate Christ. See Toom, *Thought Clothed With Sound*, pp. 38–41 and 75. Augustine, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Contra Academicos*, ed. by W.M. Green, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1970).

This passage stresses that to love God as *frui*, readers must extend love to others in either helping or receiving help. In doing so, they show obedience to God and extend proper love to their neighbours *and* exemplify the standard of behaviour *set* by Christ.

All readings of Scripture must be consistent with the fundamental teachings and doctrines of the Christian faith as they set the limits of what counts as a proper Christian interpretation of Scripture. Augustine gives an example of an interpretation of Scripture that is consistent with the *regula fidei* (the rule of faith), which is the fundamental standard of Christian tradition.<sup>12</sup> Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.15.14 that Christ's Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection reinforce all doctrines concerning the *regula fidei* as revealed in Scripture. In Augustine's context, the *regula fidei* is a guide to reading Scripture through the proper hermeneutical lens as it verifies the proper order of love. The greatest portion of love is owed directly to the Triune God, other portions of love is owed to God indirectly through the love extended to others. Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.5.5. only the Trinitarian God is the *res quibus frendum est* because only God should be loved and enjoyed for God's own sake.<sup>13</sup> Augustine defines

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in *De doct.* 3.2.3., Augustine demonstrates how to read John's prologue through the *regula fidei*. *Illa haeretica distinctio: In principio erat uerbum et uerbum erat apud et deus erat, ut alius sit sensus: Verbum hoc erat in principio apud deum, non uult deum uerbum confiteri. Sed hoc regula fidei refellendum est, quia nobis de trinitatis aequalitate praescribitur, ut dicamus: Et deus erat uerbum, deinde subiungamus: Hoc erat in principio apud deum.* (The well-known heretical punctuation "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and there was God" [John 1:1–2], giving a different sense in what follows ("This Word was in the beginning with God") refuses to acknowledge that the Word was God. This is to be refuted by the rule of faith, which lays down for us the equality of the members of the Trinity, and so we should say "and the Word was God", and then go on, "This was in the beginning with God"). Reading John 1:1–2, *In principio erat uerbum et uerbum erat apud et deus erat*, follows the *regula fidei* as it makes a distinction between the interpretations "and there was God" and the correct "and the Word was God". Augustine says this distinction alters the meaning of the following passage in verse 3, *Verbum hoc erat in principio apud deum*. This passage exemplifies Christ's role as Scripture's authoritative teacher, as Christ is the Word Incarnate, and how the *regula fidei* confirms this fundamental belief of the Christian reading of Scripture.

<sup>13</sup> *Res igitur, quibus fruendum est, pater et filius et spiritus sanctus eademque trinitas, una quaedam summa res communisque omnibus fruentibus ea, si tamen res et non rerum omnium causa, si tamen et causa. Non enim facile nomen, quod tantae excellentiae conueniat, inueniri potest, nisi quod melius ita dicitur trinitas haec unus deus, ex quo omnia per quem omnia, in quo omnia.* (The things which are to be enjoyed, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity that consists of them, which is a kind of single, supreme thing, shared by all who enjoyed it—if indeed it is a thing and not the cause of all things,

enjoyment of the *res quibus frendum est* in *De doct.* 1.4.4: *amore inhaerere alicui rei propter se ipsam* (to hold fast to it in love for its own sake). This is a specialised meaning of enjoyment that can only apply to the *frui*. The love of something that is lesser than the *frui*, specifically the *uti*, is to disrupt the proper order of love. To love the *uti* for its own sake—which is a kind of love that is owed only to the *frui*—is, for Augustine, tantamount to replacing God as *frui* with a lesser thing and to abuse the *uti* (*De doct.* 1.23.22–1.24.25). In other words, to love the *uti* over the *frui* is to be out of sync with the proper order of love.<sup>14</sup> The love of the *frui*, as demonstrated by Christ, must come first.

Augustine's Christological thinking is the focus of *De doct.* 1.11.11–1.12.12 in which he discusses Christ Incarnate as Wisdom personified. Christ's Incarnation demonstrates God's love for humanity and desire to be known:

*nisi ipsa sapientia tantae etiam nostrae infirmitati congruere dignaretur et uiuendi nobis praeberet exemplum non aliter quam in homine, quoniam et nos homines sumus. Sed quia nos, cum ad illam uenimus, sapienter facimus, ipsa, cum ad nos uenit, ab hominibus superbis quasi stulte fecisse putata est.*

(if wisdom itself had not deigned to adapt itself to our great weakness and offered us a pattern for living; and it has actually done so in human form because we too are human. But because we act wisely when we come to wisdom, wisdom has been thought by arrogant people to have somehow acted foolishly when it came to us).

God's grace and mercy led to the election of agents to speak to humanity on God's behalf. In the Old Testament, these were the lawgivers and prophets. In the New Testament, the Incarnate Christ exceeds the work of the Old Testament agents as Christ is God's Wisdom in flesh who provides "a pattern for living". For Augustine, Christ's Incarnation was necessary for humanity to receive God's grace and salvation *as well as* a model of how to live in accordance with *caritas*.

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and if indeed it is a cause. It is not easy to find a suitable name for such excellence, but perhaps the Trinity is better called the one God from whom, through whom, and in whom everything is).  
<sup>14</sup> O. O'Donovan notes that in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 4.8 Augustine says faith is not *frui*, a thing to be enjoyed for its own sake, but is *uti*, a thing meant to be used to obtain something else. "*Usus and Fructio in Augustine, De doctrina Christiana 1*", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 33.2 (1982), 361–397 (p. 382).

Christ's Incarnation allows humanity to perceive, with greater clarity, how God is to be loved and enjoyed and how we are to love neighbours appropriately in relation to God.<sup>15</sup> Christ, as the paradigmatic exemplar of the Double Love Commandment, demonstrates and illuminates *caritas* in Scripture as Christ is the living model of *caritas*.

The love of God and neighbours in relation to God leads to eternal happiness, as Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.3.3: *Illae quibus fruendum est, nos beatos faciunt. Istis quibus utendum est, tendentes ad beatitudinem adiuvamur et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas, quae nos beatos faciunt, pervenire atque his inhaerere possimus* (Those which are to be enjoyed make us happy; those which are to be used assist us and give us a boost, so to speak, as we press on towards our happiness). The key points Augustine stresses here are that God alone is to be enjoyed, for God's own sake per *De doct.* 1.4.4, and humanity is to be loved for the sake of God. Augustine continues to come back to this point which is best said in *De doct.* 2.7.10, discussed previously: those who read Scripture must recognise that it reveals God's love and directs readers to love others in accordance with God's love. Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.22.21:

*Cum autem ait: toto corde, tota anima, tota mente, nullam vitae nostrae partem reliquit, quae uacare debeat et quasi locum dare, ut alia re vellet frui, sed quicquid aliud diligendum venerit in animum, illuc rapiatur, quo totus dilectionis impetus currit.*

(And when it says "all your heart, all your soul, all your mind", it leaves no part of your life free from this obligation, no part free as it were to back out and enjoy some other thing; any other

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<sup>15</sup> In *C. Acad.* 1.8.22, Augustine says that although humanity desires to understand God, God cannot be fully known because of the nature of God and humanity's limited capacity to fully understand God. Augustine expands on this idea in *De mag.* 12.40.30 in which he argues what humanity can perceive about God is only that which has been illuminated through revelation or instruction. God is the primary source of illumination and Christ, as the Incarnation of God, is the source of illumination humanity can best understand. The centre of Augustine's doctrine of illumination is Christ, as he says in *Confessiones* 10.23, *per quam vera sunt omnia, sola veritate* ([Christ is the] sole Truth by which all things are true), which Augustine repeats in *De mag.* 13.36.35, *utrum autem vera dicantur, eum docere solum* (it is He alone who teaches us whether what is said [in the Bible] is true). Therefore, Christ is the sole truth of Scripture who presents no false images and is the best way for humanity to see and know God. Augustine, *Confessiones*, in *Augustine: Confessions*, ed. by J.J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). English translations by F.J. Sheed, *Augustine: Confessions Books I–XIII*, rev. edn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993).

object of love that enters to mind should be swept towards the same destination as that to which the whole flood of our love is directed.)

That is, loving one's neighbour is always within the context of loving God. A neighbour is never loved for themselves, they are always loved in proper measure in accordance with the love owed to God for God's own sake.

The *regula dilectionis* sets the order in which humanity is to love and engage with all things. God is to be loved and all other things are to be loved appropriately in light of their relationship to God. In *De doct.* 1.23.22–1.24.25, Augustine warns against the dangers of *cupiditas*, which can lead to the destructive abuse of the *res quibus utendum est* (things to be used). Augustine defines destructive abuse as the misuse or misunderstanding of the purpose of the *res quibus utendum est* in *De doct.* 1.24.25. To summarise Augustine's argument from Book 1, the *res quibus utendum est* are in a lower position of the created order because their function is to direct humanity's focus to God as the only *res quibus fruendum est*. But humanity, according to Augustine in *De doct.* 1.25.26, is drawn to misuse the *res quibus utendum est* since the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. The fall has limited humanity's ability to know God as the highest and greatest thing in creation; thus, humanity is drawn to the lower things of creation because they are tangible. When humanity misuses these lower things, they are loved in themselves which conflicts with the love humanity owes God. God is to be loved for God's own sake and creatures are to be loved in their relation to God. Loving lower things for themselves constitutes misuse of the lower things. Augustine says those who misuse the *res quibus utendum est* are guilty of *cupiditas* because they find enjoyment in the things that are meant to be used transitively, or enjoyed and used in light of their relationship to God. Therefore, according to Augustine in *De doct.* 1.26.27–1.40.44, humanity needs the *regula fidei* and the *regula dilectionis* to distinguish between the *uti* and the *frui* and to determine the proper conduct

and love owed to both types of things. In other words, the fundamental revelation of Scripture is love and how to behave in a way that is concordant to revealed love.

## 2.2. Relationship between Reading Correctly and Loving Correctly

The second major theme of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* concerns readers who exhibit the best form of love, which is *caritas*, and their ability to read Scripture through the correct hermeneutical approach. The activity of reading Scripture and readers reforming their moral condition is a cyclical one. In their reading of Scripture, readers recognise they need to reform the way they love God and their neighbours. As their moral condition readjusts, Augustine says their reading of Scripture will reveal more about the best form of love. As they continue to read, the text reveals and encourages them to love others in the proper order through the lens of good love. The more they follow the acts of good love demonstrated in Scripture, the more their moral condition allows them to interpret these models in the text.<sup>16</sup> To act on good love, readers must distinguish between the *res quibus fruendum est* and the *res quibus utendum* so that the appropriate order and distribution of love are extended to these things. The *regula dilectionis* guides readers to extend the proper order and measure of love owed to each type of thing.

Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.22.21: *Haec enim regula dilectionis divinius constituta est: diliges, inquit, proximum tuum tamquam te ipsum, deum uero ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex tota mente* (For the divinely established rule of love says "you shall

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<sup>16</sup> For Augustine, Biblical exegesis is not just done for the sake of theoretical practice, but for the sake of Christian ethics and good moral behaviour. As Toom says, "ultimately, it was (and is) the daily life of a Christian that shows whether the Scripture is adequately understood or not" (p. 185). In other words, true comprehension of Scripture manifested in the morality of the readers. Toom says this is why Augustine favoured allegorical interpretation over literal interpretations of Scripture; allegorical interpretations, especially those that emphasised the tropological and anagogical meaning of Scripture, revealed how to live in accordance with God's commandments and the result of following or disobeying God's commands; *Thought Clothed With Sound*, p. 211.

love your neighbour as yourself” but God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”).<sup>17</sup> Christ concludes in Matthew 22:40, *In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet, et prophetarum* (On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets). This is the foundation of Augustine’s hermeneutics of *caritas* which make a clear distinction that God and neighbour are to be loved differently, with God loved for God’s own sake and neighbours loved in light of the love owed to God. Augustine’s *praecepta* for reading Scripture allows readers to read/interpret Scripture through the *regula dilectionis*. Augustine argues that the process of interpretation is made easier if readers are in a humble state of mind, striving for humility, as he says in *De doct.* 2.42.63:

*mitem et humilem corde, subiugatum leniter Christo et oneratum sarcina leui, fundatum et radicatum et aedificatum in caritate, quem scientia inflare non possit, accedat ad ambigua signa in scripturis consideranda et discutienda.*

(Gentle and lowly in heart, peacefully subject to Christ, laden with a light burden, founded and rooted and built up in love, and incapable of being puffed up by knowledge, they should now proceed to consider and analyse the ambiguous signs in the Scriptures, about which I will now endeavour to present.)

This passage suggests Augustine saw the *regula dilectionis* as an integral part of a hermeneutical cycle in the reading and interpreting of Scripture: the Double Love of God and neighbours is the lens through which Scripture should be read; readers submit to this hermeneutical lens, in humility (*De doct.* 2.7.10), to gain illumination from Scripture; submission leads to further illumination, which reveals the *regula dilectionis*; and the cycle continues. This passage, and *De doct.* 2.7.10, discussed above, demonstrates a clear Christological emphasis in Augustine’s Biblical hermeneutics which requires readers to be *subiugatum leniter Christo* (peacefully subject to Christ).

Christ’s *regula dilectionis* provides the hermeneutical frame through which all of Scripture is to be read *as well as* establishes a standard of moral conduct to

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Matthew 22:39 and 37. Augustine reverses the order of the original passage.



be replicated by those who claim to follow him. The proper love owed to God and neighbours is vital to all of Augustine's steps toward wisdom and holiness, the last step being *sapientia* (wisdom). Augustine equates Christ with Wisdom, as seen in *De doct.* 1.11; therefore, Augustine's seven steps toward holiness, which are integral to the reading and understanding of Scripture through the proper hermeneutical lens, are steps toward Christ as the paradigmatic exemplar of Wisdom.

Augustine closes Book 1 with *De doct.* 1.40.44:

*Quapropter, cum quisque cognoverit finem praecepti esse caritatem, de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta, omnem intellectum diuinarum scripturarum ad ista tria relaturus ad tractationem illorum librorum securus accedat.*

(So when someone has learnt them the aim of the commandment is "love from a pure heart, and good conscience and genuine faith", he will be ready to relate every interpretation of the Holy Scriptures to these three things and may approach the task of handling these books with confidence.)

Augustine references Romans 13:10 in which Paul says, *Dilectio proximi malum non operatur. Plenitudo ergo legis est dilectio* (Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law). Paul echoes Christ in Matthew 22 regarding the fulfilment of the law which is accomplished through the love of neighbours. The love owed to God and neighbours is *caritas*. Therefore, the *regula dilectionis* is the moral code that establishes the right and wrong way of engaging with the *res quibus utendum est* and *res quibus fruendum est*. Only God is *frui*, as Creator of all and the source of all holiness and goodness. Neighbours are a kind of *uti*, though not the lowest form of *res quibus utendum est*. The *caritas* owed to neighbours was modelled by Christ in his life and ministry, and is meant to be followed by all Christians. The salvation that comes through the Incarnation is also a model of *caritas* as God humbled God's self, electing to become human, for the sake of humanity. God also elected to communicate directly with God's creation through the Incarnation in manners and ways in which humanity could comprehend.

These examples of *caritas* from the Divine life should be revered and emulated to the best of humanity's ability. For Augustine, extending *caritas* to neighbours shows proper reverence to God's humility and emulates Christ's example.

It should be noted that although the right moral conditions build up correct reading of Scripture, there is still room for error:

*Sed quisquis in scripturis aliud sentit quam ille, qui scripsit, illis non mentientibus fallitur, sed tamen, ut dicere coeperam, si ea sententia fallitur, qua aedificet caritatem, quae finis praecepti est, ita fallitur, ac si quisquam errore deserens uiam eo tamen per agrum pergat, quo etiam uia illa perducit. Corrigendus est tamen et, quam sit utilius uiam non deserere, demonstrandum est, ne consuetudine deniandi etiam in transuersum aut peruersum ire cogatur. (De doct. 1.36.41)*

(Anyone with an interpretation of the Scriptures that differs from that of the writer is misled, but not because the Scriptures are lying. If, as I began by saying, he is misled by an idea of the kind that builds up love, which is the end of the commandment, he is misled in the same way as a walker who leaves his path by mistake but reaches the destination to which the path leads by going through a field. But he must be put right and show how it is more useful not to leave the path, in case the habit of deviating should force him to go astray or even drift.)

The Scriptures build up love, but the author's intention may be mistaken by the readers. Those who still pursue reading Scripture through the prescription of love will find their way to the correct interpretation, although their path may be less direct.

### **2.2.1. Steps to Holiness**

In *De doctrina* 2.7.10–2.8.12, Augustine discusses seven steps to holiness which he saw as necessary for all those who took their Biblical studies seriously. Following the details of these seven steps, Augustine reiterates a point he made in *De doct.* 1.1.1 regarding the act of Biblical interpretation being dependent upon the *modus inueniendi* (process of discovery). In this conversation about the process of discovering (i.e. Biblical interpretation) in Book 2, Augustine makes a distinction between two types of discovery; that which is instituted by God and that which is

instituted by humanity. Augustine argues in *De doct.* 2.8.13–2.40.61 that while both types of studies can influence and help those who read Scripture, the greater of the two is the study of the Divine. First, because what is instituted by the Divine is greater than anything humanity can create. Second, because the Divine studies can influence the reception of God’s truth revealed in Scripture *and* the moral condition of those who read Scripture. Augustine ends this discussion in *De doct.* 2.41.62 stating: *Quo signo crucis, omnis actio christiana describitur, bene operari in Christo et ei perseueranter inhaerere, sperare caelestia, sacramenta non profanare* (In the symbol of the cross every Christian act is inscribed: to do good in Christ and to hold fast resolutely to him, to hope for heaven, to avoid profaning the sacraments). Here, Augustine seems to tie the threads of the *regula fidei* and the *regula dilectionis* from Book 1 to the activity of Biblical interpretation in Book 2. This implies a moral element to the activity of Biblical interpretation which requires those readers who are serious about their reading to be devoted to the moral example set by Christ.

The beginning of Book 2 distinguishes between different types of *signa*, which I briefly discuss later in this section. Augustine’s discussion of the seven steps to holiness begins in *De doct.* 2.6.7 where he warns that some readers may not be able to distinguish between the different *signa*, which can result in misreading or misunderstanding Scripture: *Sed multis et multiplicibus obscuritatibus et ambiguitatibus decipiuntur* (But casual readers are misled by problems and ambiguities of many kinds, mistaking one thing for another). He mentions this potential danger to reinforce the need for his own *praecepta* when reading Scripture. This passage also suggests that there are at least two types of Biblical readers: those who can read and distinguish between *signa*, and those who

cannot.<sup>18</sup> As this discussion hopes to demonstrate, part of the process of distinguishing *signa*, according to Augustine, requires the careful avoidance of certain moral preconditions that might hinder the correct reading of Scripture through the lens of *caritas*.

Augustine's first steps toward holiness seek to understand what Scripture illuminates through the guidance of the *regula fidei* and *regula dilectionis*:

*In his omnibus libris timentes deum et pietate mansueti, quaerunt uoluntatem dei. Cuius operis et laboris prima obseruatio est, ut diximus, nosse istos libros etsi nondum ad intellectum, legendo tamen uel mandare memoriae uel omnino incognitos non habere. Deinde illa, quae in eis aperte posita sunt, uel praecepta uiuendi uel regulae credendi, sollertius diligentiusque inuestiganda sunt; quae tanto quisque plura inuenit, quantum est intelligentia capacior. In his enim, quae aperte in scripturis posita sunt, inueniuntur illa omnia, quae continent fidem moresque uiuendi, spem scilicet atque caritatem, de quibus libro superiore tractauimus. (De doct. 2.9.14)*

(These are all the books in which those who fear God and are made docile by their holiness seek God's will. The first rule in this laborious task is, as I have said, to know these books; not necessarily to understand them but to read them so as to commit them to memory or at least make them not totally unfamiliar. Then the matters which are clearly stated in them, whether ethical precepts or articles of beliefs, should be examined carefully and intelligently. The greater a person's intellectual capacity, the more of these he finds. In clearly expressed passages of Scripture one can find all the things that concern faith and the moral life (namely hope and love, treated in my previous book)).

First, readers must recognise they have failed to love God and their neighbours properly and need to readjust their understanding of the love they owe to both things. Next readers must know what is in Scripture and to gain familiarity through frequent reading and rereading of the text; ideally committing Scripture to memory. Simultaneously, readers must be devoted to God and act with humility as they continue to grow in familiarity and knowledge of Scripture. Their humility must be guided by faith, hope, and charity. Thus, Augustine's hermeneutical cycle creates a tropological system of reading which then

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<sup>18</sup> This distinction between two different types of readers appears to be echoed in opening lines of *Paradiso 2* in which the Pilgrim acknowledges that not all of the *Commedia's* readers will be able to read until the end of the poem. See Chapter 4 section 4.1.

encourages reading through a moral lens. The more readers read Scripture, the more they can learn from the *regula fidei* and *regula dilectionis* as they are revealed in Scripture, which further influences readers' moral conduct toward the *frui* and the *uti*, which in turn further illuminates how readers should continue to read and learn from Scripture. And so on.

James Andrews argues Augustine's steps toward holiness are similar to those outlined in Isaiah 11:2–3:<sup>19</sup>

*Et requiescet super eum spiritus Domini: spiritus sapientiae et intellectus, spiritus consilii et fortitudinis, spiritus scientiae et pietatis; et replebit eum spiritus timoris Domini. Non secundum visionem oculorum iudicabit, neque secundum auditum aurium arguet.*

(The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears).

For Isaiah and Augustine, fear of God is the beginning of Biblical wisdom and illumination. Augustine says in *De doct.* 2.7.9, readers must be moved by fear to seek God's will and commandments: *Ante omnia igitur opus est dei timore conuerti ad cognoscendam eius uoluntatem, quid nobis appetendum fugiendumque praecipiat* (It is therefore necessary above all else to be moved by the fear of God toward learning his will: what it is that he instructs us to seek or avoid). The wisdom Scripture illuminates is what readers should and should not do out of their love for God, thus adding to the moral dimension of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics. Readers who are serious about understanding what Scripture illuminates must be of a certain moral condition to successfully accomplish their studies.

The next step is humility and submission to Scripture's authority:

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<sup>19</sup> James Andrews, *Hermeneutics and the Church: In Dialogue with Augustine* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2012), p. 103. See also Donald G. Marshall, "Making Letters Speak: Interpreter as Orator in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*", *Religion & Literature*, 24.2 (1992), 1–17.

*Deinde mitescere opus est pietate neque contradicere diuinæ scripturæ siue intellectæ, si aliqua uitia nostra percutit, siue non intellectæ, quasi nos melius sapere meliusque præcipere possimus, sed cogitare potius et credere id esse melius et uerius, quod ibi scriptum est, etiam si lateat, quam id, quod nos per nos ipsos sapere possumus. (De doct. 2.7.9)*

(After that it is necessary, through holiness, to become docile, and not contradict Holy Scripture—whether we understand it (as when it hits at some of our vices) or fail to understand it (as when we feel that we could by ourselves gain better knowledge or give better instruction.))

Augustine says it is faith that guides readers to a healthy fear of God and desire to submit to God's Will. Submission includes the acceptance of Scriptures' authority, which again implies readers must be of a certain moral condition to understand what Scripture directs readers to do and to follow it.

In the third step, readers must recognise, up to this point, that they have failed to truly understand how to love God and neighbours appropriately.

However, their reading of Scripture through Augustine's *præcepta* will allow them to actively seek the *regula dilectionis* which rectifies their past hermeneutical errors:

*Post istos duos gradus timoris atque pietatis ad tertium uenitur scientiæ gradum, de quo nunc agere institui. Nam in eo se exercet omnis diuinarum scripturarum studiosus, nihil in eis aliud inuenturus quam diligendum esse deum propter deum et proximum propter deum [...] Necessè est ergo, ut primo se quisque in scripturis inueniat amore huius sæculi, hoc est, temporalium rerum, implicatum, longe seiunctum esse a tanto amore dei et tanto amore proximi, quantum scriptura ipsa præscribit. Tum uero ille timor, quo cogitat de iudicio dei, et illa pietas, qua non potest nisi credere et cedere auctoritati sanctorum librorum, cogit eum se ipsum lugere. (De doct. 2.7.10)*

(After these two stages of fear and holiness comes the third stage, that of knowledge, with which I now propose to deal. This is the area in which every student of the Divine Scriptures exerts himself, and what he will find in them is quite simply that he must love God for himself, and his neighbour for God's sake [...] It is vital that the reader first learns from the Scriptures that he is entangled in a love of this present age, of temporal things, that is, and is far from loving God and his neighbour to the extent that Scripture prescribes. It is at this point that the fear which makes him ponder the judgement of God, and the holiness which makes it impossible for him not to admit and submit to the authority of the holy books, compel him to deplore his own condition.)

I have discussed this passage in the previous section; here I will reiterate that Augustine viewed the serious reading and interpreting of Scripture as requiring readers to be in the correct and righteous state of mind governed by the proper order of love for God and neighbours. This passage highlights the moral dimension to Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics as it mentions "the reader first learns from the Scriptures that he is entangled in a love of this present age, of temporal things, that is, and is far from loving God and his neighbour to the extent that Scripture prescribes". By this Augustine means that there is a perfect form of love that readers can, and will, experience through their pursuit of reading through the proper hermeneutical lens.

Readers cannot love lesser and temporal things more than God, for love of the things themselves, nor can they replace God with lesser things. All created things, including neighbours, must be loved in proportion, and in the proper order, of God first and all other things second. This passage implies that failure to do so results in judgement from God, which justifies the healthy and righteous fear of God. Therefore, reading Scripture requires a moral system in which readers are engaged and encouraged in their reading of Scripture. This moral system begins with readers recognising their need for readjusting their way of loving God and neighbours in relation to God.

The tropological dimension of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics is further encouraged in the fourth step in which readers are instructed to turn away from the inappropriate love of the *res quibus utendum est* and turn toward the love of the *res quibus fruendum est*:

*et esse incipit in quarto gradu, hoc est fortitudinis, quo esuritur et sititur iustitia. Hoc enim affectu ab omni mortifera incunditate rerum transeuntium sese extrahit et inde se auertens conuertit ad dilectionem aeternorum, incommutabilem scilicet unitatem eandemque trinitatem. (De doct. 2.7.10)*

(And so he begins to be at the fourth stage—that of fortitude—which brings a hunger and thirst after righteousness. In this state he extricates himself from all the fatal charms of transient things;

turning away from these, he turns to the love of eternal things, namely the unchangeable unity which is also the Trinity).

Now in the correct frame of mind, readers begin to distinguish between the appropriate types of love due to God and to lesser things, including neighbours. Augustine directs readers to recognise that the desire for lesser things keeps the eternal things hidden from their sight and full comprehension. Those who “hunger and thirst” to live righteously and love all things in the right and proper order will continue to grow in wisdom as they continue to read Scripture, which strengthens and encourages their fortitude. Again, this step emphasises the hermeneutical cycle between the *regula dilectionis* and the readers’ moral condition.

Those who continue to turn away from their misuse of the *uti* and redirect themselves toward focusing on the appropriate love owed to both of the *frui* and the *uti* enter the fifth step:

*in quinto gradu, hoc est in consilio misericordiae, purgat animam tumultuantem quodammodo atque obstrepentem sibi de appetitu inferiorum conceptis sordibus. Hic uero se in dilectione proximi nauiter exercet in eaque perficitur. Et spe iam plenus atque integer uiribus, cum peruenit usque ad inimici dilectionem, ascendit in sextum gradum. (De doct. 2.7.11)*

(he is at the fifth stage—that is, in the resolve of compassion—and purifies his mind, which is somehow turbulent and in conflict with itself because of the impurities accumulated by its desire of what is inferior. Here he strenuously occupies himself with the love of his neighbour and becomes perfect in it. Full of hope now, and at full strength, since he has come to love even his enemy, he rises to the sixth stage.)

Compassion drives readers forward as they continue to read and learn from Scripture. Augustine says it “purifies the mind” as readers recognise their previous desires were for lesser things rather than God. Augustine stresses in this stage that readers should be able to love their enemies as well as their neighbours, for the *regula dilectionis* reorders all human relationships in light of the love that is owed to God first and foremost.

In Matthew 5:45, Christ instructs his disciples to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them: *ut sitis filii Patris vestri, qui in caelis est: qui solem*



*suum oriri facit super bonos et malos: et pluit super justos et injustos* (that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust). God created the good and the wicked, and the love owed to God equalises the love owed to neighbours and enemies alike. In these steps to holiness, Augustine demonstrates that the task of Biblical reading is to become submissive to *caritas* and to extend the right and proper order of love to all (neighbours and enemies alike) not at all for their own sake, but for the sake of the love owed to God.

The final stage is when readers begin to clearly distinguish between the *res quibus fruendum est* and the *res quibus utendum est*, or at least as much as they are able while still limited by the human mind and flesh. Fundamental to this ability to distinguish between the two types of *res* is the purity of mind and the understanding of the proper order of *caritas* owed to God and others in relation to God:

*ubi iam ipsum oculum purgat, quo uideri deus potest, quantum potest ab eis, qui huic saeculo moriuntur, quantum possunt. Nam in tantum uident, in quantum moriuntur huic saeculo, in quantum autem hic uiuunt, non uident. Et ideo quamuis iam certior et non solum tolerabilior, sed etiam iucundior species lucis illius incipiat apparere, in aenigmate adhuc tamen et per speculum uideri dicitur, quia magis per fidem quam per speciem ambulatur, cum in hac uita perergerinamur, quamuis conuersationem habeamus in caelis. (De doct. 2.7.11)*

(he now purifies the eye by which God may actually be seen—to the extent that he may be seen by those who, to the best of their ability, die to this world; for they see to the extent that they die to the world, and to the extent that they live in it they fail to see. The vision of that light, although it now begins to appear more steady and not only more tolerable but also more pleasant, is none the less said to be seen still obscurely and through a mirror; this is because we walk more by faith than by sight as we travel in this life, even though we are citizens of heaven.)

It is at this stage readers can be called “holy”. Augustine echoes Paul in Romans 12:2, *Et nolite conformari huic saeculo, sed reformamini in nouitate sensus uestri: ut probetis quae sit uoluntas Dei bona, et beneplacens, et perfecta* (And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove

what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God). At this final stage, Augustine says readers can remove themselves from their desires for the physical world without removing themselves from the physical world. The point is not to avoid loving the *uti* altogether; rather, it is to love the *uti* in the appropriate way through the love of the *frui* who created all things. Readers conform themselves to a standard of moral behaviour set by the *regula dilectionis* and embodied in Christ, making them holy and wise.

Such holy persons now have the single-minded and pure-hearted focus to see God in this world and the truth revealed in Scripture, as Augustine says in *De doct.* 2.7.11:

*In hoc autem gradu ita purgat oculum cordis, ut veritati ne ipsum quidem praeferat aut conferat proximum, ergo nec se ipsum, quia nec illum, quem diligit sicut se ipsum. Erit ergo iste sanctus tam simplici corde atque mundato, ut neque hominibus placendi studio detorquetur a vero nec respectu deitandorum quorumlibet incommodorum suorum, quae aduersantur huic uitae. Talis filius ascendit ad sapientiam, quae ultima et septima est, qua pacatus tranquillusque perfruitur. Initium enim sapientiae timor domini. Ab illo enim usque ad ipsam per hos gradus tenditur et uenitur.*

(At this stage he purifies the eye of his heart so that not even his neighbour is given a higher priority than the truth, or even an equal one; nor does he give priority to himself, since he does not give it to the one whom he loves as himself. So this holy person will have a heart so single-minded and purified that he will not be deflected from the truth either by an eagerness to please men or by the thought of avoiding any of the troubles which beset him in this life. Such a son ascends to wisdom, which is the seventh and last stage, enjoyed by those who are calm and peaceful. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom": these are the stages by which we progress from the one to the other.)

These stages of holiness are the framework Augustine places around his rules for reading and interpreting Scripture. For Augustine, the best source of knowledge about God comes from Scripture, and the wisest readers are those who submit themselves to the *regula dilectionis* for the sake of love itself, which is Christ, and the sake of loving God and others properly in relation to God. The last two steps emphasise the tropological framework for reading which is guided by the *regula*

*dilectionis* to determine the appropriate love owed to the *uti* and the *frui* revealed in Scripture. The whole process is one of moral ascent and purification which helps to enable right reading and is enabled by right reading. At the end of the process, readers are Christ-like in their wisdom; as Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.12.12 and 4.5.7, Christ is Wisdom Incarnate.

### 2.2.2. Consequences of *cupiditas*

What then can be said regarding those who read without good love or a good moral foundation? From the previous sections, there is a clear connection between Augustine's rules for reading Scripture through the proper hermeneutical and moral approach and Christ, who is Love and Wisdom Incarnate. For Augustine, *cupiditas* (self-love) is quantified as giving inappropriate love to the *res quibus utendum est* as if it were the *res quibus fruendum est* for selfish pleasure and enjoyment. This constitutes abuse according to Augustine who argues that loving the *uti* as if it were *frui* elevates the *res quibus utendum est* into an unnatural order. In other words, lower things can be loved but not simply for themselves. All things which are *uti* must be loved in the context of loving God.

Aside from the steps to holiness, discussed previously, Book 2 is concerned with distinguishing between the *signa* of Scripture, which Augustine defines in *De doct.* 2.1.1: *Signum est enim res praeter speciem quam ingerii sensibus aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire* (For a sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses).<sup>20</sup> Augustine says that words are special kinds of *signa*: *Verba enim prorsus*

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<sup>20</sup> Two of the most important *signa* are *naturalia signa* (natural signs) which Augustine defines in *De doct.* 2.1.2 as, *quae sine uoluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi praeter se aliquid aliud ex se cognosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem* (those which without a wish or any urge to signify cause something else besides themselves to be known from them). *Data signa* (given signs) are defined in *De doct.* 2.2.3 as, *Data uero signa sunt, quae sibi quaeque inuentia inuicem dant ad demonstrandos, quantum possunt, motus animi sui uel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet* (Given signs are those which living things give to each other, in order to show, to the best of their ability, the emotions of their minds, or anything that

*inter homines obtinuerunt principatum significandi quaecumque animo concipiuntur* (Words have gained an altogether dominant role among humans in signifying the ideas conceived by the mind that a person wants to reveal; *De doct.* 2.3.4). Words are types of given *signa* because of the meaning ascribed to the words. Augustine goes on in *De doct.* 2.5.6 to say that Scripture was written to communicate the *res* of God through *signa* because of humanity's limited ability to understand God. This is not to say that reading the *res* and *signa* of Scripture is an easy task, even when Scripture is read through the Double Love Commandment. In *De doct.* 2.6.7, Augustine acknowledges the ambiguity and obscure nature of some words that have misled Biblical scholars: *Sed multis et multiplicibus obscuritatibus et ambiguitatibus decipiuntur, qui temere legunt, aliud pro alio sentientes* (But casual readers are misled by problems and ambiguities of many kinds, mistaking one thing for another). Here, Augustine is again demonstrating the need for reading Scripture through his *praecepta*, as well as making a distinction between those who take their Biblical studies seriously, and those who do not.

Augustine may have spent so much time defining the different types of *res* and *signa* in Scripture in Book 2 so that his readers could avoid abusing them. In *De doct.* Prol. 3, one argument critics of Augustine's *praecepta* had was their inability to read and decipher the meaning of Scripture for themselves. Augustine responds to these critics saying that while he can point to the moon he cannot make everyone see it for themselves:

*tamquam si lunam ueterem uel nouam sidusue aliquod minime clarum uellent uidere, quod ego intento digito demonstrarem, illis autem nec ad ipsum digitum meum uidendum sufficiens acies esset oculorum: num propterea mihi succensere deberent?*

(Suppose they want to see the new moon, or the old one, or a star that was very faint, and I pointed it out with my finger but their eyesight was too weak to see even my finger—surely it would be wrong for them to be annoyed with me for that reason?)

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they have felt or learnt). See also R.A. Markus, "St Augustine on Signs", *Phronesis*, 2.1 (1957), 60–83.

His point is that *De doctrina* offers everyone the necessary rules and it is the responsibility of the readers to follow these rules to discover what Scripture reveals for themselves. Having said that, Augustine does acknowledge in *De doct.* 1.3.3–4.4. the danger *cupiditas* poses in preventing a clear understanding of the intended purpose of the *res*, especially the *res quibus utendum est*, which can lead to the misinterpretation if not abuse of those things which are *uti*.

*Cupiditas* is the improper love that comes with receiving pleasure from loving the *uti* out of its proper context in the *frui*. The *uti* can be loved, so long as it is loved within the proper context of its relationship with God. Loving the *uti* out of its proper relationship and order with the *frui* constitutes *cupiditas* as it leads to the gratification that comes with abusing/misusing the *uti*. Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.22.21: *sed ad se ipsum conuersus non ad incommutabile aliquid conuertitur et propterea iam cum defectu aliquo se fruatur, quia melior est, cum totus haeret atque constringitur incommutabili bono* (if he loves himself on his own account, he does not relate himself to God, but turns to himself and not to something unchangeable). To love something in its proper order, as it relates to God, is *caritas*. All relationships between God, humanity, and even the self is shaped by *caritas*. As discussed previously, the proper love owed to God and neighbours, and the proper use of the *res quibus utendum est*, is determined by the *regula dilectionis*. Therefore, *cupiditas* is an unnatural form of love as it disrupts the natural order between the *frui* and the *uti* by treating the *uti* as if it were created to be loved for its own sake.

A less severe effect of *cupiditas* can be the misinterpretation of the *regula dilectionis* revealed in Scripture. Again, as discussed above, Augustine viewed the purpose of *De doctrina* as illuminating how all of Scripture, from Genesis to John's Apocalypse, reveals the same consistent message about the love of God and neighbours:

*Quisquis igitur scripturas diuinas uel quamlibet earum partem intellexisse sibi uidetur, ita ut eo intellectu non aedificet istam geminam caritatem dei et proximi, nondum intellexit. (De doct. 1.36.40)*

(So anyone who thinks that he has understood the Divine Scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this Double Love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.)

Augustine says the Double Love Commandment is the only hermeneutical lens through which Scripture can be read to find true illumination. Those who do not read through the proper hermeneutical lens cannot perceive the correct interpretation of Scripture. Without *caritas*, readers remain unilluminated, if not misdirected, from the *caritas* Scripture reveals. For *caritas* is the content of Scripture and the condition for right reading. That is not to say that one needs to love correctly in order to read correctly; rather, reading correctly is one of the benefits of loving correctly. Those who live a life of *caritas* demonstrate their proper moral behaviour in all aspects of their lives, including in the way they read Scripture through the correct moral filter and act in accordance with the love and morality revealed by Scripture.

Augustine does not dwell on the consequences of misusing lower things, but does say in *De doct.* 1.23.23 that *cupiditas*, in this instance the type of love that is directed to the self, denies God as the rightful source of Love:

*Inest enim uitioso animo id magis appetere et sibi tamquam debitum uindicare, quod uni proprie debetur deo. Talis autem sui dilectio melius odium uocatur. Iniquum est enim, quia uult sibi seruire, quod infra se est*

(it is the instinct of a corrupt mind to covet and claim as its due what is really due to God alone. This kind of self-love is better called hatred. It is unjust because it wants what is beneath it to serve it while itself refusing to serve what is above it)

Those who love themselves or lesser things more than God will be weighed down, spiritually, by the desire for selfish things and their souls will be unable to ascend beyond the temporal world. In *De doct.* 2.23.36, Augustine says *cupiditas*, in

this case, the desire for earthly things, prohibits loving God and neighbours, that is the practising of moral behaviours exemplified by Christ:

*quae non sunt diuinitus ad dilectionem dei et proximi tamquam publice constituta, sed per priuatas appetitiones rerum temporalium corda dissipant miserorum. In omnibus ergo istis doctrinis societas daemonum formidanda atque uitanda est, qui nihil cum principe suo diabolo nisi reditum nostrum claudere atque obserare conantur.*

(They are not publicly promulgated by God in order to foster the love of God and one's neighbour, but they consume the hearts of wretched mortals by fostering selfish desire for temporal things. So in all these teachings we must fear and avoid this alliance with demons, whose whole aim, in concert with their leader, the devil, is to cut off and obstruct our return to God.)

In this passage, Augustine claims demonic forces are behind enticing humanity to embrace *cupiditas* over *caritas*. Regardless of the source, the point remains that *cupiditas* has the power to derail those who receive pleasure from their misuse of lesser things rather than receive joy from engaging in the proper order of human relationships in relation to God through *caritas*.

### **2.3. Charitable Reading as Cooperative Reading**

There is a cooperative element to Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*: what Scripture reveals must continue to be revealed through illumination and/or instruction. Human relationships can be repaired and maintained in the proper order through the *caritas* taught and exemplified by Christ. Christ is both the revelation *and* the one who reveals God's truth. As has already been discussed in this chapter, Scripture reveals love which encourages readers to give proper love to God for God's own sake and neighbours as themselves. In *De doctrina's* prologue, Augustine responds to his critics who feel his rules for reading are unnecessary because they believe their understanding comes from Divine illumination alone. Augustine does not dismiss or discourage knowledge gained through illumination. He insists that they teach others what has been revealed to

them so that all may know God. Readers can access Christ's illumination through either following Augustine's rules of interpretation or through the gift of grace and illumination from God directly. Augustine stresses that once Scripture is illuminated, readers are obligated to illuminate the text to others. Christian preaching/teaching is a form of *caritas* because it is a way of upholding the wellbeing of others; specifically, by directing them to their fundamental good, which is their relationship to God. *De doctrina Christiana* as a manual for those serious about studying Scripture is a form of *caritas* as it instructs readers how to live in accordance with the *regula dilectionis* and engage in the two types of *res* through *caritas* so that they may go and teach others.

### 2.3.1. Proper Order of Relationships

For the Bishop of Hippo, and the 4/5th century Christian church to which Augustine belonged, the God revealed in Scripture can only be partially known.<sup>21</sup> Christ is the means through which humanity can know God as the Second Person of the Trinity and the Incarnation of God. This is not to say that God was not revealed in the Old Testament, but the laws and the prophets were prefigurations of Christ who fulfilled them, according to Matthew 22:40.

According to Augustine in *De doct.* Prol. 6, the Incarnation can communicate to humanity in a way they understand:

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine says human understanding of God is limited and caused, at least in part, by human sin and doubt, which Augustine calls the *humana condicio*. Augustine first addressed the limitations of humanity's understanding of God in *De Trinitate* 9.1, in which Augustine says the gap of human understanding cannot be filled until humanity stands *facie ad faciem* (face to face) with God. Augustine bases his theory of *humana condicio* and its *facie ad faciem* cure on his reading of 1 Corinthians 13:12: *Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte: tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum* (For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known). The limited understanding humanity has of God while living in the temporal world is only a dimly lit reflection of the knowledge that will be gained from seeing God face to face in eternal life. Of the limited knowledge humanity can know about God comes from Scripture and the Incarnation. Thus, the significance of the Incarnation acknowledges the desire of God to be known by humanity and the love God has for humanity above all other things in creation. Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Trinitate*, ed. by W.J. Mountain, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 50 and 50A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968).



*sed abiecta esset humana condicio, si per homines hominibus deus uerbum suum ministrare nolle uideretur. Quomodo enim uerum esset, quod dictum est: Templum enim dei sanctum est, quod estis uos, si deus de humano templo responsa non redderet et totum, quod descendum hominibus tradi uellet, de caelo atque per angelos personaret? Deinde ipsa caritas, quae sibi homines inuicem nodo unitatis adstringit, non haberet aditum refundendorum et quasi miscendorum sibimet animorum, si homines per homines nihil discerent.*

(but human nature would have been lowered in dignity if God had seemed unwilling to transmit His word to men through human means. Indeed, how would there be truth in the statement, “for holy is the temple of God”, if God did not grant replies from a human temple, but announced from heaven through angels all the learning which He desired to have imparted to men? Then charity itself, which unites men to one another with the bond of unity, would have no way of joining and almost fusing souls with each other, if men learned nothing from other men.)

If God chose to reveal God’s self through angels or other Divine agents, then there would be no need for the Incarnation. The Biblical reference in this passage is from 1 Corinthians 3:17: *Si quis autem templum Dei violauerit, disperdet illum Deus.*

*Templum enim Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos* (If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple).

Augustine is making two points regarding the importance of humanity. First, it is through humanity that God’s salvation can be known through the Incarnation.

Second, God elected to communicate with humanity through human means for the sake of building up charity. Thus, by revealing God’s self and communicating through human means, the Incarnation establishes a case for a cooperative element to the hermeneutics of *caritas*. Humanity need each other for their ability to comprehend the way God communicates through the Scriptures (e.g. Biblical teachers, preachers, readers, and interpreters, etc.).

God has used other agents to spread the Divine message, such as the lawmakers and prophets of the Old Testament. Christ’s message exceeds their work because he is the Incarnation of God. Christ does not rewrite or undermine the truth revealed in the Old Testament for they also reveal God’s truth. Rather, Christ’s illumination exceeds the words of the laws and prophets as Christ is the

Word of God in human flesh and communicating in a manner through which humanity can better understand God. The Incarnation of God intended to close the gap between the God who wanted to be known and those who wanted to know God.<sup>22</sup> The message God communicates is *caritas*.

In *De doct.* Prol. 8, Augustine states that Christ is the source of Biblical truth: *Nam omne uerum ab illo est, qui ait: Ego sum ueritas* (all truth comes from Him who has said: “I am the Truth”).<sup>23</sup> *Ego sum ueritas* is a bold and important claim Christ makes of himself in John 14:6: *Ego sum uia, et ueritas, et uita. Nemo uenit ad Patrem, nisi per me* (“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”).<sup>24</sup> Augustine interprets Christ’s declaration to mean that Christ is the direct way of knowing God given humanity’s limited capacity to know God. God’s election to become human and communicate with humanity is a model of *caritas* which enables humanity to receive God’s grace and salvation. To achieve salvation, humanity must be able to perceive the truth Christ illuminates and teaches in Scripture. It would be uncharitable of God to offer

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<sup>22</sup> The theme of Christ as Scripture’s illuminator and illuminating teacher is found in Augustine’s works which pre-date *De doctrina*. Toom calls this theme the doctrine of the Inner Teacher which is founded on Matthew 23:10 in which Christ denounces the Scribes and Pharisees as false teachers of God’s Word and law: *quia magister uester unus est, Christus* (“for you have one instructor, the Messiah”). Christ identifies himself as the one true teacher of God’s Word and the one teacher that all true disciples should follow. Augustine refers to this passage in *De mag.* 13.46.20 and 13.46.45 in his discussion about the *secretum oraculum* (private Oracle), which is part of a larger discussion in *De Trin.* 12.4.24 regarding the doctrine of illumination argued by the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato. *Thought Clothed With Sound*, p. 57. See also Marshall, “Making Letters Speak”.

<sup>23</sup> Augustine echoes this in *Conf.* 10.23 in which he describes Christ as, *per quam uera sunt omnia, sola ueritate* (the only Truth through which all things are true).

<sup>24</sup> In his commentary on the First Epistle of John, Augustine notes that Christ is the only teacher of the truth Christians need to follow. Augustine is referring specifically to 1 John 2:27: *Et uos unctionem, quam accepistis ab eo, maneat in uobis. Et non necesse habetis ut aliquis doceat uos: sed sicut unctio eius docet uos de omnibus, et uerum est, et non est mendacium. Et sicut docuit uos: manete in eo* (As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him). As anointed follows of Christ, Christ’s teachings alone reveal God’s truth and are the only teachings Christians need to follow. J.M. Rist suggests that the reason Christ is the starting point for Augustine’s Biblical hermeneutics is that Christ is the first born of God’s creation and the physical Incarnation of God. See Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 20.

such salvation without also offering humanity the means through which they could receive it.

### 2.3.2. The Necessity of Instruction

Most of the Prologue is Augustine's response to critics who feel Augustine's rules for interpretation are unnecessary because their understanding has come through illumination. Augustine justifies the need for his rules for Biblical interpretation as they are *complementary* to any knowledge gained through illumination.

Augustine's *praecepta* of Biblical interpretation bring further depth and meaning to Biblical texts that have already been illuminated by Christ. Regarding the role of illumination and interpretation, Augustine says in *De doct. Prol. 2*:

*Tertium genus est reprehensorum, qui diuinas scripturas uel re uera bene tractant uel bene tractare sibi uidentur: qui quoniam nullis huiusmodi observationibus lectis, quales nunc tradere institui, facultatem exponendorum sanctorum librorum se assecutos uel uident uel putant, nemini esse ista praecepta necessaria, sed potius totum quod de illarum litterarum obscuritatibus laudabiliter aperitur, diuino munere fieri posse clamitabunt.*

(A third class of critic consists of those who either interpret the Divine Scriptures quite correctly or think that they do. Because they see, or at least believe, that they have gained their ability to expound the holy books without recourse to any rules of the kind that I have now undertaken to give, they will clamour that these rules are not needed by anybody, and that all worthwhile illumination of the difficulties of these texts can come by a special gift of God.)

Augustine does not find their claim of understanding Scripture through Divine illumination, without human instruction, troublesome. What he finds troublesome is their resistance to receiving further clarification through human instruction about what has been illuminated to them. This is not to say that Augustine found fault in the way God illuminates the *res* and *signa* of Scripture, but that the human mind is limited in its aptitude to understand and would, therefore, benefit from further instruction.

Augustine's counter argument against these critics is that those to whom Scripture has been illuminated by grace still need clarification to avoid a false sense of pride. As Augustine says in *De doct.* Prol. 5: *Immo uero et quod per hominem discendum est, sine superbia discat et, per quem docetur alius, sine superbia et sine inuidia tradat, quod accepit* (No, they should learn, without any pride, what has to be learned from a human teacher; and those responsible for teaching others should pass on, without pride or jealousy, the knowledge they have received). Augustine goes on to imply in Prol. 6 that through instruction, *caritas* works to bond neighbours together in their study of the Word of God:

*Deinde ipsa caritas, quae sibi homines inuicem nodo unitatis adstringit, non haberet aditum refundendorum et quasi miscendorum sibimet animorum, si homines per homines nihil discerent.*

(there would be no way for love, which ties people together in the bonds of unity, to make souls overflow and as it were intermingle with each other, if human beings learned nothing from other humans.)

Thus, early in the text, Augustine makes cases for readers being in the correct moral condition to read Scripture correctly, and for instruction as a form of *caritas*. The latter passage was discussed in the previous section regarding the necessity of Christ's Incarnation in human flesh as a means for best communicating with humanity. Here it also makes a strong case for the role of *caritas* in cooperative reading and instruction.

Augustine returns to this concern in *De doctrina* Book 4 regarding preachers who are more concerned with eloquent speeches as they instruct, rather than offering clarity to what Scripture illuminates to them for the sake of other readers. Augustine says in *De doct.* 4.5.7, *Sapienter autem dicit homo tanto magis uel minus, quanto in scripturis sanctis magis minusue profecit* (The wisdom of what a person says is in direct proportion to his progress in learning the Holy Scriptures). As Christ is the Wisdom of God, the proportion of wisdom spoken by Biblical teachers/preachers reflects what they have received from Christ's

instruction. Augustine goes on to stress in the same passage that the wisdom taught to others should surpass superficial knowledge of Scripture, *sed bene intellegendis et diligenter earum sensibus indagandis* (but real understanding and careful investigation of their meaning). In other words, what Biblical preachers/teachers *should* focus on is not how well they speak, but what has been revealed and illuminated to them from Scripture so that their students can find the same depth of meaning and illumination in their own studies. As Augustine says in *De doct.* 4.27.59, *Habet autem ut oboedienter audiamus, quantacumque granditate dictionis maius pondus uita dicentis* (More important than any amount of grandeur of style to those of us who seek to be listened to with obedience is the life of the speaker). There again, the moral condition of the interpreters is a guide to whether they are reading correctly.

Augustine's insistence on instruction, which manifests as his *praecepta* for Biblical interpretation in *De doctrina*, is another factor in his hermeneutics of *caritas*. Again, Augustine's model for instruction is Christ as the paradigmatic exemplifier whose earthly ministry taught *and* demonstrated the Double Love Commandment. For Augustine, those who argue against the need for human instruction might as well dismiss the rest of Christ's teachings:

*Quisquis autem dicit non esse hominibus praecipendum, quid uel quemadmodum doceant, si doctores sanctus efficit spiritus, potest dicere nec orandum nobis esse, quia dominus ait: Scit pater uester quid uobis necessarium sit, prius quam petatis ab eo. (De doct. 4.16.33; quoting Matthew 6:8)*

(Anyone who says that there is no need to give people instructions about what, or how, to teach if it is the Holy Spirit that makes men teachers, may as well say that there is no need for us to pray, since the Lord says, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him").

In other words, those who claim they do not need to follow the rules for Biblical interpretation, because God has already revealed to them all that they need to know, risk sounding arrogant. Readers who are arrogant will stumble, if not fail,

to grow in God's wisdom and become Christ-like per Augustine's steps to holiness, discussed in the previous section. Augustine says they might as well not pray either since God already knows what they need before they ask. Augustine's reference to Matthew 6:8 is an interesting one as Christ's point in Matthew 6:5–14 is how to pray without arrogance. In these verses, Christ also teaches his disciples *how* to pray in Matthew 6:9–13. Thus, Augustine offers Biblical support for the necessity of human instruction based on Christ's own model of teaching.

Augustine's justification for his *praecepta* is that genuine illumination cannot be diminished by human instruction. To those who argue human instruction is imperfect, Augustine says that even a wicked preacher can still inspire and illuminate others because the message comes from Christ:

*Christus autem ueritas est et tamen etiam non ueritate adnuntiari ueritas potest, id est, ut prauo et fallaci corde, quae recta et uera sunt, praedicentur. Sic quippe adnuntiatur Iesus Christus ab eis, qui sua quaerunt, non quae Iesu Christi. Sed quoniam boni fideles non quemlibet hominum, sed ipsum dominum oboedienter audiunt, qui ait: Quae dicunt, facite; quae autem faciunt, facere nolite: dicunt enim et non faciunt; ideo audiuntur utiliter, etiam qui utiliter non agunt. (De doct. 4.27.59; quoting Matthew 23:3)*

(Christ is the truth, and yet the truth can be proclaimed even by untruth, in the sense that things which are right and true may be proclaimed by a wicked and deceitful heart. It is in this way that Jesus Christ is proclaimed by those who seek their own and not the things of Jesus Christ. But because good, faithful men listen with obedience not to a particular speaker, but to their Lord, who says, "Do what they say, but do not do what they do; for they do not practice what they preach", even those that behave unprofitably are heard with profit.)

Ideally, those who preach/teach Scripture should exhibit the same moral conduct and proper love to God and neighbours as taught and exemplified by Christ, as Augustine says in *De doct.* 4.27.59, discussed above. In this passage, Augustine acknowledges that there are exceptions, but qualifies those exceptions through Christ as the source of any wisdom and truth wicked preachers/teachers may speak. Again, Augustine puts the emphasis on Christ who, as *caritas* Incarnate and

the source of all wisdom and truth, has the power to use everyone, despite their moral conduct, to instruct others.

The points Augustine makes in these passages are primarily directed at his critics who argue human instruction is unnecessary. The Prologue and Book 4 still adhere to the moral system prescribed in Books 1–3, but here the focus is on those who teach/preach Scripture to others. For their sake, Augustine urges them to put aside their criticism against human agency as a means of instruction and recognise that whatever Scripture has illuminated to them does not come from their own understanding, but comes from God. To deny the usefulness of instruction, even for the sake of clarity, is a form of *cupiditas*. Their relationships with others are ordered in the light of their relationship with God. To love others in relation to God implies working for their right and proper relationship to God, which includes teaching others how to read the Scriptures to the same extent as God's Word has been illuminated to them. Failure to help others repair their relationship with God is a form of *cupiditas*. Augustine acknowledges that not everyone receives illumination from God or has the capability to read and understand Scripture at the same level. *De doctrina*'s rules are not meant for everyone. They are meant for those who struggle to recognise the *res* and *signa* of Scripture which point to God. Augustine sees his critics' arrogance and pride as a failure to recognise their role as illuminated readers and their duty to pass on their illumination to others, just as Christ did for his disciples.

#### **2.4. How to Read Through and Act on Proper Love**

To conclude this chapter, this section synthesises the main points of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* and expands on two strands of thought: reading and acting through the proper hermeneutical senses.

### 2.4.1. Reading Through the Proper Senses

The purpose of Augustine's *praecepta* is to clarify the ambiguities of Scripture, to illuminate those who seek God who in turn illuminate others. Preaching is a key part of this hermeneutical cycle. Augustine says in *De doct.* 4.8.22, eloquent speech should bring knowledge and instruct others in the way of holiness:

*quae ad exercendas et eliminandas quodammodo mentes legentium et ad rumpenda fastidia atque acuenda studia discere voluntium, celandos quoque, siue ut ad pietatem conuertantur, siue ut a mysteriis secludantur, animos impiorum, utili ac salubri obscuritate dixerunt.*

(in order to exercise and somehow refine their readers' minds or to overcome the reluctance and whet the enthusiasm of those seeking to learn, or even in order to cloud the minds of the wicked, whether this is done to turn them to holiness or to exclude them from the holy mysteries.)

Those who have received illumination from Scripture must teach others. As Biblical preachers/teachers, they must also encourage their students' enthusiasm and offer clarity to their studies. Instructors should also offer a moral example to be followed, but Christ can work through anyone, as discussed in the previous section. Therefore, the primary lesson from reading Scripture is how to build human relationships, between God and neighbours, through the best form of love as revealed and modelled by Christ.

*De doctrina* Book 3 focuses on reading Scripture through a tropological lens which helps to define the correlation between reading through the lens of good love and acting on good love when engaging with others. It should be noted that there is some overlap between the tropological sense of Scripture and the anagogical (eschatological) sense, particularly in the promotion of good love and good moral conduct which impacts readers in this life and in the eternal life to come. The primary discussion in Book 3 is distinguishing between literal *signa* and figurative *signa* which Augustine realised was a potential hermeneutical problem. There are some Biblical passages which, if read literally, seem to



promote actions that are contrary to the *regula dilectionis* (e.g. polygamy, adultery, warfare, etc.). The hermeneutical problem with these passages could include reading and interpreting them as literal. If read as literal, they may seem to promote immoral behaviour, or behaviours that were once accepted, but are no longer. In either instance, such misunderstanding could lead readers to misinterpret the text.

Augustine's solution to this hermeneutical problem directs readers to read these ambiguous passages through the *regula dilectionis* to determine if they were to be read in the literal or figurative/metaphorical senses. Tarmo Toom calls this "the absurdity criterion" while James Andrews calls this the "*caritas* criterion".<sup>25</sup> The criterion is Augustine's hermeneutical rule that when Biblical passages seem to contradict Christ's Double Love Commandment, they must be read figuratively rather than literally. For instance, when Scripture promotes behaviour that does not promote the love of God and neighbours in the proper order with *caritas*, the passage should be read figuratively. When Scripture promotes the proper order of love to God and neighbours with *caritas*, then the passage should be read literally.

The *regula dilectionis* is the standard by which all Biblical passages should be measured. Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.5.9–3.15.23 that when Scripture seems to promote *cupiditas*, then reading these ambiguous passages in the figurative sense, through the hermeneutics of *caritas*, will reveal the right and appropriate moral action. This is Augustine's "*caritas* criterion"; a mode of reading which keeps the moral content of Scripture consistent with the *regula dilectionis*. The "*caritas* criterion" is a tropological reading of Scripture. If the passage read literally encourages *caritas*, it is to be read and interpreted as literal. If the passage read

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<sup>25</sup> Toom says, "it is *caritas* as the criterion which prevents an interpretation from going completely astray" (p. 183). Toom, *Thought Clothed With Sound*, pp. 180–222 and Andrews, *Hermeneutics and the Church*, Chapter 4.

literally does not encourage *caritas*, it is to be read and interpreted as metaphorical. It is the task of Biblical readers to distinguish between the appropriate way of reading, just as it is their task to distinguish the appropriate love owed to the *uti* and *frui*. The end of Book 3 brings Augustine's discussion of the *res* and *signa* of Scripture full circle. Augustine directs readers to diligently follow the *regula dilectionis* as the hermeneutical principle for their study of the Scriptures and to seek holiness as the guide for their own spiritual progress.

#### 2.4.2. Acting Through the Proper Sense

The “*caritas* criterion” is the most important Christological feature of *De doctrina* Book 3 as Christ's Double Love Commandment is the standard through which Scripture is to be read, and the standard by which Christian morality is measured. In *De doct.* 3.16.24, Augustine acknowledges that there are multiple passages, particularly in the Old Testament, which seem to contradict Christ's moral example from the New Testament. However, these passages either report examples of moral behaviour that was *never* acceptable, or behaviours that *were* acceptable but *are no longer* since the Incarnation. Those Biblical passages that seem to condone *cupiditas* are not meant to be read as literal endorsements for certain immoral behaviours, but rather as warnings against improper conduct that contradicts Christ's instruction.

Augustine stresses in *De doct.* 3.18.26 that Christians should not judge the standards and practices of the people in the Old Testament, nor can they use these Biblical passages to justify their own immoral actions. Those who use Scripture to justify their immorality twist Scripture's moral instructions: *Quod nisi dominante cupiditate et ipsarum quoque scripturarum, quibus euertenda est, satellitium quaerente, non faciet* (A person will not do this unless lust is in control and actively seeking the complicity of the very Scriptures by which it must be overthrown).

For Augustine, the justification of *cupiditas* is one of the dangers of reading

Scripture through a strict literal sense. Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.12.18:

*Quae autem quasi flagitiosa imperitis uidentur, siue tantum dicta siue etiam facta sunt uel ex dei persona uel ex hominum, quorum nobis sanctitas commendatur, tota figurata sunt, quorum ad caritatis pastum enucleanda secreta sunt.*

(Matters which seem like wickedness to the unenlightened, whether merely spoken or actually performed, whether attributed to God or to people whose holiness is commended to us, are entirely figurative. Such mysteries are to be elucidated in terms of the need to nourish love).

Here again, Augustine recognises that there are passages in Scripture that can be mistaken as promoting wickedness and immorality. Those who understand how to read Scripture through the appropriate lens understand that Scripture is not promoting *cupiditas*, but offering examples of behaviours to be avoided.

Therefore, reading ambiguous passages figuratively allows readers to correctly interpret the text through the *regula dilectionis* as well as removes any chance of misinterpretation and reveals a lesson on *caritas* rather than *cupiditas*.

Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.5.9: *Nam in principio cauendum est, ne figuratam locutionem ad litteram accipias. Et ad hoc enim pertinet, quod ait apostolus: Littera occidit, spiritus autem uiuificat* (To begin with, one must take care not to interpret a figurative expression literally. What the apostle says is relevant here: “the letter kills but the spirit gives life”; quoting 2 Corinthians 3:6). If readers interpret a figurative passage literally, they may miss the deeper illuminated meaning of that passage. Augustine goes on to say in the same passage: *Ea demum est miserabilis animi seruitus, signa pro rebus accipere; et supra creaturam corpoream, oculum mentis ad hauriendum aeternum lumen leuare non posse* (It is, then, a miserable kind of spiritual slavery to interpret signs as things, and to be incapable of raising the mind’s eye above the physical creation so as to absorb the eternal light). Augustine suggests there are serious consequences to misinterpreting a passage as literal when it is figurative. From this example, readers may misinterpret the *res* and *signa* for

things meant to be enjoyed for themselves when they are meant to be used for the sake of directing readers to God. This kind of misinterpretation can lead to the misuse, if not abuse, of the *signa* which focuses the mind on lesser things, instead of how these things relate to God.

Regarding the practice of differentiating between the literal and figurative meanings of Scripture and the impact on readers' moral conduct, Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.10.14:

*Et iste omnino modest est, ut quicquid in sermone diuino neque ad morum honestatem neque ad fidei ueritatem proprie referri potest, figuratum esse cognoscas. Morum honestas ad diligendum deum et proximum, fidei ueritas ad cognoscendum deum et proximum pertinet.*

(Generally speaking, it is this: anything in the Divine discourses that cannot be related either to good morals or to the true faith should be taken as figurative. Good morals have to do with our love of God and our neighbour, the true faith with our understanding of God and our neighbour).

*Morum honestas* (good morals) means the *regula dilectionis* as it pertains directly to how readers should demonstrate the right and appropriate love owed to God and neighbours. If a Biblical passage suggests something that seems contrary to the *regula dilectionis*, then it should be interpreted as figurative rather than literal. Even then, figurative interpretations must adhere to both the *regula fidei* and *regula dilectionis* to be counted as correct interpretations for such interpretations cannot be inconsistent with the teachings of the church or with the Scripture's core message of *caritas*.

There is a moral component to reading/interpreting Scripture, as Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.24.34:

*Nam comperto, quod figurata sit, adhibitis regulis rerum, quas in primo libro digessimus, facile est eam uersare omnibus modis, donec perueniamus ad sententiam ueritatis, praesertim cum usus accesserit pietatis exercitatione roboratus.*

(When we have worked out that it is figurative, it is easy to study it from various angles, using the rules set out in Book 1, until we reach the true meaning, especially if we have the advantage of experience fortified by the exercise of holiness).

Following the *regula dilectionis* from Book 1, which should lead the readers to aspire towards holiness per Augustine's argument in Book 2, readers must keep in mind this special criterion for distinguishing between what is to be read literally and figuratively. Any passage that condemns wicked and selfish behaviour is meant to be read literally, while any passage that seems to encourage wicked or selfish behaviour is meant to be read figuratively. Likewise, any passage that promotes charity and love is to be read literally, while any passage that seems to discourage charity and love is to be figuratively.

For those passages that can be read or interpreted in either sense, Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.16.24: *ne igitur dubitaueris figurate dictum, et cum possit dupliciter interpretari, uno modo ad nocendum, altero ad praestandum, ad beneficentiam te potius caritas reuocet* (Given that it can be interpreted in two ways, in the sense of causing harm and in the sense of offering something, the principle of love should lead you to the interpretation involving kindness). Again, the *regula dilectionis* should lead readers to an interpretation in accordance with Christ's command to love God for God's sake and love neighbours in relation to God.

Augustine says in *De doct.* 3.37.56 that the illumination Bible readers seek is obtainable so long as they are guided by the *regula dilectionis* and the pursuit of holiness, which is right moral action:

*quod est praecipuum et maxime necessarium, orent, ut intellegant. In eis quippe litteris, quarum studiosi sunt, legunt, quoniam dominus dat sapientiam, et a facie eius scientia et intellectus, a quo et ipsum studium, si pietate praeditum est, acceperunt.*

(this is paramount, and absolutely vital—to pray for understanding. In the literature which they study they read that “God gives wisdom, and from his face there is knowledge and understanding”, and it is from him too that they have received even their commitment to study, provided that it is accompanied by holiness).

As mentioned in previous sections, Augustine is not just offering *praecepta* for how to read Scripture but a set of moral principles taught and reinforced through

a Christ-centred reading of Scripture. Augustine's hermeneutical cycle is one that not only illuminates Christ as a moral teacher but also offers the path to follow. Even when Christ is not mentioned directly, it is *caritas* that is the true content of Scripture; thus it is Christ who is revealed as the paradigm of right living and true love. Therefore, reading correctly will have the effect of revealing Christ and making readers more Christ-like.

From this discussion, three major themes from Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* emerge that bear a relevance to a Christological reading of Dante's *Commedia*: that *caritas* is the content of Scripture; *caritas* is a precondition, as well as a consequence, of right reading; and *caritas* is connected to successful cooperative reading. The following chapters will examine the results of applying Augustine's Christological hermeneutics to a reading of Dante's *Commedia* in which these three themes may help in highlighting the poem's Christological content. For instance, in Chapter 3, I examine two pairs of readers who demonstrate the relationship between their moral behaviour and their ability to read through the hermeneutical filter of good and bad forms of love itself. Such a discussion on reading cannot help but explore the themes of *caritas*, as the source of "good content", as well as the moral precondition, or consequence of, good reading. At least two characters fit the tentative definition of Augustine's cooperative reader; those who are learning how to engage with a text using the proper hermeneutical principles. Meanwhile, in Chapter 4, the selected case studies are each examples of passages of the poem in which readers seem to be invited to apply hermeneutics to Dante's text. The individual case studies themselves vary in Christological content. For example, the Cross of Mars draws strong connections between the act of martyrdom and Christ's *caritas*. Others offer more subtle examples of how *caritas* transforms one's moral qualities, such as the *Purgatorio's* Beatitudes.

## Chapter 3

### The *Commedia's* Readers

Three themes from Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* that were highlighted in the previous chapter, and will help highlight the Christological content of Dante's *Commedia* through the application of Augustine's hermeneutics to a reading of Dante's text, are: *caritas* as the content of Scripture; *caritas* as a precondition and consequence of right reading; and the role of *caritas* in successful cooperative reading. This chapter focuses on the role *caritas* plays in the Augustinian themes of the relationship between right reading and right moral action, and successful cooperative reading. The case studies examined in this chapter are between two pairs: Francesca and Piccarda, and Virgil and Statius. All four individual characterisations offer insight into the correlation between reading and moral action. In the first pairing, Francesca di Rimini of *Inferno* 5 is an example of a reader who not only fails to complete the reading of her text, she fails to heed the text's warning against licentiousness and adultery. The result of her failure to exercise her ability to "read well" and "act well" led her to misuse her lover, Paolo Malatesta, betray her husband, Gianciotto and wind up damned in Hell where she continues to mischaracterise herself as a victim of *Amor* rather than admit her own accountability. Piccarda Donati of *Paradiso* 3 is her heavenly counterpart, if not mirror image, as she is an example of one who applies the correct hermeneutical approach to her reading of the Rule of St Clare and devotes herself to the proper order and distribution of love of God and neighbour. In the second pairing, Virgil's two accounts of the Harrowing of Hell, from *Inferno* 4 and 12, are examples of one who "reads" a Christological event but is unable to fully understand its intended meaning. Yet Virgil still plays a vital role in the illumination and salvation of others, specifically of Dante's Pilgrim and the Roman poet, Statius. Statius himself, in *Purgatorio* 21, is an example of one who

reads beyond the literal meaning of Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Eclogue* and finds, with the help of Christian preachers, a Christian message which leads him to the Mountain of Purgatory, and Christ's illuminating salvation.

### 3.1 *Amor* and *carità*: The Two Loves of Francesca and Piccarda

Francesca and Paolo are two of the most iconic figures in the *Inferno* who, at first, might appear to have been unjustly condemned for their passionate embrace.

Likewise, Piccarda is a shining example of the peace and serenity that come to all in Paradise. Yet, Piccarda's assignment to the lowest Heavenly sphere might also strike first-time readers as unfair. A key difference between the two women is Piccarda's serene acceptance of her allotted place through Christ-like *carità* while Francesca partially blames her damned status on *Amor*. Thus, Francesca and Piccarda appear to be mirror images of each other. This case study will discuss the key similarities between Francesca and Piccarda regarding their perspectives on love, how their perspectives on love influenced their moral actions per Augustine's *regula dilectionis*, and their roles as readers.<sup>1</sup>

For Francesca, love is personified by *Amor* who led her and her paramour to damnation. Francesca's *Amor* is one of the few times Love is depicted negatively in the *Commedia*. Her negative perception, as I will argue in this discussion, stems from Francesca's misidentification of this form of *Amor* as the greatest kind of love, or as Augustine would say, the *res quibus fruendum*.

Francesca's lust for Paolo, in particular, and her failure to read the warning against adultery in the Lancelot story suggests she has a twisted perception of love. Thus, it is Francesca's misunderstanding of love, and the proper moral

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<sup>1</sup> Piccarda is not a reader in the same sense as Francesca; my argument for her to be considered as such is based on Augustine's point on the communal aspect of readership as argued in Chapter 2 section 2.4. In Dante scholarship, James T. Chiampì, discussed later in this section, makes a case for Piccarda as a reader.



action which proper love directs, that blinds her from extending the proper love she owed to God and to Paolo. In reading Francesca's interpretation of love through this Augustinian approach, Piccarda as Francesca's mirror image becomes all the clearer. For Piccarda, love is *carità* and is the force through which her soul is eternally united to God and her heavenly peers as an extension of the love she extends to God first. *Carità* also directed Piccarda to extract from her reading of the Rule of St Clare the moral actions that kept her devoted to God and to others beyond her time in the cloister. In this discussion, I will address Piccarda's moral character in terms of her inability to complete her religious vows in her earthly life, as well as her role as a corporate reader which is reflected in the way she engages her heavenly counterpart, Constance.

Augustine believed Christ to be the hermeneutical key to reading Scripture and the moral standard which all readers should aspire to imitate.<sup>2</sup> Part of the readers' task, according to *De doctrina Christiana*, is to distinguish between things that are to be enjoyed (*res quibus fruendum est*) and things to be used (*res quibus utendum est*) in light of their relationship to God, who is the greatest *frui*, and extend good love in the proper order to both classifications of things.<sup>3</sup> This is Augustine's hermeneutical principle of the *regula dilectionis* which is the moral standard Christ taught and exemplified in the Double Love Commandment.<sup>4</sup> Good love, which is *caritas* (selfless love), is owed to God for God's own sake and to neighbours in relation to God.<sup>5</sup> To fail to love God for God's own sake, or to misuse the *uti* by elevating it beyond its relationship to the *frui*, is *cupiditas* (selfish love).<sup>6</sup> The distinction between the *uti* and *frui* and the extension of good

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.1.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 2 sections 2.1 and 2.2.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.1.

<sup>5</sup> For this chapter I use *caritas* and *carità* interchangeably and in keeping with the context of Piccarda's discussion of *carità* in *Paradiso* 3.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.2.2. Augustine warns that such an improper order of love can lead one to abuse the *uti*.

love owed to both kinds of things are themes that resonate with the women of *Inferno* 5 and *Paradiso* 3. Francesca is an example of a reader who fails to heed the warning written in the Lancelot story against the misuse of her lover, Paolo, as *uti*. While Piccarda, as her heavenly counterpart, is an example of a reader who successfully reads, through the help of her religious order as represented by her partner in the Sphere of the Moon, Constance, and responds to the moral direction found in the Rule of St Clare which leads her to devote herself to God as *frui*. Francesca's failure to regard Paolo as *uti* and extend *caritas* to him is due, arguably, to her replacement of God with *Amor* as the highest order of love. On the other hand, Piccarda's devotion to God through her holy vows, and her continuation of exemplifying the proper order of love in Paradise, demonstrates the correlation between correct moral reading and correct moral action.

### 3.1.1. Francesca's *cupiditas* and Piccarda's *caritas*

Reading Francesca and Piccarda's interpretations of love in the order in which they appear in the *Commedia*, as Piero Boitani proposes, suggests a trajectory of interpretation that begins with "courtly love and lust" in *Inferno* 5 and ends in restoration and charity, if not the perfection of love, in *Paradiso* 3.<sup>7</sup> Boitani argues that Francesca misinterprets *Amor* completely and projects this misinterpretation into her reading of the love between Lancelot and Guinevere. Boitani says Francesca's skewed view of *Amor* contributes to her continued self-denial of any wrong doing, which explains her lack of insight among the damned in Hell.<sup>8</sup> With this in mind, Francesca and Paolo's episode in *Inferno* 5 can be read, in the

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<sup>7</sup> Piero Boitani, "Peace and the Mind in Love: Piccarda", in *Dante's Poetry of the Donati. The Barlow Lectures on Dante delivered at University College London, 17-18 March 2005*, ed. by John Lindon (Leeds: Maney Publishing for the Society for Italian Studies, 2007), pp. 27-41 (p. 29). It should be mentioned that Boitani also includes La Pia from *Purgatorio* 5 in his discussion as part of Dante's trajectory of love; Pia represents the middle stage of love that is transitioning from "courtly love and lust", as represented by Francesca, into Christ-like love, as represented by Piccarda.

<sup>8</sup> Boitani, "Peace and the Mind of Love", p. 31.

simplest terms, as a moral lesson regarding the dangers of lust. In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, Paolo and Francesca's story is an example of substituting the highest form of love (God) with a lesser form of love (*Amor*) which results in *cupiditas*. By extending *Amor* to Paolo, rather than *caritas*, Francesca loved/lusted for Paolo for his own sake rather than in light of the love owed to God; if Francesca loved Paolo as an extension of God, then she would not have misused him for her own pleasure. In the same line of thought, if she loved God appropriately she would not be in Hell. John S. Carroll makes an interesting note in his commentary: "Francesca has the mournful distinction of being the only Christian woman in the *Inferno*".<sup>9</sup> Therefore, reading Francesca's damnation through Augustine's Christological principles opens the text to be read as a moral lesson regarding the dangers of *cupiditas* directed at the Pilgrim, and Dante's readers by extension. Likewise, the application of Augustine's hermeneutical principles to a reading of Piccarda's episode also allows the text to be read as a moral lesson regarding *carità* as the best form of love which is to be imitated. Piccarda's story can be interpreted as an example of the failure of human will, which would make her assignment to the lowest heavenly sphere appear justified. For this discussion, I will propose a reading of Piccarda's episode through the lens of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics which casts her as a reader who correctly distinguishes between the *uti* and the *frui* in correct reading and following through with correct moral action in accordance with Augustine's *regula dilectionis*.

The punishment for the Lustful confined to Hell's second circle is described in *Inferno* 5.31–33:

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<sup>9</sup> John S. Carroll, commentary on *Inf.* 5.73–142, in *Exiles of Eternity (Inf.); Prisoners of Hope (Purg.); In Patria (Par.)*. *Expositions of John S. Carroll*, ed. by Robert Hollander and Andrew Shifflett (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904–1911), *Dartmouth Dante Project* <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>> [accessed 31 January 2018].

*La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,  
mena li spirti con la sua rapina;  
voltando e percotendo li molesta*

(The infernal whirlwind, which never rests, drives the spirits  
before its violence; turning and striking, it tortures them).<sup>10</sup>

The Pilgrim finds Paolo and Francesca paired together, clinging to one another other as they are thrashed about on the violent winds. The Pilgrim only hears Francesca's version of events as Paolo remains silent throughout the conversation; which I will contrast against Piccarda and Constance's appearance together in *Paradiso* 3, later in this discussion. Francesca blames *Amor* as the force responsible for her disastrous affair which resulted in her and Paolo's damnation. Francesca claims in *Inf.* 5.100–107 that *Amor* overwhelmed both her and Paolo's senses so that they could not resist each other:

*“Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,  
prese costui de la bella persona  
che mi fu tolta, e 'l modo ancor m'offende.  
Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,  
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte  
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.  
Amor condusse noi ad una morte.  
Caina attende chi a vita ci spense”.*

(“Love, which is swiftly kindled in the noble heart, seized this one for the lovely person that was taken from me; and the manner still injures me. Love, which pardons no one loved from loving in return, seized me for his beauty so strongly that, as you see, it still does not abandon me. Love led us on to one death. Caina awaits him who extinguished our life”.)

One of Francesca's most distinctive characteristics is her interpretation of *Amor's* influence in the events leading to her death and damnation. Teodolinda Barolini says Francesca experiences love as a compulsive force: “as a desire that cannot be withstood, even if it leads to death”.<sup>11</sup> Francesca seems to fit the romantic trope

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<sup>10</sup> All Italian passages of the *Commedia* are taken from *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi. All English translations, unless otherwise noted, are from Robert M. Durling, ed. and trans., *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, intro. and notes by Ronald M. Martinez and Robert M. Durling, 3 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996–2011).

<sup>11</sup> Teodolinda Barolini, “Dante and Francesca da Rimini: Realpolitik, Romance, Gender”, *Speculum*, 75 (2000), 1–28 (p. 9); reprinted in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 304–322.

of a tragic heroine so overcome by Love that readers *seem* to have no choice but to pity her. However, Barolini says Francesca's eloquent speech and composure are vain attempts to mask her skewed reasoning and bitter pride.<sup>12</sup> I would add to Barolini's assessment that readers should *actually* be wary of Francesca.

Francesca presents herself as one who was betrayed by *Amor*, just as she was betrayed by the husband who murdered her. In Hell, Francesca presents *Amor* as a force that continues to torment her by keeping Paolo constantly at her side. Barolini argues this is all for show and is actually a sign of Francesca's manipulative persona as she tries to seduce the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia's* readers into empathising with her point of view.<sup>13</sup> According to Francesca's version of events, *Amor* was quick and all-consuming as the force that "swiftly" overtook and consumed them. *Amor* was demanding and powerful that neither one of them were spared for consumption. For Francesca, Paolo, and Gianciotto Malatesta, Francesca's husband and Paolo's brother, *Amor* delivers death and eternal damnation rather than eternal life. The type of love Francesca associates with *Amor* is clearly the type of love better associated with carnal pleasure. At the same time, in each of these statements Francesca displaces her own guilt of acting with improper love on to *Amor* as a force that controls her actions, rather than admit her own wrongdoing. Notice too that Paolo, while not named directly, is included in her triune accusation: "*prese costui de [...] mi prese del costui piacer [...] Amor condusse noi*". It is only in the last line, which accuses *Amor* of bringing her to eternal death and damnation, that Francesca insinuates that she and Paolo are a couple.

Reading this passage in terms of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics, the love Francesca owed to Paolo was the love and respect owed to kin as he was her

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<sup>12</sup> Barolini, "Dante and Cavalcanti (On Making Distinctions in the Matters of Love): *Inferno* V in Its Lyrical Context", *Dante Studies*, 116 (1998), 31–63.

<sup>13</sup> Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*, p. 31.

brother-in-law; therefore, their embrace was both adulterous and incestuous.<sup>14</sup> This point alone signals that the love between Francesca and Paolo is not in keeping with God's order of proper love and, in Augustinian terms, is a case for *cupiditas*. According to Augustine's *regula dilectionis*, Paolo was a *signum* as both family and neighbour to whom Francesca owed *caritas*. Yet Francesca was blinded by her lust, or more pointedly, she blames *Amor* for blinding them both from noticing any impropriety. This is the very definition of *cupiditas* per *De doctrina Christiana* 1.24.25 in which Augustine warns that one of the dangers of *cupiditas* is being led to a misunderstanding, if not outright abuse, of the *res quibus utendum est*. For his part, Paolo too owed Francesca *caritas*, thus they were both blinded by their inappropriate feelings for each other which led them to act immorally. It is this correlation between immoral desire and immoral action that Augustine finds particularly discordant from the proper order of love. Francesca even gives herself away in recognising that there was already a desire on her part for Paolo before she gave into that desire. Therefore, she is aware of the immoral nature in her desires. From Augustine's perspective, Francesca's immoral actions, which stem from her immoral desires for Paolo, demonstrate a wilful misuse Paolo as *uti*.

According to Francesca, *Amor* seizes control of them through their communal reading of the Lancelot story, which she recounts in *Inf.* 5.127–138:<sup>15</sup>

“Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto  
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;  
soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto.  
Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse  
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;  
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.  
Quando leggemmo il disiato riso  
esser baciato da cotanto amante,

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<sup>14</sup> Per Leviticus 18:6–18.

<sup>15</sup> For work on the Old French sources of the Lancelot tale Dante may have worked with, or at least knew of, see Davy Carozza, “Elements of the *roman courtois* in the Episode of Paolo and Francesca (*Inferno* V)”, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 3 (1967), 291–301, and Donald Maddox, “The Arthurian Intertexts of *Inferno* V”, *Dante Studies*, 114 (1996), 113–127.

*questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,  
la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.  
Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:  
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante".*

(“We were reading one day, for pleasure, of Lancelot, how Love beset him; we were alone and without any suspicion. Many times that reading drove our eyes together and turned our faces pale; but one point alone was the one that overpowered us. When we read that the yearned-for smile was kissed by so great a lover, he, who will never be separated from me, kissed my mouth all trembling. Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it: that day we read there no further”.)

There are a number of red flags Francesca’s speech raises regarding the series of events leading to her embrace of Paolo. Chief among the red flags is her deflection of blame to everyone and everything other than herself. She says that she was reading “*per diletto | di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse*”. She notes, “*solì eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto*”. Francesca even attempts to suggest that there should have been no cause for suspicion at this moment, except she already admitted to the Pilgrim that *Amor* had seized both her and Paolo’s hearts. Thus, Francesca accuses *Amor* of being responsible for their immoral actions. This could suggest that *Amor*’s powers were so great that they eclipsed any impulse within Francesca to act in accordance with the proper love she owed to Paolo. This could also suggest that Francesca’s perception of love was so twisted that she acted upon her own desires for Paolo which, from her perspective, *Amor* directed if not justified. From the perspective of either reading, Francesca and Paolo’s time together gave *Amor* the opportunity to mislead them to act immorally. Francesca continues, “*Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse | quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso*”. Now it is the content of the book that is responsible for fanning the flames of her lust. Again, Francesca displaces blame away from herself and shifts the blame to the book (or, perhaps, *Amor* working through the book as the cause of her immoral actions). The tipping point for Francesca is when they read of Lancelot’s forbidden kiss with Guinevere. Francesca says that is when Paolo “*la bocca mi*

*basciò tutto tremante*". Now Paolo is at fault because *he* kissed her first. Francesca then curses the book for its role in their demise, shifting blame back to the book for its role in their damnation.<sup>16</sup>

Francesca's skewed understanding of *Amor* and the love she owed to Paolo perpetuates her self-portrayal as a tragic victim of *Amor*. Mark Musa says Francesca's eloquent manner of speech and self-depiction as a tragic lover is meant to garner sympathy from the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia's* readers.<sup>17</sup> Musa calls Francesca "*Inferno's* Eve" who attempts to seduce the Pilgrim, and Dante's readers by extension, to abandon reason in favour of passion.<sup>18</sup> Musa argues that perceptive readers should be able to see through Francesca's emotional speech to her unemotional attachment to Paolo, whom she barely acknowledges.<sup>19</sup> Francesca plays the role convincingly enough that she moves the Pilgrim to faint with pity for the couple:

*Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,  
l'altro piangèa; sì che di pietade  
io venni men così com' io morisse,  
e caddi come corpo morto cade. (Inf. 5.139–142)*

(While one spirit said this, the other was weeping so that for pity I fainted as if I were dying, and I fell as a dead body falls.)

At the beginning of *Inferno* 5, Minos warns the Pilgrim against trusting the damned in lines 19–20, "*guarda com' entri e di cui tu ti fide: | non t'inganni l'ampiezza de l'intrare!*" ("beware how you enter to whom you entrust yourself: be not deceived by the spacious entrance!").<sup>20</sup> John Ruskin suggests that the nature of sin, as

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Hollander makes a similar observation in his commentary on *Inf.* 5.107: "Francesca, whose chief rhetorical strategy is to remove as much blame from herself as she is able, finding other forces at fault wherever possible (e.g., Paolo's physical beauty, her despicable husband, the allure of a French romance), here tries to even the score with her husband". See *The Divine Comedy*, ed. by Robert Hollander, trans. by Robert and Jean Hollander (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 2000–2007), *Dartmouth Dante Project* [accessed 23 January 2018].

<sup>17</sup> Mark Musa, *Advent at the Gates: Dante's Comedy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), pp. 19–35.

<sup>18</sup> Musa, *Advent at the Gates*, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Musa, *Advent at the Gates*, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Charles S. Singleton notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 5.20 an interesting Biblical parallel between Minos's position at the proper entrance to Hell and Christ's description of Hell in Matthew 7:13: *Intrate per angustam portam: quia lata porta, et spatiosa via est, quae ducit ad perditionem, et*



Dante depicts it in the *Inferno*, blinds the shades of Hell from recognising their own accountability until the punishment causes true suffering.<sup>21</sup> Ruskin's assessment certainly seems appropriate in Francesca's case. Ruskin also suggests that Minos's warning is directed at the readers to take care and not let the self-delusions of the damned blind readers from recognising who is really at fault for their confinement to Hell. I would add that in this instance, Francesca and Paolo are as responsible for their actions as Gianciotto is for killing Francesca. Carroll reads Minos' warning as an address to the Pilgrim to not trust his guide, Virgil, as a representative of Human Reason: "the warning therefore seems to mean that in the contemplation of sin and its penalties, it is possible to trust Reason too much".<sup>22</sup> The implication is that Virgil's insight is limited by his reliance on reason over faith. Robert Hollander also suggests Minos's warning is directed at the Pilgrim and said with the intention "to unsettle Dante" and shake his confidence in his guide.<sup>23</sup> Hollander continues with his remark, "Virgil obviously understands that Minos's words were meant to scare Dante off"; this explains Virgil's response in verses 21–22: "*Perché pur gride? | Non impeder lo suo fatale andare*" ("Why still cry out? Do not impede his going, which is decreed").<sup>24</sup> Hollander's interpretation seems more in keeping with the depiction of Minos as

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*multi sunt qui intrans per eam* ("Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it"); See Charles S. Singleton, trans., *Dante: The Divine Comedy*, Bollingen Series, LXXX, 6 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970–1975), *Dartmouth Dante Project* [accessed 23 January 2018]. Hollander also makes the same comment in his commentary on *Inf.* 5.20.

<sup>21</sup> George P. Huntington, ed., *Comments of John Ruskin on the Divina Commedia*, with an Introduction by Charles Eliot Norton (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903), pp. 45–201, *Dartmouth Dante Project* [accessed 31 January 2018]. Other commentaries examined for this discussion were: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, trans., *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. by Janet Stephens and Antonia Rossi (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1867), and the Rev. H.F. Tozer, *An English Commentary on Dante's Divina Commedia*, ed. by Andrew Shiflett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901). Both located through the *Dartmouth Dante Project* <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>> [accessed 23 January 2018].

<sup>22</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Inf.* 5.20.

<sup>23</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 5.22–24.

<sup>24</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 5.22–24.

a chief demon whose role is to build on the growing sense of danger the Pilgrim, and readers, feel the deeper the journey into Hell.

In light of Augustine's hermeneutics and the importance he gives to readers being aware of any and all *signa* a text may present, I prefer Ruskin's interpretation of Minos's warning as an address to the readers rather than a message for the Pilgrim alone. This interpretation is strengthened when Minos's warning is read, albeit retrospectively, against Dante's Pilgrim falling (pun intended) for Francesca's story and its unnerving implications. If she is an unfortunate victim of *Amor*, then she presents the Pilgrim and readers with a seed of doubt regarding the execution of God's justice in Hell.<sup>25</sup> Yet, as an examination of Francesca's own words has demonstrated, she is one of the best liars in Hell. Furthermore, reading Francesca's version of events through the lens of the *regula dilectionis* reveals Francesca's twisted view of love. For Francesca, *Amor* is a force of irrational and passionate self-serving lust. Reading Francesca's interpretation of *Amor* through Augustine's hermeneutic principles, *Amor* has replaced *caritas* and is a form of *cupiditas* that promoted the unhealthy attraction between Francesca and Paolo independently of any reference to God. *Amor* blinded Francesca from recognising Paolo as *uti* in relation to God so that he may be used to satisfy her own passionate desires. More damnable, Francesca appears to have replaced God with *Amor* as *frui*. The love that *Amor* brought Paolo and Francesca was the exact opposite of the type of love that is promoted by Christ's Double Love Commandment.

William Franke expands upon Francesca's self-depiction, saying Francesca's fundamental sin is the misinterpretation of her responsibility in what she has done wrong.<sup>26</sup> Franke says that in denying any wrongdoing, Francesca is

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<sup>25</sup> See the discussion regarding the Hell Gate inscription from *Inferno* 3; see Chapter 4 section 4.2.

<sup>26</sup> William Franke, *The Revelation of Imagination: From Homer and the Bible through Virgil and Augustine to Dante* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015), p. 326.

denying God the opportunity to execute Divine Justice.<sup>27</sup> Thus, any sympathy felt by the Pilgrim, or the readers for that matter, is unwarranted because she has no remorse or acknowledgement of what she has done wrong. This is the opposite of Piccarda who feels no jealousy for others in Paradise regarding their allotted placement in the heavenly spheres, nor does she have any desire to move beyond own her station in Paradise. Boitani argues that Piccarda's satisfaction is based on her correct interpretation of love, which Piccarda read as the call to religious humility and selflessness achieved through her peaceful submission to *caritas* in Paradise.<sup>28</sup> Boitani concludes that Piccarda desires nothing else beyond what God has given her, which is a sharp contrast to Francesca's self-portrayal as one who is misused and unjustly punished by, in her view, an unjust and unloving God, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Piccarda has an opposing view of love from Francesca, as evidenced in her speech in *Par.* 3.43–45:

*“La nostra carità non serra porte  
a giusta voglia, se non come quella  
che vuol simile a sé tutta sua corte”.*

(“Our charity does not lock its doors to a just desire, but follows his love who wishes all his court to be like himself?”)

Piccarda is explaining to the Pilgrim that she and all the souls in Paradise live in accordance with God's supreme and divine Will and are bonded through mutual love (*carità*) to God and to each other. For Piccarda, love, whom she identifies here as the *Spirito Santo* but is a manifestation of God, ignited within her the flames of eternal peace which is also a manifestation of God as the *frui*:

*“Li nostri affetti, che solo infiammati  
son nel piacer de lo Spirito Santo,  
letizian del suo ordine formati”* (*Par.* 3.52–54)

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<sup>27</sup> Franke, *Revelation of Imagination*, p. 326.

<sup>28</sup> Boitani, “Peace and the Mind of Love”, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> Boitani, “Peace and the Mind of Love”, p. 33.

(“Our affections, enflamed solely by the delight of the Holy Spirit, rejoice to be formed by its ordering”)

All the souls in this sphere are illuminated by God with joy and peace, regardless of their location in Paradise. This suggests that while the Pilgrim sees Piccarda in the first sphere of the Moon, *carità* allows her to enjoy the same measure of peace and unity with God and all the souls in Paradise. Thus, reading Piccarda’s description of the Heavenly peace and unity through Augustine’s hermeneutics makes her understanding of *carità* seem as if it is the fulfilment of Christ’s Double Love Commandment. Piccarda’s understanding of *carità* is, as Vittorio Montemaggi says, the “love by which the will of each blessed [soul] is perfectly at one with that of God and that of all the other blessed”.<sup>30</sup> Thus, as Montemaggi explains, Piccarda lives eternally in peace with the will of God, which has transformed her will, and the will of all in Paradise, through mutual Christian love which is the foundation of all human existence.<sup>31</sup> Montemaggi goes on to say, “God is the truth in seeing by which human beings recognise themselves as expressions of the love that grounds their being”.<sup>32</sup> Piccarda measures her existence in the eternal Paradise by the love she radiates and reflects, which comes first from God’s *caritas*. What is most significant in Montemaggi’s analysis is the reminder that while *Paradiso* 3 is the first place Dante’s Pilgrim sees Piccarda, that is not her final position in Paradise as he will see her again in the mosaic of the Empyrean. This means that the lowest heavenly sphere is not the furthest point from God’s presence in Heaven. In other words, the hierarchy the Pilgrim *thinks* exists in Heaven does not actually exist in terms of the same kind

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<sup>30</sup> Vittorio Montemaggi, “The Bliss and the Abyss of Freedom: Hope, Personhood and Particularity”, in *Vertical Readings in Dante’s Comedy*, ed. by George Corbett and Heather Webb, 3 vols (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015–2017), I, 57–76 (p. 72). See also, Montemaggi, “Contemplation, Charity and Creation *ex nihilo* in Dante’s *Commedia*”, *Modern Theology*, 29.2 (2013), 62–82, and “In Unknowability as Love: The Theology of Dante’s *Commedia*”, in *Dante’s Commedia Theology as Poetry*, pp. 60–94.

<sup>31</sup> Montemaggi, “Bliss and the Abyss of Freedom”, p. 72.

<sup>32</sup> Montemaggi, “Bliss and the Abyss of Freedom”, p. 73.

of spatial boundaries found in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. There is only God's eternal *carità* and those who are completely submissive and bound to it.<sup>33</sup>

Augustine writes in *De doctrina* 2.8.12 that *caritas* affects both the Biblical readers' ability to understand the tropological message of Scripture and the readers' response to Scripture's moral instruction.<sup>34</sup> This suggests, there is a direct correlation between right reading and right moral action that is directed by the right reading. For Piccarda, *carità* has led the blessed souls to eternal life and transformed them into those whose spiritual fires "*che solo infiammati | son nel piacer de lo Spirito Santo*". In Augustinian terms, they become *subiugatum leniter Christo* (peacefully subject to Christ; *De doct.* 2.42.63).<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Piccarda explains that with *carità* as the ruling force which binds God's Will to all the souls in Paradise, there is no need to desire more than what they have received by God's Will:

*“Frate, la nostra volontà quieta  
virtù di carità, che fa volerne  
sol quel ch’avemo, e d’altro non ci asseta.  
Se disassimo esser più superne,  
foran discordi li nostri disiri  
dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne,  
che vedrai non capere in questi giri,  
s’essere in carità è qui necesse,  
e se la sua natura ben rimiri”.* (Par. 3.70–78)

(“Brother, our will is quieted by the power of charity, which causes us to desire only what we have and does not make us thirst for anything else. If we desired to be higher up, our desires would be discordant with the will of him who assigns us here, which you will see is contradictory to these spheres, if to be in charity is here *necesse*, and if you consider well its nature”.)

Piccarda explains to the Pilgrim that she feels no jealousy or desire to be placed in a higher position than where she is. Through *carità*, Piccarda relates to others in light of her love for God which seems to match Augustine's *regula dilectionis*.

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<sup>33</sup> Montemaggi, “Bliss and the Abyss of Freedom”, p. 73.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.2.1.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.2.

Part of her task in *Paradiso* 3 is to prepare the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia*'s readers, for what living fully in *caritas* means. Part of that instruction is the recognition that there is no real hierarchy in Paradise; the divisions he sees are for his benefit as he is not yet ready to see the fullness of Paradise.

Piccarda's perception of love, and the unity it brings to all the blessed in Paradise, fits with Augustine's *regula dilectionis* which defines *caritas* as the appropriate selfless love owed to God, as the greatest *res quibus fruendum est*, and neighbours in the light of the love owed to God. For Piccarda, the proper love owed to God is obedience to God's Will. In other words, if she, or anyone in Paradise, desired anything else than what has been received from God, it would be discordant with the Will of God who has put all things in their proper order. However, the love in which Piccarda and all the souls in her sphere live, has not been distributed from God in gradations. This *caritas* is given and received from God in equal measure. This is why Piccarda tells the Pilgrim he will see no contradictions among the spheres. This also establishes that God's Will is the source of eternal unity among all the blessed souls:

*“Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse  
tenersi dentro a la divina voglia,  
per ch' una fansi nostre voglie stesse;  
sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia  
per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace,  
com' a lo re che 'n suo voler ne 'nvoglia”.* (Par. 3.79–84)

(“Indeed, it is constitutive of this blessed *esse* to stay within God's will, and thus our very wills become one, so that how we are arranged from level to level through this kingdom, delights the entire kingdom, as well as the King who enamours us of his will”.)

In Paradise, an individual's will submits to God's Will, which unifies the souls to God and to each other; this is a form of selfless love. Thus, every level of the Heavenly Kingdom is ordered by God's Will and pleases God and unites all those who occupy that space. In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*,

Piccarda is not just talking about how the individual will is conformed to the Will of God; she is describing the goal of the Double Love Commandment which is the mutual love and unity shared in all of creation through God's Divine order. Thus, Piccarda is describing the natural reordering of creation and the reclamation of all creation through *carità* so that all things are seen in the light of their relationship to God.

Piccarda's *carità* is a sharp contrast to Francesca's *Amor* according to Robin Kirkpatrick who points out that Francesca's all-consuming *Amor* isolates her as well as damns her in *Inferno* 5, while Piccarda's *carità* unites her with God and all the souls in Heaven in *Paradiso* 3.<sup>36</sup> Kirkpatrick continues to note their differences: Francesca's version of love is entirely self-serving and self-destructive whereas Piccarda's version of love is entirely selfless and inclusive.<sup>37</sup> Barolini also notes their similarities: Francesca and Piccarda were two women who are subject to the gender politics of their time, forced into marriages, and both are overcome by a deep sense of love that presents itself outside of their respective marriages.<sup>38</sup> Again, what separates them is not only their understanding of love but the way they respond to their respective interpretations of love, particularly in how they engage with others. Francesca's response to twisted love led to her damnation while Piccarda's response to charitable love led to her unification with God. Barolini says that Francesca's misunderstanding of love blinded her to lust for Paolo which resulted in her and her paramour's death.<sup>39</sup> This reads as a credible analysis of her character in light of Francesca's claims that she was under *Amor's* control when she was brought to damnation. Meanwhile, Piccarda's desire for the proper order of love was reinforced in her joining of a religious order. Piccarda's

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<sup>36</sup> Robin Kirkpatrick, "Massacre, *Miserere*, and Martyrdom", in *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, I, 97-117.

<sup>37</sup> Kirkpatrick, "Massacre, *Miserere*, and Martyrdom", p. 100.

<sup>38</sup> Barolini, "Notes toward a Gendered History of Italian Literature, with a Discussion of Dante's *Beatrix Loquax*", in *Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, pp. 360-378 (pp. 373-376).

<sup>39</sup> Barolini, "Notes toward a Gendered History of Italian Literature", p. 374.

understanding of love, specifically as *carità*, was liberating and illuminating.

Although Piccarda admits that she broke her religious vows when she was taken from the convent and forced into a political marriage, she still knows that through *carità* she has renewed and fulfilled her vows. These moral qualities, I argue, are connected to her moral actions as one who reads correctly and acts morally in direct response to what she has read.

### 3.1.2. Reading Tropologically

What is most interesting in this character comparison is the activities of Francesca and Piccarda as readers. In his discussion of the hermeneutical cycle in *De doctrina*, Augustine draws a connection between those who read Scripture through the correct hermeneutical lens and those who act in accordance with the moral instructions illuminated in Scripture through their correct reading. Part of Augustine's discussion regarding *cupiditas* and *caritas* in *De doctrina* is his discussion of the greater purpose the *signa* of Scripture which serve as indicators pointing to God. For Francesca and Paolo, the Lancelot book was a *signum* warning against the immorality of lust and acting on those lustful feelings, which has been discussed at length in the previous section. For Piccarda, the Rule of St Clare, which she read communally with her religious order, was a *signum* which reinforced the life of devotion to God she chose for herself.<sup>40</sup>

Martin Eisner suggests there is a parallel between Mary's reading of Isaiah at the moment of the Annunciation and Francesca's reading of the Lancelot tale.<sup>41</sup> Eisner argues that Francesca is a parody of the Annunciation in Luke 1:26–38 when Gabriel announced to Mary that God elected her to give birth to Christ.

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<sup>40</sup> In this section I will discuss the scholarship regarding Piccarda as a reader. It is important to keep in mind that part of the duties Piccarda was subject to in her religious order was the submission to the Rule.

<sup>41</sup> Martin Eisner, "The Word Made Flesh in *Inferno* 5: Francesca Reading and the Figure of the Annunciation", *Dante Studies*, 131 (2013), 51–72.



According to Eisner, the popular medieval depictions of the Annunciation include images of Mary reading from Isaiah 7:14 which foretells the birth of the Messiah: *ecce virgo concipiet, et pariet filium, et vocabitur nomen ejus Emmanuel* (Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel).<sup>42</sup> Eisner argues that by establishing the visual link between Mary and Francesca as readers, “Dante indicates the potentially positive outcome that reading might produce”.<sup>43</sup> If Paolo and Francesca had continued to read the book, they would have realised Lancelot and Guinevere were doomed lovers as they were almost immediately discovered and punished for their embrace. Paolo and Francesca might have also seen the foreshadowing of their own discovery and demise. The two are almost perfect examples of what Augustine calls in *De doct.* 2.6.7 “casual readers”: *Sed multis et multiplicibus obscuritatibus et ambiguitatibus decipiuntur, qui temere legunt, aliud pro alio sentientes* (But casual readers are misled by problems and ambiguities of many kinds, mistaking one thing for another).<sup>44</sup> Just like the events in the book that the two lovers did not read *until the end*, Francesca is discovered in Paolo’s arms by her husband. Deviating from the events of the book, Gianciotto murders the two out of jealousy which results in Paolo and Francesca’s assignment to the lustful and Gianciotto’s assignment to the deepest pit in Hell. The questions such a reading raise are whether *Amor* twisted Francesca’s reading of the book in order to lead her to a twisted interpretation of love and moral action. Or did Francesca’s twisted sense of morality guide her to misunderstand the meaning of the Lancelot story in order to justify her own lustful desires for Paolo? The latter reading raises questions regarding *Amor*’s agency in Francesca’s moral failure to extend the proper order of love to God and Paolo.

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<sup>42</sup> Eisner, “Word Made Flesh”, p. 56–57.

<sup>43</sup> Eisner, “Word Made Flesh”, p. 62.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 2 sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

There is a tropological dimension to Eisner's analysis in that Gabriel's visit to Mary in the middle of her reading of Isaiah's prophecy which reinforces the imagery of Mary's righteous piety as she is reading from Scripture and supports her worthiness as the *ancilla Domini* (handmaiden of the Lord). The anagogical dimension of this story is the confirmation that the prophecy has been filled through Mary's reading Isaiah's prophecy at the moment of Gabriel's visit which establishes a connection between the prefiguration of the event (i.e., the Incarnation foretold in the prophecy) and the event itself (i.e., the Annunciation).<sup>45</sup> In other words, there are two hermeneutical cycles at work here. Mary's actions demonstrate the moral qualities that make her worthy of God's favour. And the prophecy is brought full circle as it is read by the very person God elected to fulfil it. Eisner suggests there is a similar hermeneutical cycle established in Francesca and Paolo's reading of the Lancelot story.<sup>46</sup> Tropologically, Francesca and Paolo's reading of Lancelot kindles their lust for each other, resulting in the two of them putting down the book. The stolen kiss between Lancelot and Guinevere prefigures Francesca and Paolo's own kiss. It stands to reason that had Francesca and Paolo continued to read, they would have realised the book was warning them against the very same action they were reading in Lancelot and Guinevere's own dangerous and ill-fated love affair. Both couples were discovered and subsequently punished, although in Dante's scheme Gianciotto also damned himself for the murder of his wife and brother. Therefore, the impact of Francesca's misinterpretation did not just damn the lovers, but also has the potential to damn the Pilgrim.

The Pilgrim's overwhelming pity for Paolo and Francesca is misguided, if not dangerous. For just as the lovers ignored the signs warning against their own

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<sup>45</sup> Erich Auerbach discusses this in his analysis of mimesis; see *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953, repr. 2013).

<sup>46</sup> Eisner, "Word Made Flesh", p. 63.

*cupiditas*, the Pilgrim's pity could potentially blind him to the warning against his own misguided love for Beatrice; a misinterpretation that is not addressed and corrected until their reunion in *Purgatorio* 30 and their journey into Paradise.

Augustine is very clear in *De doct.* 1.23.22–1.24.25 that a misunderstanding of the *res quibus utendum est* is self-destructive.<sup>47</sup> In *De doct.* 1.22.21, Augustine says that the love of the self, which leads to the misuse of *signa* and *uti*, replaces the love owed first and foremost to God as *frui*.<sup>48</sup>

*sed ad se ipsum conuersus non ad incommutabile aliquid conuertitur et propterea iam cum defectu aliquo se fruitor, quia melior est, cum totus haeret atque constringitur incommutabili bono.*

(if he loves himself on his own account, he does not relate himself to God, but turns to himself and not to something unchangeable.)

Bearing in mind the emphasis Augustine places on teaching others what has been gained from a moral reading of Scripture, the danger comes from any misinterpretation of love that can potentially be passed on to other readers blinded by their own *cupiditas*. Francesca misread the Lancelot story as a *signum* against *cupiditas*. Yet the book was not the catalyst to her demise. Prior to taking up the book, she failed to recognise Paolo as an opportunity to demonstrate the proper love owed to God and neighbours. Francesca also failed to act on the love and respect she owed to her husband by setting a boundary to prevent herself from being alone with the object of her desire. These factors by themselves are not Hell-worthy trespasses as Piccarda also failed to uphold her holy vows. The saved Roman poet Statius, discussed in the second-half of this chapter, also failed to fully live and act in accordance with Christ's *regula dilectionis*.<sup>49</sup>

One key factor that separates Francesca from Piccarda and Statius, and demonstrates the Augustinian fault of her moral character, is her misuse of Paolo

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<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.1.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 2 sections 2.1 and 2.2.

<sup>49</sup> See section 3.2.2, below.

to satisfy her own selfish desire. From the perspective of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics, Francesca's lustful intentions damaged her relationship with Paolo just as much as her lustful actions disrupted the proper order of human relationships established by the *regula dilectionis*. She does not recognise, or "read", her relationship to Paolo through the proper filter of her relationship to God, never recognising that the love she owed Paolo should reflect the love she owed to God. She treats him as an object of lust meant to satisfy her own pleasures which breaches Christ's Double Love Commandment. This is echoed in her limited engagement with the weeping Paolo who remains fixed to her side. These points demonstrate the failure of Francesca's moral compass and are partially to blame for her assignment to Hell; in other words, what put her on the path to her damnation. Francesca's continued denial of wrong doing, as well as her blaming *Amor* as the primary culprit of her immoral actions, are the reasons why she *deserves* to remain in Hell. If the Pilgrim, and the readers, fail to recognise the hermeneutical cycle between Francesca's improper reading of the Lancelot story and her immoral actions, which she continues to use in order to justify her immoral actions, then there could be a further violation of the proper order of love.

When this episode is read through the filter of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, there are red flags in Francesca's speech in *Inf.* 5.88–93 that readers should recognise:

*"O animal graz'ioso e benigno  
che visitando vai per l'aere perso  
noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno,  
se fosse amico il re de l'universo,  
noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace,  
poi c'hai pietà del nostro mal perverso".*

("O gracious and benign living creature who through the black air go visiting us who stained the world blood-red, if the king of the universe were friendly we would pray to him for your peace, since you have pity on our twisted pain".)

Francesca's speech is eloquent but filled with residual bitterness toward God for her damnation. Again, this is not in of itself a Hell-worthy trespass as Sapia, who will be discussed in the next chapter, found her way into Purgatory despite her blasphemies uttered against God.<sup>50</sup> In this case, Francesca's bitterness toward God, as evident in her word to the Pilgrim "*se fosse amico il re de l'universo, | noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace*", are part of her failure to admit her own part in her damnation. She cannot see God as a friend, which sours her initial greeting to the Pilgrim as she has no peace to offer him because God has not granted her any peace. She calls the punishment she and Paolo received a "*mal perverso*". Franke argues this failure to recognise her own guilt denies God the opportunity to exact righteous justice for her *cupiditas*.<sup>51</sup> Astute readers should detect these red flags as signs of her prevailing *cupiditas* as well as recognise that her story is a warning against following her example as a poor reader who failed to make the connection between her own moral compass, her own moral actions, and a text in which she was warned not to behave in accordance with her own flawed moral compass.

Again, what is most interesting regarding Francesca's *cupiditas*, in light of Augustine's hermeneutics, is her last comment: "*quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante*". Hollander compares Francesca's "we read no further" to Augustine's *Tolle! Lege!* moment from *Confessiones* 8.12.<sup>52</sup> Hollander notes that when Augustine read Romans 13:13, he interpreted the text as a warning against his own drunkenness and licentiousness which then inspired him to redirect his sinful behaviour and focus on God. There is an echo of this story in Statius's reading of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which will be discussed in the next section below.<sup>53</sup> Hollander says

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 4 section 4.4.

<sup>51</sup> Franke, *Revelation of Imagination*, p. 326.

<sup>52</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 112–113. Hollander also highlights these issues in his commentary on *Inf.* 5.138.

<sup>53</sup> See section 3.2.2, below.

that when Augustine said “*Nec ultra volui legere*” (“And I did not wish to read any further”), he meant that the passage was a sufficient warning against continuing immorality and he did not need to read further to understand the flaws of his own moral character.<sup>54</sup> Hollander stresses that this does not mean that Augustine abandoned his reading, as Francesca and Paolo did: “the Lancelot story, by giving delight rather than instruction, helped to perform the ultimate destruction of Francesca, who read about the wrong garden and who loved the wrong Paul”.<sup>55</sup> Hollander’s observations are brilliant and well-nuanced as he notes that Francesca was not reading the wrong book; rather, she was reading the right book in the wrong way.

It could be argued that the filter of Francesca’s immoral compass might not have completely eclipsed the moral lessons encoded in the Lancelot story, just as Augustine’s own immorality could not blot-out the moral lesson he found in Romans 13. Had Francesca continued reading, she *may* have read a warning against infidelity that *may* have redirected her behaviour, just like the warning Augustine found in his reading of Romans. Had Francesca and Paolo continued to read they would have seen that Lancelot and Guinevere were discovered in their embrace, and punished for the very actions the book seemingly instructed the pair to do. I would argue that had Francesca and Paolo been *better readers*, *i.e.* readers aware of the correlation between good reading and good moral action, the Lancelot story could have been read as a warning *against* adultery and the very action which led to their damnation. I will discuss this aspect of Augustine’s Biblical hermeneutics in the next section of this chapter as this is an important aspect of Statius’s salvation. For Augustine, the impetus of correct moral action is

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<sup>54</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*, p. 113.

<sup>55</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*, p. 113.

on the readers who must evaluate the text through the lens of the *regula dilectionis* and then act accordingly.

The most important aspect of Augustine's "*caritas* criterion", which he outlines in *De doctrina* Book 3, is that readers must determine how a text encourages or discourages right moral action.<sup>56</sup> Augustine argued that when Scripture was read through the proper hermeneutical approach, it encourages the appropriate order of love and moral conduct owed to things that are *frui* and *uti*. When Scripture seems to promote inappropriate forms of love and/or immoral conduct, Augustine's "*caritas* criterion" allows readers to read such passages figuratively, or metaphorically, to ensure an interpretation consistent with the *regula dilectionis*. This corresponds to the reader's moral actions because passages that encourage *caritas* are to be read and followed as literal moral instructions, while passages that seem to encourage *cupiditas* are to be read as figurative examples of behaviours to be avoided. In other words, if a text encourages correct moral action, then the text can be read, in a literal sense, as a guide on correct moral action. If it does not, the text is to be read in another sense if not a literal warning against incorrect moral action.

Regarding a reading of Piccarda's episode from the perspective of Augustine's hermeneutical cycle, the most important aspect is the role of corporate reading. Discussing Piccarda as a reader in the same way as Francesca is challenging. We know nothing of the circumstances that led Piccarda to join the Order of the Poor Clares. From the limited information Dante gives us, as well as her placement in Paradise, readers can surmise that Piccarda's enlistment came from the impulse of, or at least the desire for, good moral action. In other words, Piccarda's good moral compass led her on the correct moral path. There is a healthy thread of Dante scholarship devoted to the details of Piccarda's

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<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.4.

placement among those who failed to fulfil their religious vows in the Sphere of the Moon.<sup>57</sup> Yet she displays a sincere devotion to God despite her involuntary departure from the cloister. When discussing Piccarda's moral character and qualities through the filter of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the way in which she engages with others is consistent with Christ's *regula dilectionis* and, thus, offers a potential insight into the correlation between her good moral actions and her role as a good reader.

As a member of the cloister, she most likely had to read the Rule of her Order, or had the Rule read to her and her peers. This fits with Augustine's notion of corporate reading; that is the study of Scripture, and its moral lessons, within a group. The Rule of St Clare undoubtedly encouraged, if not reinforced, good moral action in accordance with the Order's views on how to be devoted to God and demonstrate *caritas* to others. In other words, how to live in accordance with Christ's Double Love Commandment. This corporate reading, if not individual reading, of the Rule would have the added benefit of reinforcing the direction of Piccarda's moral compass. In Augustinian terms, the Rule is a *signum* which directed for her a life of humility and charity, and reinforced the positive moral qualities she, presumably, had prior to joining the Order. Piccarda, then, is an example of one who reads and interprets the *signum* correctly. This is one of the ways in which Piccarda is the opposite of Francesca, as discussed by James Chiampì who says Piccarda's reading of the Rule of St Clare performs a "divine

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<sup>57</sup> See for example: Joan Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature from the 12th Century to Dante* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975). Marianne Shapiro, *Women Earthly and Divine in the Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975). Richard Lansing, "Piccarda and the Poetics of Paradox: A Reading of *Paradiso* III", *Dante Studies*, 105 (1987), 63–77. Warren Ginsberg, "Place and Dialectic in Pearl and Dante's *Paradiso*", *ELH*, 55.4 (1988), 731–753. Victoria Kirkham, "A Canon of Women in Dante's *Commedia*", *Annali d'Italianistica*, 7 (1989), 16–41. Jeryldene M. Wood, "Breaking the Silence: The Poor Clares and the Visual Arts in Fifteenth-Century Italy", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 48.2 (1995), 262–286. Virginia Jewiss, "Piccarda's Peace in a German War Cemetery", *MLN*, 127.1 (2012), S119–S129. Montemaggi, "Bliss and Abyss of Freedom". Inga Pierson, "Piccarda's Weakness: Reflections on Freedom, Force, and Femininity in Dante's *Paradiso*", *Speculum*, 94.1 (2019), 68–95.



act of reading”.<sup>58</sup> Chiampi argues, “Francesca fashioned herself in romance; Piccarda is fashioned as a creature rewritten to conformity to the Word as it is read in love by the Father”.<sup>59</sup> In terms of Augustine’s hermeneutical cycle, Piccarda correctly read the Rule as a guide to put Christ first which directed her to maintain a life devoted to serving others as modelled by Christ. Chiampi acknowledges that Piccarda’s inability to fulfil her holy vows in life can be read as a flaw in her moral character; yet, she *does* fulfil them in Paradise through *carità*. Thus, Chiampi highlights an important difference between Francesca and Piccarda: Francesca blames everyone, except herself, for her damnation while Piccarda holds only herself accountable for her failure to fulfil her vows and gives God the rightful credit for her salvation.<sup>60</sup> In truth, Francesca had the choice of giving in to her lust for Paolo while Piccarda had no choice in leaving the cloister as she was forced to leave. Piccarda’s reading of the Rule through the correct moral filter as well as the content of the Rule itself encouraged all those who belonged to the Order to act in accordance with God’s Double Love Commandment.

Regarding the comparisons between Francesca and Piccarda, both appear to the Pilgrim in pairs. In *Inferno* 5, Francesca appears with Paolo and in *Paradiso* 3, Piccarda is paired with one of her peers from the first heavenly sphere, Constance. Again, just like Francesca, the way Piccarda engages with her partner indicates the correlation between Piccarda’s moral qualities and her role as a good moral reader. While Francesca barely acknowledges Paolo’s presence, except to implicate him in the circumstances leading to her damnation, Piccarda acknowledges Constance’s presence and encourages her to speak to the Pilgrim. Piccarda and Constance share a similar story in their desire to take holy orders

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<sup>58</sup> Chiampi, “Dante’s *Paradiso* from Number to Mysterium”, *Dante Studies*, 110 (1992), 255–278.

<sup>59</sup> Chiampi, “Dante’s *Paradiso* from Number to Mysterium”, p. 267.

<sup>60</sup> Chiampi, “Dante’s *Paradiso* from Number to Mysterium”, p. 268.

but were diverted as they are forced out of the Order and into arranged marriages. When the Pilgrim asks Piccarda for the details of her life, Piccarda tells him in *Par.* 3.97–102 that she was greatly inspired by the life of St Clare:

*“Perfetta vita e alto merto inciela  
donna più sù,” mi disse, “a la cui norma  
nel vostro mondo giù si veste e vela,  
perché fino al morir si vegghi e dorma  
con quello sposo ch’ogne voto accetta  
che caritate a suo piacer conforma”.*

(“Perfect life and high merit enheaven a lady further up,” she said, “according to whose rule, down in your world, women dress and veil themselves so that until death they may watch and sleep with that Bridegroom who accepts every vow conformed by charity to his pleasure”.)

The “*norma*” of “*veste e vela*” is a reference to the Rule of St Clare.<sup>61</sup> Piccarda’s reading of the Rule filled her with the desire to live a holy life guided by both faith and charity. Piccarda says the Rule guides the women to accept and conform to the vows of “*caritate*”. Piccarda’s language also refers to Christ as that “*sposo*”; meaning that she, and all the ladies of the order, were spiritually married to Christ through the conformity of *caritas*.<sup>62</sup> About her life outside the cloister, Piccarda only says that she fled from home as a young girl with the intent to join the Poor Clares, but she was forcefully removed. Piccarda says of the event in *Par.* 3.106–107, “*Uomini poi, a mal più ch’ a bene usi, | fuor mi rapiron de la dolce chiostra*” (“Later, men more used to evil than to good tore me out of the sweet cloister”). Piccarda then trails off in line 108, “*Iddio si sa qual poi mia vita fusi*” (“God alone knows what my life was after that”).

Another parallel between Piccarda and Francesca is that she too is joined by another in *Par.* 3.115. Unlike Francesca, Piccarda redirects the Pilgrim’s focus

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<sup>61</sup> The female Franciscan order founded by St Clare of Assisi (1194–1253) who was a devoted follower of St Francis of Assisi.

<sup>62</sup> Hollander notes in his commentary on *Par.* 3.100–102 that Piccarda echoes several Biblical passages in which the love of God involves the spiritual marriage to Christ: Matthew 9:15 and 25:1–12, Mark 2:19, and Luke 5:35.

to Constance to acknowledge her.<sup>63</sup> Neither Piccarda nor Constance dwell on the harshness they suffered from their families. Rather, Piccarda tells the Pilgrim that despite their inability to fulfil their vows, they both remained faithful in their hearts to Christ:

*“Ma poi che pur al mondo fu rivolta  
contra suo grado e contra buona usanza,  
non fu dal vel del cor già mai disciolta”.* (Par. 3.115–117)

(“But still, after she had been turned back to the world against her liking and against good custom, she was never loosed from the veil upon her heart”.)

Reading this episode Augustine’s hermeneutics of *caritas* highlights Piccarda and Constance as examples of those who successfully read the *signum* in a text that pointed them to remain focused on their love for God. As Piccarda says that despite leaving the cloister, they did not abandon the Rule in their hearts. They remained devoted to her cloistered life and Christ as their *sposo* and to *caritas* which allowed them to fulfil her vows in Paradise. Piccarda’s acknowledgement of Constance also demonstrates a sense of unity which *carità* has brought her and all those in Paradise. Readers are not given the circumstances that led Constance to her own conversion, but we do know that Piccarda’s correct reading of the Rule made a significant impact on her moral actions. Even if Piccarda’s moral character, or Constance’s for that matter, were not completely pure when they first joined the religious order, their reading of the Rule set a clear path for right moral action.

Augustine’s fourth and fifth steps toward holiness in *De doctrina* 2.7.10–11, discussed previously in this thesis, are fortitude and the turning away from the misuse of the *res quibus utendum est*.<sup>64</sup> Piccarda does both steps by joining the Poor

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<sup>63</sup> This is Constance (1152–1198), daughter of King Roger II of Naples and Sicily. See Hollander’s commentary on *Par.* 3.109–120 for the more comprehensive history of Constance of Sicily. See also Enrico Malato, “Il difetto della volontà che ‘non s’ammorza’: Piccarda e Costanza: Lettura del canto III del *Paradiso*”, *Filologia e critica*, 20 (1995), 278–317.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 2 sections 2.1 and 2.2.

Clares with the intention of submitting to the Rule in the cloister and in her heart. When the Pilgrim meets her in Paradise, Piccarda has already completely submitted herself to God and to those around her in *carità*. Although the Pilgrim does not initially understand why Piccarda has been assigned to a lower sphere in Heaven, after hearing Piccarda's perception of her status in Paradise as being counted among the blessed the Pilgrim recognises in *Par. 3. 88–89, Chiaro mi fu allor come ogne dove | in Cielo è Paradiso* (It became clear to me then how everywhere in Heaven in Paradise). Piccarda is a clear example for the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia's* readers, of how good reading correlated to good moral action.

The main similarity between *Inferno's* Francesca and *Paradiso's* Piccarda is their devotion to love. Their understanding and reactions to love are also their main difference. Francesca remains bitterly devoted to *Amor*, while Piccarda is devoted to the redemptive and life-giving *carità*. Their perception of love alters the way they view themselves as reflected in their accountability for their eternal assignments and the way they engage with those around them. Paolo remains quietly fixed to Francesca's side and she barely notices him, whereas Piccarda invites Constance to speak freely with the Pilgrim. Piccarda recognises herself as part of a whole community, whereas Francesca isolates herself in the way she dispenses blame on others. Francesca treated Paolo as the object of enjoyment, independent of God, whereas Piccarda integrates her relations with others in her relation to God.

These are two examples of the extremes of good love and bad love paired with good and bad moral action. The next pairing, Statius and Virgil, offer insight into the correlation between good and bad reading and transformative love. Statius, while a good reader, still needs instruction to separate himself from bad moral action. Meanwhile, Virgil, when read through a Christian hermeneutical

lens, offers good moral instruction but is incapable of acting in accordance with Christ's instruction.

### **3.2 Christ's Harrowing and Resurrection:**

#### **Christological Readings of Virgil and Statius**

As with Francesca and Piccarda, Virgil and Statius offer examples of the correlation between reading through a Christ-centred lens and right moral action when read through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*. In his episode in *Purgatorio* 20–22, Statius's claim that Virgil was the inspiration for both his poetic fame and his conversion to Christianity. Additionally, Statius, like Piccarda, is an example of a cooperative reader as he claims to have learned how to read Virgil through a Christian lens from Christian preachers. As for Virgil himself, despite his role as Statius's spiritual guide, and the Pilgrim's literal guide through Hell and Purgatory, Virgil remains on the outside of Christian salvation looking in. This discussion will consider the hermeneutical approach Statius applied to his reading of Virgil through tropological and Christological lenses. What makes this discussion on Statius and Virgil different from the first half of this chapter is the added complexity of the Biblical references that, arguably, prompt the *Commedia's* readers to apply a similar hermeneutical framework to their reading of *Purgatorio* 20–22 as Statius to his reading of Virgil. Therefore, the Statius episode has a unique position in this thesis's argument of reading the *Commedia* through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* because it presents a reader who applies a Christocentric hermeneutical lens, which he learned from Christian preachers, as well as prompts readers to apply the same hermeneutics to their reading of the *Commedia*.

Virgil's tropological impact as a writer must be discussed in terms of how his texts were interpreted by Statius. This too is an aspect of Augustine's

hermeneutics of *caritas*; namely how readers, like Statius, can read beyond the literal or intended meaning of a text through the application of a Christ-centred hermeneutic. Through his Christian reading of Virgil, Statius redirects his *cupiditas* and comes to know God as the *res quibus fruendum est*; meanwhile, Virgil himself remains outside of Christian salvation. Dante's Virgil even witnesses Christ's Harrowing of Hell but is unable to recognise God as the *res quibus fruendum est*. While Virgil's offence against God is less severe than Francesca's, he too is an example of one who failed to appropriately distribute the proper order of love to God and neighbour. In simpler terms, Virgil's time on earth did not coincide with Christ's, making him ineligible for Christian salvation. This complexity makes Virgil an interesting case study for this discussion due to his role in helping both Statius and Dante's Pilgrim avoid Hell. Therefore, part of this discussion must examine Dante's presentation of Virgil. While he remains unsaved in Limbo, the Roman poet still has a major contribution in illuminating the path to Christ for both Statius and the Pilgrim. It is crucial to keep in mind that Dante's presentation of Virgil's text containing a Christian message is not unique to Dante as there is a long-standing tradition of reading the historical Vergil's (meaning the historical person and not Dante's caricature of the Roman poet) texts through Christian hermeneutics.<sup>65</sup> What is unique to Dante's depiction of Virgil is the Roman poet's special advantage of witnessing Christ's Harrowing while remaining outside of Christian salvation. This raises the question of whether or not Christ is meant to be the central figure of Dante's *descensus Christi ad inferos* (Christ's descent into Hell), or if Dante's Harrowing is meant to be considered through a non-Christian perspective. As with the previous discussion on Francesca and Piccarda, this section will focus on two aspects of Virgil and

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<sup>65</sup> I am using Virgil here and elsewhere as a way of distinguishing between the historical poet and Dante's invented Virgil who was designed to guide Dante's own avatar through this journey.

Statius's relationship: their roles as readers and the correlation between right reading and right moral action; and the order of love as established by Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*.

Statius's reading of Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Eclogue* corresponds to the application of Augustine's hermeneutical approach in that Statius saw in the *Aeneid* a warning against his immoral actions and, because of this reading, was inspired him to change his behaviour. Statius also saw a Christological prophecy in the *Eclogues* which inspired him to convert to Christianity. The latter is more complex than the first as I do not think Statius came to this Christological reading of Virgil on his own. Rather the text suggests Statius was guided by Christian preachers who taught him how to read Virgil through a Christological lens. Thus, the main themes discussed here are Virgil's version of the *descensus Christi*, or Christ's descent during the Harrowing of Hell, the Christ-centred Biblical references that frame the Statius episode, and, finally, Statius's Christological reading of Virgil. Virgil's version of Christ's Harrowing, which is told from the perspective of an outsider who was left behind, is a vital component to Virgil's character and further separates Virgil and Statius as two different kinds of hermeneutical case studies. Virgil's account of Christ's appearance in Limbo is detailed, yet incomplete as he is unable to name Christ or recognise Christ's full relationship with God. Meanwhile, Statius reaps the benefit of Christian salvation specifically because of his reading of Virgil.

### **3.2.1. *Descensus Christi*: Virgil's Misreading of Christ**

In *Inferno* 4, Dante's Pilgrim awakens to the sound of thunder and finds himself in the first circle of Hell. Virgil explains that they are in Limbo where the unbaptized and virtuous pagans, including himself, are stationed due to their failure to know the Christian God. Limbo is described as *la selva* (the wood, *Inf.*

4.65), which recalls the opening lines of the *Commedia* where the Pilgrim finds himself in *una selva oscura* (a dark wood, *Inf.* 1.2). The image of the wood establishes a visual link between the Pilgrim's path, where Virgil finds him, and the wood of Limbo, where Virgil is assigned. The connection between the two places is further reinforced through the theme of the right path lost shared by the Pilgrim at the beginning of the poem and by the souls in Limbo who did not follow the Christian path despite their moral virtue. These similarities also help establish Virgil's role as the one to help Dante's Pilgrim find *la diritta via* (the right road; *Inf.* 1.3) as well as foreshadows Virgil's role as the one who helped Statius find *la diritta via* to Christian salvation.

Virgil describes those who live in Limbo, including himself, in *Inf.* 4.34–39:

*“ch’ei non peccaro,<sup>66</sup> e s’elli hanno mercedi,  
non basta, perché non ebber battesimo,  
ch’è porta de la fede che tu credi;  
e s’e’ furon dinanz’i al cristianesimo,  
non adorar debitamente a Dio:  
e di questi cotai son io medesimo”.*

(“that they did not sin; and if they have merits, it is not enough, because they did not receive baptism, which is the gateway to the faith that you believe. And if they lived before Christianity, they did not adore God as was needful: and of this kind am I myself’.)

Regardless of their moral virtue in life, Virgil says those in Limbo remain outside the Christian faith because they were either never baptised or never converted to the Christian faith. However, this does not mean they were without their own merit as Virgil says in lines 34–35, “*e s’elli hanno mercedi, | non basta*”. This could suggest that one's earthly virtues only carry a soul so far but fall short of God's

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<sup>66</sup> Singleton's commentary on *Inf.* 4.34 notes that the word “*peccaro*” is referring to personal sin rather than original sin. Singleton says, “Virgil's understanding of a specifically Christian truth—even one such as this, by which he himself is judged—is veiled and dim”; meaning that Virgil's understanding of why the souls in Limbo, including himself, is limited due to his lack of Christian faith.



grace as salvation through Christ is necessary for eternal life.<sup>67</sup> Virgil explicitly says they fell short in faith and in the grace of the baptismal sacrament, which again emphasises the necessity of Christian faith. This reading is supported by Dante's depiction of Statius as one who turned away from his own *cupiditas* through his moral reading of the *Aeneid*, but still needed the help of Christian preachers to read Virgil in a Christian context. Virgil speaks of the moral virtues of those in Limbo in *Inf.* 4.40–42:

“Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,  
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi  
che sanza speme vivemo in disio”.

(“Because of such defects, not for any other wickedness, we are lost, and only so far harmed that without hope we live in desire”.)

Reading this passage through the lens of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, their earthly virtue allowed them to recognise that there *is* a higher good (*frui*) but they failed to extend the proper order of love to this higher good. In this sense, theirs is the worst punishment as they are fully aware of God, and desire to know God as the highest good, but cannot as Christ is the means through which God can be known. Hollander supports this reading suggesting that the occupants of Limbo are suspended between eternal damnation and their desire to know God and the eternal life beyond Hell.<sup>68</sup> In Augustinian terms, Christ is the medium through which proper love to God as *frui* can be extended.<sup>69</sup> I highlight these passages as a preamble to Virgil's account of the Harrowing of Hell because they provide insight into Virgil's inability to fully comprehend God as *frui* which impacted his ability to recognise Christ as the Incarnate revelation of the *frui*. It is important to

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<sup>67</sup> Carroll's commentary on *Purg.* 7.34–36 notes that those in Limbo did not have the three Theological Virtues of faith, hope, and love (cf. Romans 13:13) which are “necessary for salvation”.

<sup>68</sup> See Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 4.45. See also Francesco Mazzoni, “Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Divina Commedia*: il Canto IV dell'*Inferno*,” *Studi Danteschi*, 42 (1965), 29–206, and Pertile, “Il nobile castello, il paradiso terrestre e l'umanesimo dantesco,” *Filologia e critica*, 5 (1980), 1–29.

<sup>69</sup> Hollander notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 2.40 that those who occupy Limbo live “in constant hope that must be denied, a condition that would seem to equate roughly with despair”.

keep in mind from the perspective of Augustine's hermeneutics that even if Virgil does not fully understand the full significance of Christ, this does not discredit or diminish his role as one who can help illuminate Christ to others.

The details of Christ's Harrowing are absent from Scripture although it is arguably mentioned in 1 Peter 3:18–20:

*Quia et Christus semel pro peccatis nostris mortuus est, justus pro injustis, ut nos offerret Deo, mortificatus quidem carne, vivificatus autem spiritu. In quo et his, qui in carcere erant, spiritibus veniens praedicavit: qui increduli fuerant aliquando, quando exspectabant Dei patientiam in diebus Noe, cum fabricaretur arca: in qua pauci, id est octo animae, salvae factae sunt per aquam.*

(For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.)

Christ's *qui in carcere erant, spiritibus veniens praedicavit* follows the passage *mortificatus quidem carne*, which can be interpreted as Christ's Harrowing. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* contains the more dramatic details of Christ's descent and rescue of the Biblical saints, who are mentioned in 1 Peter 3 as *qui in carcere erant, spiritibus veniens praedicavit: qui increduli fuerant aliquando, quando exspectabant Dei patientiam in diebus Noe*.<sup>70</sup> The *Gospel of Nicodemus* has been used to tell the more well-known versions of Christ's Harrowing. According to Amilcare Iannucci, the Harrowing of Hell was a popular apocryphal story in the Middle Ages and widely depicted in art, mosaics, plays, and poems throughout the era.<sup>71</sup> The Biblical saints' exclusion from Heaven up to the Crucifixion is based on Christ's promise to one of the

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<sup>70</sup> M.R. James, trans., *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, ed. by J.K. Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925; repr. 1993). See also Iannucci, "The *Gospel of Nicodemus* in Medieval Italian Literature", *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 14 (1992), 191–220, and M.R. Rambaran-Olm, *John the Baptist's Prayer or The Descent into Hell from the Exeter Book: Text, Translation and Critical Study*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 21 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014).

<sup>71</sup> Iannucci, "Beatrice in Limbo: A Metaphoric Harrowing of Hell", *Dante Studies*, 97 (1979), 23–45 (p. 27).

thieves on the Cross in Luke 23:43: *Amen dico tibi: Hodie mecum eris in paradiso* (“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise”).

The *descensus Christi* is a running theme throughout the *Commedia* rather than an isolated event. As Peter Hawkins notes, Beatrice and the Pilgrim are imitators of Christ’s descent.<sup>72</sup> In classic literature, there were many other *descensus* tales such as Hercules and Aeneas, which Franke calls “the prototype of heroic foray into the nether realm”.<sup>73</sup> Homer, Ovid, and even Virgil himself all have their own versions of the *descensus inferni* with their respective heroes descending into the underworld on their respective quests.<sup>74</sup> Franke argues the Pilgrim does not necessarily have to be following Christ’s model, since there are many other examples of heroes descending into Hades. However, from the perspective of Christian hermeneutics, the Pilgrim’s journey *is* definitively a Christian one.<sup>75</sup> Virgil’s role is not to share in the Christian narrative itself, but to report to others who benefit from what the Harrowing means regarding Christian salvation.

The Pilgrim asks, in *Inf.* 4.49–50, whether anyone has “*uscisci mai alcuno, o per suo merito | o per altrui, che poi fosse beato?*” (“ever gone forth from here, either through his own merit or through another, so as to become blessed?”). In other words, is there any hope of leaving this place or will the souls remain in Limbo for eternity? Virgil explains that he witnessed the only exception to this eternal punishment during the Harrowing of Hell in *Inf.* 4.52–63:

*“Io era nuovo in questo stato,  
quando ci vidi venire un possente  
con segno di vittoria coronato.  
Trasseci l’ombra del primo parente,  
d’Abèl suo figlio e quella di Noè,  
di Moissè legista e ubidente;  
Abraàm patriarca e David re,  
Israèl con lo padre e co’ suoi nati*

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<sup>72</sup> Peter Hawkins, “*Descendit ad inferos*”, in *Dante’s Testaments*, pp. 99–124.

<sup>73</sup> Franke, *Dante’s Interpretive Journey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 103.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter 4 section 4.3 which discusses the heavenly messenger from *Inferno* 9 as another *descensus inferni* story in the *Commedia*.

<sup>75</sup> Franke, *Dante’s Interpretive Journey*, p. 103.

*e con Rachele, per cui tanto fè,  
e altri molti, e fèceli beati.  
E vo' che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi,  
spiriti umani non eran salvati”.*

(“I was still new in this condition, when I saw a powerful one come, crowned with a sign of victory. He led forth from here the shade of our first parent, of Abel his son, and that of Noah, of Moses, lawgiver and obedient, Abraham the patriarch and David the king, Israel with his father, and his children, and Rachel, for whom he did so much, and many others, and he made them blessed. And I would have you know that before them no human spirits were saved”.)

This is Virgil’s first version of the Harrowing of Hell; it is interesting to note that in both versions he recalls the events from the perspective of an outsider left behind.<sup>76</sup> The historical Vergil died around 19 BCE, some fifty years before Christ’s Crucifixion. Dante’s Virgil describes the post-Crucified/pre-Resurrected Christ as a powerful one with a crown. The crown could be a reference to Christ’s crown of thorns as described in Matthew 27:29: *Et plectentes coronam de spinis, posuerunt super caput ejus, et arundinem in dextera ejus. Et genu flexo ante eum, illudebant ei, dicentes: “Ave rex Judaeorum”* (And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: “Hail, king of the Jews”). If it is, then Virgil is astute enough to associate the crown, which was meant to humiliate Christ, with power and victory rather than defeat and death. The crown could also be a reference to the cruciform halo, a cross within a halo, that was common in medieval depictions of Christ. In his commentary, Hollander suggests Christ is either wearing the sign of victory as a crown or “holding the sign of victory, a sceptre representing the Cross”.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Hermann Oelsner notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 4.52–61 that Dante mostly likely took his version of the Harrowing from 1 Peter 3 and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, as discussed previously; notes and commentary by Oelsner in *The Temple Classics Translation of Dante: Inferno*, ed. by Janet Stephens (London: J. M. Dent, 1900), *Dartmouth Dante Project* [accessed 25 January 2018].

<sup>77</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 4.52–54. See also Mazzoni, “Saggio di un nuovo commento alla *Divina Commedia*”, pp. 105–112.

This first version may be the more familiar version of the Harrowing for the *Commedia's* readers as Virgil lists all the Biblical saints rescued from Limbo. Hawkins notes that Virgil's report "is oddly disappointing" for two reasons.<sup>78</sup> There is a lack of dramatic details such as the earthquake or demons barring Christ's entrance through the Hell Gate; nor are these details mentioned in Virgil's second version of the Harrowing in *Inferno* 12.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, Hawkins notes that Virgil does not provide a hint of his own future salvation.<sup>80</sup> In the *Inferno* 4 version, Virgil lists the Hebrew saints who were saved (Adam, Eve, Moses, etc.), but makes no mention of any Gentiles.<sup>81</sup> This may imply that there is no hope for Virgil's salvation, or it may imply Dante's focus was only on Biblical figures familiar to the *Commedia's* readers. The saints Virgil able to identify are all from the Old Testament and, according to Christian doctrine, were already destined for salvation as they were obedient and faithful to God but died before the Incarnation. Yet Virgil's inability to identify Christ by name suggests a limited understanding of the Christian God; he seems to understand the big picture of God's salvation, but not the key details. As Virgil's story arc in the *Commedia's* narrative continues, Virgil's account of the Harrowing and his prophetic words regarding Christ's triumph over death become hollow as Virgil himself remains subject to death without the hope of resurrection. Hollander notes two layers of meaning in the Pilgrim's question regarding the Harrowing. In the first, the Pilgrim seeks to confirm what he already knows about the

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<sup>78</sup> Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments*, pp. 107–108.

<sup>79</sup> All of these details are dramatized for the Pilgrim in *Inferno* 8–9 when the messenger comes to help him and his guide get past the Gates of Dis. This episode will be discussed as an example in which the *Commedia's* readers are prompted to read the text through a Christological lens in a later discussion; see Chapter 4 section 4.3.

<sup>80</sup> Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments*, pp. 107–108.

<sup>81</sup> Carroll notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 4.46–50 that the Pilgrim will come to see in the Sixth Heaven that there are a few Romans who are included among the saved beyond Statius: Trajan and Rhipeus. Trajan's salvation was already revealed to the Pilgrim during his climb up Mount Purgatory as the Emperor was used as an example of humility (*Purg.* 10.73–93). Rhipeus is said to be saved because of his love for Divine righteousness (*Par.* 22. 67–72) with reference to Vergil's *Aeneid* 2.426 and 427.

Harrowing regarding the release of the Biblical saints from Limbo. The second seems to ask whether or not Virgil is one of the saved. Hollander does point out that Virgil is actually one of the souls rescued from Limbo, at least temporarily to the end of his time with the Pilgrim.<sup>82</sup>

A common element between the two versions of the Harrowing is Virgil's inability to name Christ. Singleton notes "Christ is always referred to in Hell by circumlocution"; in other words, never directly by any of the occupants.<sup>83</sup> Ronald Martinez and Robert Durling note in their commentary that "Virgil does not seem to have recognised Christ as anything more than a man".<sup>84</sup> In his second account of the Harrowing from *Inf.* 12.37–47, Virgil demonstrates a misunderstanding of Christ's true nature:

*"Ma certo poco pria, se ben discerno,  
che venisse colui che la gran preda  
levò a Dite del cerchio superno,  
da tutte parti l'alta valle feda  
tremò sì, ch'ì pensai che l'universo  
sentisse amor, per lo qual è chi creda  
più volte il mondo in caosso converso;  
e in quel punto questa vecchia roccia,  
qui e altrove, tal fece riverso".*

("But certainly, if I remember well, a little before he came who took from Dis the great spoils of the highest circle, on every side this deep, foul valley trembled so that I thought the universe must be feeling love, by which, some believe, the world has often been turned back into chaos: and at that point this ancient cliff, here and elsewhere, was broken down".)

Virgil's depiction of Christ is consistent with that of a hero on a quest to take back heaven's "*gran preda*" whose dramatic entrance is heralded by an earthquake.

According to Franke, Virgil's version of the Harrowing reads like a "daring

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<sup>82</sup> Hollander's commentary on *Inf.* 4.46–51 makes an interesting note that Virgil's reprieve from Limbo only seems to come into effect when Beatrice commissions him to guide the Pilgrim out of the dark wood in *Inferno* 2.

<sup>83</sup> Singleton's commentary on *Inf.* 12.36–45.

<sup>84</sup> Martinez and Durling, notes on *Inf.* 4. Virgil does refer to Christ again in *Inf.* 4.96, when discussing the Last Judgement, and calls Christ "*la nimica podesta*" ("the enemy governor"). Again, Martinez and Durling note that Virgil fails to say anything about Christ's divinity.

exploit of a Homeric hero” with Christ as the featured hero.<sup>85</sup> Clarence Miller also reads Virgil’s vision of Christ’s descent as “the surrogate figure or ‘type’ of Hercules”.<sup>86</sup> In this sense, Virgil’s version of the Harrowing of Hell is recited to the Pilgrim with the same allegorical depth as Aeneas’s *descensus* in the *Aeneid*. Given Virgil’s assignment to Limbo where the occupants live with the desire to know God, but without the hope of Christian faith, it would be impossible for Virgil to identify Christ as anything other than a hero. Thus, both Franke and Miller argue that Virgil did not see Christ as the Incarnation of God because he could only see him through the eyes of a storyteller who recognises Christ as a type of Aeneas. Thus, Franke argues, this second account of the Harrowing is evidence of Virgil’s misinterpretation of Christ’s true nature.<sup>87</sup>

A Christological element featured in this second version of the *descensus Christi* is the reference to an earthquake, which could be a reference to the earthquake felt after Christ’s final breath on the Cross as recorded in Matthew 27:32–61.<sup>88</sup> The image of the earthquake is what prompts Virgil to recall the Harrowing of Hell in *Inferno* 12. As the Pilgrim and his guide descend to the seventh circle, Virgil mentions to his ward that the banks of the seventh circle have fallen since the last time he descended to the lower circles, which was some time before the Harrowing which caused the bridge’s collapse. Virgil describes the earthquake that preceded the Harrowing as a force so powerful, “*lui pensa che l’universo | sentisse amor*”; it is interesting to note that Virgil’s word for love in line

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<sup>85</sup> Franke, *Dante’s Interpretive Journey*, p. 97.

<sup>86</sup> Clarence Miller, “Hercules and his Labours as Allegories of Christ and His Victory over Sin in Dante’s *Inferno*”, *Quaderni d’italianistica*, 5.1 (1984), pp. 1–17 (p. 1). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 section 4.3, regarding the heavenly messenger’s descent to the Gates of Dis.

<sup>87</sup> There are other places in the *Inferno* where Virgil calls attention to Christ’s Harrowing such as *Inf.* 5.34, 11.2, 21.108, and 23.136. The imagery of Christ as a second Hercules is reinforced in *Inferno* 9 when the messenger rebukes the rebellious demons at the Gates of Dis by referencing Hercules and Cerberus; see Chapter 4 section 4.3 for the discussion of this episode as a prompt for the *Commedia*’s readers to apply a Christian hermeneutic to the text.

<sup>88</sup> Multiple commentaries offer a consensus that this is the earthquake from Matthew 27:51 that marked Christ’s physical death on the Cross. I have not included the Biblical text in this section as it is an important element in my discussion regarding the Biblical references that establish a Christological framework for reading *Purgatorio* 20.

42 is *amor*, which echoes Francesca's *Amor*.<sup>89</sup> Lawrence Baldassaro argues this is an ironic use of *amor*, "the love that the universe felt at that moment was not the pagan force that Virgil understood it to be, but the Christian love expressed in the Crucifixion".<sup>90</sup> This reading supports my argument that Virgil is an eye-witness (*e.g.* reader) to Christ's Harrowing but fails to grasp the soteriological significance of the event because he cannot fathom Christ as the Incarnation of God nor reap the benefit of the Harrowing as a sign of Christ's salvation for those have faith in God.

Despite his incomplete understanding, or "reading", of the Harrowing of Hell and the full significance of Christ, Virgil still has the unique advantage over all Christians, including Dante's Pilgrim and Statius in that he is one of few characters in the *Commedia* to have witnessed Christ in person.<sup>91</sup> personally witnessed Christ's Harrowing. Yet his inability to name Christ, in either account of the Harrowing, marks a crucial difference between Statius and the Pilgrim beyond his assignment to Limbo. Virgil's role through this journey is one who illuminates Christ to others but does not recognise the Christological significance of what he witnesses, or prophecies, for himself. Hawkins argues this is a part of Virgil's character as he fails to recognise the Christological significance of both Beatrice's descent to Limbo in *Inferno* 2 and the Pilgrim's own passage through Hell as ordered by the Divine Ladies.<sup>92</sup> Virgil is unilluminated and, as far as readers of the *Commedia* know, unsaved. Hence his inability to recognise these

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<sup>89</sup> See the previous discussion on Francesca's *Amor* in section 3.1.1, above.

<sup>90</sup> Lawrence Baldassaro, "Inferno XII: The Irony of Descent", *Romance Notes*, 19.1 (1978), 98–103 (p. 101).

<sup>91</sup> Notable others featured in the *Commedia* are the Apostles Peter, James, and John, the Pilgrim will meet in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars (*Paradiso* 24–27) and Judas Iscariot. There is an interesting parallel between Virgil and all of these Apostles in terms of their failure to fully comprehend Christ's true identity. Peter, James, and John witnessed Christ's Transfiguration, yet failed to fully understand the Christological significance of the event (see Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, and Luke 9:28–36). Arguably, Judas's betrayal of Christ can be interpreted as his failure to fully comprehend the point of Christ's earthly ministry and identity. Dante includes Judas as one of the three souls found in Satan's three mouths reserved for those who betray their masters, along with Brutus and Cassius, in *Inferno* 34.

<sup>92</sup> Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments*, p. 110.



Christological elements. Iannucci offers an insight which might explain the discrepancy: the “harrowing is no longer the focal point of Dante’s Limbo. Its primary function is to set in dramatic relief the tragedy of the virtuous pagans”.<sup>93</sup> In other words, Virgil’s version of the Harrowing offers a juxtaposition between the happy ending of those who are reunited with God through Christ’s salvation and the tragedy of those who never know God and continue to remain unilluminated.<sup>94</sup> Iannucci’s observations are excellent as he points out that Christ is not meant to be the central character in Virgil’s version of the Harrowing. Rather, the focus is on the effect Christ’s Harrowing has to those in Hell who will not be saved despite witnessing Christ’s salvation of the Biblical saints first-hand. Virgil’s role then is to relay to the readers, including Statius and the Pilgrim, the message of Christ’s salvation, or more pointedly, to offer proof of Christ’s salvation.

Before examining the Statius episode in detail, some parallels between Virgil and Statius should be discussed. It is important to note that although Virgil fails to understand the Harrowing Christ as a sign of God’s grace and mercy to the faithful, this does not impede Virgil’s ability to illuminate the path to Christ for Statius or the Pilgrim. Virgil’s value as a guide and mentor are unmistakable as evidenced by Beatrice’s commissioning of Virgil in *Inf.* 2.58–60 and 67–69:<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Iannucci, “Beatrice in Limbo”, p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> Iannucci, “Beatrice in Limbo”, p. 30.

<sup>95</sup> Augustine says in *De doctrina Christiana* 4.11.27 that one of the Biblical preacher’s most useful tools is speaking in eloquence to inspire their listeners to understand and know God. Although it is preferable that those who offer moral instruction to readers should practice the same moral discipline, Augustine would acknowledge that the message is more important than the morality of the messenger. Augustine does address the morality of Biblical preachers/teachers in *De doctrina* Book 4, arguing that they should, ideally, imitate Christ’s example in all things. However, Augustine also recognises that God can use those who are immoral to spread his message of grace and salvation. In a sense, so-called “wicked” preachers who still effectively teach Scripture’s core message of Christ’s Double Love Commandment are the embodiment of the “*caritas* criterion” as they exemplify moral actions to be learned from if not avoided while still preaching Scripture correctly. Therefore, even if that preacher/teacher stands outside of God’s grace, the words of inspiration come from God. For example, in *De doct.* Prol. 6 and 1.11.11, Augustine says God elected to use human agents to communicate with humanity. While Christ is the exemplary human agent for communicating with humanity, God can use anyone among the righteous and the wicked to illuminate God’s will. See Chapter 2 section 2.1.

“O anima cortese mantoana,  
di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura,  
e durerà quanto 'l mondo lontana [...]   
Or movi, e con la tua parola ornata  
e con ciò c'ha mestieri al suo campare,  
l'aiuta sì ch'i' ne sia consolata”.

(“O courteous Mantuan soul, whose fame still lasts in the world and will last as far as the world will go [...] Now go, and with your ornamented speech and whatever else is needed for his escape help him so that I may be consoled”.)

Beatrice's praise of Virgil echoes Statius' praise in *Purgatorio* 21 where he credits Virgil as the one who inspired him to come to faith. Although Virgil's understanding of God is limited, Virgil has the divinely appointed task of helping the Pilgrim on his journey to God. Therefore, Virgil's role as a guide and mentor through Hell and Purgatory is to point the Pilgrim and the readers to Christ; seeing Christ comes through the application of a Christological hermeneutic.

### 3.2.2. Biblical Hermeneutics: Statius's Christological Reading of Virgil

Two elements that stand out in the Statius episode regarding Christological hermeneutics are the Biblical references that frame the episode and the way Statius reads Virgil through a Christian lens. The Biblical references serve as a prompt that connects the *Commedia's* narrative to Christ. In order to demonstrate how the Biblical references in the Statius episode invite the *Commedia's* readers to apply a Christological hermeneutic to the text, a portion of this discussion must be devoted to examining these references and their order of appearance. In addition to establishing a hermeneutical filter through which the episode can be read, the Biblical references serve as foreshadowing for the events of the Statius episode. Hawkins notes the references to Matthew 27 and Luke 2 in *Purgatorio* 20 establish a “hermeneutics of grace” which assists readers to read Statius's arrival

through the lens of the Gospels.<sup>96</sup> Hawkins argues the specific references to Christ's resurrection found in this episode are deliberately meant to establish in the readers' minds a connection between the Gospel accounts of Christ's birth and resurrection, and Statius's arrival in *Purgatorio* 21, which I discuss in more detail below.

In *Purg.* 20.127–128 the mountain unexpectedly shakes: *quand' io senti', come cosa che cada, | tremar lo monte* (when I felt the mountain shake like a falling thing). Matthew 27:51–53 records an earthquake immediately following Christ's death on the cross:

*Et ecce velum templi scissum est in duas partes a summo usque deorsum: et terra mota est, et petrae scissae sunt, et monumenta aperta sunt: et multa corpora sanctorum, qui dormierant, surrexerunt. Et exeuntes de monumentis post resurrectionem ejus, venerunt in sanctam civitatem, et apparuerunt multis.*

(At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.)

Verse 52, *et multa corpora sanctorum, qui dormierant, surrexerunt*, could to be a reference to those Biblical saints who were asleep, waiting for Paradise to be opened upon Christ's Crucifixion. In terms of the *Commedia*, this passage could refer to those saints who were rescued from Limbo during Christ's Harrowing. This communal resurrection foreshadows Christ's individual resurrection, reported in Matthew 28:1–10, as well as the resurrection of all Christians at the Final Judgement. Regarding its significance to *Purgatorio* 20, there are a few key passages worthy of examination. The first is verse 2, *Et ecce terraemotus factus est magnus. Angelus enim Domini descendit de caelo: et accedens revolvit lapidem, et sedebat super eum* (And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord,

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<sup>96</sup> Hawkins, "Resurrecting the Word: Dante and the Bible", *Religion & Literature*, 16.3 (1984), 59–71 (p. 64).

descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it). Between Matthew 27:51 and 28:2 there are *two* earthquakes that precede Christ's resurrection; the first signals his death (in 27:51); the second one (in 28:2) announces the arrival of an *angelus* who confirms that Christ has risen from the dead. The second key passage is what the *angelus* tells the women in verses 5–6, *Nolite timere vos: scio enim, quod Jesum, qui crucifixus est, quaeritis. Non est hic: surrexit enim, sicut dixit* ("Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said"). This echoes the *angelus* from Luke 2 who calmed the frightened shepherds at Christ's birth, which I will return to momentarily. The last key passage is verses 9 and 10 in which the women see the risen Christ for themselves: *Et ecce Jesus occurrit illis, dicens: Ave [..] Tunc ait illis Jesus: Nolite timere: ite, nuntiare fratribus meis ut eant in Galilaeam; ibi me videbunt* (Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" [..] Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me"). I will return to this passage shortly as there is an echo of these words in Statius's greeting in *Purgatorio* 21.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the two earthquakes bookend Christ's death in chapter 27 and his resurrection in chapter 28, in the middle is the resurrection of the saints who died before the Crucifixion. These elements are recreated in *Purgatorio* 20 and are confirmed by Statius in *Purg.* 21.58–63:

*"Tremaci quando alcuna anima monda  
sentesi, sì che surga o che si mova  
per salir sù, e tal grido seconda.  
De la mondzia sol voler fa prova  
che, tutto libero a mutar convento,  
l'alma sorprende, e di voler le giova".*

("Here the mountain trembles when some soul feels itself cleansed, so that it rises up or starts to climb, and that cry seconds it. We know that we are cleansed when the will itself surprises the soul with the freedom to change convents, and the soul rejoices to will it".)

Stattius explains that Purgatory does not operate under the rules of the physical world but under the supernatural authority of God. The penitent move on from Purgatory when they know their wills have been transformed and, in Stattius's words, "*anima monda | sentesi*". The mountain shakes to signal to the other penitential souls that they should rejoice for the souls who is ready to be free from the process of purgation. There is no clear Christian doctrine that Dante drew from regarding this aspect of the penitents' purgation.<sup>97</sup> The mountain shook in this instance when Stattius was ready to transition from his penance to his eternal rest in Paradise. The additional benefit of such a signal is the motivation and encouragement it invokes. This time it is Stattius who is ready to move on. The next time, it will be one of them, and the process continues.

In *Purg.* 20.135–136, there are two references to Luke 2. The first reference follows the earthquake when Virgil reassures the frightened Pilgrim saying, "*Non dubbiar, mentr' io ti guido*" ("Fear not, while I am guiding you"; *Purg.* 20.135). The second is the exaltation shouted by the penitent who remain face down, shouting "*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*" (*Purg.* 20.136). As mentioned previously, Hawkins argues the reference in verse 135 is a reference to the *angelus* from Luke 2:10 who reassured the shepherds, saying: *Nolite timere: ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum, quod erit omni populo* ("Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people").<sup>98</sup> It is my argument that Virgil's words could also be a reference to the *angelus* from Matthew 28:5 who reassured the women at Christ's empty tomb: *Nolite timere vos: scio enim, quod Jesum, qui crucifixus est, quaeritis*. Although, Hawkins' claim is admittedly stronger considering the second reference in verse 136 which is a direct quote from Luke 2:14 when

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<sup>97</sup> Hollander also notes Dante's originality regarding the "self-judging quality" of the penitent souls who seem to know when they are ready to move on as their wills seem to turn toward God's Will. This notion is further supported in *Paradiso* 3 when Piccarda describes the teleological union between the blessed souls in Paradise who are bound to God and each other through *carità*. See the previous discussion above in section 3.1.1.

<sup>98</sup> Hawkins, "Resurrecting the Word", p. 64.

the heavenly host proclaim to the shepherds: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis!* (“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”). These words are put in the mouths of the penitent who feel the mountain shake. Adding further validity to Hawkins, analysis is the description of the Pilgrim and his guide standing as the surprised shepherds from Luke’s Nativity in the previous canto:

*No’ istavamo immobili e sospesi,  
come i pastor che prima udir quel canto,  
fin che ’l tremar cessò ed el compiesi.* (*Purg.* 20.139–141)

(We were standing immobile and in suspense, like the shepherds who first heard that song, until the shaking ceased and the song was completed.)

The last two lines regarding “*i pastor*” and “*’l tremar cessò*” brings the two events of Christ’s birth and death together in this canto. Carroll notes in his commentary that the connection between the earthquake and Christ’s Crucifixion is deliberate, as is the announcement to the shepherds (from Luke 2). Carroll says, “in this way Dante links together the birth and the death, the Incarnation and the Atonement, and indicates that these are the foundation on which redemption rests”.<sup>99</sup>

However, Hawkins notes the order in which these references appear is significant: the first reference is to Matthew’s Crucifixion and the second is to Luke’s Nativity.<sup>100</sup> In Carroll’s words, the order in which Dante presents these Christological events in *Purgatorio* 20 is the Atonement first, followed by the Incarnation. It is Hawkins’ argument that the order of the Biblical references in *Purgatorio* 20 fits a larger theological point regarding God’s salvation through Christ; specifically, that just as the earthquake foreshadowed Christ’s resurrection in Matthew, the earthquake at the end of *Purgatorio* 20 foreshadowed Statius’s resurrection in canto 21.<sup>101</sup> Hollander argues that Dante’s use of Luke 2 in

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<sup>99</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Purg.* 21.58–72.

<sup>100</sup> Hawkins, “Resurrecting the Word”, pp. 63–67.

<sup>101</sup> Hawkins, “Resurrecting the Word”, p. 64.

*Purgatorio* 20 “underlined the connection between Jesus and Statius”; the earthquakes that confirm the “rebirth” of Statius and the acclamation that heralded Christ’s birth present a retelling of Christ’s Resurrection in the real-time of the poem’s narrative.<sup>102</sup>

The opening of canto 21 shifts from the shepherds in Luke 2 to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:<sup>103</sup>

*La sete natural che mai non sazia,  
se non con l’acqua onde la femminetta  
samaritana domandò la grazia (Purg. 21.1–3)*

(The natural thirst that is never sated, except by the water of which the poor Samaritan woman begged the gift)

Hawkins argues that the reference to John 4 is an example of the type of hermeneutical misunderstanding that comes from mistaking an allegorical message for a literal one.<sup>104</sup> In John 4:7–10, the Samaritan woman misunderstands Christ’s message regarding living water, thinking it was something that she can literally drink:

*Venit mulier de Samaria haurire aquam. Dicit ei Jesus: Da mihi bibere. (Discipuli enim ejus abierant in civitatem ut cibos emerent). Dicit ergo ei mulier illa Samaritana: Quomodo tu, Judaeus cum sis, bibere a me possis, quae sum mulier Samaritana? non enim coutuntur Judaei Samaritanis. Respondit Jesus, et dixit ei: Si scires donum Dei, et quis est qui dicit tibi: Da mihi bibere, tu forsitan petisses ab eo, et dedisset tibi aquam vivam.*

(A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink”. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food). The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans). Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water”.)

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<sup>102</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Purg.* 20.136–141. See also John A. Scott, *Dante’s Political Purgatory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Hollander, *Allegory in Dante’s Commedia*; and Hermann Gmelin, *Kommentar: der Läuterungsberg* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1955).

<sup>103</sup> Commentary tradition acknowledges the reference to John 4, but I have not seen any that make the connection between the Samaritan woman as a disciple of Christ and Statius’ unexpected conversion to Christianity.

<sup>104</sup> Hawkins, “Resurrecting the Word”, p. 66. Augustine has a strong warning against misinterpreting figurative passage for literal ones, see Chapter 2 section 2.4.

In verses 13 and 14, Christ explains that his meaning is allegorical as he is really offering her eternal life: *Omnis qui bibit ex aqua hac, sitiet iterum; qui autem biberit ex aqua quam ego dabo ei, non sitiet in aeternum: sed aqua quam ego dabo ei, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam* (“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”). Hawkins argues Statius gives Virgil and the Pilgrim the allegorical explanation to their literal misunderstanding of the events at the end of canto 20, just as Christ explained his allegorical meaning to the Samaritan woman in John 4.<sup>105</sup> Thus, Hawkins argues the reference to John highlights Virgil’s and the Pilgrim’s need for someone to explain the significance of what they witnessed in this episode and it is Statius who can offer that clarity from an insider’s perspective.<sup>106</sup>

What is missing from Hawkins’ discussion of this Biblical reference is the outcome of the Samaritan woman’s encounter with Christ as reported in John 4:39–41:

*Ex civitate autem illa multi crediderunt in eum Samaritanorum, propter verbum mulieris testimonium perhibentis: Quia dixit mihi omnia quaecumque feci. Cum venissent ergo ad illum Samaritani, rogaverunt eum ut ibi maneret. Et mansit ibi duos dies. Et multo plures crediderunt in eum propter sermonem ejus.*

(Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done”. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word.)

After the Samaritan woman’s conversation, Christ sends her back to her village. There she tells others she has just met the Messiah prompting them to follow her back to the well to meet Christ for themselves. The Gospel records “*multo plures*

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<sup>105</sup> Hawkins, “Resurrecting the Word”, p. 66.

<sup>106</sup> Hawkins, “Resurrecting the Word”, p. 66.



*crediderunt in eum propter sermonem ejus*” which suggests that the Samaritan woman becomes an unexpected disciple of Christ who leads others to their own conversion. This parallels Statius’ own unexpected conversion to Christianity, as he explains to Virgil and the Pilgrim in *Purgatorio* 21.

The last Biblical reference that stages Statius’ arrival is to Luke 24 in which the Resurrected Christ appeared before two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, which, as Franke argues, is another moment that further links Christ to Statius.<sup>107</sup> In Luke 24:30–31, the two disciples do not recognise Christ until he breaks bread with them in a gesture that reminds them of the Eucharist: *Et factum est, dum recumberet cum eis, accepit panem, et benedixit, ac fregit, et porrigebat illis. Et aperti sunt oculi eorum, et cognoverunt eum: et ipse evanuit ex oculis eorum* (When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight). For whatever reason, the two disciples did not recognise the Resurrected Christ until he made a gesture that reminded them of their Lord. In *Purg.* 21.10–13, Virgil and the Pilgrim do not realise that Statius had joined them until he greets them in line 13: *“O frati miei, Dio vi dea pace”* (“O my brothers, God give you peace”). Denise Heilbronn suggests Virgil and the Pilgrim stand in as the two clueless disciples from Luke 24 and Statius as a figuration of Christ.<sup>108</sup> What adds validity to Heilbronn’s argument is Christ’s greetings to the women in Matthew 28:9 and 10: *Avete*, followed by, *ite, nuntiare fratribus meis ut eant in Galilaeam; ibi me videbunt*. The structure may be coincidental in the way the greeting is followed by the word for “brother”; but it is interesting to note how the Biblical references that incorporate the drama of Christ’s resurrection from the Gospels are brought

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<sup>107</sup> Franke, *Dante’s Interpretive Journey*, pp. 191–232.

<sup>108</sup> Denise Heilbronn, “The Prophetic Role of Statius in Dante’s *Purgatory*”, *Dante Studies*, 95 (1977), 53–67 (p. 57). Hollander’s commentary on *Purg.* 21.10–14 disagrees with labelling Statius as figure of Christ, nor is he comfortable with calling him a “fulfilment” of Christ’s promise for all Christian: a death and resurrection from sin.

full circle in the *Purgatorio*'s narrative. Furthermore, as Franke says, the reference to Luke 24 and Statius's appearance in *Purgatorio* 21 serves as a reminder of "how the truth of Christ is revealed in the present experience of believers".<sup>109</sup> In other words, Statius' resurrection is a re-enactment of Christ's own resurrection; and not just Statius as he implies the drama is retold every time a penitent soul is ready to rise, reborn, and transition from Purgatory to Paradise *in imitatio Christi*.

What links these Biblical references to one another are the themes of the necessity for an explanation regarding the drama of Christian salvation that is unfolding in these passages and unexpected conversion. At the end of *Purgatorio* 20, Virgil and the Pilgrim are stand-ins for the bewildered shepherds in Luke 2. They require Statius to explain the deeper meaning of the earthquake they just felt and the exalted "*Gloria*" that came from the penitent souls. The need for an explanation mirrors the conversation between the Samaritan woman and Christ in John 4 regarding eternal life. The Samaritan woman, as an unexpected convert to Christianity, foreshadows Statius himself as one whom the Pilgrim did not expect to find in Purgatory:

*“per quello che Clìo teco l’è tasta,  
non par che ti facesse ancor fedele  
la fede, sanza qual ben far non basta.  
Se cos’è, qual sole o quai cande  
ti stenebraron sì che tu drizzasti  
poscia di retro al pescator le vele?” (Purg. 22.58–63)*

(“by what Clio touches on with you there, it seems that faith, without which good works are not enough, had not yet made you faithful. If that is so, what sun or what candles dispelled your darkness so that then you set your sails to follow the fisherman?”)

The Pilgrim says Statius gave no indication that he was a Christian in his poetry and asks how it could be that "*tu drizzasti | poscia di retro al pescator le vele?*". The mention of the fisherman in line 63 is a reference to Christ's first apostles who were fishermen: Simon-Peter, Andrew, James, and John (per Mark 1:16–20).

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<sup>109</sup> Franke, *Dante's Interpretive Journey*, p. 193.

Christ calls to them in Mark 1:17 saying, *Venite post me, et faciam vos fieri piscatores hominum* (“Follow me and I will make you fish for people”). This Biblical reference also works to create a particular Christian frame around Dante’s Statius which guides the *Commedia*’s readers to engage with the episode as a Christian story, if not a retelling of Christ’s Resurrection.

A potential Biblical reference that has yet to be included in these discussions of the Statius episode occurs in *Purg.* 22.88–93:

*‘E pria ch’io conducessi i Greci a’ fiumi  
di Tebe poetando, ebb’ io battesmo;  
ma per paura chiuso cristian fu’ mi,  
lungamente mostrando paganesmo;  
e questa tepidezza il quarto cerchio  
cerchiar mi fé più che ’l quarto centesimo’.*

(“And before I led the Greeks to the rivers of Thebes in my poetry, I was baptized; but out of fear I was a secret Christian, for a long time feigning paganism; and this lukewarmness had me circling the fourth circle beyond a fourth century”).

The word *tepidezza* (lukewarmness) could be a reference to the Apocalypse of John 3:16 in which the church of Laodicea is warned against being *tepidus* (lukewarm). The reference may also be coincidental, but the content of the letter to Laodicea deserves some consideration. The reason for Laodicea’s lukewarm nature is detailed in Apocalypse 3:17–22:

*quia dicis: Quod dives sum, et locupletatus, et nullius egeo: et nescis quia tu es miser, et miserabilis, et pauper, et caecus, et nudus. Suadeo tibi emere a me aurum ignitum probatum, ut locuples fias, et vestimentis albis induaris, et non appareat confusio nuditatis tuae, et collyrio inunge oculos tuos ut videas. Ego quos amo, arguo, et castigo. Aemulare ergo, et poenitentiam age. Ecce sto ad ostium, et pulso: si quis audierit vocem meam, et aperuerit mihi januam, intrabo ad illum, et coenabo cum illo, et ipse mecum. Qui vicerit, dabo ei sedere mecum in throno meo: sicut et ego vici, et sedi cum Patre meo in throno eius. Qui habet aurem, audiat quid Spiritus dicat ecclesiis.*

(“For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing’. You do not realise that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent. Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the

door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches”.)

Among the more striking passages is verse 17 in which the church is rebuked for their abuse of wealth, which is the reason why Statius was assigned to the fourth terrace of Purgatory. The tone of the letter, while condemning the church’s *cupiditas*, is a message of hope as God rebukes and disciplines those whom God loves as well as rewards those who *licerit*—either over their own vice or, perhaps, over death through their salvation. Considering Statius’s confession that he hid his Christianity out of fear of persecution, the four hundred years he spent in Purgatory for his prodigality, and the Christological references surrounding his episode in the *Purgatorio*’s narrative, this passage from Apocalypse 3 seems to fit the deeper meaning of the Statius episode. That is, in Augustinian terms, despite Statius’s secret conversion to Christianity, God has a place for those who read and understand God as *frui* and behave in accordance with the proper order of love.

This brings me to the second hermeneutical elements of this episode regarding right reading. Statius and Piccarda are two examples of readers who look past the author’s intended meaning and find Christ in their respective texts.<sup>110</sup> In *Purgatorio* 22, Statius says that he was assigned to the fifth terrace of Purgatory because of his prodigality. However, Statius credits his reading of Virgil’s *Aeneid* as part of his moral transformation against the sin of prodigality that prevented him from being assigned to the fourth circle of Hell:<sup>111</sup>

“Or sappi ch’avarizia fu partita  
troppo da me, e questa dismisura

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<sup>110</sup> See the previous section, 3.1.2, regarding the discussion of Piccarda as a communal reader of the Rule of St Clare.

<sup>111</sup> The commentary tradition notes that the two extremes of abusing wealth, avarice and prodigality, are both punished on the fourth terrace of Purgatory. This is similar to the four circle of Hell which also punishes the same extremes of wealth in *Inferno* 7, which is what Statius is referring to in line 42.

*migliaia di lunari hanno punita.  
E se non fosse ch'io drizzai mia cura  
quand' io intesi là dove tu chiami,  
crucciato quasi a l'umana natura:  
Per che non reggi tu, o sacra fame  
de l'oro, l'appetito de' mortali?  
voltando sentirei le giostre grame.” (Purg. 22.34–42)*

(“Know then that avarice was too distant for me, and thousands of months have punished this lack of measure. And had it not been that I straightened out of my desires, when I understood the place where you cry out, almost angry at human nature: ‘Why do you, O holy hunger for gold, not govern the appetite of mortals?’ I would be turning about, feeling the grim jousts”.)

The last two lines are quoted directly from *Aeneid* 3:55–58 and clearly express a warning against an excessive appetite for wealth if not an outright plea for moral redirection.<sup>112</sup> Statius claims this plea aided in his moral redirection as he recognised that his prodigality was misguided. Although Statius credits Virgil for guiding him to the shores of Purgatory, there is nothing overtly, or covertly, Christological about this passage from the *Aeneid*. Later in this discussion I will examine Statius’s reading of Virgil’s *Eclogues* through a Christian hermeneutic as the catalyst for his Christian conversion.

An important aspect of this passage from *Purgatorio* 22 worth noting is the way Statius is depicted as a reader. Franke argues that when Statius read Virgil’s warning against the abuse of excess wealth in *Aeneid* 3, he read it as a warning directed at him.<sup>113</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz notes the parallel between Francesca and Statius as two readers who applied a hermeneutical approach to their readings of their respective texts with two different results.<sup>114</sup> I would add that the difference in results stem from their perspectives on good and proper love.

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<sup>112</sup> Hollander’s commentary on *Purg.* 22.40–41 offers Petrocchi’s text of Vergil’s *Aen.* 3.56–57: *Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, | auri sacra fames?* (to what do you not drive human hearts, impious hunger for gold?; Hollander’s translation).

<sup>113</sup> Franke, *Dante’s Interpretive Journey*, pp. 198–200. See also R.A. Shoaf, “‘Auri sacra fames’ and the Age of Gold (*Purg.* XXII, 40–41 and 148–150)”, *Dante Studies*, 96 (1978), 195–199, who discusses Statius’s prodigality and the classical interpretation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* 3.

<sup>114</sup> Christopher Kleinhenz, “The Celebration of Poetry: A Reading of *Purgatory* XXII”, *Dante Studies*, 106 (1988), 21–41 (p. 24).

Francesca's failure to heed the moral lesson of the Lancelot tale led her to become consumed by *Amor* while Statius's success in perceiving a moral lesson in Virgil, and responding with appropriate moral behaviour, led him to eternal life. Franke's analysis highlights Virgil's role as an author who points the way to correct moral action as well as Statius' role as a reader who takes away an accurate moral interpretation of Virgil's text leading to correct moral action. Hollander's commentary of this passage stands out as he notes the Latin variations of the *Aeneid* and Dante's selection of a version that emphasised the condemnation of prodigality over avarice. According to Hollander, Dante's Statius "needed to understand [Virgil's] lines as condemning prodigality and not avarice and thus adjusted their meaning to fit his own condition".<sup>115</sup> Hollander has spotted an important difference between Dante's use of Virgil's poem and Statius' interpretation of Virgil's poem as the catalyst for his moral redirection.<sup>116</sup>

The impact of Statius's tropological reading of the *Aeneid* did not end with his turning away from his immoral love of wealth. Statius says his new path, inspired first by his moral reading of the *Aeneid*, directed him to Christian preachers who taught him how to read Virgil's *Eclogues* through the lens of Christian allegory. Despite this inability to recognise the Christian meaning in his own work, Virgil is highly respected by Statius and the Pilgrim for his *Eclogues*

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<sup>115</sup> Hollander's commentary on *Purg.* 22.40–41.

<sup>116</sup> Hollander notes in his commentary on this passage: "The debate continues into our own day, mainly propelled by the notion that Dante could not possibly have misunderstood Virgil's words and therefore did not grossly misrepresent them. This, however, is to overlook the fact that it is the character Statius who is understanding them as they took on significance for him, guilty of prodigality, not of avarice. And just as he will later reveal his 'misinterpretation' of Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* at vv. 70-72, a 'misreading' that saved his soul, so now he shows how his moral rehabilitation was begun when he 'misread' a passage in the *Aeneid*. The debate is finally in such condition that this view, present in some of the earliest commentators but energetically attacked over the centuries, now may seem only sensible". See also Alessandro Ronconi, *Interpretazioni grammaticali* (Padua: Liviana, 1958), pp. 85–86. Feliciano Groppi, *Dante traduttore*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Editrice "Orbis Catholicus" Herder, 1962), pp. 163–168. Ettore Paratore, *Tradizione e struttura in Dante* (Florence: Sansoni, 1968), pp. 73–75. Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, p. 222. Hollander, "The Tragedy of Divination in *Inferno XX*", in *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1980), pp. 212–213 and *Il Virgilio dantesco: Tragedia nella Commedia* (Florence: Olschki, 1983), pp. 86–89. Barolini, *Dante's Poets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 260. And Martinez, "La sacra fame dell'oro (*Purgatorio* 22, 41) tra Virgilio e Stazio: Dal testo all'interpretazione", *Lecture classensi*, 18 (1989), 177–193.

which offer a Christological prophecy about the birth of a child who will bring peace. Statius describes Virgil as a non-Christian prophet in *Purg.* 22.66–72 who carried a lamp behind him:

*“e prima appresso Dio m’alluminasti.  
Facesti come quei che va di notte,  
che porta il lume dietro e sé non giova,  
ma dopo sé fa le persone dotte,  
quando dicesti: ‘Secol si rinnova;  
torna giustizia e primo tempo umano,  
e progenie scende da ciel nova”*”.

(“you first lit the way for me toward God. You did as one who walks at night, who carries the light behind him and does not help himself, but instructs the person coming after, when you said: “The age begins anew; justice returns and the first human time, and a new offspring comes down from Heaven””.)

The last three lines from *Eclogue* 4 were widely read as a Christological prophecy, which is more challenging to contextualise.<sup>117</sup> Virgil knew nothing of Christ when he wrote the so-called Christological prophecy, yet the text has a long literary tradition of being read through a Christological lens.<sup>118</sup> It is important to note that Dante did not invent for Statius a way of reading Virgil Christologically, rather Dante’s Statius exemplifies a way of reading Virgil consistent with the way Christians had already been reading many of the Greek and Roman poets, including Virgil. Kleinhenz notes: “Dante fashioned Statius’ reading of this passage to conform to the generally accepted allegorical interpretation of the Virgillian verses”.<sup>119</sup> As Franke says, Statius learns to read Virgil through the hermeneutical lens of “Christian worship and preaching (that is, by ‘new preachers’)”.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Singleton’s commentary on *Purg.* 22.70–72 offers the original verses for *Eclog.* 4.5–7 and a translation: *magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo. | iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna; | iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto* (The great line of the centuries begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new progeny descends from heaven on high).

<sup>118</sup> Carroll’s commentary on *Purg.* 22.64–93 suggests that Statius is a figuration, if not a fulfilment, of the resurrected Christ in the *Commedia*’s narrative while Virgil is the “Pagan John the Baptist”.

<sup>119</sup> Kleinhenz, “Celebration of Poetry”, p. 29.

<sup>120</sup> Franke, *Dante’s Interpretive Journey*, pp. 193–194.

For Statius, Virgil illuminated the path to Christ but with the unfortunate position of carrying Christ's illumination behind him rather than in front of him. In other words, Virgil has a peripheral awareness of Christ but did not receive Christ's salvation himself, as discussed earlier. The references to the lamp being carried behind the lamp bearer recalls John 1:6–9 in which John the Baptist is described as the one who illuminated the path to Christ but was not himself a Christian disciple:<sup>121</sup>

*Fuit homo missus a Deo, cui nomen erat Joannes. Hic venit in testimonium ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine, ut omnes crederent per illum. Non erat ille lux, sed ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine. Erat lux vera, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum.*

(There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.)

John was sent to testify and prepare the way for Christ and brought people to faith before Christ began his ministry. Thus, John serves as both a prophet and prefiguration of Christ for his role in guiding others to Christ. In the Gospel of John 5:35–36, Christ describes John the Baptist as carrying a shining lamp for others to see: *Ille erat lucerna ardens et lucens: vos autem voluistis ad horam exsultare in luce ejus. Ego autem habeo testimonium majus Joanne* (“He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But I have a testimony greater than John’s”). Thus, Statius associates Virgil with John, as one who illuminates the path to Christ, but does not benefit from the illuminated Christ personally.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Curiously, while commentaries recognise Virgil's role as a John the Baptist figure, none of the commentaries reviewed discuss the potential reference to John 1 in conjunction with this passage.

<sup>122</sup> This is not to say that John the Baptist did not receive God's salvation through Christ. John's role was to be a prophetic voice in that he illuminated the path to salvation before Christ's ministry, but was not elected to be one of Christ's disciples.



There is no way of determining when Statius developed this Christian framework for his life; especially as this seems to be Dante's original characterization of the Roman poet. According to Statius, Virgil's poetry was the source of his Christian conversion through his reading of the *Aeneid* in *Purg.*

21.94–99:

*“Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville,  
che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma  
onde sono allumati più di mille;  
de l'Eneida dico, la qual mamma  
fummi e fummi nutrice, poetando:  
sanç' essa non fermai peso di dramma”.*

(“The seeds to my ardour were the sparks from which I took fire, of the divine flame that has kindled more than a thousand: of the *Aeneid*, I mean, which was my mama and was my nurse in writing poetry: without it I did not make up a dram of weight”).

Statius's admiration of Virgil reflects the Pilgrim's own praise of Virgil in *Inf.*

1.85, “*Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore*” (“You are my master and my author”).<sup>123</sup>

Statius says that Virgil ignited “*le faville [...] de la divina fiamma*” which in turn inspired others, including the Pilgrim. The unfortunate difference between John the Baptist and Virgil is that John is saved while Virgil is not. Statius's comparison of Virgil with John is perhaps another insight into Statius's own representation as a Christ-like figure. Christ acknowledged the importance of John's ministry in Matthew 11:11: *Amen dico vobis, non surrexit inter natos mulierum major Joanne Baptista : qui autem minor est in regno caelorum, major est illo* (Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he). Without Virgil acting as a John the Baptist figure, Statius would not have become Christian and,

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<sup>123</sup> Hollander suggests in his commentary on *Purg.* 21.97–99 that “Statius's fictive biography serves as a sort of stand-in for Dante's genuine one, that is, in Statius's words here about his dependence on Virgil we are also reading Dante's confession of his own debt to the Roman poet”. See also Paratore, *Tradizione e struttura in Dante*, pp. 72–73. Giorgio Padoan, “Il Canto XXI del *Purgatorio*”, in *Nuove letture dantesche*, vol. 4 (Florence: Le Monnier, 1970), p. 354. Hollander, “Babytalk in Dante's *Commedia*”, in *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1980), pp. 123–124. William A. Stephany, “Biblical Allusions to Conversion in *Purgatorio XXI*”, *Stanford Italian Review*, 3 (1983), 151.

arguably, the Pilgrim would not be able to safely navigate through Hell and Purgatory.

What is most unique to Dante is the role of the *nuovi predicanti* who helped Statius construct the proper Christological lens he applies to his reading of Virgil. Simone Marchesi calls the Christological hermeneusis Statius applied to his reading of Virgil “Statius’s active misreading of Virgil’s text”.<sup>124</sup> Marchesi explains that readers who seek for a deeper meaning of a text, and find material that supports what they are looking for, find in their reading a meaning “more fruitful and true than the one its author encoded into it”.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, Statius is another example, like Piccarda, of one who reads into a text a Christological message that is reinforced by the Christian community surrounding him. Contrast Statius’s reading with that of Francesca whose reading of the Lancelot story is not only incomplete, but also misused to justify her immoral actions. Marchesi also notes the mimetic relationship between Virgil and Statius, and Virgil and Dante’s Pilgrim. Statius and the Pilgrim both found something of personal and spiritual significance in their reading of Virgil; Statius finds his path to Christian salvation, and the Pilgrim has a guide through Hell and Purgatory. Meanwhile, Virgil is an example of a reader who fails to understand the deeper Christian meaning of his own writing.<sup>126</sup>

The most significant feature of Marchesi’s analysis for this discussion is his recognition that Dante’s Statius implements, either intentionally or unintentionally, Augustine’s Christ-centred hermeneutics in his reading of Virgil.<sup>127</sup> What is missing from Marchesi’s discussion is the role of the Christian preachers in Statius’s reading of Virgil as well as the moral example they set in

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<sup>124</sup> Simone Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 14.

<sup>125</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 109.

<sup>126</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, pp. 119 and 120.

<sup>127</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 141.

reading Virgil through the proper hermeneutical lens. Statius credits the *nuovi predicatori* with teaching him how to read a deeper Christian message in Virgil, or at least a message in Virgil that is consistent with the Christian message of salvation. Again, this does not devalue Virgil's role in Statius's conversion, rather the *nuovi predicatori* give Statius the Christian context through which Virgil can be, if not *should* be, read as he says in *Purg.* 22.73 and 76–81:

“Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano: [...]
Già era 'l mondo tutto quanto prego
de la vera credenza, seminata
per li messaggi de l'eterno regno,
e la parola tua sopra toccata
si consonava a' nuovi predicatori,
ond' io a visitarli presi usata.”

(“Through you I became a poet, through you a Christian [...]
Already the whole world was pregnant with the true belief, sown
by the messengers of the eternal kingdom, and your word,
touched on above, agreed with the new preachers, and so I took
up the custom of visiting them”.)

The image of the world pregnant with Christian faith that Statius depicts is poignant when paired with Virgil's words from *Eclog.* 4.5–7, already discussed above. The Christian ministers, acting as agents of God, are the ones sowing the seeds of Christ's ministry; impregnating the world with the message of God's Incarnation for the salvation of humanity through Christ. Statius's growing awareness of the Christian message helped him make sense of the Roman poet who already set him on the path of moral redirection. Statius claims he read the same message between Virgil, which directed him to turn away from his personal sin, and the Christian preachers who directed him to turn toward Christ. Virgil's words, when read through this Christian hermeneutic, sing the same tune as the Christian ministers, which justifies Statius' interpretation of Virgil's text. While Statius gives Virgil credit, Virgil could not make sense as a Christian text unless he was read through a Christian hermeneutic taught to Statius by the *nuovi predicatori*.

In *Purg.* 22.82–87, Statius discusses his admiration for these Christian preachers:

*“Vennermi mi poi parendo tanto santi  
che, quando Domizian li persegnette,  
sanza mio lagrimar non fur lor pianti,  
e mentre che di là per me si stette  
io li sovvenni, e i lor dritti costumi  
fer dispregiare a me tutte altre sette”.*

(“They grew to seem so holy to me that, when Domitian persecuted them, their weeping did not lack my tears, and while I remained back there I helped them, and their righteous ways made me look down on all other sects”.)

According to Statius, not only were Christian preachers spreading their message throughout the world, they were also suffering from Domitian’s persecution. Kleinhenz notes the persecution of the early Christians under Domitian was particularly violent, leading many to keep their faith hidden.<sup>128</sup> This could explain why Statius identifies himself as a poet first and a Christian second. Perhaps he feared experiencing the same persecution as his new Christian friends. Although, Statius says he was moved by pity for these men that he helped them as he could, and for that reason he wept for their suffering. Perhaps Statius’s prodigality was not just in the squandering of earthly wealth, but in the excessive weeping and pity he felt for these Christian martyrs for the persecution they experienced but failed to demonstrate the same measure of love for God in living openly as a Christian. In other words, Statius admired the Christians but did not openly follow in their example and subject himself to the same persecution in faith. Perhaps it is in this way that Statius demonstrates *tepidezza* in that he talks about the *la divina fiamma* sparked within him by Virgil and the *nuovi predicanti*, but he also admits he could not live openly as a Christian. Such a reading adds to the Augustinian way of reading this passage in which, despite the best of his intentions and his desire to love others in accordance with Christ’s Double Love

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<sup>128</sup> Kleinhenz, “Celebration of Poetry”, pp. 30–31.

Commandment, Statius did not love the *nuovi predicanti* as well as he could have. Compare this with Francesca who failed to extend proper love to both God and Paolo. Even in her damned state, she continues to ignore Paolo who weeps at her side while simultaneously presenting himself as someone worthy of pity. Meanwhile Statius's work in Purgatory is to restore the proper order of love and reconcile himself to his faith. Statius, although flawed, is a sign of hope and promise of salvation for the Pilgrim as he continues his climb. It is either a stroke of brilliant foreshadowing or coincidence that the complexity of Statius's Christological significance, as this *signum* of hope and promise of resurrection, is first seen in *Purgatorio* 20's earthquake which is filled with its own Christological depth, as discussed at the beginning of this section.

Furthermore, either intentionally or unintentionally, Virgil illuminated a path to God which could only be detected by Christians who held the hermeneutical key to reading and interpreting Virgil correctly. For non-Christian readers, like Statius before his conversion, Virgil illuminated a path to correct moral behaviour; this is supported by Beatrice's selection of Virgil in *Inferno* 2 as the Pilgrim's guide through this journey. In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the *nuovi predicanti* provided the hermeneutical key Statius needed to understand Virgil so he could find his own path to God. Thus, there is a hermeneutical cycle created in which Statius's moral reading of Virgil is validated by the Christian preachers who teach him how to read through the proper lens and Statius's growing Christian faith. Statius' love and praise of Virgil as one of the architects of his salvation demonstrates a correlation between one who reads through the proper order of love and portions that love appropriately between God and others. This is the cycle of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*; Statius not only read Virgil through the proper hermeneutical lens, he loves Virgil through the proper filter of Christ's *caritas*. Statius is the opposite of Francesca as

one who not only failed to read through the proper hermeneutical lens but continues to fail to love others through *caritas*. Statius's assignment to Purgatory confirms his need to continue to grow and perfect that love before joining others whose love has been conformed and perfected by *carità*, such as Piccarda and Constance in Paradise.

The Biblical references that frame *Purgatorio* 20–22 and Statius's Christological reading of Virgil support this reading of the Statius episode through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* as demonstrated in this discussion. By extending Augustine's hermeneutic principle to the Statius episode, all the Biblical references are to be read as figurative guides that foreshadow an event in the narrative or prompt readers to reflect on Christ-centred hermeneutics. In a sense, the drama of God's plan for humanity's salvation through Christ is retold through the drama of the Statius episode, from the proclamation of Christ's birth in Luke 2 to the confirmation of the resurrection of the faithful in Matthew 28. Statius is a figuration of Christ and all Christians. An added layer of complexity of Statius' character is his reading of Virgil through a Christological hermeneutic. Statius's moral and figurative readings of Virgil fit with Augustine's "*caritas* criterion" which allows for readers to read meaning into a text that goes beyond the author's original intention. Piccarda too is an example of one who finds the path to Christ. This hermeneutical practice allowed Statius to read Christ into Virgil's non-Christian texts and to find a consistent message between Virgil and the Christian preachers. Such hermeneutical practices do not diminish Statius's genuine affection for Virgil, whom he credits as the source of his poetic and Christian inspiration; rather, they offer a practical example of one who observes the proper order of love by reading in Virgil the signs that point to God as *frui* and loving Virgil for his role in directing readers to the *frui*. Statius' love for Virgil further highlights Virgil's effectiveness as the Pilgrim's guide through Hell and

Purgatory, despite his inability to recognise or know Christ for himself. For this, Virgil must remain on the outside of Christian salvation. The tragedy of Virgil is, especially when compared to Francesca, that his intentions seem to be driven by a good moral foundation. This is what makes him worthy of guiding the Pilgrim, but morality is not enough. *Caritas* is the key. The distribution of *caritas* is what separates Francesca from Piccarda and Statius from Virgil. Virgil sees *caritas* incarnate but cannot fully understand him. Francesca has none to give to anyone, let alone God. Statius had *caritas* for the *nuovi predicanti* but failed to live openly in accordance with that *caritas*. Piccarda is the only one whose life, despite its imperfections, was guided by, and now lives on eternally in, *carità*.

In the next chapter, the case studies discussed are moments in which the *Commedia* seems to invite readers to apply a hermeneutic to the text. This thesis will continue to argue that the application of Augustine's Christological hermeneutic to the text will, again, highlight Christological themes such as *caritas* as the content of God's Word, *caritas* as the relationship between right reading and right moral action, and *caritas* as the foundation to successful cooperative reading.

## Chapter 4

### *Caritas* and the *Commedia's* Reader

The task of this chapter is to explore passages in which the *Commedia* seems to invite and encourage readers to reflect on the practice of hermeneutics. In keeping with the theme regarding Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the case studies in this chapter focus on those passages in the *Commedia* that illuminate moral instructions, if not promote the *regula dilectionis*, and its correlation with moral behaviour. These two strands encompass many of the features that are distinctive of Augustine's hermeneutics, particularly the "*caritas* criterion", which promotes *caritas* and discourages *cupiditas*.<sup>1</sup> Christ remains the centre of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics, which affirms Christ's Double Love Commandment (Matthew 22:37–40) as the fundamental content of the Scriptures, thus these case studies were selected for their illumination of Christ as the paradigm of properly ordered love.

Aside from their Christological elements, these case studies are also examples of the various ways in which Dante prompts his readers to engage with the *Commedia* hermeneutically. The first example discusses the address to the *Commedia's* readers in *Paradiso* 2 which directs readers to reflect on their ability to read beyond a certain point. While there are many addresses to readers in the *Commedia*, what makes this one stand out is its suggestion that there are two types of readers: those with a certain moral condition who can read to the end of the poem, and those who lack the moral condition needed. They will struggle to understand the deeper meaning of the poem. After this first case, the remaining episodes follow the order in which they are presented in the *Commedia's* narrative.

The second is the inscription above the Hell Gate in *Inferno* 3 that makes several theological claims and should be read critically. When specifically read

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2 sections 2.1.1. and 2.1.2.



through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the inscription is among the first moments in which the *Commedia's* readers are instructed to engage with the text hermeneutically. The Christological content of the inscription warrants its selection for this discussion on hermeneutics.

The last three focus on the *Commedia's* use of Scripture to infuse a Christological dimension in the narrative, beginning with the episode outside the Gates of Dis in *Inferno* 8 and 9. As with the Statius episode, discussed in the previous chapter, the Biblical references help establish the hermeneutical approach to be applied to a reading of the canto.<sup>2</sup> The combination of the addresses to readers with the Biblical references narrows the readers' focus to the Christological elements of the episode. The fourth case study continues this examination of Biblical references as hermeneutical prompts, this time in the form of the Beatitudes in the *Purgatorio*. The Beatitudes are features in the transitional spaces of Purgatory as the Pilgrim and his guide hear them as they climb between the terraces. This may suggest that there is a correlation between the Beatitudes, as a form of moral instruction, and Purgatory's purpose as a place of moral reconditioning. The final case study discusses the Pilgrim's meditation on the Cross of Mars and his conversation with his ancestor, Cacciaguida, in *Paradiso* 14–17. The Cross of Mars is a moment of Christological devotion which deserves attention in this study of Dante's Christology. Rather than specific Biblical passages establishing a specific hermeneutical approach to reading these cantos, the Cross of Mars is an episode in which there is a more blatant Christological message. What makes this episode stand-out in particular is the connection Cacciaguida makes between martyrdom, as a sign of true faith, and the Pilgrim's calling to write the *Commedia*. The implication is that the poem itself is not only consistent with Scripture, but that the *Commedia* and Scripture share

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.2.2.

the same source. In Augustinian terms, the Pilgrim must learn the best path to loving God (as *frui*) and neighbours (as *uti*), as well as accept his own cross to follow Christ by writing all that he has seen and heard.

#### 4.1. Addresses to Readers

There are passages in the *Commedia* addressed to the poem's readers that have been the object of discussion among Dante scholars.<sup>3</sup> There appears to be an equal distribution of these addresses in each of the three *cantiche*, at least according to Herman Gmelin.<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this discussion, I selected the address in *Paradiso* 2 because this specific address invites readers to think about what they have read thus far, as well as makes a distinction between two types of readers: those who have been able to read the *Commedia* correctly, and are able to continue to read to the end of the poem, and those who have not. Thus far, the scholarship concerning these addresses emphasises how they serve as rhetorical devices, meant to imitate Scripture or the ways they function as hermeneutical prompts, directing readers to engage with the narrative. I will return to these themes from the scholarship after examining the address in *Paradiso* 2 itself.

In terms of the *Commedia*'s narrative, this specific address serves as a transition between the Pilgrim's start in the Earthly Paradise in *Paradiso* 1 to his transportation into Paradise proper in *Paradiso* 2. Hermeneutically, this passage

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<sup>3</sup> The addresses are found in: *Inferno* 8.94–96, 9.61–63, 16.127–132, 20.19–24, 22.118, 25.46–48, and 34.22–27; *Purgatorio* 8.19–21, 9.70–72, 10.106–111, 17.1–9, 29.97–105, 31.124–126, and 33.136–138; *Paradiso* 2.1–18, 5.109–114, 10.7–27, 13.1–21, and 22.106–111. See Vittorio Russo, “appello al lettore”, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, ed. by Umberto Bosco, 6 vols (Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970–1975), I, 324–326.

<sup>4</sup> Gmelin includes *Par.* 9.10–12 and splits *Paradiso* 10 into two addresses, the first in lines 7–15 and the second in lines 22–27; see “Die Anrede an den Leser in der *Göttlichen Komödie*”, *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 30 (1951), 130–140. Auerbach agrees with the addition of *Par.* 9.10–12, but does not split the address in *Paradiso* 10 into two parts; see “Dante's Addresses to the Reader”. Hollander categorises the address in *Paradiso* 9 as an open invocation to Christians, similar to the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and other “foolish mortals” rather than an address to the *Commedia*'s readers. Hollander is also one of the few to note that the addresses in *Paradiso* 2 and *Inf.* 22.118 Dante refers to his audience as “listeners” rather than “readers”.

suggests there is a particular way of reading the *Commedia* that is needed for reading up to and beyond this point:

*O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,  
desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti  
dietro al mio legno che cantando varca:  
tornate a riveder li vostri liti,  
non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,  
perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti;  
l'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse (Par. 2.1–7)*

(O you who in little barks, desirous of listening, have followed after my ship that sails onward singing: turn back to see your shores again, do not put out on the deep sea, for perhaps, losing me, you would be lost; the waters that I enter have never before been crossed)

Readers who have followed the narrator to this point are directed to look back from where they started, and evaluate how much further they can continue.

Readers are also asked to turn back for fear of being lost which suggests that what comes next cannot be read and/or understood by everyone. H.F. Tozer suggests this particular line in the address, “warns off those of his readers who had paid no attention to philosophy and theology”.<sup>5</sup> John S. Carroll suggests the address is directed towards his critics, or those whom he knew would struggle with the content of the third *cantica* if not the theological content of the *Commedia* as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Carroll also notes that Dante picks up the *piccioletta barca* theme in *Par.* 23.67–69 in his vision of the Triumphant Christ:

*non è pareggio da picciola barca  
quel che fendendo va l'ardita prora,  
né da nocchier ch'a sé medesimo parca.*

(it is no voyage for a little bark, the one my daring prow goes cutting, nor for a helmsman who spares himself)

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<sup>5</sup> H.F. Tozer, commentary on *Par.* 2.1–9.

<sup>6</sup> Carroll's commentary on *Par.* 2.1–18. Carroll suggests Dante knew that his (“sacred poem”; *Par.* 25.1) was not going to be understood by everyone, except those who understood Christian theology.

Charles S. Singleton calls this passage, “the most remarkable address to the reader in the whole of the *Commedia*” for its length and content.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the narrator’s claim, “*L’acqua ch’io prendo già mai non si corse*”, Singleton reads this as a reference to the voyage of Dante’s Pilgrim and not necessarily of St Paul’s journey in 2 Corinthians, which has been cited among commentaries as the Biblical reference Dante makes. Singleton says, “Paul did not take us back over his experience, but Dante the poet intends to do this now, to go back over his journey, in poetry”.<sup>8</sup> In other words, Dante offers his readers all the details about Heaven that Paul merely hints at in his letter. For those who do not fully understand the poem, but continue to read regardless, there is a hint of pride in the last line which recalls the voyages of Odysseus and Jason whose hubris led to their failures, which I will discuss toward the end of this section. Singleton also suggests the two types of readers mentioned are those who were able to follow the guidance of Virgil, as an allegorical representative of reason, through the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, but will struggle to follow Beatrice’s lead as a representative of Lady Wisdom, if not Christ, through the *Paradiso*.<sup>9</sup>

The address continues in the following lines:

*Voi altri pochi che drizzaste il collo  
per tempo al pan de li angeli, del quale  
vivesi qui ma non sen vien satollo:  
metter potete ben per l’alto sale  
vostro navigio, servando mio solco  
dinanzi a l’acqua che ritorna equale (Par. 2.10–15)*

(You other few, who stretched out your necks early on for the bread of the angels, which one lives on here though never sated by it: you can well set your course over the salt deep, staying within my wake before the water returns level again)

Again, the address distinguishes between two types of readers: those who are in danger of becoming lost if they continue to read beyond this point, and those

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<sup>7</sup> Singleton’s commentary on *Par.* 2.1–18.

<sup>8</sup> Singleton’s commentary on *Par.* 2.7.

<sup>9</sup> Singleton’s commentary on *Par.* 2.1–6. See also his *Dante Studies 2. Journey to Beatrice*.

who, in their receiving the *pan de li angeli*, can continue to follow in the narrator's wake. Singleton argues Dante's use of the phrase the *pan de li angeli* is an example of how the *Commedia* makes itself available to, if not openly invites, a comparison to Scripture. Singleton and Daniel Ransom suggest the phrase comes from Psalm 77:24–25: *Et pluit illis manna ad manducandum, et panem caeli dedit eis. Panem angelorum manducavit homo; cibaria misit eis in abundantia* (he rained down on them manna to eat, and gave them the grain of heaven. Mortals ate of **the bread of angels**; he sent them food in abundance; emphasis added).<sup>10</sup> Singleton also argues that Dante's use of this Biblical phrase should signal to readers that they need to engage with the text through a Christian hermeneutic.<sup>11</sup> In other words, readers can continue beyond this point so long as they have the proper hermeneutical approach to reading and understanding the meaning of the text. Ransom disagrees with Singleton, citing Dante's earlier use of the phrase the *pan de li angeli* in the *Convivio* and argues that in the *Commedia*, "Dante is borrowing the rhetorical force of the biblical phrase, but not its substance".<sup>12</sup> In other words, Dante uses the Biblical reference as a poetic trope rather than suggesting readers require a specific hermeneutical approach to continue reading. James Chiampì sides with Singleton and points to the Pilgrim's faith as the driving force for the *Commedia's* narrative, arguing that while Virgil illuminated the Pilgrim's physical path out of the dark wood to the top of Mount Purgatory, it was Christ who first illuminated the path from *Inferno's* dark wood to the *Paradiso's* open waters.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel J. Ransom, "Panis Angelorum: A Palinode in the *Paradiso*", *Dante Studies*, 95 (1977), 81–94. See also Hollander's commentary on *Par.* 2.10–12.

<sup>11</sup> Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice*, pp. 122–138. See also Attilio Mellone, "Pane degli angeli", *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1973), IV, 266.

<sup>12</sup> Ransom, "Panis Angelorum", p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Chiampì, "Dante's *Paradiso* from Number to Mysterium", pp. 272–273. Christ's illumination of the path can be read literally as Virgil led the Pilgrim on the same path Christ took from the Gates of Hell to Limbo during the Harrowing of Hell. Even as the two continue their descent to the lowest pit, there are physical reminders of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection that have altered Hell's physical landscape. The path Christ illuminates is also an allegorical one referring to the Pilgrim's spiritual transformation that began in the darkness of self-doubt in *Inferno* 1, and ends with seeing God face-to-face in *Paradiso* 33.

The phrase the *pan de li angeli* could also be a reference to the Eucharist, as argued by William O'Brien who examines the allegorical use of the phrase in John 6:48–51:<sup>14</sup>

*Ego sum panis vitae. Patres vestri manducaverunt manna in deserto, et mortui sunt. Hic est panis de caelo descendens: ut si quis ex ipso manducaverit, non moriatur. Ego sum panis vivus, qui de caelo descendi.*

(“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh”.)

Those who eat of Christ's bread of life will be nourished (in the literal sense), follow his teachings (in the tropological sense), and follow his path to eternal life (in the spiritual, or anagogical, sense). O'Brien argues this address draws a line between those who read for the sake of reading and those who read to follow Christ.<sup>15</sup> In other words, those who read the *Commedia* in the literal sense, and those who read into its deeper meaning. Matthew Treherne echoes this idea in his vertical readings of the second cantos in *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*, and notes the distinction between those who are simply reading the *Commedia*'s narrative, and those who are engaging with the salvific content of the text.<sup>16</sup> The latter activity of engaging with the text is in keeping with Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics as it engages directly with the salvific content of the poem. Those who can benefit from the Pilgrim's journey also benefit from Christ's Eucharist and should continue to read. Those who do not fully understand what the narrative is striving to achieve will be lost.

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<sup>14</sup> William J. O'Brien, “The Bread of Angels’ in *Paradiso 2: A Liturgical Note*”, *Dante Studies*, 97 (1979), 97–106 (p. 99).

<sup>15</sup> O'Brien, “The Bread of Angels”, pp. 104–105.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Treherne, “Reading Time, Text, and the World”, in *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, I, 37–56 (pp. 50–53).

A recurring phrase used by scholars who interpret the *Commedia's* addresses as rhetorical devices imitating Scripture's literary style is "Dante's allegory of the theologians"; in other words, Dante's use of Biblical figures of speech and theological content in his poetry. Robert Hollander also defines this term as the use of secular poetry and prose to discuss theological concepts that were previously only accessible to theologians.<sup>17</sup> Henri de Lubac explains that in the Middle Ages the tradition of Biblical interpretation expanded from three interpretive senses to four: the literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical.<sup>18</sup> Arguably, the *Commedia's* theological content and imitation of the Biblical style allows Dante's text to be interpreted through the same senses of Biblical interpretation, which is one of the major themes of this thesis.

Among the most noted scholars to argue that the *Commedia* can be read through the same interpretive lenses as Scripture was Singleton who argues everything in the *Commedia* has a deeper meaning.<sup>19</sup> According to Singleton, what makes the *Commedia* different from other works of medieval literature is the poem's imitation of the Biblical style, as well as its claim to share the same source of Divine inspiration.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Singleton argues, the *Commedia's* multiple layers of complex meaning encourage readers to use interpretive practices to illuminate the theological content of Dante's poem, including those practices previously reserved for Scripture alone.<sup>21</sup> Hollander agrees with Singleton, saying the *Commedia's* rhetorical style and inter-textual references are a deliberate imitation

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<sup>17</sup> Hollander, "Dante as *Theologus-Poeta*", p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*.

<sup>19</sup> Singleton, "End of a Poem". See also, "In Exitu Israel de Aegypto", *Dante Studies 1. Commedia: Elements of Structure*, and *Dante Studies 2. Journey to Beatrice*. This was also the conclusion made by Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, Chester, "Virtue in Dante", and Montemaggi, *Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology*. See Chapter 1 sections 1.2. and 1.3.

<sup>20</sup> Singleton, *Elements of Structure*, pp. 14–16.

<sup>21</sup> Singleton, *Elements of Structure*, pp. 14–16.

of the Biblical style, meaning that the text can withstand interpretation through the hermeneutical practices used in Biblical exegesis.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the *Commedia's* imitation of the Biblical style, A.C. Charity argues that Dante used an “applied typology” for every aspect of the *Commedia* in order to mirror Scripture’s Christian narrative.<sup>23</sup> For example, the Pilgrim’s journey through each realm of the Christian afterlife is a familiar typology of a soul’s journey to find God by following the path of Christ. Charity says that each of the *Commedia's* three *cantiche* is an isolated typology: the *Inferno* is an allegorical typology of death to sin; the *Purgatorio* is a typology of reformation and resurrection; and the *Paradiso* is a typology of redemption and eternal life. John Freccero bridges the discussions between Singleton, Hollander, and Charity by adding the use of Augustinian hermeneutics as a way of reading the *Commedia*.<sup>24</sup> Freccero argues that the *Commedia* is modelled on a Biblical-style conversion story similar to Augustine’s *Confessiones*.<sup>25</sup> Freccero also stresses that the *Commedia* is not to be read literally, but through multiple interpretive lenses.<sup>26</sup> What is missing from these conversations is how the *Commedia's* addresses function as hermeneutical prompts as a means to highlight the Christological content of the text, or how these addresses offer moral guidance in light of Christ’s *regula dilectionis*. These themes can be illuminated when the text is read through the filter of Augustine’s hermeneutics of *caritas*.

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<sup>22</sup> Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*. See also “Dante as *Theologus-Poeta*”, *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1980), “Why did Dante write the *Comedy*?”, *Dante Studies*, 111 (1993), 19–25, and “Dante’s Pride”, in *Studi sul canone letterario del Trecento per Michelangelo Picone*, ed. by Johannes Bartuschat and Luciano Rossi (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2003), pp. 43–55.

<sup>23</sup> A.C. Charity, “Typology in the *Divine Comedy*”, in *Events and their Afterlife: The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 167–261.

<sup>24</sup> Freccero, “Dante’s Firm Foot and the Journey Without a Guide”, in *Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 1–28. The most recent publication of Freccero’s work, which includes new material and republished material, also closely follows the connections between Augustine and Dante in, *In Dante's Wake*. See also Chapter 1 section 1.1 on the scholarship concerning Dante and Augustine.

<sup>25</sup> Freccero, “Allegory and Autobiography”, in *In Dante's Wake*, pp. 96–115 (pp. 96–98).

<sup>26</sup> Freccero, “Allegory and Autobiography”, p. 104.



As for the second argument concerning the addresses as prompts for reader-centred hermeneutics, or as Simone Marchesi suggests, the hermeneutical practices in which readers are the central interpretive focus rather than the *Commedia's* author, the addresses seem to invite varied responses from readers.<sup>27</sup> Gmelin notes that the addresses display a variety of tones across the three *cantiche*.<sup>28</sup> For instance, in the *Inferno*, the addresses seem to invoke an empathetic response from readers as they appear at moments of distress and danger and attempts to prompt readers to share the Pilgrim's dread and unease. The example I explore later in this chapter is from the Gates of Dis in *Inferno* 8 and 9.<sup>29</sup> In the *Purgatorio*, the addresses prompt readers to share in the spiritual renewal of the penitent as they overturn their earthly vices into heavenly virtues. For the purpose of this thesis, I pay particular attention to the Beatitudes of Purgatory.<sup>30</sup> And in the *Paradiso*, the addresses imitate a moralistic (if not prophetic) authoritative tone urging readers to follow in the Pilgrim's footsteps for their own safety and salvation.<sup>31</sup> The specific example I discuss above, from *Paradiso* 2, fits this general description.

It has been argued by Gmelin and Erich Auerbach that the tones of these addresses are meant to establish an emotional connection between the author and his readers.<sup>32</sup> Auerbach, Singleton, Hollander, and Charity all argue that the *Commedia's* addresses elevate the text to a special category of poetry that seems to mimic Scripture in tone and content. Auerbach's argument differs from the others as he discusses how the addresses function as religious and moral appeals

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<sup>27</sup> Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 109; see Chapter 1 section 1.1.1.

<sup>28</sup> Gmelin, "Die Anrede an den Leser", pp. 130–140.

<sup>29</sup> See section 4.3, below.

<sup>30</sup> See section 4.4.

<sup>31</sup> Gmelin, "Die Anrede an den Leser", pp. 131–139.

<sup>32</sup> Auerbach, "Dante's Addresses to the Reader", p. 271. See also "Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages of Dante's *Commedia*", *Speculum*, 21.4 (1946), 474–489. "Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature", *Yale French Studies*, 9 (1952), 3–10. And "Figura", in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, pp. 11–66.

to the *Commedia's* readers; either encouraging them to act appropriately or warning them against immorality.<sup>33</sup> Auerbach says, “the ‘lettore’ (reader) in the *Commedia* is every Christian who happens to read his poem, just as the passage in the Lamentations was addressed to everyone who happened to pass through the streets of Jerusalem”.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Auerbach links the *Commedia's* imitation of the Biblical style to reader-centred hermeneutics through its addresses to readers. Regarding the response the addresses attempt to illicit from readers, Leo Spitzer argues each of the three *cantiche* have a specific tone that corresponds to the moral message of the *Commedia's* three parts, similar to Gmelin's observations.<sup>35</sup> In the *Inferno*, readers are directed to avoid the traps of sin. In the *Purgatorio*, readers are invited to share in the transformation of the penitential souls by empathizing with their experiences or praying for their expedition. And in the *Paradiso*, readers receive moral instructions, if not encouragement as with Cacciaguida, so they too can rejoice with the blessed souls. Spitzer argues these shifts in tone add to the hermeneutical approach for each *cantica*, if not provide a hermeneutical suggestion for how readers should read each part of the *Commedia*.<sup>36</sup>

For the *Commedia's* addresses to function in the way Spitzer suggests would mean that each address was written with a specific hermeneutical function in mind. William Franke argues the *Commedia's* addresses are not just a rhetorical device, but a method of establishing a hermeneutical cycle between the text, as a guide and mentor, and the readers, as followers and students.<sup>37</sup> Franke's insights

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<sup>33</sup> Auerbach, “Dante's Addresses”, p. 269.

<sup>34</sup> Auerbach, “Dante's Addresses”, p. 272.

<sup>35</sup> Leo Spitzer, “The Addresses to the Reader in the *Commedia*,” *Italica*, 32 (1955), 143–166.

<sup>36</sup> Spitzer, “Addresses to the Reader”, pp. 146–153.

<sup>37</sup> William Franke, *Dante's Interpretive Journey*, pp. 37–47. See also, “Dante's ‘New Life’ and the New Testament: An Essay on the Hermeneutics of Revelation”, *The Italianist*, 31.3 (2011), 335–366, “Paradoxical Prophecy: Dante's Strategy of Self-Subversion in the *Inferno*”, *Italica*, 90.3 (2013), 343–364, and “Dante's Hermeneutic Complicity in Violence and Fraud in *Inferno* 9–17”, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 82.1 (2013), 1–19.

suggest the addresses are part of a hermeneutical cycle that begins when readers have been taught how to correctly read the text. Readers will then find other hermeneutical prompts which will, again, teach the readers how to appropriately respond to the text, and the hermeneutical cycle continues.<sup>38</sup> Franke says it is in this way that the *Commedia* most reflects Scripture in both theological content and reader-centred hermeneutics.<sup>39</sup> This hermeneutical cycle is similar to the one proposed by Augustine in *De doctrina Christiana* 2.42.63 regarding the *regula dilectionis*; first, Christ reveals how Scripture should be read in order to promote appropriate Christian behaviour, which prompts further Christological reading, and then prompts more Christ-like actions.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Scripture and the *Commedia* share a common style of hermeneutical cause and effect as the text teaches readers how to read and interpret the text, as well as presents behaviours to be either imitated or avoided, depending on its reflection or rejection of the Double Love Commandment. Augustine calls this specific hermeneutical cycle the *caritas* criterion.

Before moving on to the next case study, I must return to the address to readers in *Paradiso* 2. At the end of the address, the Pilgrim shifts his focus to the Heaven of the Moon, the first sphere of Paradise, and he compares his journey to the story of Jason and the Argonauts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

*que' gloriosi che passaro al Colco  
non s'ammiraron come voi farete,  
quando Iason vider fatto bifolco (Par. 2.16–18)*

(those glorious ones who sailed to Colchos did not so marvel as you will do, when they saw Jason become a plowman)

This passage can be read ironically because after Jason successfully retrieved the golden fleece, his ship sank off the isle of Lemnos where, *l'ardite femmine spietate* |

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<sup>38</sup> Franke, *Dante's Interpretive Journey*, p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Franke, *Dante's Interpretive Journey*, p. 40.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 2 section 2.2.

*tutti li maschi loro a morte dienno* (the bold, pitiless women had put all their males to death; *Inf.* 18.89–90).<sup>41</sup> Dante's Pilgrim finds Jason in the first *bolgia* of the eighth circle of Hell with the Pimps and Seducers.<sup>42</sup> Dante's Jason stretched himself, and his crew beyond their limitations, or as the address in lines 10–15 would say, he became confused and lost on his journey resulting in the damnation of himself and his entire crew. What is striking about this reference to Jason's failed journey is the narrator's promise that there are wonders to behold that are greater than what can be imagined. In other words, those who can read beyond this point receive God's grace and salvation, which are greater treasures than Jason and his crew could have imagined. Therefore, in order to follow in the Pilgrim's wake, readers need to be nourished and encouraged by the bread of angels rather than feed off their own arrogance and *cupiditas*. This contrast also suggests that there is a need for readers to be within a specific moral condition to successfully read and interpret the *Commedia's* deeper meaning. If one sails like Jason, they will steer themselves into danger, if not damnation. However, if one sails like the Pilgrim then they may steer themselves into Paradise.

What does this have to do with those readers who are unable to follow beyond the note's point, and must return to the safety of their native shores? I believe the narrator empathises with their limited understanding because he too was in their position once. In the first canto of the *Inferno*, when the Pilgrim first attempted to stretch beyond his own limitations and climb the mountain without guidance, he describes the frustrating experience as follows:

*E come quei che con lena affannata,  
uscito fuor del pelago a la riva,*

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<sup>41</sup> Book 7.104–121. See Michelangelo Picone, "Dante argonauta: la ricezione dei miti ovidiani nella *Commedia*", in M. Picone and B. Zimmermann, eds., *Ovidius redivivus: von Ovid zu Dante* (Stuttgart: M&P Verlag, 1994), pp. 191–200.

<sup>42</sup> According to the commentaries, Dante assigned Jason to this *bolgia* for his seduction of Hypsipyle, daughter of King Thoas of Lemnos, and his abandonment of Medea, daughter of King Æetes of Colchis, for Creusa. Hollander notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 18.86–96, Jason is presented in a positive manner in the *Paradiso* because he is the precursor to Dante's Pilgrim for his navigation of uncharted and dangerous seas and return with treasure.

*si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata:  
così l'animo mio, ch'ancor fuggiva,  
si volse a retro a rimirar lo passo  
che non lasciò già mai persona viva. (Inf. 1.22–27)*

(And like one with labouring breath, come forth out of the deep onto the shore, who turns back to the perilous water and stares: so my spirit, still fleeing, turned back to gaze again at the pass that has never yet left anyone alive.)

The images of the perilous sea and a pilgrim out of his depth connect the two cantos. Readers who are unprepared to make the crossing must return to the beginning and try again. In their next attempt at following in the Pilgrim's path, readers may notice the hermeneutical prompts steering them to engage with the text as well as directing them to engage with the right moral condition which they may gain through their right reading of the text. It is from the perspective of one who has returned to the beginning of the *Commedia* to read the Pilgrim's journey again, but this time with the advantages of knowing what is to come, that the remaining case studies in this chapter will be examined.

#### **4.2. The Hell Gate Inscription**

The inscription above the Gates of Hell in *Inferno* 3 makes claims regarding the relationship between God and Hell, Hell's eternal nature, and that those who enter through these gates must "abandon all hope". On first reading, the inscription appears to speak directly to the souls entering Hell. However, the inscription's claims may warrant careful consideration through a Christological hermeneutic approach. Therefore, this section proposes a reading of the inscription through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* in order to evaluate what the inscription claims to say about the relationship between God and humanity, the moral condition of those who read the inscription, and how the inscription contributes to a Christological reading of the *Commedia*.

For the damned, the inscription above the Gate of Hell is the final word. For the Pilgrim, and readers following the Pilgrim's journey, the inscription is one of the first passages in the *Commedia* that prompts hermeneutical reflection. The inscription describes the nature of the souls in Hell, Hell's origin, and God's justice as one of Hell's functions:

*Per me si va ne la città dolente,  
Per me si va ne l'eterno dolore,  
Per me si va tra la perduta gente.  
Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;  
fecemi la divina podestate,  
la somma sapienza e'l primo amore.  
Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create  
se non eterne, e io eterno duro.  
Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate. (Inf. 3.1–9)*

(“Through me the way into the grieving city, through me the way into eternal sorrow, through me the way among the lost people. Justice moved my high maker; divine power made me, highest wisdom, and primal love. Before me were no things created except eternal ones, and I endure eternal. Abandon every hope, you who enter”.)

Those in Hell are lost to grief and pain and their punishments are not only just but ordained by the Triune God. Carroll notes the ease in which anyone can enter through the Gates of Hell compared to the other circles which have a posted guardian.<sup>43</sup> Singleton notes the similarities between Dante's open Hell Gate and Vergil's open door of Dis in *Aeneid* 6.127: “*Noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis*” (“Night and day the door of gloomy Dis stands open”).<sup>44</sup> The inscription ends with one of the most famous lines from the *Commedia*: *Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate* (“Abandon every hope, you who enter”).<sup>45</sup> This discussion will examine each claim made in the inscription and in the order they are presented.

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<sup>43</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Inf.* 3.1–9.

<sup>44</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Inf.* 3.1–3; translation Singleton.

<sup>45</sup> Durling's translation reads, “Abandon every hope, you who enter”. I prefer the more dramatic translation by Henry F. Cary, *Dante's Inferno* (New York: Hurst, 1885), “abandon all hope”.

When read through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the first set of lines appear to describe the damned as those who failed to love God as *frui*. To categorise them in Augustinian terms, the damn elected to love material or lesser things for the things themselves rather than love them appropriately in light of the love owed to God first. Thus, the damned are sentenced in accordance with their earthly *cupiditas*. The tone of the inscription and its condemnation of *cupiditas* raises the question of authorship. Assuming the Bible was Dante's source of inspiration, God is a feasible author of the gate's inscription. Freccero links the Hell Gate inscription to God's warning against hubris in Daniel 5 when King Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, asks the prophet Daniel to interpret the words: *MENE TEKEL PARSIN*. According to verses 5–6, the words were found inscribed on a wall in the king's palace, seemingly written by an invisible hand. Daniel offers an interpretation in Daniel 5:24–28:

*Et haec est interpretatio sermonis. Mane: numeravit Deus regnum tuum, et complevit illud. Thecel: appensus es in statera, et inventus es minus habens. Phares: divisum est regnum tuum, et datum est Medis, et Persis.*

(“This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; TEKEL, you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting; PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians”.)

Prior to offering his interpretation, Daniel listed Belshazzar's failings, as well as his father's, as both rulers had displeased God (verses 17–23). It was their hubris that cost them their kingdom and their relationship with God. Therefore, Daniel reads the inscription as a warning which indicates the Lord's displeasure with Belshazzar, which results in his reign being cut short. Daniel's interpretation comes true as Belshazzar was murdered that night and was replaced by Darius who divided the kingdom. Freccero sees the connection between the inscriptions

in Daniel 5 and in *Inferno* 3 as signs of God's warning against hubris and *cupiditas*.<sup>46</sup>

Another indication that God is mostly likely author of the inscription is its Christological tone. The first three lines, *Per me si va* to "the grief-wracked city", *Per me si va...* "everlasting pain", *Per me si va...* "lost souls" seems to echo Christ's words from John 14:6, *Ego sum via, et veritas, et vita. Nemo venit ad Patrem, nisi per me* ("I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except **through Me**"; emphasis added). When Christ says *per me* he gives a series of statements that reflect his relationship with God which is also an extension of the Father's presence on earth. For instance, in John 14:15 Christ says, *Si diligitis me, mandata mea servate* ("If you love Me, keep My commandments"), referring to the Double Love Commandment. The inscription's next lines suggest the justice distributed and enforced in Hell is an extension of God's presence.

There is some room for ambiguity regarding the author of the inscription as the Three Persons of the Trinity are not named directly but mentioned as the attributes of the "*divina podestate*", "*somma sapienza*", and "*primo amore*" in lines 4–6. These attributes do correlate to all three Person of the Trinity as well as establish a link between the Triune God and Hell, or rather Hell's role as the enforcer of the Triune God's Justice. For instance, line 4 claims: "*Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore*". Singleton says because the inscription associates itself with God's supreme justice, then "the inscription speaks not simply for the gate but for Hell in its entirety".<sup>47</sup> This association further implicates God's role in the inscription's authorship, as well as indicates God's authoritative role in the execution of Hell's

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<sup>46</sup> Freccero, "Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell", in *Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 93–109 (p. 99).

<sup>47</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Inf.* 3.4.



justice. Virgil explains to the Pilgrim that when the damned arrive in Hell they are compelled to come to the River Acheron to seek their judgement:<sup>48</sup>

*“Figliuol mio”, disse ’l maestro cortese,  
“quelli che muoion ne l’ira di Dio  
tutti convegnon qui d’ogne paese;  
e pronti sono a trapassar lo rio,  
ché la divina giustizia li sprona  
sì che la tema si volve in disio.  
Quinci non passa mai anima buona”*<sup>49</sup> (*Inf.* 3.121–127)

(“My son”, said my courteous master, “those who die in God’s anger all come together here from every land; and they are ready to cross over the river, for God’s justice so spurs them that fear turns to desire. No good soul ever passes this way”)

It is the “*divina giustizia*” that draws those who die “*ne l’ira di Dio*” to gather at the riverside and cross over the river to face their judgement.<sup>50</sup> Upon their arrival, all souls share the same fear and desire to face justice. It is after their assignment to their respective punishments that some souls revert back to claiming their innocence, like Francesca.<sup>51</sup> As the Pilgrim continues his descent, the tone of Hell’s acknowledgement of the Trinity shifts from the inscription’s boastful tone, claiming to be the enforcer of God’s justice, to Satan’s parody of the Trinity in *Inferno* 34. Additionally, the poem’s *terza rima* produces a triune-pulse that serves as the narrative’s backbeat suggesting God is present in each realm of Dante’s afterlife.

Adding further ambiguity to the inscription’s author are the claims in lines 7–8, “*Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create | se non etterne, e io eterno duro*”, which suggest that Hell was among the first of the physical things created. From a

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<sup>48</sup> The damned are not assigned to a specific circle of Hell until they come to Minos located between the first and second circles. The souls’ desire to cross the first river of Hell is an example of how each soul does feel the compulsion, however fleeting, to be subject to God’s control and justice.

<sup>49</sup> Singleton notes the similarity of this line with *Aen.* 6.563: “*Nulli fas casto sceleratum insistere limen*” (“No pure soul may tread the accursed threshold”; translation Singleton). See commentary on *Inf.* 3.127.

<sup>50</sup> Singleton notes there are similarities between the compulsion of these souls to move forward in Dante and in Vergil’s *Aen.* 6.313–314; see commentary on *Inf.* 3.124–126.

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.1.1.

Biblical perspective, Hell is not mentioned in either creation story in Genesis. According to Genesis 1:1, *In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram* (God created the heavens and the earth), and in Genesis 2:4, *fecit Dominus Deus caelum et terram* (God made the earth and the heavens). In both accounts the earth and heavens were made first, even before the separation between light and darkness; meaning there is no mention of Hell in either account. According to John 1:1–3, God and the Word are the only co-eternal beings in the universe:

*In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt: et sine ipso factum est nihil, quod factum est.*

(In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.)

The Word is Christ and, as John 1 says, all of creation was made through the Word; again, there is no mention of the creation of Hell. Furthermore, Scripture reports that Hell will be destroyed in John's Apocalypse 20:14–15, meaning that it will not endure eternally. Yet the inscription's claim of being the first created thing does not necessarily diminish the truth behind lines 1–3 regarding the "*città dolente*", where the "*perduta gente*" suffer with "*eterno dolore*". Nor is the inscription's claim of operating under the auspices of the Triune God false. The tone of these claims presents a theological inconsistency that should cause readers to pause. In particular, the inscription's last claim, *Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate*, which does not apply to the Pilgrim, or those who follow him in their *piccioletta barca*. This claim certainly did not apply to the Biblical saints who were rescued during Christ's Harrowing in Limbo, as told by Virgil in *Inferno* 4 and 12.<sup>52</sup>

Beatrice too is another exception to this warning as she came from her eternal rest in Paradise to recruit Virgil from Limbo as the Pilgrim's guide. When

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<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.2.1.

asked whether she was afraid of Hell's dangers, she explains to Virgil in *Inf.* 2.88–93:

*“Temer si dee di sole quelle cose  
c’hanno potenza di fare altrui male;  
de l’altre no, ché non son paurose.  
I’ son fatta da Dio, sua mercé, tale  
che la vostra miseria non mi tange,  
né fiamma d’esto ’ncendio non m’assale”.*

(“One must fear only those things that have the power to harm; not other things, for they are not fearful. I am made by God, in his mercy, such that your misery does not touch me, the flame of this burning does not assail me”.)

In other words, there is nothing for Beatrice to fear while she was in Hell because she has the protection of God's grace. Hell cannot harm her or anyone with God's grace, including the Pilgrim. Hollander notes in his commentary that the penitent in Purgatory, and the blessed in Paradise, do not have “a thought for the damned (only the damned themselves do) [...] Hell, for the saved, is a sordid reality of which it is better not to speak”.<sup>53</sup> In *Inf.* 2.94–99, Beatrice tells Virgil that the Pilgrim's spiritual welfare was placed in her care by St Lucia who is, according to Beatrice, the “*nimica di ciascun crudele*” (“enemy of all cruelty”; *Inf.* 2.100). It was Lucia who took pity on the Pilgrim while he was lost in the dark wood and sent Beatrice to steer him from further harm. Echoing Beatrice, Virgil reassures the Pilgrim in *Inf.* 2.121–126 he has safe passage through Hell:

*“Dunque che è? perché, perché restai,  
perché tanta viltà nel core allette,  
perché ardire e franchezza non hai,  
poscia che tai tre donne benedette  
curan di te ne la corte del cielo,  
e ’l mio parlar tanto ben ti promette?”*

(“Therefore what is it? why, why do you stand still? why do you nurse such cowardice in your heart? why do you not have boldness and freedom, seeing that three such blessed ladies have a care for you in the court of Heaven, and my speech promises you so much good?”)

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<sup>53</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 2.85–93.

The Pilgrim's journey is under Heavenly protection, ensuring that he will move from Hell, through Purgatory, and into Paradise. However, those who do not have God's grace and protection should be terrified. The Pilgrim, and readers able to follow along with the Pilgrim's path, do not need to abandon hope at Hell's front door.<sup>54</sup> The protection secured by St Lucia and promised by Beatrice may explain why the Pilgrim's immediate response to the inscription is confusion, rather than taking its claims literally.

After reading the inscription above the Hell Gate, the Pilgrim tells Virgil in *Inf.* 3.12, "*Maestro, il senso lor m'è duro*" ("Master, their sense is hard for me").

Meaning, the Pilgrim struggles to fully understand the inscription's warning.

Freccero argues the Pilgrim's "*il senso lor m'è duro*" is an echo of the disciples' complaint to Christ in John 6:60, *Durus est hoc sermo* ("This teaching is difficult").<sup>55</sup>

In John 6:35 Christ said, *Ego sum panis vitae* ("I am the bread of life"), and continues in verse 40, *omnis qui videt Filium et credit in eum, habeat vitam aeternam* ("all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life").<sup>56</sup> The disciples

complain that they did not understand what Christ meant by saying he was the *panis vitae*. Christ explains to them in verses 64–66 that his words are *spiritus et vita* ("spirit and life"); Christ also suggests that not everyone can understand them because some do not have the proper faith. Later, in verse 66, Christ explains that no one can know God except through Christ, and, even then, only if God wants them to know God: *quia nemo potest venire ad me, nisi fuerit ei datum a Patre meo* ("that no man can come to me, unless it be given him by my Father").

Hermeneutically, the Pilgrim needs a guide to help navigate the ambiguities and outright false claims of the inscription, which also reflects the ambiguities and

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<sup>54</sup> Readers of the *Commedia* are also seemingly exempt as they are allowed to pass through Hell unscathed with the Pilgrim. They are also allowed to climb to the highest sphere of Paradise provided they can read the narrative correctly while being nourished by the *pan de li angeli* (cf. *Inf.* 2.11).

<sup>55</sup> Freccero, "Infernal Irony", p. 99.

<sup>56</sup> Freccero, "Infernal Irony", p. 99.

false claims made by many of Hell's occupants, especially by those who claim to be innocent, like Francesca.<sup>57</sup> If the Pilgrim took the inscription literally, he might have taken the last line of the inscription seriously, prompting him to turn back and walk away from the journey altogether. Doing so would have led him, and the *Commedia's* readers, right back in to the *selva oscura*. In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, a literal reading of the inscription challenges the conception that creation was made through God's *caritas*. If God is without *caritas*, then there is no reason to hope. If the *Commedia's* readers abandoned hope, and took the inscription literally, then they too might put down the book and, in the words of Francesca *non leggere avante* (*Inf.* 5.138).

Many of these claims seem, at least partially, self-inflated and are not straight-forward. If Hell's intended purpose is to dispense God's justice, as lines 5–6 suggest, then Hell must serve a purpose after the Final Judgement. If that were the case, then the inscription is accurate in claiming to be eternal. However, the inscription also claims that punishment and judgement are God's basic motives for the creation of Hell, rather than God's *caritas*; this claim is fundamentally discordant to Scripture's central message. According to *De doct.* 1.11.11, God adopted a human form to save humanity, rather than condemn it to eternal damnation and punishment. Therefore, the inscription's claim seemingly misrepresents the full picture of God's relationship with humanity.

When read through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, a literal reading of the inscription presents claims that are inconsistent with Scripture and dismisses the *caritas* that unites God with humanity through Christ.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, reading the inscription through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* highlights the

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<sup>57</sup> Such as Francesca, see Chapter 3 section 3.1.1. This need for an explanation extends to events, such as the earthquake at the end of *Purgatorio* 20; see Chapter 3 section 3.2.2.

<sup>58</sup> Just as Piccarda describes her relationship with God and others in *Paradiso* 3; see Chapter 3 section 3.1.2.

inscription's lack of instruction for reordering and repairing relationships through Christ's Double Love Commandment. While the inscription acknowledges the Trinity, and Hell's role is executing God's justice, it also seems to exemplify the displacement of responsibility for the very punishments Hell distributes. In other words, like Francesca, the inscription misrepresents God as *frui*. Rather than present God as the highest good who extends *caritas* to creation, God is presented as the creator of grief, pain, and loss. Reading these claims through a Christological lens further highlight the inscription's *cupiditas* and message of hopelessness. Apart from lines 6 and 9, the inscription constantly refers to itself:

*Per **me** si va ne la città dolente.  
Per **me** si va ne l'eterno dolore.  
Per **me** si va tra la perduta gente.  
Giustizia mosse il **mio** alto fattore;  
**fecemi** la divina podestate,  
la somma sapienza e'l primo amore.  
Dinanzi a **me** non fuor cose create  
se non etterne, e **io** eterno duro.  
Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate.*

If the inscription were read literally, then readers would be led straight to Hell as the claims made set a moral precedent of *cupiditas* and narcissism. The inscription's self-inflated views are reflected in the souls the Pilgrim speaks to along the way, such as Francesca who fails to acknowledge Paolo at her side or her responsibility for her actions which brought them to Hell. In Augustinian terms, the inscription encourages a misreading of the *uti*, or the things which are signs directing readers to God as *frui*. When Hell's inscription claims *per me*, it replaces *caritas* as the foundation of proper relationships and displaces the love that is owed to God and neighbours in their appropriate measure and order. The inscription offers no path to seeing the Father, nor does it offer any way of building on the Double Love Commandment with others. These hermeneutical contradictions certainly contribute to the ambiguity of the author's inscription. If, on the other hand, the inscription is read through the correct hermeneutical filter,

as God's other Words should be read, the inscription sets a very clear path for navigating and avoiding the kind of attitudes and actions that led the occupants of Hell to their eternal damnation. Failure to read the inscription through the correct hermeneutical filter may lead readers into the *città dolente... eterno dolore... perduta gente*.

### 4.3. The Gates of Dis

There is a treasure trove of scholarship on the *Commedia*'s infusion of Biblical quotes, themes, and stories in its narrative. As with the Statius episode, discussed in the previous chapter, the Biblical references that precede the arrival of the heavenly messenger in *Inferno* 9 establish a Christological framework through which the episode outside the Gates of Dis can be read.<sup>59</sup> What makes this episode stand-out from other similar passages in the *Commedia* is the combination of hermeneutical prompts and Biblical references; both of which guide readers to apply a Christological hermeneutic to their reading of the episode. By hermeneutical prompts, I mean the addresses to the readers in *Inferno* 8 and 9 which are closely intertwined with the Biblical references in this episode. It is my argument that when this episode is read through a Christological lens, the rescue of Dante's Pilgrim at the Gates of Dis readers witness a re-enactment of Christ's Harrowing of Hell.

As the Pilgrim and Virgil approach the City of Dis, the Pilgrim sees the demons guarding the city gates in *Inf.* 8.82–83: *Io vidi più di mille in su le porte | da ciel piovuti* (At the gate I saw more than a thousand that had rained down from Heaven). These are the rebellious fallen angels, now demons, who fell with Lucifer as described in Isaiah 14:15: *Verumtamen ad infernum detraheris, in profundum*

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<sup>59</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.2.

*laci* (But you were brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit).<sup>60</sup> C.H. Grandgent suggests these are the demons who both fell with Lucifer and attempted to block Christ's descent during the Harrowing; Dante depicts them as, "still possessed by the pride that caused their original fall" for their refusal to let the Pilgrim pass.<sup>61</sup> Singleton adds in his commentary the image of the fallen angels from John's Apocalypse in 12:9 when Lucifer and his rebels were banished from Heaven: *et projectus est in terram, et angeli ejus cum illo missi sunt* (he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him).<sup>62</sup> The demons in this canto recall the neutral angels the Pilgrim saw in *Inferno* 3. Assigned to the Vestibule, the neutral angels refused to side with either God or Lucifer, leaving them stationed outside of Hell-proper where the Pilgrim hears them weeping and wailing in *Inf.* 3.37–39:

*“Mischiate sono a quel cattivo coro  
de li angeli che non furon ribelli  
né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro”.*

(“They are mixed with that cowardly chorus of angels who were not rebels yet were not faithful to God, but were for themselves”.)

Reading this passage through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the neutral angels who “*per sé fuoro*” epitomise *cupiditas*. They refused to side with either God or Lucifer in order to wait for the outcome most beneficial for themselves. Their *cupiditas* is the love for themselves and their refusal to observe the proper order to love owed to God. Commentaries note Dante's originality in adding these neutral angels who are not mentioned in Scripture.<sup>63</sup> Carroll suggests these are the

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<sup>60</sup> Ezekiel 28:6–19 also records Lucifer's fall as a result of his arrogance and pride.

<sup>61</sup> C.H. Grandgent, commentary on *Inf.* 8.125; *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, edited and annotated by C.H. Grandgent (Boston: 1909 – 1913), edited by Andrew Shiflett, *Dartmouth Dante Project* <<https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>> [accessed 28 January 2018].

<sup>62</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Inf.* 8.83.

<sup>63</sup> Grandgent says neutral angels are mentioned in the Syriac version of the apocryphal *Apocalypse of St Paul*; see his commentary on *Inf.* 3.37. Hollander notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 3.37–39 that there is some dispute regarding the origins of the neutral angels and whether Dante is following a medieval tradition. See Francesco Mazzoni, *Saggio di un nuovo commento alla Divina Commedia: “Inferno” –Canti I–III* (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), pp. 368–376. Freccero, “The Neutral



Lukewarm referenced in Apocalypse 3:16, *sed quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo* (So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth).<sup>64</sup> They are neither punished in Hell-proper nor will they ever be saved. Ironically, they do join with other neutrals in the Vestibule to create Hell's "*cattivo coro*", which may be a reference to Christ's description of Hell in Matthew 13:42: *in caminum ignis. Ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium* ("the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"). Luke 13:28 uses the same phrase regarding the separation between the blessed and the damned: *Ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium: cum videritis Abraham, et Isaac, et Jacob, et omnes prophetas in regno Dei, vos autem expelli foras* ("There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out"). It is interesting to note that in *Inf.* 8.65, the Pilgrim describes the loud wailing from the souls at the Gates of Dis: *l'orecchie mi percosse un duolo* (for my ears were now struck by a shrieking). Just as in *Inferno* 3, the Pilgrim is overwhelmed by the sound of wailing and weeping: *Quivi sospiri, pianti e alti guai | risonavan per l'aere senza stelle* (There sighs, weeping, loud wailing resounded through the starless air; *Inf.* 3.22–23). In both instances, the disturbing sounds heighten the Pilgrim's fear and uncertainty regarding his own safety. These two elements further link the two cantos together.

As he approaches the City of Dis, the Pilgrim says he sees a city on fire: *"già le sue meschite | là entro certe ne la valle cerno, | vermiglie come se di foco uscite | fossero"* ("already I discern its mosques there clearly within the moat, as red as if they had just come out of the fire"; *Inf.* 8.70–73). Virgil confirms the Pilgrim's observation in *Inf.* 8.73–75: *"Il foco eterno | ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse, | come tu vedi in questo*

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Angels", in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 110–118. Bruno Nardi, *Dal Convivio alla Commedia* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1960; repr. 1992), pp. 331–350.

<sup>64</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Inf.* 3.31–57.

*basso inferno*” (“The eternal fire that burns within it makes them glow red, as you see in this lower Hell”).<sup>65</sup> The Pilgrim’s fear is more than justified based on what he has witnessed thus far. It is in this tension that the *Commedia*’s readers are addressed for the first time:

*Pensa, lettore, se io mi sconfortai  
nel suon de le parole maladette,  
ché non credetti ritornarci mai. (Inf. 8.94–96)*

(Think, reader, if I became weak at the sound of those cursed words, for I did not believe I would ever return here.)

It is the Pilgrim, now acting as the author of the *Commedia*’s narrative, who is addressing his readers. Singleton writes in his commentary that the Pilgrim is inviting the readers to “put themselves in his place at that moment”.<sup>66</sup> Spitzer argues this address is aimed at eliciting an empathetic response from readers, or at least prompting readers to reflect on what they are reading.<sup>67</sup> The Pilgrim’s recollection of the events brings him back to the drama outside the Gates of Dis and his feelings of terror, but the address reminds readers that he survived the experience.

Virgil reassures the Pilgrim in *Inf.* 8.104–105: “*Non temer, ché ’l nostro passo | non ci può tòrre alcun: da tal n’è dato*” (“Do not fear, for our passage no one can prevent, it is granted by such a one”).<sup>68</sup> There is hope in Virgil’s words which, no doubt, are based on Beatrice’s promise in *Inferno* 2 regarding the Pilgrim’s safe passage, mentioned earlier. One of the most recurrent phrases in Scripture is “*Nolite timere*” (“Do not be afraid”), which was said by Christ at least sixteen times

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<sup>65</sup> Singleton notes in his commentary on *Inf.* 8.75 that “*basso inferno*” is Lower Hell and is referenced in Psalm 85[86]:13, *quia misericordia tua magna est super me, et eruisti animam meam ex inferno inferiori* (For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol).

<sup>66</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Inf.* 8.94.

<sup>67</sup> Spitzer, “Addresses to the Reader”.

<sup>68</sup> Hermann Oelsner argues in his commentary that *da tal* (in line 105) is a reference to God, “but the Holy Name is not mentioned in Hell”. The absence of God’s name here further links cantos 3 and 8 as the inscription above the Hell Gate does not name God directly. This would also link the passages to *Inferno* 4 which does not name Christ directly in Virgil’s account of the Harrowing; see Chapter 3 section 3.2.1.

in the Gospels.<sup>69</sup> In this episode, it is Virgil who reassures the Pilgrim that help is on the way with a specific promise:

[...] *“Tu, perch’ io m’adiri,  
non sbigottir, ch’io vincerò la prova,  
qual ch’a la difension dentro s’aggiri”.*  
*Questa lor tracotanza non è nova,  
ché già l’usaro a men segreta porta,  
la qual sanza serrame ancor si trova:  
sovr’ essa vedestù la scritta morta.  
E già di qua da lei discende l’erta,  
passando per li cerchi sanza scorta,  
tal che per lui ne fia la terra aperta”.* (*Inf.* 8.121–130)

(“You, though I am angered, do not be dismayed, for I will overcome this test, however they scurry about inside to prevent it. This overweening of theirs is not new; they use it once before at a less secret gate, which still cannot be barred: above it you saw the dead writing. And already, on this side of it, there comes down the slope, passing through the circles without a guide, such a one that by him the city will be opened to us”.)

Lines 124–126 are a reference to Hell’s outer gate with the inscription from canto 3; the doors will always remain open after Christ forced them open during his Harrowing. Singleton’s commentary mentions Biblical references in which Christ forces the Gates of Hell open: Psalm 106 (107):16, *Quia contrivit portas aereas, et vectes ferreos confregit* (For he shatters the doors of bronze, and cuts in two the bars of iron), and Matthew 16:18b, *et portae inferi non praevalent adversus eam* (“and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it”).<sup>70</sup> It is important to note that at this

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<sup>69</sup> See Genesis 15:1, 21:17, 26:24, 35:17, 43:23, 46:3, 50:19 and 21; Exodus 14:13 and 20:20; Numbers 14:9 and 21:34; Deuteronomy 1:21 and 29, 3:2 and 22, 7:18, 20:1, 31:6 and 8; Joshua 8:1, 10:8 and 25, 11:6; Judges 4:18 and 6:23; Ruth 3:11; 1 Samuel 4:20, 12:20, 22:23, 23:17, 28:13; 2 Samuel 9:7 and 13:28; 1 Kings 17:13; 2 Kings 1:15, 6:16, 19:6, 25:24; 1 Chronicles 22:13 and 28:20; 2 Chronicles 20:17 and 32:7; Nehemiah 4:14; Job 5:21, 11:15, 21:9, 33:7, 39:16 and 22; Psalms 3:6, 23:4, 27:1 and 3, 46:2, 49:16, 56:4 and 11, 78:53, 91:5, 112:7–8, 118:6; Proverbs 3:24–25 and 31:21; Isaiah 7:4, 8:12, 10:24, 12:2, 35:4, 37:6, 40:9, 41:10 and 13–14, 43:1 and 5, 44:2 and 8, 51:7, 54:4 and 14; Jeremiah 1:8, 10:5, 17:8, 23:4, 30:10, 40:9, 42:11, 46:27–28; Lamentations 3:57; Ezekiel 2:6 and 3:9; Daniel 10:12 and 19; Joel 2:21–22; Zephaniah 3:15–16; Haggai 2:5; Zechariah 8:13 and 15; Matthew 1:20, 10:26, 28, and 31, 14:26–27, 17:6–7, 28:4–5, 8, and 10; Mark 4:40, 5:36, 6:50; Luke 1:12–13, 30, and 74, 2:9–10, 5:10, 8:50, 12:4–5, 7, and 32; John 6:20, 12:15, 14:1 and 27; Acts 18:9 and 27:24; Romans 8:15 and 31, and 13:3; 1 Corinthians 16:10 and 13; Philippians 1:14 and 4:6; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 11:23 and 27, and 13:5–6; 1 Peter 3:6 and 13–14; 1 John 4:18; John’s Apocalypse 1:17 and 2:10.

<sup>70</sup> Singleton’s commentary on *Inf.* 8.124–126 also mentions the reference to *Aen.* 6.127: *“Noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Dis”* (“Night and day the door of gloomy Dis stands open”); trans. Singleton).

moment, Virgil is confident that help will come and move them further on their journey. It is unclear how he knows about the messenger making his way down to the fifth circle, or how he can track his movements. This passage links their current situation to Christ's Harrowing in the lines that reference a "*segreta porta*" which "*sanza serrame ancor si trova*" which is a reference to when Christ forced his way past demons attempting to block him out of Hell. This passage also links the present moment to the Pilgrim's own *descendus ad infernos* by referencing the "*scritta morta*". The demons' failure to block Christ's entry is echoed in their attempt to block the Pilgrim's entry into the City of Dis is another element linking cantos 3 and 8.<sup>71</sup> By stacking these references into this passage, the readers are given a clear foreshadowing of the Pilgrim's successful entry past another set of gates, not unlike Christ's entry past the Hell Gate. By mentioning the inscription in canto 8, readers can link the Pilgrim's journey to Christ's own Harrowing and be assured that the momentary terror the Pilgrim feels will be soothed through a, albeit veiled, Christological hope.

That is not to say there is not a real sense of dread in this episode; the Pilgrim is justifiably terrified. Whatever confidence Virgil had at the end of canto 8 seems to have weakened at the beginning of canto 9:

*"Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga,"  
cominciò el, "se non... Tal ne s'offerse.  
Oh quanto tarda a me ch'altri qui giunga!" (Inf. 9.7–9)*

("Still, we must win the fight," he began, "if not... Such a one was offered to us. Oh how long it seems to me until someone arrives!")

Mark Musa notes the shift in Virgil's tone from optimistic at the end of *Inferno* 8 to pessimistic at the beginning of *Inferno* 9 occurs when the Furies threaten to turn the Pilgrim to stone.<sup>72</sup> Musa suggests that to Virgil, the Furies represent the

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<sup>71</sup> Oelsner suggests these are the same demons who attempted to block Christ during his Harrowing; see commentary on *Inf.* 8.124–127.

<sup>72</sup> Mark Musa, *Advent at the Gates: Dante's Comedy*, p. 69.

mythological monsters from his own poetry and that his fear of them represents his “total submission to Pagan laws”.<sup>73</sup> In other words, whatever sense of confidence he felt knowing the messenger was on his way to help, or received when he was first commissioned by Beatrice, evaporated when faced with the literal demons of his Roman world. When the Furies arrive, Virgil covers the Pilgrim’s eyes and turns him away from them, fearing that Medusa will come and turn the Pilgrim to stone: “*Volgiti ’n dietro e tien lo viso chiuso*” (“Turn around and keep your eyes shut”; *Inf.* 9.55). Musa suggests the shift in Virgil’s mood from *Inferno* 8 to 9 offers insight into Virgil’s damnable sin: the ability to recognise heavenly power (Reason), but the failure to draw strength or trust in the Divine promise of salvation (Faith).<sup>74</sup> In Augustinian terms, Virgil may be unable to fully recognise God as *frui* and is therefore unable to follow the commandment of loving, and trusting, God as the highest good.

This new threat prompts the Pilgrim, as the *Commedia*’s author, to address his readers again:

*O voi ch’avete li ’ntelletti sani,  
mirate la dottrina che s’asconde  
sotto ’l velame de li versi strani. (Inf. 9.61–63)*

(O you who have sound intellects, gaze on the teaching that is hidden beneath the veil of the strange verses.)

Readers are directed to engage with the text and consider the hidden meaning to the following passages. In the literal sense, readers are asked to look for the hidden meaning of the text. In other words, to actively engage with the text hermeneutically and read beyond what is written on the page. Hollander’s commentary notes the division among commentary tradition: some commentaries argue the address directs readers to consider the meaning of

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<sup>73</sup> Musa, *Advent at the Gates*, p. 70.

<sup>74</sup> Musa, *Advent at the Gates*, p. 73.

previous verses, *i.e.* the coming of Medusa or the Furies, while others suggest the address directs readers to interpret the meaning of the approaching messenger.<sup>75</sup>

When read through the filter of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics, there may be a Biblical reference in the address to Exodus 34:29–35; after Moses received the Ten Commandments, his face was seen to be glowing, *et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua ex consortio sermonis Domini* ("did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God"; Exodus 34:29). This required Moses to cover his face with a veil. St Paul refers to Moses and the veil in 2 Corinthians 3:6–17 as a reference to the new covenant between God and God's people. In verse 6, Paul says that the new covenant has been revealed, *non littera, sed Spiritu: littera enim occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat* ("not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life"). Paul says in verses 12–13 that by covering his face, Moses kept God's glory veiled: *Habentes igitur talem spem, multa fiducia utimur: et non sicut Moyses ponebat velamen super faciem suam, ut non intenderent filii Israel in faciem ejus* ("we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside"). In verse 14, Paul says that the veil has remained with God's chosen people ever since Moses but now, *quoniam in Christo evacuatur* ("only in Christ is it set aside").

Musa says the underlying Christological significance of the events in *Inferno* 9 becomes clear when read through the hermeneutical instructions of *Inf.* 9.61–63 which explicitly asks readers "to interpret the literal sense of the narrative figuratively".<sup>76</sup> Musa argues the Christological framework begins at the end of *Inferno* 8 with Virgil's optimistic promise to the Pilgrim that a messenger is

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<sup>75</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 9.58–63. See Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*, pp. 239–246, and Iannucci, "Dottrina e allegoria in *Inferno* VIII, 67–IX, 105", in *Dante e le forme dell'allegoresi*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo, 1987), pp. 99–124.

<sup>76</sup> Musa, *Advent at the Gates*, p. 66.

on the way to help.<sup>77</sup> In terms of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics, in order to read and understand Scripture properly, the text must be free of any veiled or unclear meaning. In light of Paul's point about the veil in 2 Corinthians 3, this passage is to be read in the spiritual sense, or through Christ's Double Love Commandment. But to which passage must reader read beyond the literal? The imagery of the Furies and Virgil's momentary panic? Or the following lines regarding the heavenly messenger? To make a case for the illumination of the *Commedia's* Christological content, I argue it must be the latter.

Upon the arrival of the heavenly messenger in *Inferno* 9, the Pilgrim hears the *fracasso d'un suon* (the crashing of a fearful sound; *Inf.* 9.65), which leads to the shaking of both banks (*Inf.* 9.66), caused by *un vento | impetuoso per li avversi ardori* (a wind made impetuous by conflicting heats; *Inf.* 9.67–68). The strength of the wind is said to be so powerful that it caused violent currents on the River Styx. These details closely resemble the storm from the Gospel of Mark, Matthew, and John when Christ walked on water. In Mark 6:48 the disciples are described as, *laborantes in remigando (erat enim ventus contrarius eis)* (labouring in rowing (for the wind was against them)). Matthew 14:24 records, *Navicula autem in medio mari jactabatur fluctibus: erat enim contrarius ventus* (But by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them). And John 6:18 says, *Mare autem, vento magno flante, exsurgebat* (The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing). In these three Gospels, the storm is described as being so strong that the disciples were frightened they would drown.

It is into this dramatic tension of Virgil and the Pilgrim's mounting fear, which mirrors the disciples' own fear, that the heavenly messenger arrives as *un cb'al passo | passava Stige con le piante asciutte* (one who was walking across Styx with dry feet; *Inf.* 9.80–81). This is an obvious Christological image recalling Christ

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<sup>77</sup> Musa, *Advent at the Gates*, p. 66.

walking on water in Mark 6:48–49: *et circa quartam vigiliam noctis venit ad eos ambulans supra mare: et volebat praeterire eos. At illi ut viderunt eum ambulantem supra mare, putaverunt phantasma esse, et exclamaverunt* (he came toward them around the fourth watch, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out).<sup>78</sup>

The phrase *un ch'al passo passava* from *Inf.* 8 is unmistakably similar to *et volebat praeterire eos* in Mark 6:48. Such a play on words may be coincidental, but the reference adds to the Christological features of the heavenly messenger. The phrase, *illi ut viderunt eum ambulantem* (intended to pass them by) from Mark 6:49 seems to echo the messenger's annoyed attitude. With the storm raging about him, the messenger marches to the Gates of Dis, forcing them to open without physically touching them:

*Abi quanto mi pareva pien di disdegno!  
Venne a la porta e con una vergchetta<sup>79</sup>  
l'aperse, che non v'ebbe alcun ritegno. (Inf. 9.88–90)*

(Ah, how full of disdain he seemed to me! He came to the gate and with a little wand he opened it, for nothing held it.)

In the Gospels, Christ does acknowledge the disciples as he walks by their boat. In Mark 6:50, Christ reassures the disciples who cry out in fear: *Confidite, ego sum: nolite timere* (“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid”). Matthew 14:27 records similar words: *Habete fiduciam: ego sum, nolite timere* (“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid”). And in John 6:20, Christ says, *Ego sum: nolite timere* (“It is I; do not be afraid”). In the *Inferno*, the Pilgrim notes that the messenger says nothing to them, much less acknowledges them: *Poi si rivolse per la strada lorda, | e non fé motto a noi* (Then he turned back along the filthy way and said not a word to us; *Inf.* 9.100–101); I will

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<sup>78</sup> See also Matthew 14:25, *Quarta enim vigilia noctis, venit ad eos ambulans super mare* (And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea).

<sup>79</sup> Hollander notes the significance of the “*verghetta*” (wand) the messenger carries as it is commonly associated with Mercury as featured in Ovid, *Metam.* 2.819. See Hollander, “The Tragedy of Divination in *Inferno* XX”, in *Studies in Dante* (Ravenna: Longo, 1980), p. 181 fn, and Susanna Barsella, “The Mercurial *integumentum* of the heavenly messenger (*Inferno* IX 79–103)”, *Letteratura italiana antica*, 4 (2003), 371–395 (p. 386).



return to this point below. First, it must be asked where is the calming reassurance from the messenger to the terrified Pilgrim and his guide? The absence of these words may be a deliberate reminder to the readers that while the messenger has a lot of similarities to Christ, he is not Christ himself. Carroll notes Dante's depiction of the messenger conjures images of Mercury or Æneas, rather than any specific Christian figure except for his walking across the water and rebuking the demons. Carroll says, "Since his errand is to subdue the rebel angels, he is much more likely to be Michael, the archangel who conquered them in the great war in Heaven".<sup>80</sup> Hollander suggests the messenger's annoyed and brisk attitude is based on God's attitude toward sin in general: "from God's perspective there is nothing worthy of attention in their plight".<sup>81</sup> Therefore, the messenger desires to leave Hell as quickly as he entered it and return to Heaven. Another possibility is that Virgil already extended the Christ-like peace to the Pilgrim, "*Non temer*" at the end of the previous canto; thus, making it unnecessary to hear the words again. The Gospel of Matthew adds the disciple's proclamation, *Vere Filius Dei es* ("Truly you are the Son of God"; Matthew 14:33), which is echoed by the narrator's observation of the messenger in *Inf.* 9.85: *Ben m'accorsi ch'elli era da ciel messo* (Well did I perceive that he was sent from Heaven).

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<sup>80</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Inf.* 9.64–103. This is also the argument of Silvio Pasquazi, ("Messo celeste", *ED* (1971) III, 919–921), based on his interpretation of Apocalypse 12:7–9: *Et factum est praelium magnum in caelo: Michael et angeli ejus praeliabantur cum dracone, et draco pugnabat, et angeli ejus: et non valuerunt, neque locus inventus est eorum amplius in caelo. Et projectus est draco ille magnus, serpens antiquus, qui vocatur diabolus, et Satanas, qui seducit universum orbem: et projectus est in terram, et angeli ejus cum illo missi sunt* (And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him). Regarding the possibility that the messenger is actually the pagan god, Mercury, Hollander suggests that "Dante here gives us an archangel Michael 'dressed up' as Mercury, a fused identity that is not problematic in any way, given Dante's practice of combining pagan and Christian materials"; see his commentary on *Inf.* 9.85. See also Massimo Seriacopi, "Un riscontro testuale inedito per 'dal ciel messo' (*Inferno* IX 85)", *Publications of the Carla Rossi Academy Press*, (1999), <<http://www.cra.phoenixfound.it/epubbf.htm>> [accessed 29 July 2018].

<sup>81</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Inf.* 9.100–103.

Thus, all the details of Christ's walking on water from the Gospels are present, albeit reordered.

These Christological elements are deliberate as they encourage readers to, *mirate la dottrina che s'asconde | sotto 'l velame de li versi strani*, through a Christological filter. As mentioned previously, the messenger's arrival at the beginning of *Inferno* 9 recalls Christ's Harrowing of Hell. Spitzer argues these parallels between Dante's messenger and Christ are intentional and that the Biblical references in both cantos framing the episode serve as guides for the readers to read the events through a Christological lens.<sup>82</sup> Amilcare Iannucci says that the *Inferno's* messenger is "an obvious analogue of Christ" sent from Heaven to specifically help remove the barriers blocking Virgil and the Pilgrim from the City of Dis.<sup>83</sup> Musa argues that the arrival of the messenger in *Inferno* 9 is a re-enactment of both Christ's Harrowing and Second Advent.<sup>84</sup> Although the messenger has nothing to say to Virgil or the Pilgrim, he does have plenty to say to the demons at the Gates of Dis:

*"O cacciati del ciel, gente dispetta",  
cominciò elli in su l'orribil soglia,  
"ond' esta oltracotanza in voi s'alletta?  
Perché recalcitrate a quella voglia  
a cui non puote il fin mai esser mozzò,  
e che più volte v'ha cresciuta doglia?  
Che giova ne le fata dar di cozzò?  
Cerberò vostro, se ben vi ricorda,  
ne porta ancor pelato il mento e 'l gozzò". (Inf. 9.91–99)*

("O driven forth from Heaven, despised people," he began on the horrid threshold, "how is this overweening nursed in you? Why do you kick back against that Will whose ends can never be cut short and which has many times increased your sufferings? What is the good of butting against fate? Your Cerberus, if you remember, still has his chin and gullet stripped because of it".)

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<sup>82</sup> Spitzer, "Addresses to the Reader", pp. 148–149.

<sup>83</sup> Iannucci, "Beatrice in Limbo: A Metaphoric Harrowing of Hell", p. 31.

<sup>84</sup> Musa argues there are three re-enactments of Christ's Advent in the *Commedia*; *Advent at the Gates*, pp. 65–84. The messenger's arrival in *Inferno* 9 is the first. The second is in *Purgatorio* 8 when Virgil and the Pilgrim witness two angels fly over the souls in Anti-Purgatory, keeping watch against a serpent who appears in the garden. The third is in *Purgatorio* 30 when Beatrice arrives and judges the Pilgrim's actions since her death.

The messenger's rebuke of the rebellious angels is as sharp as any of the verbal spars Christ had with demons, as recorded in the Gospels.<sup>85</sup> The message is clear: the demons' insolence cannot hinder God's Will for the Pilgrim and his guide to continue their journey; furthermore, their disobedience is more harmful to themselves than anyone else. The messenger ends his rebuke reminding the demons of the last time they attempted to block a son of a god, referring to Hercules rather than Christ: "*Cerbero vostro, se ben vi ricorda, | ne porta ancor pelato il mento e 'l gozzoso*".<sup>86</sup> This reference is unexpectedly from ancient mythology, rather than Biblical, but it serves as a sharp reminder of what happens to those who try to hinder God's Will.

The messenger's *descensus ad inferni* serves as a bridge between pagan mythology and Christian theology. Iannucci suggests that the messenger's actions are a fusion of Christ's Harrowing and the classical hero archetype, such as Hercules referenced in the passage.<sup>87</sup> Clarence Miller argues *Inferno* 9 deliberately fuses the story of Hercules's visit to Hades with Christ's Harrowing of Hell as an example of the *Commedia's* merging classical mythology with Christian theology.<sup>88</sup> Miller also notes Dante's careful construction of a narrative that stacks Hercules and Christ together so that when read allegorically, the Christian story of God's salvation through Christ is revealed on multiple interpretative levels. Miller says, "Christ as harrower of hell is presented not only literally (*Inf.* 4.52–54) but also through the surrogate figure or 'type' of Hercules [in *Inferno* 9]".<sup>89</sup> In a sense,

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<sup>85</sup> See Matthew 4:1–11, and 23, 9:32–34, 12:15–16, and 22–30, 8:16–17, and 28–34, 10:42, 15:21–28, 17:14–21, 25:41; Mark 1:12–13, 23–28, 32–34, and 39, 3:11, and 22–30, 5:1–20, 7:24–30, 9:14–29, and 38–41, 16:9; Luke 4:1–13, 33–37, 40–41, and 44, 8:26–39, 9:37–43a, and 49–50, 11:14–23, and, 13:10–17.

<sup>86</sup> The specific reference in this passage is to Hercules chaining Cerberus from Hesiod's *Theogony*. Tozer suggests Dante's reference comes from Vergil's account of the story in *Aeneid* 6.395–396; commentary on *Inf.* 9.98–99.

<sup>87</sup> Iannucci, "Beatrice in Limbo", p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> Clarence Miller, "Hercules and his Labours as Allegories of Christ and his Victory over Sin in Dante's *Inferno*"; discussed previously in Chapter 3 section 3.2.1.

<sup>89</sup> Miller, "Hercules and his Labours", p. 1.

Hercules' journey through Hades is a foreshadowing of Christ's Harrowing of Hell. The mentioning of Hercules in *Inf.* 9.91–99 should have the same hermeneutical effect as Virgil's account of the Harrowing of Hell from *Inferno* 4 as both foreshadow the Pilgrim's imminent rescue. Both Miller and Hollander argue that Dante used classical characters and stories in the *Commedia* as prefigurations and revelations of the Christian story, much like the Old Testament prefigures the New Testament.<sup>90</sup> Thus, this hermeneutical fluidity allows for a reading of Christ's Harrowing in Christian and non-Christian sources.

Returning to a previous point regarding the messenger's quick appearance in the narrative, in *Inf.* 9.100–101 the messenger is said to have departed without saying a word to Virgil or the Pilgrim:

[...] *ma fé semblante*  
*d'omo cui altra cura stringa e morda*  
*che quella di colui che li è davante;*  
*e noi movemmo i piedi inver' la terra,*  
*sicuri appresso le parole sante. (Inf. 9.101–105)*

([...] he had the look of a man whom other cares urge and gnaw than his who stands before him; and we directed our feet toward the city, unafraid after the holy words.)

The serious demeanour of the messenger suggests he takes no notice of the storm whirling around him or the demons who, moments before, had Virgil and the Pilgrim cowering in fear. Rather, the messenger is described as one who “*fé semblante | d'omo cui altra cura stringa e morda | che quella di colui che li è davante*”.

Iannucci argues the messenger's arrival and actions in *Inferno* 9 are meant to recall Virgil's version of the Harrowing of Hell from *Inferno* 4. Iannucci says, “this adaptation of the descent, like the traditional version, celebrates the victory of the forces of good over the forces of evil, and man's release from the slavery of

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<sup>90</sup> See Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia*.

sin”.<sup>91</sup> In other words, the messenger, like Christ, descends to aid God’s chosen vessel and guide him back to God. As discussed in a previous chapter, Virgil’s version of the Harrowing depicts Christ as a classical hero rather than the Son of God. Iannucci suggests that Virgil’s version of the Harrowing should be read not just as a continuation of Christian theology, but also as a foreshadowing of the Pilgrim and Virgil’s dramatic rescue later in the *Inferno*. I agree with Iannucci and Miller regarding the parallels between the messenger’s *descensus* and classic hero archetypes. However, missing from these discussions is how the Biblical references and addresses to the *Commedia*’s readers work together to construct a hermeneutical framework that highlights the Christological significance of the episode. The next section on the Beatitudes will demonstrate how Dante’s Biblical references can create a specific Christological lens through which the *Commedia* can be read Christologically.

#### 4.4. The Beatitudes in *Purgatorio*

This is a case study in two parts. The first discusses the Beatitudes in terms of the order in which they are presented and their function as a transitional feature between each of Purgatory’s terraces. As mentioned previously, the Beatitudes are examples of Biblical references that guide, if not direct, the moral behaviour of those who “read” them to become more Christ-like as well as restore the proper order of love for God and neighbour. The second part examines *how* the penitent are transformed through the work of Scripture’s moral direction and *caritas*.<sup>92</sup> For instance, the Proudful on the first terrace are presented with multiple examples from Scripture of those who are *pauperes spiritu* (“poor in spirit”;

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<sup>91</sup> Iannucci, “Beatrice in Limbo”, p. 31.

<sup>92</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the Beatitudes play a role in the reconditioning of Purgatory’s occupants. The intended audience of the Beatitudes is not made explicit; the Pilgrim, and those who read the *Purgatorio*, “read” the Beatitudes. There is no indication that these blessings are given to all who climb from terrace to terrace.

Matthew 5:3) as part of their moral reconditioning. Meanwhile, the Envious learn how to become the *misericordes* (“merciful”; Matthew 5:7) from the *caritas* they receive from others. I chose the *Purgatorio*’s Beatitudes for two reasons: the first is what I perceive to be a direct connection between proper moral direction and the restoration of the proper order of love, which the rest of this section will argue. The second is because the Beatitudes appear in between the terraces, not just the terraces themselves. This suggests that the “space in between” is just as important to the Pilgrim’s journey up the mountain as each individual terrace. The Pilgrim hears each Beatitude at transitional moments, literally as he leaves Pride behind for the next vice he must encounter. Each Beatitude reinforces the moral lesson revealed on each terrace. Purgatory itself is the “space in between” Hell and Paradise and, according to Dante’s system of the Christian afterlife, is the path that all must travel to reach their eternal rest in God. In terms of the *Commedia*’s narrative, the *Purgatorio* is the “space in between” Dante’s *Inferno* and *Paradiso*.

The Beatitudes, as Biblical references, are a recurring feature in the *Commedia*. According to Peter Hawkins, there are “30 direct citations and roughly 40 allusions” to Scripture in just the *Purgatorio*.<sup>93</sup> In the context of Dante’s Purgatory, the Beatitudes serve as encouragement for the Pilgrim, and possibly Virgil too, as they ascend to the top of the mountain. Dante’s ordering of the Beatitudes deviates from the way in which they appear in Matthew 5:3–10. Dante purposefully pairs them with their opposing vices. Stanley Benfell says it was common among medieval Biblical exegetes to list only seven of the eight Beatitudes.<sup>94</sup> Arguably, Dante drew from a long-standing tradition of re-ordering the Beatitudes to reflect a relationship with the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>93</sup> Peter S. Hawkins, *Dante’s Testaments: Essays in Scriptural Imagination*, p. 43.

<sup>94</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 120.

Nancy Lindheim says Augustine of Hippo, Gregory the Great, Hugh of St Victor, and Thomas Aquinas each recognised a relationship between Christ's Beatitudes and the Holy Spirit's Gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.<sup>95</sup> Benfell notes that Hugh of St Victor's *De quinque Septenis* matches seven Beatitudes with the Seven Capital Vices or Seven Deadly Sins.<sup>96</sup> John Mahoney agrees with Benfell regarding the connection between Dante's *Purgatorio* and Hugh's *De quinque Septenis*, as well as notes that the *Purgatorio*'s Beatitudes are divided into two categories: God's gifts to humanity through Christ (humility, meekness, sorrow) and gifts needed by humanity to ascend to God through Christ (justice, mercy, purity, and peace).<sup>97</sup> I would keep Mahoney's categories but emphasise that each virtue was exemplified by Christ for humanity to follow in order to restore their relationships with both God and neighbours. Benfell says each terrace is a step set in the direction of Christ; therefore, the penitent are now devoted exclusively to spiritual life *in imitatio Christi*.<sup>98</sup> Again, I would add that the penitent's focus in Purgatory is on the moral examples of righteousness taught in Scripture and modelled by Christ. Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi says regardless of the theological sources Dante drew inspiration from, the Beatitudes help shape the hermeneutical framework for reading the *Purgatorio*.<sup>99</sup> I have discussed this utilisation of the Bible before in my discussion of Statius in the previous chapter.<sup>100</sup>

Dante's Pilgrim receives his first blessing between the first two terraces of Pride and Envy:

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<sup>95</sup> Nancy Lindheim, "Body, Soul, and Immortality: Some Readings in Dante's *Commedia*", *MLN*, 105.1 (1990), 1–32. See also Federigo Tollemache, "*beatitudini evangeliche*", *ED* (1970), 1: 540–541.

<sup>96</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 120.

<sup>97</sup> John F. Mahoney, "The Role of Statius and the Structure of the *Purgatorio*", *Dante Studies*, 79 (1961), 11–38 (p. 25). See also Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 120.

<sup>98</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 120.

<sup>99</sup> Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, "Le beatitudini e la struttura poetica del *Purgatorio*", *Giornale storico della letteratura Italiana*, 161 (1984), 1–29 (p. 20).

<sup>100</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.2.2.

*Noi volgendo ivi le nostre persone,  
“Beati pauperes spiritu!” voci  
cantaron sì che nol diria sermone.  
Abi quanto son diverse quelle foci  
da l’infernali! ché quivi per canti  
s’entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci. (Purg. 12.109–114)*

(As we were turning into it, voices sang: “*Beati pauperes spiritu!*” in a way that speech cannot describe. Ah, how different are these passageways from those in Hell! for here one enters with singing, down there with fierce laments.)

The blessing comes from the first Beatitude in Matthew 5:3, *Beati pauperes spiritu: quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum* (“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”). In Purgatory, the Beatitudes emphasise the progress the penitential souls make as they climb the mountain. Eleanor Cook says their upward progress is an imitation of Christ’s *ascendit in montem* from Matthew 5:1.<sup>101</sup> Hawkins argues the Beatitudes reveal the tropological path of the penitential souls who are *in via* (on the road) to God. Therefore, the Beatitudes function as the moral motivation for the penitent to transform their earthly vices into heavenly virtues.<sup>102</sup> Regarding Dante’s abbreviated reference to them, Hawkins says each Beatitude is not recited in full in order to prompt souls (and perhaps readers too) to respond to each blessing and complete the omitted verses.<sup>103</sup> For instance, Cook says when the Pilgrim hears, “*Beati pauperes spiritu!*”, the implied, but omitted, response is “*quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*”.<sup>104</sup> As mentioned before, the blessing references the vice purged in the previous terrace, as well as encourages the Pilgrim to continue forward. Mahoney notes that the higher the Pilgrim and his guide climb, the more the penitent appear to be focused on those virtues which bring them closer to imitating Christ.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, commentaries, such as Singleton’s, note the pairings between the vices to be purged and

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<sup>101</sup> Eleanor Cook, “Scripture as Enigma: Biblical Allusion in Dante’s Earthly Paradise”, *Dante Studies*, 117 (1999), 1–19.

<sup>102</sup> Hawkins, *Dante’s Testaments*, pp. 36–53.

<sup>103</sup> Hawkins, *Dante’s Testaments*, p. 47.

<sup>104</sup> Cook, “Scripture as Enigma”, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> Mahoney, “Role of Statius”, p. 25



replaced by their antithetical virtues; for instance, Pride is paired with Humility as its antithesis.<sup>106</sup>

The next two Beatitudes follow this pattern. Between the second and third terraces, Envy and Wrath respectively, the Pilgrim receives his second blessing:

*Poi giunti fummo a l'angel benedetto,  
con lieta voce disse: "Intrate quinci  
ad un scaleo vie men che li altri eretto".  
Noi montavam, già partiti di linci,  
e "Beati misericordes!" fue  
cantato retro, e "Godì, tu che vinci!" (Purg. 15.34–39)*

(When we reached the blessed angel, with joyful voice he said: "Enter here on a stairway much less steep than the others". We were climbing, already having left him, when "Beati misericordes!" was sung behind us, and "Rejoice, you who overcome!")

This is actually the fifth Beatitude from Matthew 5:7, *Beati misericordes: quoniam ipsi misericordian consequentur* ("Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy").

Again, the omitted blessing offers the moral directive for those who struggle to extend mercy to others. The third blessing is offered between the terraces of Wrath and Sloth:

*e tosto ch'io al primo grado fui,  
senti'mi presso quasi un muover d'ala  
e ventarmi nel viso e dir: "Beati  
pacifici, che son sanz' ira mala!" (Purg. 17.66–69)*

(as soon as I was on the first step, I felt something like the motion of a wing near me, and a wind in my face, and one saying: "Beati pacifici, who are without sinful anger!")

The Beatitude from Matthew 5:9 begins, *Beati pacifici* ("Blessed are the peacemakers"), and ends *quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur* ("for they will be called the children of God"). Dante changes the ending to "*che son sanz' ira mala!*" to better link the blessing to the vice of Wrath. Carroll comments that Wrath is a, "dark

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<sup>106</sup> Singleton's commentary on *Purg.* 12.110 cites Augustine's *De sermone Domini in monte* 1.1.3 and Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theol.* 1–2, q. 69, a. 3, resp. 10–11 as the medieval traditions that note humility as the antithesis of pride.

passion concealing its plans and purposes of revenge”, which is consistent with Dante’s depiction of the Wrathful who are consumed in thick clouds of smoke, “whereas Meekness is a bright and sunny virtue harbouring nothing but on [*sic*] eagerness to help others”.<sup>107</sup>

The fourth blessing between the terraces of Sloth and Avarice also breaks with the previous formulaic style:

*Con l’ali aperte, che parean di cigno,  
volseci in sù colui che sù parlonne,  
tra due pareti del duro macigno.  
Mosse le penne poi e ventilonne,  
“qui lugent” affermando esser “beati,  
ch’avran di consolar l’anime donne”. (Purg. 19.46–51)*

(With open wings like those of a swan, the one who had spoken thus directed us upward, between the two walls of hard granite. Then he moved his feathers and fanned us, affirming “*Qui lugent*” to be “*beati*, whose souls will be possessed of consolation”.)

Again, Dante begins with the Latin from Matthew 5:4, *qui lugent* (“those who mourn”), but switches to the vernacular, “*ch’avran di consolar l’anime donne*”. In this instance, Dante does keep with the Latin’s original meaning in the vernacular blessing. Benfell and Mahoney argue this canto marks a turning point in which the penitent shift from repenting for their misuse of material things to their misuse of God and neighbour.<sup>108</sup> For instance, Benfell says the vice of Sloth is overturned by those who engage others with empathy, because empathy emphasises the importance of human connection over material things.<sup>109</sup>

The fifth and sixth blessings come from the Beatitude in Matthew 5:6: *Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam: quoniam ipsi saturabuntur* (“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled”). Dante splits this Beatitude between the terraces of Avarice and Gluttony. Those who thirst for justice are blessed after the terrace of the Avaricious and Prodigal:

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<sup>107</sup> Carroll, commentary for *Purg.* 17.64–69.

<sup>108</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 130 and Mahoney, “Role of Statius”, p. 26.

<sup>109</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 131.

Già era l'angel dietro a noi rimaso,  
l'angel che n'avea vòlta al sesto giro,  
avendomi dal viso un colpo raso,  
e quei c'hanno a giustizia lor disiro  
detto n'avea "beati", e le sue voci  
con "sitiunt", sanz'altro, ciò fornìro. (*Purg.* 22.1–6)

(Already the angel had remained behind us, the angel who had turned us toward the sixth circle, having erased one wound from my brow, and those who have their desire bent to justice he had called "beati" and his words had filled that out as far as "sitiunt", with nothing more.)

Dante quotes "beati" and "sitiunt" from the Latin and "sanz'altro", meaning there is no implied response from the readers. Compare this to *Purgatorio* 2 when a group of newly arrived souls embark on the mountain's shores singing Psalm 113 (114), *In exitu Israel de Aegypto*. The Pilgrim reports: *cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce | con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto* (they were singing all together with one voice, with as much of that psalm as is written thereafter; *Purg.* 2. 47–48).<sup>110</sup> Dante only writes the first line of the Psalm but assures readers the full Psalm was sung. According to *Purg.* 22.6, Dante says the blessing stops after the word "sitiunt", creating an expectant pause in the narrative which is picked up in *Purg.* 24.148–154:

tal mi senti' un vento dar per mezz'a  
la fronte, e ben senti' mover la piuma,  
che fé sentir d'ambrosia l'orezz'a,  
e senti' dir: "Beati cui alluma  
tanto di grazia che l'amor del gusto  
nel petto lor troppo disir non fuma,  
esuriendo sempre quanto è giusto".

(such a wind did I feel against my forehead, and I heard the feathers moving, scenting the air with ambrosia, and I heard: "Blessed are those whom so much grace illuminates that love of the palate does not smoke with too much desire in their breasts, hungering always for what is just!")

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<sup>110</sup> See Helena Phillips-Robins who has worked on singing in the *Purgatorio* and this passage in particular; "Cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce": Singing and Community in the *Commedia*", pp. 15–16. See also Hollander, "Purgatorio 2: The New Song and the Old", *Lectura Dantis (virginiana)*, 6 (1990), 28–45 (p. 36). See also Singleton "In exitu Israel de Aegypto". Dunstan Tucker, "In exitu Israel de Aegypto": The *Divine Comedy* in the Light of the Easter Liturgy". Peter Armour, "The Theme of Exodus in the First Two Cantos of the *Purgatorio*". Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, pp. 14–15 and 55–69. And Emilio Pasquini, "Dante and the 'Prefaces of Truth': from 'Figure' to 'Completion'", *Italian Studies*, 54 (1999), 18–25.

Again, Dante alters the literal transcription of the Latin Beatitude to present an allegorical and typological interpretation that highlights those who hunger for righteousness in the vernacular: “*Beati cui alluma | tanto di grazia che l’amor del gusto | nel petto lor troppo disir non fuma, | esuriendo sempre quanto è giusto*”. The final blessing returns to the earlier format of reciting from the Latin without alteration:

*Fuor de la fiamma stava in su la riva  
e cantava “Beati mundo corde!”  
in voce assai più che la nostra viva.  
Poscia: “Più non si va, se pria non morde,  
anime sante, il foco: intrate in esso,  
e al cantar di là non siate sorde” (Purg. 27.7–12)*

(He was standing outside the flame, on the bank, and he was singing, “*Beati mundo corde!*”, with a voice much more alive than ours. Then: “You go no further, holy souls, unless the fire bites first; enter into it, and be not deaf to the singing over there”)

This is the last Beatitude from Matthew 5:8, *Beati mundo corde: quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt* (“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”). In addition to using the original Latin verse, Dante also offers a vernacular exposition that ties directly the events of the narrative: “*Più non si va, se pria non morde, | anime sante, il foco*”. The flames of lust must be quenched in these divine flames, only then can they move on to the Earthly Paradise.

Purgatory is the starting point of conforming individual wills to the will of God, as exemplified by Piccarda in *Paradiso* 3 where all are bound together in *caritas*.<sup>111</sup> The Beatitudes function, at least in part, as moral instruction of how we ought to behave on earth. Vittorio Montemaggi suggests that the penitent learn in Purgatory what they should have learned on earth regarding the love of God and neighbours.<sup>112</sup> Montemaggi argues that the work the penitent complete through their penance is the Christological foundation of Piccarda’s love for *carità*

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<sup>111</sup> See Chapter 3 section 3.1.1.

<sup>112</sup> Vittorio Montemaggi, “In Unknowability as Love: The Theology of Dante’s *Commedia*”, in *Dante’s Commedia: Theology as Poetry*, pp. 60–94.

in Paradise.<sup>113</sup> Montemaggi claims that from an intellectual and spiritual perspective, the penitent have the same limited understanding of God as Christ did at the moment of his crucifixion when he cried out *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?* (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”; Matthew 27:46).<sup>114</sup> Montemaggi stresses this moment should not be read as an example of Christ’s despair, but rather as a moment of transformative joy in which Christ’s will conforms to the Will of God.<sup>115</sup> For the penitent, this means that their current pain is temporary. Furthermore, through the purgation of their earthly vices (which they did through their own will), they are allowing Christ’s words and actions to reprogramme their wills into God’s Will. Montemaggi says is that the transformation Christ experienced through his suffering is re-enacted by each of the penitent souls through their own suffering. Montemaggi notes they are, “willingly and joyfully accepting pain, like Christ accepted death on the cross”.<sup>116</sup>

In terms of Augustine’s hermeneutics of *caritas*, the pain the penitent experience is acceptable for the sake of restoring their relationship with God as they are re-conforming the order of relationships with God and neighbours. Matthew Treherne explains that by turning away from their earthly vices the penitent open themselves to the possibility of transformation and praise.<sup>117</sup> For example, in *Purgatorio* 23, the emaciated Gluttons circle around a fruit-bearing and intoxicatingly fragrant tree. Treherne argues the Christological imagery and tone of this canto provides a key example of the penitent not only conforming to the Will of God through their suffering, but are re-assimilating themselves as God’s

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<sup>113</sup> Montemaggi, “In Unknowability as Love”, p. 67.

<sup>114</sup> Montemaggi, “In Unknowability as Love”, p. 67.

<sup>115</sup> Montemaggi, “In Unknowability as Love”, pp. 69, 71–72; see also *Reading Dante’s Commedia as Theology*, p. 179.

<sup>116</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante’s Commedia*, p. 223.

<sup>117</sup> Matthew Treherne, “Liturgical Personhood: Creation, Penitence, and Praise in the *Commedia*”, in *Theology as Poetry*, pp. 131–160 (p. 142).

chosen people through their following of Christ's sacrifice.<sup>118</sup> Yet this transformation cannot be achieved in a vacuum.

The restoration of Christ's Double Love Commandment and the proper order of love are crucial to the process of transformation in Purgatory. Montemaggi says in order for the penitent to be successful in the purgation of their individual vices *and* re-conform their wills into following God's Will for them, they need to be with others. The penitent need to be among their neighbours so that they can extend the love of Christ to others *and* so they can receive a reflection of Christ's love extended to them from others who are, like them, undergoing their own process of purgation and re-conformation.<sup>119</sup> *Caritas* is multidirectional. It first comes from God. It should be extended to others as a return of the *caritas* owed to God, and as an imitation of the *caritas* exemplified by Christ as the Incarnation of God. Those who follow the model of *caritas* Christ paradigmatically exemplifies should not only be able to extend it to others, but receive it from others who, likewise, are following Christ's example. For receiving *caritas* from others gives *caritas* back to God, from whom *caritas* was first given and is first owed in return, to Christ, who taught and modelled *caritas*, and to others, who should be the recipients of *caritas* as an extension of the *caritas* owed to God. When the *Commedia* is read through this hermeneutical perspective, the Beatitudes act as beacons guiding the Pilgrim and the reader closer to more Christ-like behaviours. Again, what binds each Beatitude together is *caritas* which, as Piccarda attests, is the force that binds all souls to God and to each other.

The argument of this thesis is that Christ's Double Love Commandment is the hermeneutical key to unlocking the theme of *caritas* present in the *Commedia*. The first part of this case study identified each of Christ's Beatitudes

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<sup>118</sup> Treherne, "Liturgical Personhood", pp. 144–145.

<sup>119</sup> Montemaggi, *Reading Dante's Commedia*, p. 162.

that serve as benedictions in the transitional spaces between each of Purgatory's terraces. Each Beatitude corresponds to a vice the Pilgrim witnesses being purged and transformed into a virtue. They are in the transitional spaces, or "space in between" the terraces, in order to guide the penitent to become more Christ-like. It is possible these Beatitudes were meant to be heard by the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia's* readers, alone. There is no indication in the text that these blessings are bestowed on each penitent soul as they individually climb the mountain. Furthermore, each blessing is delivered to the Pilgrim while simultaneously removing a "P" from the Pilgrim's brow; again, this suggests that the Pilgrim's experience is unique to his own passage through Purgatory.<sup>120</sup> If these blessings are only meant for the Pilgrim, then perhaps they were specifically meant to encourage him to look past the pain and suffering found on each terrace. Especially when the Pilgrim recognises that he will spend some time in Purgatory for his own vices.

The Beatitudes may even be meant for the readers and delivered to the Pilgrim as a proxy in order to encourage them to keep reading and look past Purgatory's penance. These seem to fit the narrator's address to readers in *Purg.* 10.106–111:

*Non vo' però, lettor, che tu ti smaghi  
di buon proponimento per udire  
come Dio vuol che 'l debito si paghi.  
Non attender la forma del martire:  
pensa la succession, pensa ch'al peggio  
oltre la gran sentenza non può ire.*

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<sup>120</sup> In *Purg.* 9.106–114, the angel at the gates of Purgatory-proper inscribes on the Pilgrim's forehead seven "P"s (*peccata/um*) for each of the Seven Deadly Sins. Oelsner suggests in his commentary on *Purg.* 9.112 that the ritual of inscribing the Pilgrim with the seven "P"s is related to a liturgical practice of the 12th century Church during the transitional period between Lent and Easter. Singleton and Hollander's commentaries on lines 112–114 note that the Pilgrim alone receives the inscription across his forehead—there is no indication that the souls in Purgatory receive the same treatment. Hollander also discusses the potential Biblical influences of the inscription as Ezekiel 9:2–6 in which those in Jerusalem who repent of their disobedience against God are to mark their foreheads, and/or John's Apocalypse 7:3 in which God's true believers are to have a sign of their devotion to God on their foreheads (*signemus servos Dei nostri in frontibus eorum*).

(But I do not wish you, reader, to be dismayed in your good intention, when you hear how God wills that the debt be paid. Do not regard the form of the suffering: think what follows it, think that at worst it cannot go beyond the great Judgment.)

Some of the penance appear just as horrific as the punishments in Hell. There is a crucial difference between the two realms: Hell's punishments are permanent, and Purgatory's are temporary. Readers may be too distracted by the process of purgation, or amount of time each penitent soul spend in Purgatory, rather than the reward that comes with their spiritual transformation. Similar to those unable to follow the Pilgrim in their *picciolletta barca* in *Paradiso* 2, perhaps Dante was worried readers would overlook the purpose behind Purgatory's transformative penance. After this address, the Pilgrim and his guide arrive at the first terrace of Pride.

To enter the first terrace, Virgil and the Pilgrim climb through a narrow fissure in the rock and see intricately detailed carved reliefs. Two of the Biblical reliefs described in *Purg.* 10.28–69 are Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38) and David dancing before the ark of the Lord (2 Samuel 6:16–23). Carroll says of Mary that she, “represents the highest reach of perfection of human virtue”; not just because of her humility in becoming the *ancilla Dei*, but because she became the mother of the Incarnate God, which is the greatest example of humility.<sup>121</sup> Each relief is detailed to emphasise the virtue of humility as evidenced in the Pilgrim's descriptions: Gabriel is *quivi intagliato in un atto soave* (carved there in his gentle bearing; verse 38); while the details of David include *trescando alzato, l'umile salmista* (leaping with his robes girt up, was the humble Psalmist; verse 65).<sup>122</sup> The Pilgrim says of these carvings, *io mi dilettava di guardare | l'imagini di tante umilitadi* (I was delighting to see the images of so many humilities;

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<sup>121</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Purg.* 10.34–45.

<sup>122</sup> See Hollander, “Dante's Use of the Fiftieth Psalm”, *Dante Studies*, 91 (1973), 145–150, and Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, pp. 275–278 for a discussion of the relationship between David and Dante.



verses 97–98). Singleton notes the level of detail in his commentary, especially in the Annunciation where Mary, “can be ‘seen’ to reply to Gabriel”.<sup>123</sup> An interesting question the commentaries have attempted to answer is, “Who sculpted these reliefs?”, as the text does not give a clear answer. As with the inscription of the Hell Gate in *Inferno* 3, the answer is most likely God.<sup>124</sup> The reliefs are signs of God’s moral instruction given with the intention that they be used as examples to be followed.<sup>125</sup>

As for the penance itself, the Proud carry large weights on their backs which represents the weight of their own egos as described in *Purg.* 10.130–132:

[...] *sostentar solaio o tetto*  
*per mensola talvolta una figura*  
*si vede giugner le ginocchia al petto*

(As to support a ceiling or a roof we sometimes see for corbel a figure that touches knees to breast)

The weight is so heavy that it forces the “body” (for lack of a better term) into an unnatural squat, with the legs bent so low that the knees are pressed into the chest. They do not all carry the same amount of weight, but that which is proportional to their individual pride and arrogance:

*Vero è che più e meno eran contratti*  
*secondo ch’avien più e meno a dosso,*  
*e qual più pazienza avea ne li atti,*  
*piangendo pareva dicer: “Più non posso”. (Purg. 10.136–139)*

(It is true that they were more and less compressed according as they had more and less upon their backs, and he whose bearing showed the most patience weeping seems to say: “I can bear no more”.)

Singleton notes in his commentary that the word *contratti* conjures the image of the penitent being “crushed down” by the weight of their boulders rather than

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<sup>123</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Purg.* 10.43–45. See also Christie K. Fengler and William A. Stephany, “The Visual Arts: A Basis for Dante’s Imagery in *Purgatory* and *Paradise*”, *The Michigan Academician*, 10.2 (1977), 127–141 (p. 132).

<sup>124</sup> See Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante, Poet of the Desert*, pp. 237–252, and Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, p. 275.

<sup>125</sup> In the world of the *Commedia*, other examples are Scripture, the Incarnation, and the Hell Gate inscription.

bent-over or compressed, which is a far more vivid image.<sup>126</sup> One of the penitent, Umberto, demonstrates that the penitent are aware of the reason they are being punished and when they can move on:

*'To sono Umberto; e non pur a me danno  
superbia fe', ché tutti miei consorti  
ha ella tratti seco nel malanno.  
E qui convien ch'io questo peso porti  
per lei, tanto che a Dio si sodisfaccia,  
poi ch'io nol fe' tra ' vivi, qui tra ' morti'.* (Purg. 11.67–72)

(“I am Umberto; and pride has harmed not only me, for all my consorts it has drawn into misfortune. And because of it I must bear this weight here among the dead until God is satisfied, since I did not do it among the living”.)

Umberto admits his moral shortcomings harmed himself and others, and the weight he carries is just considering his crime. Like his peers on this terrace, and throughout Purgatory, he must continue on until “*Dio si sodisfaccia*”. The position Umberto, and the Proud, are forced into represents humility. To reinforce the lesson on humility, their position physically forces their gaze to their feet where there are more carved reliefs representing examples of pride and arrogance, which the Proud must (literally) trample under their feet. The first Beatitude aids in their transition from their physical pain to spiritual joy.

Among the Biblical scenes depicted are Lucifer’s fall (Isaiah 14), Nimrod (Genesis 10), Saul’s death (1 Samuel 31), as well as Rehoboam (1 Kings 12), and Sennacherib (2 Chronicles 32). The Pilgrim marvels at the life-like details of these carvings:

*Qual di pennel fu maestro o di stile  
che ritraesse l'ombre e ' tratti ch'ivi  
mirar farieno uno ingegno sottile?  
Morti li morti e i vivi parean vivi:  
non vide mei di me chi vide il vero  
quant' io calcai, fin che chinato givi.* (Purg. 12.64–69)

(What master of the brush or stylus could portray the shadings and the outlines there, which would cause a subtle wit to marvel? Dead seemed the dead, and the living living: one who saw the

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<sup>126</sup> Singleton, commentary on Purg. 10.136–137.

true event did not see better than I all that I trod upon, while I walked bent over.)

As with the reliefs the Pilgrim and Virgil notice when they climb to this terrace, these carvings are just as realistic and lifelike as the living subjects themselves. The artistry is so detailed that the carvings clearly capture the moral lesson of each scene. For those marching around the circle while carrying heavy boulders, these carvings reinforce the Biblical warnings against their prideful *cupiditas*. The reliefs that capture the antithesis of pride, humility, are just out of their range of vision. Thus, the Proud are reminded of their sins on multiple sensory levels. Perhaps the knowledge that one day they will be able to let go of their own pride and stand humbly in God's presence is a powerful motivator. There may be a playful element to the way Dante depicts the various degrees of humility and pride in this episode. Mary and David are at the highest upright position as the carved reliefs which oversee the occupants of this terrace. However, rather than look down upon the slow-moving Proud with their heavy boulders, Mary and David have their gazes fixed toward God. Mary is gazing at the angel Gabriel, while David is fixed on the ark. While Gabriel and the ark are not themselves God, they are signs that point to God. In Augustinian terms, both Mary and David clearly understand the relationship between the sign itself (*uti*) and God which the sign resembles (*frui*). The only things in this episode that are looked down upon are reliefs depicting examples of pride and arrogance, which are trampled underneath the feet of the penitent as they move about the terrace. The penitent themselves are those who stand in the space in between the two extremes of humility and pride. Furthermore, they have the hope, and assurance, that they too will be relieved of the crushing weight and stand upright, able to see past the *uti* and toward the *frui*.

Leaving the first terrace, the Pilgrim reflects on the difference in attitude toward the purification for sin he witnessed between Hell and Purgatory:

*Abi quanto son diverse quelle foci  
da l'inferral! ché quivi per canti  
s'entra, e là giù per lamenti feroci. (Purg. 12.112–114)*

(Ah, how different are these passageways from those in Hell! for here one enters with singing, down there with fierce laments.)

The damned rarely seem to accept their fate or recognise the Divine justice behind their station, as seen with Francesca in *Inferno* 5. That lack of insight prevents them from understanding how their actions impact their individual relationship with God and others. Humility is required to have this insight, and without this insight, the damned remain in their *cupiditas*. What triggers this reflection in the Pilgrim is the first Beatitude, sung to the Pilgrim by an unseen angel, as he climbs between the first and second terraces (*Purg.* 12.109–111, discussed above). Again, it is unclear whether the blessing is directed at the Pilgrim individually, or to all who climb up the mountain. The message itself is very clear: blessed are those without pride and arrogance. The blessing sounds more like a benediction than a reproach or lamentation and adds to the atmosphere of moral reconditioning the Pilgrim witnesses throughout Purgatory. The Beatitude also reminds the Pilgrim that Purgatory requires of its occupants both a physical reconditioning as well as a spiritual one; those who have been spiritually stunted under their own pride must work to the point they can be elevated through humility.

This first terrace encapsulates the larger tropological theme of the *Purgatorio*, which is the transformation of earthly vices to heavenly virtues. This episode also demonstrates how Biblical references are used to provide examples of both those virtues to be followed and those vices which are to be avoided; which is exactly what Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics provide in the *caritas* criterion. The most important aspect of this episode is the example of humility set by the Annunciation and David's dancing. These carvings are the first things the Pilgrim and his guide see when they climb to the terrace. The figures of

Lucifer *et al* are positioned under the penitent's feet as they are examples to be avoided, if not (literally) looked down upon. In the middle, a theme that further connects the penitent on this terrace and the Beatitude delivered between the first and second terraces is the Proud who are brought crushed down under the weight of their own vice. Their gazes forced to only see these examples from Scripture of the very behaviour they are meant to purge from their souls. An added layer of pageantry to their purgation is their opportunity to crush these Biblical examples of immoral Pride under their own feet as they continue to circle the terrace. This is a detail of Dante's that can be interpreted as bearing Christological significance as the image recalls Christ crushing the serpent under his foot. It is especially applicable to all in Purgatory as they are metaphorically crushing their own vices underfoot as they redirect their behaviour to become Christ-like.<sup>127</sup>

The use of Biblical references to help the moral reconditioning of the penitent is part of the purgation system. The second terrace of Purgatory differs greatly from the first, but still implements Scripture as a way of reforming the penitent and aiding in the restoration of the relationship between God and neighbour. The Envious are described as sitting in clusters along the cliff of the second terrace with their eyes wired shut:

*E come a li orbi non approda il sole,  
così a l'ombre quivi ond' io parlo ora  
luce del ciel di sé largir non vole:  
ché a tutti un fil di ferro i cigli fóra  
e cusce, sì come a sparvier selvaggio  
sì fa però che queto non dimora. (Purg. 13.67–72)*

(And as the sun does not reach the blind, so to the shades there of whom I speak now the light of heaven does not grant itself: for

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<sup>127</sup> See Luke 10:19, *Qui vos audit, me audit: et qui vos spernit, me spernit. Qui autem me spernit, spernit eum qui misit me* (See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you). And Romans 16:20, *Deus autem pacis conterat Satanam sub pedibus vestris velociter. Gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi vobiscum* (The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you).

each had his eyelids pierced and sewn by an iron wire, as we do to a wild sparrowhawk because it will not be still.)

The vice of Envy itself conjures images of those who lust for things which they see, but do not possess. Dante describes the Envious as untrained hawks who must have their eyes wired shut in order to calm and train them. Again, this imagery signals that their current condition is temporary. With their eyes wired shut, the penitent must re-train their selfish desires for material things to focus on God and their neighbours. Carroll's commentary suggests the penance for the Envious may be a reference to Matthew 6:23: *Si autem oculus tuus fuerit nequam, totum corpus tuum tenebrosum erit. Si ergo lumen, quod in te est, tenebrae sunt: ipsae tenebrae quantae erunt?* (but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!).<sup>128</sup>

Because the penitent are blind on this terrace, the Biblical lesson is delivered audibly through disembodied voices:

*e verso noi volar furon sentiti,  
non però visti, spiriti parlando  
a la mensa d'amor cortesi inviti. (Purg. 13.25–27)*

(when flying toward us we heard, but not seen, spirits speaking courteous invitations to the table of love.)

The first voice the Pilgrim hears in *Purg.* 13.29–30 is a reference to the Wedding at Cana: “*Vinum non habent*” *altamente disse | e dietro a noi l'andò reïterando* (“*Vinum non habent!*” and behind us went repeating it). In John 2:3, Christ and his mother went to a wedding where the attendants ran out of wine for the guests.<sup>129</sup> Christ, at Mary's prompting, transforms water into wine. For the penitent, Mary exemplifies *caritas* as she showed empathy for the servants. The specific reference to the miracle of turning water into wine could represent Christ's metaphorical

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<sup>128</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Purg.* 13.70–72.

<sup>129</sup> See Anthony Cassell, “The Letter of Envy: *Purgatorio* 13–14”, *Stanford Italian Review*, 4 (1984), 18–21, who, as Hollander points out, discusses this passage from the *Purgatorio* in light of Augustine's commentary on the Gospel of John.

ability to transform the penitent into reformed and righteous children of God. Another voice the Pilgrim hears in *Purg.* 13.36 instructs the penitent to, “*Amate da cui male aveste*” (“Love those from whom you have had evil!”). This is Christ instructing his disciples to love all, especially those who have harmed them; not for their own sake, but for the love owed to God, who loves us unconditionally, and neighbours, who are to be loved unconditionally.<sup>130</sup>

At the heart of both Biblical references is tropological instruction to be generous with *caritas* to others, even those who do not return that love. In Dante’s system, *caritas* is the antithesis of envy. Dante defines envy in *Purg.* 17.115–120:

*É chi, per esser suo vicin soppresso,  
spera eccellenza, e sol per questo brama  
ch’el sia di sua grandezza in basso messo;  
è chi podere, grazia, onore e fama  
teme di perder perch’altri sormonti,  
onde s’attrista sì che ‘l contrario ama*

(There are those who hope for supremacy through their neighbour’s being kept down, and only on this account desire that his greatness be brought low; there are those who fear to lose power, favour, honour, or fame because another mounts higher, and thus are so aggrieved that they love the contrary)

Dante makes envy an extension of pride which manifests as the selfish satisfaction of what can be accomplished without the aid of others. In this episode Dante demonstrates that where envy damages human relationships, and the proper order of love, *caritas* restores both the relationship between an individual and God and an individual and their neighbours through Christ’s Double Love Commandment. This is exemplified by Sapia of Siena, one of the Envious. She tells the Pilgrim that her vice drove her to rejoice at her fellow-

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<sup>130</sup> In Matthew 5:44, Christ challenges the idea of reserving love for only those who love us in return, instead disciples are to love unconditionally: *Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos, et orate pro persequentibus et calumniantibus vos* (“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”). While in Luke 6:27–28, Christ instructs: *diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos. Benedicite maledicentibus vobis, et orate pro calumniantibus vos* (“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you”).

citizens' pain and misfortune. This mixture of uncharitable and arrogant attitudes toward others even led her to blaspheme against God:

*“Io fui sanese,” rispuose, “e con questi  
altri rimendo qui la vita ria,  
lagrimando a colui che sé ne presti.  
Savia non fui, avvegna che Sapia  
fossi chiamata, e fui de l'altrui danni  
più lieta assai che di ventura mia.  
E perché tu non creda ch'io t'inganni,  
odi s'i' fui, com' io ti dico, folle,  
già discendendo l'arco d'i miei anni.  
Eran li cittadin miei presso a Colle  
in campo giunti co' loro avversari,  
e io pregava Iddio di quel ch'e' volle.  
Rotti fuor quivi e vòlta ne li amari  
passi di fuga; e veggendo la caccia,  
letizia presi a tutte altre dispari,  
tanto ch'io volsi in sù l'ardita faccia,  
gridando a Dio: 'Omai più non ti temo!'” (Purg. 13.106–122)*

(“I was Sieneſe,” it replied, “and with theſe others here I repair my wicked life, weeping to him ſo that he may grant himſelf to us. I was not wiſe, although Sapia was my name, and I rejoiced at others’ harm much more than at my own good luck. And leſt you believe that I deceive you, hear if I was mad, as I tell you, when the arc of my years was already deſcending. My fellow-citizens were joined with their enemies in the field of Colle, and I prayed God to do what he then willed to do. They were routed there and turned in the bitter ſteps of flight; and ſeeing them hunted down, I took joy from it greater than all other joys, ſo that I turned my bold face upwards, ſhouting to God: ‘Now I fear you no more!’”)

Sapia admits ſhe not only felt joy at others’ failures but alſo prayed to God for the Sieneſe defeat. The ſatisfaction ſhe received at ſeeing the miſfortune of others was toxic and blinded her from the proper order of love owed to God and neighbours. In Auguſtinian terms, Sapia loved herſelf for her own ſake and took pleaſure in the abuſe and miſfortune of her enemies. She failed to love them in the context of their relation to God; her ſtory is very ſimilar to Francesca’s in *Inferno* 5.<sup>131</sup> Carroll’s commentary notes that the vices on the firſt three terraces of

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<sup>131</sup> Another ſimilarity between the two episodes is Dante’s uſe of wind. In *Inferno* 5, Francesca and Paolo are helpſeſ to fight againſt the wind which ceaeſeſſly fluttered them around the ſecond circle of Hell. Allegorically, the lovers are now at the mercy of God’s juſtice. Here, on the ſecond terrace of Purgatory, Sapia and the Envious are helpſeſ in their blindneſſ, but the bodileſſ voices carried by the wind brings them comfort and encouragement of God’s mercy and *caritas*. It is



Purgatory come from “Defective Love”—that is the desire for something that is misinterpreted as a positive good (ego, the self, property, reputation, *etc.*).<sup>132</sup> According to Carroll, Envy is the result of excess misdirected love toward the self as it is misdirected love that it eclipses the selfless love that should be extended to others. Robin Kirkpatrick says this definition of envy is unique to Dante as it manifests as a selfish hatred for others for all they have accomplished, rather than the selfish desire for their possessions.<sup>133</sup> In Purgatory, the way to repair the proper order of love caused by envy is in the extension and acceptance of mercy as a form of *caritas*. Therefore, this Beatitude of *Beati misericordes* is most appropriate because mercy is a specific type of *caritas* that demonstrates selfless and empathetic love in which neighbours are loved in light of the love owed to God. To truly love God is to show love and mercy to others in their time of need, just as it is modelled by Mary at the Wedding of Cana. Mercy and love are also owed to those who do not deserve them, as directed by Christ and an important component of Sapia’s story.

Although she repented of her Envy late in life, Sapia explains to the Pilgrim that the *caritas* Pier Pettinaio extends to her in his prayers for her soul have helped her accelerate her climb up mount Purgatory:

*“Pace vollì con Dio in su lo stremo  
de la mia vita, e ancor non sarebbe  
lo mio dover per penitenza scemo,  
se ciò non fosse, ch’a memoria m’ebbe  
Pier Pettinaio in sue sante orazioni,  
a cui di me per **caritate** increbbe”.* (*Purg.* 13.124–129)

(“I wished peace with God at the end of my life, and my debt would not yet be cancelled by penance, were it not that Piero the

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from the promise of God’s mercy that they are encouraged to transform their envy into mercy and *caritas*.

<sup>132</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Purg.* 17.91–139.

<sup>133</sup> Robin Kirkpatrick, commentary *Purg* 13.115–120, in *Dante Alighieri. The Divine Comedy 2: Purgatorio*, trans. and ed. by Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin Group, 2007), pp. 382–386 (p. 382). Hollander shares the same observations in his commentary of *Purg.* 17.112–124. See also Claudia Rattazzi Papka, “Sapia”, in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Lansing (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 762–763.

comb-seller remembered me in his holy prayers, having pity on me in his **charity**"; emphasis added)

Earlier in the *Purgatorio*, the Pilgrim learns that those who repent of their sins late in life must remain along the lowest terraces of the mountain, outside of Purgatory-proper, before they can climb to the first terrace. The only way to accelerate up the mountain is through the prayers of the living who can help the late-repenters begin their penitential journey. Pettinaio, whom Claudia Rattazzi Papka identifies as a Franciscan hermit, has been praying for Sapia's soul despite her uncharitable disposition in life.<sup>134</sup> Sapia calls Pettinaio's prayers *caritate*, which, again, links the virtues of *misericordes* to *caritas* in Christ-like fashion.<sup>135</sup> Sapia begs the Pilgrim to tell others her story so that she, and others in Purgatory, may be remembered in the prayers of the readers:

*“però col priego tuo talor mi giova.  
E cheggioti, per quel che tu più brami,  
se mai calchi la terra di Toscana,  
che a' miei propinqui tu ben mi rinfami”.* (*Purg.* 13.147–150)

(“therefore with your prayers help me from time to time. And I beg you by what you most desire, if ever you tread the soil of Tuscany, restore my good fame among my relatives”.)

This passage is highlighted in this discussion as it is an indirect address, if not an appeal, to the *Commedia's* readers to pray for her soul (*e.g.* engage with the text) through a Christian hermeneutic. Sapia extends an invitation to the *Commedia's* readers to extend *caritas* to their neighbours in Purgatory, even those who may not be worthy of such mercy.<sup>136</sup> This does not spare Sapia, or any of the souls in Purgatory, from the necessary process of purging their vices and redirecting their moral compass to reflect Christ's example. That is a necessary part of Purgatory's

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<sup>134</sup> Papka, “Sapia”, p. 763.

<sup>135</sup> The role of advocates, such as Mary and Pettinaio, seems to be another underlying theme of this canto which I cannot expand upon here, but may in future research.

<sup>136</sup> Hollander's commentary for *Purg.* 13.145–150 notes that Dante has become her second Pier Pettinaio, someone willing to pray for her condition and help her along her own journey to God. Sapia's transformation is on display for the *Commedia's* reader, as Hollander says “she responds to [Dante's] charity for her with charity”. This highlights the cyclical nature of *caritas*, which is a point elaborated in *Purg.* 15.49, and the following lines.

function. Furthermore, for those who receive the prayers through the mercy of the living, then Sapia, and her peers, are able to grow in *caritas*, which in turn fosters the proper love owed to God and others in their proper order.

After the Pilgrim receives the second Beatitude in *Purgatorio* 15, he and Virgil discuss how *caritas* grows when shared in a larger community:

*‘Perché s’appuntano i vostri disiri  
dove per compagnia parte si scema,  
invidia move il mantaco a’ sospiri.  
Ma se l’amor de la spera supprema  
torcesse in suso il desiderio vostro,  
non vi sarebbe al petto quella tema:  
ché, per quanti si dice più là ‘nostro’,  
tanto possiede più di ben ciascuno,  
e più di caritate arde in quel chiostro’.* (*Purg.* 15.49–57)

(“Because your desires point to where sharing lessens each one’s portion, envy moves the bellows to sighing. But if the love of the highest sphere bent your desire upward, you would not have that fear in your breasts: for the more say ‘our’ up there, the more good each one possesses, and the more charity burns in that cloister”.)

While it is better to divide a finite thing, like treasure, into large portions among a smaller number of people, love is not a finite thing and can be divided and shared infinitely without diminishing the quantity of love. Love, specifically *caritas*, can be portioned among any number of recipients and at any variable quantity. Most importantly, *caritas* encourages others to share love with each other rather than simply receive it. Virgil continues to explain the unlimited supply of love, which he refers to here as *amore*, in *Purg.* 15.67–75:<sup>137</sup>

*“Quello infinito e ineffabil Bene  
che là sù è, così corre ad amore  
com’ a lucido corpo raggio vène.  
Tanto si dà quanto trova d’ardore,  
sì che, quantunque carità si stende,  
cresce sovr’ essa l’eterno Valore.  
E quanta gente più là sù s’intende,*

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<sup>137</sup> Again, there is more that could be said regarding Virgil’s reference to love as *amore*. This point has the potential to be expanded in a future project stemming from these observations regarding Augustine’s *caritas* criterion. For the sake of time, here I must note that Virgil does not refer to *amore* in the same way as Francesca’s *Amore* in *Inferno* 5; see Chapter 3 section 3.1.

*più v'è da bene amare, e più vi s'ama,  
e come specchio l'uno a l'altro rende”.*

(“That infinite and ineffable Good which is up there, runs to love just as a ray comes to a shining body. It gives itself according to the measure of the love it finds, so that however great is the charity that reaches out, by so much the eternal Worth grows upon it. And the more people bend toward each other up there, the more there is to love well and the more love there is, and, like a mirror, each reflects it to the other”.)

Grandgent comments, “In other words, God’s blessing corresponds to the measure of affection of the loving soul, and is really added to it”.<sup>138</sup> God is the source of the supply of mercy and *caritas* and there is no limit to the source of these good things. Those who share their portion of mercy and love with others increase the supply of mercy and love. Singleton’s commentary describes this as a “chain reaction” of love.<sup>139</sup> Hollander notes that the word love (*amore, carità, amare, ama*) appears four times in these lines which contribute to the idea that love is the true cure for envy.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, the Biblical references featured in this episode, specifically John 2:3, Matthew 5:44/Luke 6:27–28, and Matthew 5:7, each demonstrate how mercy is a form of *caritas* and can restore the relationships between humanity and God, and in their proper order. As a result of their blinding, the Envious must depend on each other during their purgation. The Pilgrim finds them sitting in pairs and small groups along the terrace. Thus, their blinding is an allegory for the penitent’s heightened dependence on others to restore their relationships with God and neighbours. Sapia’s accelerated climb up Mount Purgatory is the result of Pettinaio’s *caritas*. Sapia’s request that the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia*’s readers, remember her and her peers suggests her once envious and uncharitable nature is transforming into one of *caritas* and *misericordia*.

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<sup>138</sup> Grandgent, commentary on *Purg.* 15.72.

<sup>139</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Purg.* 15.75.

<sup>140</sup> Hollander, commentary for *Purg.* 15.67–75.

#### 4.5. The Cross and the Heaven of Mars

For this final case study, I return to the *Paradiso* and examine the Pilgrim's meditation of the Cross of Mars in cantos 14–17. This case study is the most Christocentric in content and may establish the meaning of the Pilgrim's own journey through the lens of Christ's Cross, as well as contribute to the overarching argument of this thesis regarding how and why the *Commedia* should be read Christologically. As with the inscription of the Hell Gate, the Cross of Mars is another stand-alone invitation to the *Commedia's* readers to reflect on the Christological content of the text. Christ's Cross signifies Christ's humility. Christ's sacrifice on the cross signifies the restoration of the relationship between God and humanity. The Cross itself is the Christological backdrop of the Pilgrim's encounter with his ancestor, Cacciaguida, whose episode offers a tropological, if not Christological, reading of Florence's history and the Pilgrim's calling to write the *Commedia*. As with the Biblical references in the Statius episode and the Beatitudes in Purgatory, discussed previously, the Cross and Cacciaguida's role as a Christian martyr are the main Christological elements that frame this episode and the Pilgrim's composition of the *Commedia*.

The Cross is described as white which stands out in contrast to the red sphere behind it: *ché con tanto lucore e tanto robbi | m'apparvero splendor dentro a due raggi* (for so shining and so fiery appeared splendors within two rays; *Par.* 14.94–95). The Pilgrim, reflecting on the Cross, praises Christ for the vision he sees:

*sì costellati facean nel profondo  
Marte quei raggi il venerabil segno  
che fan giunture di quadranti in tondo.  
Qui vince la memoria mia lo 'ngegno,  
ché quella croce lampeggiava Cristo  
sì ch'io non so trovare essempro degno,  
ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo  
ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso,  
vedendo in quell' albor balenar Cristo.  
Di corno in corno e tra la cima e 'l basso*

*si movien lumi, scintillando forte  
nel congiungersi insieme e nel trapasso (Par. 14.100–111)*

(so those rays, arranged in the depths of Mars, made the venerable sign formed by the joining of the quadrants of a circle. Here my memory outstripes my wit, for that cross flashed forth Christ, and I cannot find a worthy comparison, but whoever takes up his cross and follows Christ, will yet excuse me for what I must leave out, seeing in that whiteness the blazing forth of Christ. From horn to horn and from summit to base lights were moving, scintillating brightly when meeting together and when passing on)

The Pilgrim is struck by the brightness of the Cross which outshines the ruby red of Mars and all the surrounding constellations. Line 106, *ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo*, is a reference to Matthew 16:25: *Qui enim voluerit animam suam salvam facere, perdet eam: qui autem perdidit animam suam propter me, inveniet eam* (“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me”).<sup>141</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp says this Matthaean passage is a call to all true disciples to follow their master wherever he leads, including death, which Dante presents through the personification of his ancestor, Cacciaguida.<sup>142</sup> The repetition of the word *Cristo* in verses 104, 106, and 108, combined with the image of the Cross, establish the hermeneutical key for reading this episode. The repetition of *Cristo* three times also echoes the lines *Per me si va* from the Hell Gate’s inscription (*Inf.* 3.1–3). Carroll notes that this is the first of three visions of Christ the Pilgrim sees in Paradise.<sup>143</sup> The second takes place in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars where Christ appears in Triumph with other starry saints (*Par.* 23.28–39). The third is in the final image of the Trinity in which the Pilgrim momentarily glimpses the Incarnation before he is sent back to earth (*Par.*

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<sup>141</sup> Hollander notes the commentary tradition that has picked up the similarities between Dante’s verse and Christ’s words, beginning with Jacopo della Lana; commentary on *Par.* 14.106.

<sup>142</sup> Jeffrey Thompson Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante’s Paradise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 101.

<sup>143</sup> Carroll, commentary on *Par.* 14.103–108.

33.127–145). Carroll does not suggest it in his commentary, but perhaps the repetition of *Cristo* is a foreshadowing of these three visions.

Glistening in the light surrounding the Cross are the souls of the blessed martyrs:

*così si veggion qui diritte e torte,  
veloci e tarde, rinnovando vista,  
le minuzie d'i corpi, lunghe e corte,  
moversi per lo raggio onde si lista  
talvolta l'ombra che, per sua difesa,  
la gente con ingegno e arte acquista. (Par. 14.112–117)*

(thus down here we see moving, straight and oblique, swift and slow, always changing, some long, some short, the tiny motes in the sunbeam that sometimes stripes the shade that with wit and art people make for their defence.)

The martyrs are the streaks of light surrounding the glowing Cross. Perhaps more accurately, their presence produces the glow around the Cross which enhances the contrast between the white Cross and the redness of Mars. The colour red recalls the blood of Christ and of the presence of the martyrs enhances the brightness of the glistening Cross. As the Pilgrim continues to gaze at the Cross he hears music:

*E come giga e arpa, in temprata tesa,  
di molte corde fa dolce tintinno  
a tal da cui la nota non è intesa:  
così da' lumi che lì m'apparinno  
s'accogliea per la croce una melode  
che mi rapiva, sanza intender l'inno. (Par. 14.118–123)*

(And as viol and harp, stretched and tuned, make a sweet tintinnus of many strings to one who cannot distinguish the melody: so from the lights that appeared to me, I heard along the cross a melody that ravished me, though I could not grasp the hymn.)

As string instruments, the harp and viol might conjure images of David and his lyre. The music in the heavenly spheres might be a reference to Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, or Paul's vision of the third heaven from 2 Corinthians 12:4 in which Paul says that he knows a man who *raptus est in paradisum: et audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui* (was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are

not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat). The latter seems more likely as Paul's inability to fully write the things heard and seen echoes the Pilgrim's words in *Par.* 14.107 in which he says he cannot fully report his experience, *ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso*. As with the episode at the Gates of Dis, the Pilgrim's journey reads as a fusion of the classics and Scripture, reporting a mixture of the same heavenly events as Scipio and St Paul did before him.

The lyre and strings are mentioned again, this time in relation to the Cross's ability to silence *cupidità* (selfishness) and *iniqua* (iniquity):

*Benigna voluntade—in che si liqua  
sempre l'amor che drittamente spira,  
come cupidità fa ne la iniqua—  
silenzio puose a quella dolce lira  
e fece quietar le sante corde  
che la destra del Cielo allenta e tira. (Par. 15.1–6)*

(A good will—into which the love that breathes for justice resolves itself, just as cupidity does into a wicked will—imposed silence on that sweet lyre and quieted the holy strings that the right hand of Heaven loosens and tightens.)

Singleton notes in his commentary that the souls in the Cross are laid out in such a way that they are both the lyre, as instruments, and the strings that give the instrument voice; both are tuned by God.<sup>144</sup> God's good Will distils love through the Cross, which in turn is distributed and reflected in all of creation. The Pilgrim goes on to describe the Cross as a stumbling block to those who only love material and temporal things:

*Bene è che sanza termine si doglia  
chi per amor di cosa che non duri  
eternalmente quello amor si spoglia. (Par. 15.10–12)*

(It is well that he grieve without end who, for love of a thing that does not last eternally, divests himself of that other love.)

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<sup>144</sup> Singleton, commentary on *Par.* 15.1. Hollander builds on this to suggest that the momentary silence of the souls is “to welcome Dante to this heaven and to invite his questions”, and that the harmony the Pilgrim hears here is a result of God's playing them as instruments; commentary on *Par.* 15.1–6.



Singleton notes Dante is making the distinction between the things that will not last forever as the, “love of them reflects the notion of *cupidita* (v. 3)”, and the eternal things, meaning God.<sup>145</sup> As he continues to reflect on the Cross, the Pilgrim makes sense of the music he hears:

*Ben m'accors' io ch'elli era d'alte lode,  
però ch'a me venìa "Resurgi" e "Vinci",  
come a colui che non intende e ode.  
Io m'innamorava tanto quinci,  
che 'nfino a lì non fu alcuna cosa  
che mi legasse con sì dolci vinci. (Par. 14.124–129)*

(Well did I perceive that it was of high praise, for “Arise” and “Conquer” came to me, as to one who does not understand, although he hears. I was falling so in love with it, that until then there had been nothing that bound me with such sweet bonds.)

“Resurgi” may be a reference to Isaiah 60:1, *Surge, illuminare, Jerusalem, quia venit lumen tuum, et gloria Domini super te orta est* (Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you). “Vinci” might be a reference to 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 in which Paul says true disciples must become whatever is required to spread the Gospel message. While “Vinci!” may also be a reference to Romans 8:37 in which Paul says Christ’s death was the ultimate act of love and has the power to make the faithful, *omnibus superamus propter eum qui dilexit nos* (more than conquerors through him who loved us). In other words, because Christ’s death was the ultimate act of love, all faithful Christians are made greater than conquerors through Him who conquers all through love. Hollander makes a similar assessment in his commentary: “Christ conquered death, we conquer by being bound to Him. This is the highest recognition that Dante has yet achieved, based on the experience of his selfless love of God”.<sup>146</sup>

The image of the Cross is intrinsically linked to Christ’s Crucifixion which is a crucial moment in God’s providential, or salvation, history. The

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<sup>145</sup> Singleton’s commentary on *Par.* 15.11–12.

<sup>146</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Par.* 14.127–129.

Crucifixion binds the salvific work God prepared through the laws and the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures with the salvific work accomplished through Christ's Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. Schnapp argues that the Transfiguration of Christ in Matthew 17:1–13 is the hermeneutical key to understanding the depth of the Christological content in this episode because it is through the Transfiguration that humanity's salvation and restoration by God is foreshadowed.<sup>147</sup> The Transfiguration was also the moment when Christ reveals his true identity as the Son of God to his closest disciples. The glorified Christ stands between Moses and Elijah symbolising Christ's authority as consistent with Moses (representing the laws) and Elijah (representing the prophets). Schnapp says that the Transfiguration confirms, "Christ's dual nature, his messianic identity, and the uniqueness of his sonship in God".<sup>148</sup> Why the Transfiguration specifically? Schnapp says the connection between the Cross of Mars and Christ's Transfiguration is made in Cacciaguida's greeting to the Pilgrim in *Par.* 15.88–89: "*O fronda mia in che io compiacemmi | pur aspettando, io fui la tua radice!*" ("O my branch, in whom I have been well pleased even while waiting, I was your root!").<sup>149</sup> This greeting is an echo of God's declaration at the Transfiguration in Matthew 17:5: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui: ipsum audite* ("This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"). I would add to Schnapp's argument that Cacciaguida's words also echo the Father's proclamation at Christ's baptism in Matthew 3:17: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui* ("This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased"). Schnapp's observations highlight the connection between Cacciaguida and Christ and set-up the Pilgrim's ancestor as a Divinely appointed

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<sup>147</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 13.

<sup>148</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 95.

<sup>149</sup> Schnapp, "*Si p̄ia l'ombra d'Anchise si porse: Paradiso 15.25*", in *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's Commedia*, ed. by Jacoff and Schnapp (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 145–156. See also Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22.

messenger who delivers God's providential history of Florence, a condemnation of the city, and commissions the Pilgrim to write all that he has witnessed since being lost in *una selva oscura*.

Cacciaguida's version of Florence's offers details of the most prominent Florentine families and ends with Cacciaguida's frustration at the city's pride and arrogance. Cacciaguida says in *Par.* 16.109–110, "*Oh quali io vidi quei che son disfatti | per lor superbia!*" ("Oh how great they seemed to me, those who have been undone by their pride!"). Catherine Keen suggests that for Cacciaguida, Florence is a city that has damned itself through its arrogance, violent history, and allegiance with Papal authority.<sup>150</sup> In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the true mission of the Church should be its obedience to Christ and the Double Love Commandment expected of all true faithful Christians, not the politics and greed in which Dante's medieval Church was engaged. Keen suggests that Cacciaguida's vision of Florence, with its emphasis on wealth and prosperity, is meant to recall images of the Heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>151</sup> Claire Honess argues that Dante saw his own city as a second Babylon, a city of great secular power and wealth, but morally and spiritually bankrupt.<sup>152</sup> Honess notes Dante's *Epistola* 6 in which Dante condemns his political rivals' preference for the corrupt Papal authority over the Divinely appointed Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VII, whom Dante characterised as a type of messianic hero.<sup>153</sup> Dante praises Henry's campaign through Italy in *Par.* 30.136–138:

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<sup>150</sup> Catherine M. Keen, "The Patterning of History: Poetry, Politics and Adamic Renewal", in *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy* (2016), II, 55–75.

<sup>151</sup> Keen, "Patterning of History", p. 70.

<sup>152</sup> Claire E. Honess, "'Ritornerò poeta...': Florence, Exile, and Hope", in "*Se mai continga...*": *Exile, Politics, and Theology in Dante*, ed. by Claire E. Honess and Matthew Treherne (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2013), pp. 85–103 (pp. 91–92). See also Honess' translation and commentary on *Epistola* 6 in *Dante Alighieri. Four Political Letters*, Modern Humanities Research Association 6 (London: MHRA, 2007), pp. 57–68.

<sup>153</sup> Honess, "'Ritornerò poeta...'", p. 92 and Keen, "Patterning of History", p. 70. See also H.T. Silverstein, "The Throne of the Emperor Henry in Dante's *Paradise* and the Mediaeval Conception of Christian Kingship", *Harvard Theological Review*, 32 (1939), 115–129. Edward Peters, "The Failure of Church and Empire: *Paradiso* 30", *Mediaeval Studies*, 34 (1972), 326–335. Jacques Goudet, "La 'parte per se stesso' e l'impegno politico di Dante", *Nuove letture dantesche* (Florence: Le

*“sederà l'alma, che fia giù agosta,  
de l'alto Arrigo ch'a drizzare Italia  
verrà in prima ch'ella sia disposta”.*

(“the noble Harry’s soul will be enthroned, which will be august down below and will come to raise Italy up before she is so disposed”.)

The tone of this passage is prophetic and implies both Henry’s success in conquering Italy and a lack of preparation on behalf of Henry’s opponents. Henry’s campaign in Italy ultimately failed, yet the *Commedia*’s author, through the mouth of his ancestor, Cacciaguida, has a harsh opinion of his native city and felt justified in his allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor as the superior secular power.

Cacciaguida’s point is that it is to the Cross, as a symbol of *caritas*, to which all Christians should be loyal. While on earth, Christians should be loyal to those cities which are most like the Heavenly City. Honess and Keen highlight the ways in which Cacciaguida’s vision of Florence shares many similarities with the Jerusalem depicted in the Gospels; both are cities of God, chosen by God for God’s faithful people, but lapsed into wickedness, pride, and greed. In other words, both cities are guilty of *cupiditas*.<sup>154</sup> Honess notes Luke 19:42 as an example of Christ’s frustration with Jerusalem which *should* have been the Kingdom of God on earth: *Quia si cognovisses et tu, et quidem in hac die tua, quae ad pacem tibi: nunc autem abscondita sunt ab oculis tuis* (“If you, even you, had only recognised on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes”).<sup>155</sup> Cacciaguida seems to echo this frustration with Florence’s corrupt secular politics is presented in this episode as part of the ongoing struggle for the city’s salvation. Schnapp says that the Cross is the central point of God’s

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Monnier, 1974), VII, 289–316. Albert Rossi, “*A l’ultimo suo. Paradiso XXX and Its Virgilian Context*”, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 4 (1981), 43–50. Paola Rigo, “Tempo liturgico nell’epistola ai Principi e ai Popoli d’Italia”, *Memoria classica e memoria biblica in Dante* (Florence: Olschki, 1994), pp. 33–44.

<sup>154</sup> Honess, “Ritornerò poeta...”, p. 94 and Keen, “Patterning of History”, p. 72.

<sup>155</sup> Honess, “Ritornerò poeta...”, p. 94.

providential history which stretches from the creation of the world to the end of time. That means that Christ, and God's salvation through Christ, is the centre of human history.<sup>156</sup> Cacciaguida's main criticism of Florence, according to Schnapp, is its exaggerated victimhood as suffering for the sake of Christ, when in reality Florence's violent history is a result of its loyalty to false, pagan, gods such as Mars.<sup>157</sup> In other words, Florence claims to have suffered for the sake of their devotion to Christ, when in reality they are false Christians and suffer due to their own selfish *cupiditas*. Keen argues that Cacciaguida's frustrations with Florence could have been applied to any number of medieval cities, including Rome.<sup>158</sup> Marchesi says that after the Day of Judgement, no earthly city, including Florence, will ever rival the new heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, as Honess says, the Heaven of Mars is a turning point in the Pilgrim's ascent through *Paradiso* as he is reminded that his true allegiances are to God, the Cross, and the eternal city in Heaven.<sup>160</sup>

The tone of this episode overall, according to Kirkpatrick, invites readers to reflect on the call to Christian duty and the service owed to Christ as exemplified by the Cross as a symbol of Christ's service and the martyrs, who followed Christ's example.<sup>161</sup> Meanwhile, Schnapp argues Cacciaguida's greeting to the Pilgrim, which echoes the Transfiguration, should shift readers' attention from reflecting on the Cross to Christ's Transfiguration as a moment of God's self-revelation and illumination. Schnapp says in the Heaven of Mars the martyrs have been transformed into the likeness of Christ through their own self-sacrifice

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<sup>156</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 54.

<sup>158</sup> Keen, "Patterning of History", p. 74.

<sup>159</sup> Marchesi, "Dante's Fatherlands", in *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*, II, 77–99 (p. 96).

<sup>160</sup> Honess, "Ritornerò poeta...", p. 101.

<sup>161</sup> Kirkpatrick, "Polemics of Praise: Theology as Text, Narrative, and Rhetoric in Dante's *Commedia*", in *Dante's Commedia: Theology as Poetry*, pp. 14–35 (p. 22, 26–27). See also Steven Botterill, "Martyrdom", in *Dante Encyclopedia*, p. 596.

and service to faith.<sup>162</sup> Cacciaguida represents a model of how those who die for the sake of their Christian faith are allowed to bypass any penitence in Purgatory because they have followed Christ's paradigmatic example so closely that they make Christ's Cross shine even brighter in the cosmos:

*“Quivi fu’ io da quella gente turpa  
disviluppato dal mondo fallace,  
lo cui amor molt’ anime deturpa,  
e venni dal martiro a questa pace”.* (Par. 15.145–148)

(“There by that base folk I was disentangled from the deceiving world, the love of which defaces many souls, and I came from martyrdom to this peace”.)

The Cross alone, says Schnapp, is “powerful enough to transform the tragedy of life as death into the comedy of death as eternal life”.<sup>163</sup> The circumstances of Cacciaguida's death may have been man-made but he lived his life based on the example of Christ's self-sacrifice and service and died in faith. Therefore, for the Pilgrim, Cacciaguida stands as a model of Christ and personal mentor who directs the Pilgrim to take up his own Cross and follow. Marchesi says Cacciaguida's status as the Pilgrim's ancestor adds to the weight of his authority as a martyr; who directs the Pilgrim to disassociate from any sense of loyalty to Florence and focus only on the Heavenly City.<sup>164</sup> Victor Castellani says in the system of Paradise it is the martyrs who serve the true intention of the Cross, which is an unreserved devotion to God, as opposed to a loyalty to the Church which has been corrupted by its material greed and lust for secular power.<sup>165</sup> Chiampi says that what the Cross really represents is a symbol of Christ-like grace and piety witnessed through an act of love and self-sacrifice.<sup>166</sup> Cacciaguida is

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<sup>162</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 9.

<sup>163</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 62.

<sup>164</sup> Marchesi, “Dante's Fatherlands”, p. 86.

<sup>165</sup> Victor Castellani, “Heliocentricity in the Structure of Dante's *Paradiso*”, *Studies in Philology*, 78.3 (1981), 211–223.

<sup>166</sup> Chiampi, “Dante's *Paradiso* from Number to Mysterium”, p. 271.

frustrated, justifiably so, with those who falsely claim to follow the Cross, only to align themselves with earthly interests.

Florence's pride and arrogance align the city with the Papacy's quest for political power against the Holy Roman Emperor, whom the Pilgrim props-up as God's ordained in *Paradiso* 30. Cacciaguida plays a triple role in this episode as a Christian martyr, the Pilgrim's mentor, and a prophet who tells the Pilgrim that he will be exiled from Florence in the near-future, after the events of his journey:

*Qual si partio Ipolito d'Atene  
per la spietata e perfida noverca:  
tal di Fiorenza partir ti conviene.  
Questo si vuole e questo già si cerca,  
e tosto verrà fatto a chi ciò pensa  
là dove Cristo tutto dì si merca. (Par. 17.46–51)*

(“As Hippolytus left Athens because of his pitiless, treacherous step-mother: so must you leave Florence. This is willed, this is already sought, and soon will be done by him who plans it where Christ is sold all day long”.)

In this canto, Dante's autobiography bleeds heavily into the text. The Pilgrim is told that he will be exiled from Florence shortly after his journey from the afterlife; historically, by the time Dante wrote the *Paradiso*, he had been exiled from the city since 1301. Those responsible for Dante's exile were his political rivals, specifically the Pope, who ensured Dante was never able to return to Florence.<sup>167</sup> In part, Cacciaguida's condemnation of Florence highlights the precise ways it fails to obey Christ. In part, especially lines 50–51, Dante expresses his anger toward the Pope and his supporters for his exile and those who have corrupted themselves for the buying and selling of their spiritual authority. Dante viewed this specific form of usury as abhorrent; he even reserved a specific spot for Pope Boniface VIII in the eighth circle of Hell for

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<sup>167</sup> This autobiographical fact is presented in the *Commedia's* narrative as future prophecy. Hollander's commentary on *Par.* 17.43–99 notes, “this is clearly meant to be taken as the most important prognostication of Dante's personal involvement in the political affairs of his world”.

simony.<sup>168</sup> The silver-lining in this prophecy is that the Pilgrim's journey, and future exile, will bring him fame and the opportunity to guide others on the same path toward salvation:

[...] *“Cosciènza fusca  
o de la propria o de l'altrui vergogna  
pur sentirà la tua parola brusca.  
Ma nondimen, rimossa ogne menzogna,  
tutta tua vision fa manifesta,  
e lascia pur grattar dov' è la rognà.  
Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta  
nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento  
lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta.  
Questo tuo grido farà come vento  
che le più alte cime più percuote,  
e ciò non fa d'onor poco argomento”.* (Par. 17.124–135)

(“A conscience dark with its own or another's shame will indeed feel your word to be harsh. But nonetheless, putting aside every falsehood, make manifest all your vision, and let them still scratch where the itch is. For if your voice will be painful at the first taste, it will leave vital nourishment later, when it is digested. This cry of yours will be like a wind that strikes hardest the highest peaks, and this is no small claim to honour”.)

There is a nice cyclical moment between *Par. 2.11*, the *pan de li angeli*, which nourishes readers, and Cacciaguida who says that the Pilgrim will, “*vital nodrimento | lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta*”, or nourish others through his writing (17.130–132). These two passages imply that the *Commedia* gives all the sustenance and direction readers need in their own pilgrimages to God. When read through Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, this interpretation seems more likely than not. The sustenance the Pilgrim is commissioned to offer readers is the truth of what he sees and hears, regardless of how his critics may respond. Schnapp says that the only reassurance Cacciaguida can offer the Pilgrim is that his future pain and suffering will transform temporary defeat into eternal victory. The Pilgrim's call is to, like his ancestor, be obedient to the mission of the Cross over his own

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<sup>168</sup> Dante has several popes in *Inferno* 19; one of which, Nicholas III, mistakes the Pilgrim for Boniface.



personal interests.<sup>169</sup> Schnapp says Cacciaguida does not advise the Pilgrim to follow his path to martyrdom through violence, but to serve the truth by reporting all that God has allowed him to see to the best of his ability.<sup>170</sup> Hollander points out that Cacciaguida warns the Pilgrim about telling the truth and how painful the experience will be, but the reward will be far greater.<sup>171</sup> In essence, Cacciaguida presents the Pilgrim with his cross. This may explain the brief address to the *Commedia's* readers in *Par.* 14.106 which asks forgiveness for his inability to accurately report all that he saw.

As was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, what has always stood out about the *Commedia* is its claim of sharing the same source and authority as Scripture.<sup>172</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow identifies the Biblical reference in *Par.* 17.128 as Habakkuk 2:2: *Et respondit mihi Dominus, et dixit: Scribe visum, et explana eum super tabulas, ut percurrat qui legerit eum* (Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it).<sup>173</sup> Benfell says this claim is part of what makes the *Commedia* unique from other poems.<sup>174</sup> Hawkins and Benfell argue that Cacciaguida's commission of the Pilgrim to write the *Commedia* echoes the moment God commissioned the prophet Ezekiel by handing him a scroll in Ezekiel 2:9: *Et vidi: et ecce manus missa ad me, in qua erat involutus liber* (I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it).<sup>175</sup> Therefore, the parallel between the Pilgrim and other Biblical prophets is striking, particularly in Ezekiel 2:6–9 when the prophet is warned that his opponents will criticise the message God has elected him to bring to the Israelites. And just like Ezekiel, the Pilgrim is to remain faithful to the message,

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<sup>169</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 39.

<sup>170</sup> Schnapp, “*Si pia l'ombra d'Anchise si porse*”, p. 149.

<sup>171</sup> Hollander, commentary on *Par.* 17.124–135.

<sup>172</sup> See Chapter 1 section 1.2.

<sup>173</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, commentary on *Par.* 17.128.

<sup>174</sup> Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 58.

<sup>175</sup> Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments*, pp. 73–74. See also Benfell, *Biblical Dante*, p. 59.

and to the task of delivering it, no matter what criticism he receives.

Cacciaguida's commission does not stipulate that the cost of the Pilgrim's discipleship will require martyrdom in the literal sense, but perhaps in a figurative sense. Schnapp says Cacciaguida's prophetic warning for the Pilgrim's "martyrdom" is the assurance that through his suffering in writing God's truth will result in further alienation from his beloved Florence and plotting a new course into unknown waters, perhaps the same waters the Pilgrim mentions in *Paradiso 2*.<sup>176</sup>

In terms of offering Christological insight, *Paradiso 16* might be overlooked because of its focus on Florence's history, rather than offering theological depth. However, as Keen, Honess, and Schnapp have demonstrated, Florence's connection to Mars, the god of war and music, and the Cross prompts further Christological reflection. The Heaven of Mars highlights a tension between Christ's command for his followers to submit to the Double Love Commandment and the Church's own violent history which is founded on Christian martyrdom. As discussed in the previous section, in Matthew 5:10, Christ instructed his disciples to bless those who harm and persecute them: *Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter justitiam: quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum* ("Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"). Christ also says that there will be those who fall away from their faith in times of persecution, but those who endure will be blessed: *qui autem perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit* ("the one who endures to the end will be saved"; Matthew 24:13). Cacciaguida and the martyrs are those who have been persecuted for their faith and rewarded with eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven for their endurance. Their successful obedience to Christ's *regula dilectionis*

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<sup>176</sup> Schnapp, "Dante's Ovidian Self-Correction in *Paradiso 17*", in *Poetry of Allusion*, pp. 214–223 (p. 223).

sharply contrasts with Florence, and Rome, for their failure to be truly part of the Heavenly Kingdom.

Cacciaguida's martyrdom as a soldier in the Second Crusade may seem contradictory to Christian *caritas*. Yet in the medieval mind, Christendom believed itself to be under threat from other faiths. Participation in Holy War with the intention of protecting either the Christian faith or the Church was viewed as proper Christian conduct. In other words, while Cacciaguida's style of martyrdom may seem to clash with Christ's model of devotion to God and others through *caritas*, but his life was devoted to both things, and in the proper order, to the point of pain and death. This contradiction is part of the key to understanding the Christological content of this episode, especially with the Cross as the central sign of Christ's own pain and suffering for the sake of restoring the relationship between God and humanity.

When read through the filter of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics, all of the episodes discussed in this chapter brings the *Commedia's* readers back to the central message of Christ's Double Love Commandment. That is the proper order of love owed to God as *frui* and neighbours as *uti*. Reading this episode on the Cross of Mars in particular through a Christological perspective offers a deeper meaning to Cacciaguida's frustrations with Florence and with the Church for the dissonance between the moral actions set by Christ and the immorality displayed by the Church and her leaders. This is not to say Christians will not experience violence, indeed Christ anticipates his disciples will experience their own persecution. Nor does Christ condemn those who willingly sacrifice their lives for their neighbours; in fact, he says that doing so is the greatest demonstration of love: *Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat qui pro amicis suis* ("No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends"; John 15:13). This, I think, is the point of Cacciaguida's prophecy

regarding the Pilgrim's exile. The Pilgrim may feel bereft for his permanent exile from Florence, but he is gaining the Kingdom of God so long as he takes up his own cross and follows Christ. For the Pilgrim, the writing of the *Commedia* is the witness to his faithfulness and obedience to the Cross. The invitation to the readers, then, is for them to take up their own *picciotta barca* and follow. Those who do recognise that they have dual citizenship between the Heavenly Kingdom and their earthly kingdom. The one that matters most is God. As Philippians 3:20 says: *Nostra autem conversatio in caelis est: unde etiam Salvatorem expectamus Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum* (our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ). On earth, the best we can do to live up to our heavenly citizenship is to love God and our neighbours to God. In Augustinian terms, obedience to the *regula dilectionis* puts the love of God, neighbours, and things in their proper order; all of which is set and exemplified by Christ's *caritas*. Schnapp suggests that in the context of the *Paradiso*, the only true children of God are those who take up their own crosses and shine like gemstones around the eternal glory of Christ's Cross to make the Cross of Mars shine all the brighter.<sup>177</sup> I would add that in the Heaven of Mars, the Pilgrim realises that the true citizens of heaven are those who exemplify Christ as the standard by which all Christians are measured. Models of Christ-like behaviour are not limited to martyrdom, but extend to all who strive to exemplify the Double Love Commandment.

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<sup>177</sup> Schnapp, *Transfiguration of History*, p. 63.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

What this thesis proposed to do was attempt a reading of Dante's *Commedia* drawing on the hermeneutic principles of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* and discuss the mutually illuminated themes of good and bad forms of love (i.e. *caritas* and *cupiditas*), and how these forms of love impact the moral and hermeneutical condition of the *Commedia*'s readers. Following Augustine, the thesis has also employed the idea that Scripture's revelation of the Double Love Commandment is also a revelation of Christ, who is the paradigmatic exemplar of properly ordered love. The core of the thesis was divided between figures in the *Commedia* who exemplify the relationship between good and bad forms of love and reading, and moments in which the *Commedia* prompts readers to apply a hermeneutical approach to their reading of the text. It was not my argument that Dante wrote the *Commedia* drawing on detailed direct knowledge of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*. Nor was it my argument that the *Commedia* can be read through this specific Christological hermeneutical approach alone. Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics was chosen because of his prominence in the Middle Ages. Even if Dante had not quoted from *De doctrina* in his prose works, more than likely Dante would have been familiar with Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics through other mediated ways.

Augustine's approach is particularly useful for reading Dante because at the centre of his hermeneutical principles is Christ's Double Love Commandment, which reorders humanity's relationships to God and neighbours. Augustine's Christological hermeneutics call attention to the forms of good and bad love which are set by the *regula dilectionis* (rule of love). For Augustine, the *regula dilectionis* is the hermeneutical key to reading and interpreting Scripture so that God alone is loved for God's own sake and neighbours are loved in an

appropriate way in light of their relation to God. *Caritas* instructs and guides human activity so that God is loved and enjoyed for God's self (*frui*) as the greatest and highest good, and neighbours are loved and used (*uti*) in light of the love extended from God to humanity as well as as an extension of the love and obedience owed to God. Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* establish a tropological cycle in which Christ's moral example reveals the *regula dilectionis* to Biblical readers, which further inspires readers to seek God's salvation as revealed in Scripture, and so on. For Augustine, the importance of reading Scripture is to learn the distinction between the *res* as *uti* or *frui* so that the proper love owed to a thing (*res*) may be determined and followed accordingly. In the context of the *Commedia*, good love (*caritas*) might be said to define Purgatory and Paradise, while bad love (*cupiditas*) shapes Hell.

As this thesis argued, the restoration of relationships through *caritas*, in the proper order of God, for God's own sake, and neighbours, for the sake of loving God, is a key theme of the *Commedia*. This brings Christology to the foreground since Christ is the paradigmatic exemplar of properly ordered love. In Augustinian terms, what the Pilgrim is meant to see and learn from in Hell are examples of *cupiditas*. Within the hermeneutical framework of Augustine's *caritas* criterion, the damned in Hell demonstrate moral examples of how the Pilgrim should *not* behave because of the damage they can impart on the relationship between an individual and God and others. Those assigned to Hell are those who failed to love God and neighbour appropriately. Thus, learning from these examples of *cupiditas* should help alter the trajectory of the Pilgrim's own tropological path back to God. The Pilgrim's time among the damned should also prepare him to see the transformative work Christ accomplishes within those who actively seek redemption and repentance for their moral failings, as seen in Purgatory.

Francesca's episode in *Inferno* 5, when read through Augustine's definition of *cupiditas*, can be read as a straightforward warning against those who lust for others rather than engage in the appropriate forms and order of love. Francesca is also one of the first moments in which Dante's Pilgrim is faced with an embodiment of *cupiditas*, she also serves as a learning opportunity for the Pilgrim to turn away from his own lustful desires. According to Augustine in *De doct.* 1.24.25, what makes *cupiditas* so dangerous is its ability to obfuscate the purpose of the *res*, which can lead to the abuse of the *res* through the distribution of improper love. Augustine was specifically concerned with lower, or temporal, things being enjoyed for their own sake rather than through the filter of their relationship to God. What damns Francesca through Augustine's system of the *regula dilectionis* is her replacement of God's *caritas* with *Amor*. Therefore, her relationship with Paolo was a lustful one and her *cupiditas* was her failure to integrate her relationship with Paolo into her relationship to God. Francesca's *cupiditas* is amplified by the fact that her relationship with Paolo is clearly a form of bad love which doomed not only herself, but her lover and her husband as well. To the Pilgrim, and the *Commedia's* readers, Francesca attempts to present herself as someone who was caught up in the power of *Amor*, a force greater than herself; in denying her own responsibility, she offers no insight or any remorse for what she has done. She places all the responsibility on *Amor* for creating the environment in which she succumbed to her *cupiditas*. Francesca's bitterness for her situation even sours her greeting to the Pilgrim: "*se fosse amico il re de l'universo, | noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace*" ("if the king of the universe were friendly we would pray to him for your peace"; *Inf.* 5.91–92); which suggests that in her damned state, Francesca cannot view anyone through the lens of *caritas*.

While Virgil was unable to understand the Christological significance of his work, Statius successfully read Virgil and uncovered a tropological meaning

that reshaped his moral condition and his conversion to Christianity. Statius claims his reading of Virgil was guided by *nuovi predicanti*, who helped guide Statius to read Virgil through a Christological lens. Thus, Statius gives credit to Virgil guiding his moral condition which helped him put the Roman poet into Christian context through the Christian hermeneutics taught to Statius by these Christian preachers. This makes Dante's Statius a striking figure as someone who demonstrates how to apply Christological hermeneutics to a non-Biblical text. Augustine says in *De doct.* 1.35.39–36.40, *caritas* begets *caritas*; thus, where Christ illuminates *caritas* in Scripture, the readers are taught to find *caritas* in the text, which is, then verified by Christ who continues to reveal *caritas* in the text. For Statius, Virgil did not illuminate a Christological meaning in his *Eclogue*, but his tropological message in the *Aeneid* planted the seed for his ability to read beyond Virgil's intended meaning. The *nuovi predicanti* then trained Statius to read through his moral lens a Christological message which led to his conversion.

Piccarda is the heavenly counterpart to Francesca; a woman who submits to *carità* through her communal reading of the Rule of St Clare which directed her to devote her life to God. Unfortunately, Piccarda was forced to leave the cloister making her unable to fulfil her vows on earth. For her unbroken vows, Piccarda is assigned to the first, and lowest, of the heavenly spheres. Yet, Piccarda successfully finds Christ at the heart of the Rule and her community whose moral instinct is to be obedient and faithful to God. In Augustinian terms, Piccarda is the embodiment of the *regula dilectionis*. Piccarda says that she never abandoned her vows in her heart, even when she was removed from the cloister. This is the ideal of *caritas* in which the relationship with others is integrated into the relationship to God. Despite the number of similarities between Piccarda and Francesca, Piccarda is a model of a reader who not only accurately interprets a calling to a higher moral life but follows through her tropological interpretation



with righteous and moral action. In that sense, Piccarda is the opposite of Francesca and a perfected version of Statius who not only read through the proper Christological framework but took the proper moral action *because* of what she read. Where Statius was a model of Augustine's Christological hermeneutics in action, Piccarda is testimony that Augustine's *caritas* criterion works, i.e. that a reading informed by the *caritas* principle is capable of producing *caritas* in the readers.

Running parallel to the Pilgrim's journey is the hermeneutical journey of the *Commedia's* readers themselves. The application of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics to a reading of the *Commedia* offered in this thesis highlights moments when readers are invited to apply a hermeneutic approach to their reading of the text. These prompts vary between stand-alone moments, to the poem's narrator addressing readers directly, to the combination of addresses to readers and the use of Biblical quotes. One of the earliest moments in which this type of hermeneutical prompt occurs is at the Hell Gate in *Inferno* 3. The inscription presents itself as a literal message about the nature of Hell and its relationship to the Triune God. Applying Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* to a reading of the inscription illuminates the tropological tone of the inscription which, if read literally, could lead readers to damnation as there is nothing in the inscription that promotes *caritas*.

The episode outside the Gates of Dis in *Inferno* 8–9 features a combination of addresses to readers and Biblical references. The function of these addresses is, at least in part, to invite readers to directly engage with the *Commedia* hermeneutically. In *Inferno* 8, the narrator invites readers to empathise with his fear of the demons who pose a danger to his safe passage through Hell. The second address in *Inferno* 9 invites readers to reflect on the deeper meaning of the events the Pilgrim witnessed and recorded. Both addresses invite readers

deeper into the text, rather than act as passive observers. Working with the addresses to enrich the Christological significance of these episodes are the Biblical references which connect the heavenly messenger to Christ as a figure who appears walking on water, rebukes the demons, and forces the Gates of Dis open so the Pilgrim may continue his journey. For the Pilgrim, and perhaps some of the *Commedia's* readers, the illuminating work of the Biblical references are dimmed by the atmosphere of the *Inferno*. Arguably, readers who understand the Biblical references will understand exactly who has come to help and the deeper meaning of the Pilgrim's experience in these cantos.

The Biblical references in the *Purgatorio* attract the readers' attention to the penitential souls' moral redirection from *cupiditas* to Christ-like *caritas*, and the reordering of their relationships with others in light of humanity's relationship to God. The *Purgatorio's* Beatitudes function as a transitional blessing as well as a capstone to the moral lesson on each of the seven terraces. The strategic placement of these blessings between Purgatory's terraces emphasises the tropological meanings behind the penance each group of penitent souls incur. For instance, the Proud must bend low and learn to be humble and the Envious must have their eyes sown shut to redirect their gaze from their worldly desires to look toward God. Each Beatitude and blessing the Pilgrim receives encourage him to continue his climb up the mountain. In addition to the Biblical references, there are addresses to readers that encourage readers to participate in interpreting the deeper meaning of the text, if not pray for the penitential directly.<sup>1</sup> These hermeneutical elements are most akin to Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* which suggest that a proper moral condition is a precondition of right reading. The right moral condition is not just a condition of

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<sup>1</sup> This is a point made by Helena Phillips-Robins regarding the prayers and songs of *Purgatorio* which invite readers to participate with the penitential as they continue their ascent; see "*Cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce*": Singing and Community in the *Commedia*". See Chapter 4 section 4.4.

right practice in the relationship to others, but is bound up with the readers' capacity to read Dante's text correctly.

The theme of moral conditioning influencing correct reading is also found in the *Paradiso's* earliest addresses to readers in which the narrator encourages those who cannot read *and* understand the forthcoming cantos to return to safer shores. It is here Dante acknowledges two types of readers and makes a connection between the moral condition of the readers and their ability to read. Those who can read and understand may follow in the Pilgrim's wake because they have the proper hermeneutical approach to read the multiple layers of meaning, intended and unintended, by the author. While the *Commedia* never specifies a correct hermeneutic approach, the reference to *pan de li angeli* (bread of angels; *Par.* 2.11) suggests the text is keyed to a Christian lens. In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, this passage reiterates the need for a hermeneutical approach that is in tune with the readers' moral condition in order to read the *Commedia* through the correct lens.

Those who can read through the correct lens may find more obvious passages with deep Christological significance, such as the Pilgrim's meditation on the Cross of Mars. Surrounding the Cross, the Pilgrim sees specks of light which are the souls the Christian martyrs. As the Pilgrim reflects on the Cross, the heavenly music enhances his love for the Cross and the martyrs who symbolise true *caritas* through their devout love of God for the sake of God and neighbours in relation to God. In terms of Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas*, the Pilgrim's meditation on the Cross further highlights how the martyrs are the embodiment of the *regula dilectionis*.

## 5.1. Future Research

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, my research engages with a rich thread of Dante scholarship. There are more readers in the *Commedia* to discuss in addition to those I have examined here, and certainly more moments in which the *Commedia* prompts readers to engage with the text hermeneutically. Regarding the methodology applied in this thesis, there are at least three potential avenues of future research. One might explore the consequences of reading/engaging with others through bad forms of love. This could entail exploring how the claims made by the Hell Gate inscription are manifested by those whom the Pilgrim encounters in Hell. Francesca and Paolo are not the only pair of souls the Pilgrim meets who are deliberately paired together. Reading the Pilgrim's engagement with a pair or group of souls through the inscription's tropological meaning may provide another layer of insight into the absence of *caritas* in the social order and the relationships featured in the *Inferno*. The recent work done in the *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy* volumes provide a useful template for mapping the trajectory of how these relationships are unravelled and restored in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* from *cupiditas* to *caritas*.<sup>2</sup>

Another potential avenue may be the investigation of where and how the themes of moral reading and *caritas* appear in the reception of Dante's work. This would include an in-depth exploration of commentaries on the *Commedia* that highlight Augustine's influence on Dante, if not branch out to explore how Dante's journey was used as a hermeneutical frame in medieval preaching. For instance, Pietro Delcorno's research investigates the *Quadragesimale peregrini cum angelo*, a fifteenth-century collection of Lenten sermons that uses the *Commedia*'s

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<sup>2</sup> George Corbett and Heather Webb, eds, *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy*.

narrative as a tool to frame the preacher's moral lessons.<sup>3</sup> The author of these sermons alters Dante's narrative to suit his own needs but works direct quotes from the *Commedia* into his sermons. This raises more questions: How far might the Augustinian principles discussed in this thesis have informed Dante's readers and commentators in the Middle Ages? Was the *Commedia* used in other sermons because of its tropological meaning or its incorporation of familiar Christian themes and allusions? Delcorno's research, and the projects that it can inspire, could add to the ongoing discussion of Dante reception in Europe during and after the Middle Ages.

Outside of Dante studies, Augustine's hermeneutics of *caritas* could be applied to the reading of other medieval texts which claim to feature Christian allegory. Chaucer, Boccaccio, and even Arthurian literature could be read through the lens of Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics to illuminate mutual themes of good and bad forms of love, if not the instruction of good and bad forms of reading. Such a future project need not be limited to medieval literature; J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, and even J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series have been discussed in terms of featuring Christian allegory. What may limit the reading of these modern works through Augustine's Biblical hermeneutics is the author's intentional use of Christian allegory. Dante seems to welcome readings of the *Commedia* in light of Scripture as his poem draws from, and claims to draw inspiration from, several Biblical references and allusions. However, as argued by Simone Marchesi, Augustine's hermeneutics

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<sup>3</sup> Pietro Delcorno's research project, "Crossing the Alps with Dante: Preaching the *Commedia* in Fifteenth-Century Europe", was conducted through the Leeds Humanities Research Institute, School of Languages, Cultures, and Societies (University of Leeds) and funded by the Rubicon fellowship of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Pietro Delcorno, "Faculty Profile: Pietro Delcorno", 2016, <[https://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/profile/20046/2025/pietro\\_delcorno](https://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/profile/20046/2025/pietro_delcorno)> [accessed 27 July 2017].

advocates a reading of the text through an “active lens”, or through an approach that goes beyond the author’s intention.<sup>4</sup>

## 5.2. Final Reflections

*O voi che siete in picciotta barca,  
desiderosi d’ascoltar, seguiti  
dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,  
tornate a riveder li vostri liti:  
non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,  
perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.  
L’acqua ch’io prendo già mai non si corse (Par. 2.1–7)*

(O you who in little barks, desirous of listening, have followed after my ship that sails onward singing: turn back to see your shores again, do not put out on the deep sea, for perhaps, losing me, you would be lost; the waters that I enter have never before been crossed)

Of all the addresses in the *Commedia*, this one speaks to me the most. For those who have followed along with Dante’s Pilgrim through Hell and Purgatory, what comes next may not be accessible to all who dare to continue to read. For those who find nourishment in the *pan de li angeli*, they may well see the key to reordering the relationships in their own lives.

Reflecting on where this research began, I feared that I too would succumb to the dangerous waters of reading, but not fully understanding. I initially limited myself in thinking of the *Commedia*’s Christological themes in terms of the Pilgrim seeing Christ, face-to-face, rather than as the paradigm of Christian revelation and moral conduct. Augustine’s rules for reading Scripture emphasise the order of human relationships as Christ taught them to be: to love God as the Highest and Greatest Good and loving neighbours through selfless charity and respect for God’s sake. Upon recognising how Matthew 22:37–40 was the hermeneutical key to reading and understanding the proper order of human conduct, my task for this research was to understand how Christ served

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<sup>4</sup> Simone Marchesi, *Dante & Augustine*, p. 109.

as the moral and figurative guide in the Pilgrim's journey. The Pilgrim stands in for all Christians who need Christ to transform their hearts, minds, and souls to fully and genuinely love God and others. Christ reveals the true path to living a life of obedience to God and service to others. The moral instruction is clear, but the journey to accomplishing it is not easy.

This thesis has desired to be counted among those who are able to read beyond this address in *Paradiso* 2. For beyond these dangerous and uncharted waters is a path to the Cross which stands as a crossroads for readers. They can end their journey with the Pilgrim there and return to the dark wood, refusing to heed the warnings of the text as Francesca did, and continue to live disconnected from God and others. Or they can continue to follow in the Pilgrim's wake and take up their own pen and tell others how to distinguish between the good and bad forms of love. They too can restore the relationships around them in light of Christ's commandment to love God above all and others in proper charity and service to God. They can follow the better path illuminated by Christ who steers our *picciola barca* to God's eternal light in the stars.

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