

**The Knowledge of the Heart:  
Reading the *Ancrene Wisse* in the Context of Twelfth-  
Century Monastic Conscience Literature**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses the nature and role of contemplation in the early-thirteenth-century English *Ancrene Wisse* (*AW*). Previous scholarship on the text has debated whether or not it ought to be described as ‘mystical,’ and has generally focused on language and imagery that the *AW* shares with more conventionally recognised mystical literature. This thesis takes a different approach by focusing on the role of the conscience within the text. The *AW* prescribes a rule of life that governs the heart. The *AW* author defines a pure heart as a clean conscience. An attempt to understand the contemplative life in the *AW* must first establish what the author means by the conscience; applications of modern and medieval scholastic understandings of the conscience to the *AW* are anachronistic. This thesis explores the *AW* author’s handling of conscience within the context of twelfth-century monastic thought, as expressed in three treatises on conscience which have hitherto received minimal scholarly attention: Peter of Celle’s *De Conscientia*, and the pseudo-Bernardine *Tractatus de Conscientia* and *De Interiori Domo*. In these texts, conscience is neither a moral guide nor a record of personal conduct. Their authors synthesise a new understanding of the conscience from different elements within classical, biblical, and patristic thought. This thesis argues that this distinctive approach to conscience gave rise to a different form of contemplative thought and practice that lies outside the mainstream development of medieval mysticism. Rather than utilising tripartite schemas of spiritual ascent based on the stages of purgation, illumination, and union, the conscience texts base their view of union with God on the model of moral reasoning. This thesis argues that the *AW* participates in this school of thought on conscience and contemplation, rather than more conventionally recognised traditions of medieval mystical literature.

## Contents

<b>Note on Texts and Translations.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. The Problem.....	4
2. The <i>Ancrene Wisse</i> .....	7
3. The Modern Conscience.....	9
4. The Medieval Conscience.....	10
a. Scholasticism.....	11
b. <i>Conscience</i> and <i>Inwit</i> .....	14
c. Outside Scholasticism.....	19
2. The Contemplative Conscience and Mystical Consciousness.....	28
3. Thesis Outline.....	31
<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter One: Peter of Celle.....</b>	<b>52</b>
1. Introduction.....	52
2. Memory in the Present: Peter's Definition of Conscience.....	55
3. Acquiring a Conscience: Peter's Description of Conscience.....	64
a. Description and Composition.....	64
i. The Chariot.....	71
ii. The Guest Chamber.....	74
iii. Solomon's Temple.....	77
iv. The Tower, Temptation, and Confession.....	85
b. A Rule of Life.....	91
4. Conclusion.....	93
<b>Chapter Two: Two Pseudo-Bernardine Conscience Texts.....</b>	<b>96</b>
1. Introduction.....	96
2. <i>Tractatus de Conscientia</i> .....	96
3. <i>De Interiori Domo</i> .....	106
4. Conclusion.....	127
<b>Chapter Three: The <i>Ancrene Wisse</i>.....</b>	<b>130</b>

1. Introduction.....	130
2. The Heart as a Moral Faculty.....	131
3. Will and Desire.....	137
4. Charity .....	148
5. Thought of the Heart.....	158
a. Reason and Understanding.....	159
b. Thoughts as Meditations and Weapons .....	163
6. The Guest Chamber .....	169
7. Conclusion .....	171
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>178</b>
Appendix A: <i>Tractatus de Conscientia</i> .....	179
Appendix B: <i>De Interiori Domo</i> .....	192
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>231</b>

## Note on Texts and Translations

All citations from the *Ancrene Wisse* are, unless otherwise noted, from Bella Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). References to the *AW* are given parenthetically in text as section (P for the Preface, Roman numerals for subsequent sections), and line numbers from Millett's edition.

Citations from Peter of Celle's *De Conscientia* are, unless otherwise noted, from Jean Leclercq, OSB, *La Spiritualité De Pierre De Celle*, vol. 7, *Etudes De Theologie Et D'Histoire De La Spiritualité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1946). I have also drawn upon Hugh Feiss's emendations to the text as found in Peter of Celle, *Selected Works*, trans. Hugh Feiss (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 38-40. References to *De Conscientia* are given parenthetically in text as page and line numbers from Leclercq's edition.

Citations from the *Tractatus de Conscientia* and *De Interiori Domo* are from the text included in volume 184 of Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina* (Paris: Migne, 1841-64). References are given parenthetically in text to the paragraph numbers as they appear in the *Patrologia Latina*. I have also included the same paragraph numbers in my translations of the texts, found in the appendices to this thesis. Direct citations from the texts are accompanied by footnotes which also include the volume and column number from the *Patrologia Latina*.

Biblical citations, unless otherwise noted, are from Robert Weber and Roger Gryson, eds., *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 5th ed. (Nördlingen: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007). I have accordingly followed the Vulgate's numbering of the Psalms.

Translations from Latin and early Middle English are provided in the footnotes. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

## Introduction

### 1. The Problem

The *Ancrene Wisse* (*AW*) provides two rules of life for women living the rigorous, solitary life of anchoritism.<sup>1</sup> One rule is inner, and the other outer.<sup>2</sup> Both consist of moral and ethical prescriptions with a strong emphasis on resisting temptation and making a good confession. The prescriptions come in a variety of forms including *exempla*, allegories, and etymologies. The author's creative and imaginative rhetoric configures the anchoress as a bride of Christ and sporadically alludes to extraordinary spiritual experience. The text describes spiritual flight, an inner vision that develops proportionately to an outer blindness, the secret embraces of Christ that simultaneously take place out of the body and in the bower of the heart, and a unique closeness with God that only anchoritism can foster. The tension between the two elements in the *AW* – the ethical and the experiential – has generated discussion and debate amongst scholars for almost as long as the text has been studied.<sup>3</sup> The *AW* is a work of religious guidance, the first of its kind in English, written for women living as anchoresses sometime during the 1220s. What are the aims and goals of such a life? Does its author intend his readers to have spiritual, mystical experiences? If so, why are references to spiritual experience only interspersed amongst moral teaching? If not, why does the text allude to such experiences at all?

Approaches to the *AW*'s spirituality are typically framed within the question of whether or not the text is mystical. Does the text suggest that its reader might or will attain

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<sup>1</sup> The title, *Ancrene Wisse*, roughly translates into Modern English as "Guide for Anchoresses." The title is commonly used both with and without the definite article. I have followed those who retain the definite article in the same way that the definite article is used with reference to the titles of other works such as the *Regula* of Benedict or the *Confessiones* of Augustine.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of what the term *rule* means with regards to the *AW*, see Bella Millett, "The Genre of *Ancrene Wisse*," in *A Companion to "Ancrene Wisse"*, ed. Yoko Wada (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003) and Bella Millett, "Can There Be Such a Thing as an 'Anchoritic Rule'?", in *Anchoritism in the Middle Ages: Texts and Traditions*, ed. Catherine Innes-Parker and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> See the Literature Review (pp. 33-51 of this thesis) for a more detailed account of scholarly debates about the spirituality of the *AW*.

some form of extraordinary spiritual experience? Some scholars, beginning with Nicholas Watson and most recently represented by Mary Agnes Edsall, maintain that the *AW* is mystical but that its mysticism deviates from what would traditionally be recognised as medieval mysticism. The other, more generally accepted, view is that the *AW* is not a mystical text, because its allusions and references to mysticism are not part of any spiritual trajectory or hierarchical ascent. There is no explicit definition or discussion of spiritual experience or the role it plays, and references to it are scattered.

Both sides in the debate are, ironically enough, undermined by the very presence of the mystical elements they discuss. Watson and his successors maintain that the *AW*'s mysticism is not conventional medieval mysticism. Mari Hughes-Edwards counters Watson, writing that "evidently [the] earlier medieval guides echo wider medieval contemporary negotiations of contemplative union."<sup>4</sup> The *AW* alludes to conventional forms of mysticism, and thus the author clearly has them in mind. He simply does not regard them as particularly relevant or important. The problem for those who deny that the *AW* is a mystical text is, once again, that the text does contain allusions to mysticism. The author may not emphasise them, but they are there. Thus, questions about the nature and role of spiritual experience in the *AW* continue to appear in work on the text.

The classification of the *AW* as 'mystical' is of minimal value in itself since, as Watson points out, it is largely a matter of semantics.<sup>5</sup> Whether or not the *AW* is a mystical text will depend largely on how mysticism is defined. The classification is only significant insofar as it imports assumptions and expectations about the text. The expectation is that mystical texts will be concerned with the inner life, orienting the reader towards union with God or transcendence of ordinary experience. Non-mystical texts, by contrast, are

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<sup>4</sup> Mari Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 92.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Watson, "The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 134.

earthbound. They are more likely to provide moral prescriptions and restrictions as ends in themselves.

The *AW* states that its purpose is the attainment of a pure heart or a good conscience. The spirituality of the *AW* is therefore best understood within the context of conscience literature from its time. It is necessary to take into account what the *AW* author's contemporaries and near contemporaries wrote about conscience in order to properly understand how he conceptualises the conscience that he makes the basis of the spiritual life. Bella Millett has studied the *AW* in relation to continental confession literature.<sup>6</sup> None of the previous scholarship, however, has read the *AW* in the context of the conscience literature of its time.

This thesis argues that the *AW* draws upon a distinctive, contemplative conception of conscience that appears in twelfth-century monastic literature. Twelfth-century monastic writers transform the conscience from God's law within the soul into God's presence within the soul. They model contemplative union with God on the operation of the traditional moral conscience rather than on paradigms of spiritual purgation, illumination, and union. The moral conscience traditionally applied God's law to daily life. The contemplative conscience, by contrast, applies God's presence to daily life.

This thesis thus argues that Bernard McGinn's more recent analysis of mystical texts – what McGinn terms 'mystical consciousness' – is a more useful tool for reading the spirituality of conscience literature than traditionally defined mysticism. Conscience literature, including the *AW*, does intend for its readers to attain extraordinary spiritual experiences, but these experiences cannot be enjoyed independently of the reader's ordinary life and practice. The extraordinary and the ordinary are fused together.

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<sup>6</sup> Bella Millett, "Ancrene Wisse and the Conditions of Confession," *English Studies* 80, no. 3 (1999): 193.



## 2. The *Ancrene Wisse*

Six of the *AW*'s eight parts are devoted to the inner rule, the rule that governs the heart. Not all religious are obligated to follow the same outer rule, but all religious must “halden a riwle onont purte of heorte” (P.40).<sup>7</sup> The inner rule “quantum ad puritatem cordis, circa quam uersatur tota religio” (P.38-39).<sup>8</sup> The rule’s goal is to cleanse and purify the heart because “[r]ihtin hire and smeðin hire is of euch religiun ant of euch ordre þe god ant al þe strengðe” (P.43-44).<sup>9</sup> An accurate understanding of what the author means by the heart is therefore vital, if the *AW* and its spirituality are to be understood at all.

The author provides a definition of the heart when he introduces the two rules. Purity is explained as “cleane ant schir inwit” (P.40-41).<sup>10</sup> The definition, however, shifts rather than resolves the problem. Now *inwit*, conscience, is in need of definition.

Mary Baldwin illustrates the difficulties in understanding the *AW*'s conscience and heart when she points to the author's dual emphases on conscience and charity. The “orientation of the inner rule raises the question of the meaning of charity in *AW* as a whole. Conscience receives a greater emphasis in the Introduction than love, and the author’s conception of the meaning and role of charity as the ruling force in the interior life is ambiguous as a result.”<sup>11</sup> Baldwin’s reading has had an especially significant impact on subsequent scholarship on the *AW*. Baldwin’s project attempts to distil the unique doctrinal content of the *AW* by analysing the author’s reappropriation of his sources. Her unpublished doctoral thesis remains one of the most extensive and thorough source analyses of the text, and is frequently used and referenced in editions of the *AW* to the present. Most scholarship has consequently engaged the *AW* author’s appropriation of sources through the lens of

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<sup>7</sup> “... keep a rule touching purity of heart.”

<sup>8</sup> “... pertains to purity of heart, about which all religion revolves.”

<sup>9</sup> “... to make the heart right and smooth is the good and all the strength of every religious order.”

<sup>10</sup> “... a clean and bright conscience.”

<sup>11</sup> Mary Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background in the Christian Tradition of Religious Instruction and Spirituality” (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1974), 33.

Baldwin's conclusions. This thesis begins from the point of Baldwin's argument that the spirituality of the *AW* is predominantly characterised by its emphasis on conscience at the expense of charity. This thesis argues, contrary to Baldwin, that conscience (and not charity) needs redefinition.

The *AW* author states that purity of heart is a "cleane ant schir inwit" (P.40-41), equating *heorte* and *inwit*. The latter of these two Middle English words is usually understood to mean 'conscience.' The *AW* itself supports this reading. The author first uses *inwit* to translate the biblical *consciencia* (P.18). The second appearance of *inwit* in the text is similarly accompanied by the Latin gloss, *consciencia* (P.41), most likely to prevent subsequent scribal confusion of *inwit* and *inwið*.<sup>12</sup> Baldwin observes "nothing especially unusual about the identification of pure heart and good conscience."<sup>13</sup> She traces it to the gospel commentaries and homilies of Jerome and Augustine, particularly to their treatments of the Beatitudes.<sup>14</sup> She contrasts, however, the author's initial exaltation of the inner rule as "circa quam uersatur tota religio" (P.39) with the inner rule's stated object of a clean, sin-free conscience. She concludes that it is "a very limited conception of the rule of purity of heart that is the virtue and strength of every religious order and the core of the religious life," especially compared with other treatments of eremitic spirituality.<sup>15</sup> If she is correct in identifying *inwit* with something resembling a modern, popular understanding of conscience, then her observation is sound. The *AW*'s conception of the religious life would indeed be limited.

In order to assess the validity of Baldwin's observation – and unequivocally use 'conscience' to understand *inwit* – we need to establish the author's understanding of the words. *Inwit*, *conscience*, and *heorte* in the text need to be defined on their own terms and

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<sup>12</sup> Bella Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Baldwin, "Ancrene Wisse and its Background," 27-28.

<sup>14</sup> Baldwin, "Ancrene Wisse and its Background," 27.

<sup>15</sup> Baldwin, "Ancrene Wisse and its Background," 27-28.

distinguished from modern definitions of conscience. Otherwise we risk importing and imposing an anachronistic understanding on the text's discourse on the inner life.

### **3. The Modern Conscience**

The Modern English 'conscience' encompasses a variety of meanings, deceptively collapsed together under a single label. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists at least four distinct meanings in the space of a single sense. Conscience 1.a. is "[t]he internal acknowledgement or recognition of the moral quality of one's motives and actions; the sense of right and wrong as regards things for which one is responsible; the faculty or principle which judges the moral quality of one's actions or motives. Now also in weakened sense: one's awareness of what is advisable or acceptable for one to do."<sup>16</sup>

The modern meanings of 'conscience' are, however, divisible into two simpler, more general, categories. William Spohn, writing as a theologian, suggests the terms 'anterior conscience' – "all the searching and deliberation that leads up to a moral decision" – and 'subsequent conscience' – "that reflects back on decisions we have made."<sup>17</sup> Spohn concedes the ambiguity surrounding conscience, that it "eludes precise definition."<sup>18</sup> He attempts some resolution by concentrating on the anterior conscience, describing it as "a human process of assessment and judgement and not the authoritative voice of God."<sup>19</sup>

Today, William Lyons notes, "discussion of the concept of conscience in philosophy has become rather rare."<sup>20</sup> Contemporary philosophical discussions of conscience, when they occur at all, typically focus on the anterior conscience, corresponding to the third of the OED's definitions, "the faculty or principle which judges the moral quality of one's

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<sup>16</sup> OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/39460?result=1&rskey=CA9MeF& s.v. 'conscience.'>

<sup>17</sup> William C. Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development," *Theological Studies* 61, 1 (2000): 122.

<sup>18</sup> Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development," 122.

<sup>19</sup> Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development," 122.

<sup>20</sup> William Lyons, "Conscience – An Essay in Moral Psychology," *Philosophy* 84 (2009): 477.

actions or motives.” Lyons argues for the resuscitation of conscience in analytic philosophy and attempts to define it in contradistinction to both theological and psychoanalytic understandings as “the development internally of a deep commitment to moral principles of an objective and ‘other-regarding’ sort that we ourselves have judiciously generated.”<sup>21</sup> His philosophical definition resembles Spohn's theological one, insofar as both regard conscience as the end-product of a process involving other mental activities.

Paul Thagard and Tracy Finn offer a slightly different definition that encompasses both the anterior and subsequent conscience. They define conscience as “the internal sense of moral goodness or badness of one’s own actual or imagined conduct. The products of conscience are moral intuitions, which are the feelings that some acts are right and others are wrong.”<sup>22</sup> They proceed to argue that “conscience is not a special mental faculty, but rather a neural process that involves both cognitive appraisal and somatic perception.”<sup>23</sup> Their definition largely accounts for the sense of moral satisfaction or guilt experienced after the performance of action. The reference to imagined conduct, however, enables their definition to also include conscience as a future-oriented moral guide, and not merely an emotional reaction to past conduct.

These discussions are modern. They represent modern understandings and usages of the term ‘conscience.’ Millett and Dance define the Middle English *inwit*, in their glossary to the *AW*, simply as “conscience.”<sup>24</sup> Their gloss risks invoking modern rather than medieval meanings.

#### **4. The Medieval Conscience**

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<sup>21</sup> Lyons, “Conscience,” 488.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Thagard and Tracy Finn, “What is Moral Intuition?” in *Morality and the Emotions*, ed. Carla Bagnoli (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150.

<sup>23</sup> Thagard and Finn, “Moral Intuition,” 152.

<sup>24</sup> Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 2:397.

## a. Scholasticism

Timothy Potts lamented in 1980 that “[c]onscience has been much neglected by philosophers.”<sup>25</sup> He attempted to rectify the situation and “to create interest in medieval philosophy” with the publication of his book, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*.<sup>26</sup> Thirteen years later, however, Douglas Langston observed that Potts’ “work has ... failed to spark the interest he clearly hoped it would.”<sup>27</sup> The situation is not very different today. There are few scholarly treatments of the medieval conscience. Those that exist – like those of Potts and Langston – typically focus on conscience in scholastic philosophy. The studies are usually less interested in history and more interested in using medieval philosophy “as an aid to thought about contemporary philosophical problems.”<sup>28</sup> The scholastics are favoured because their works are rigorously systematic and therefore more fruitful to this end.

Modern philosophers find a kindred spirit in the scholastics with whom they share a focus on moral evaluation. Both modern and medieval scholastic discussions treat conscience as a moral evaluation of conduct in the past, future or both. Conscience, in each case, compares behaviour with a moral standard. It is the instrument for moral evaluation of one’s past actions and the guide for future actions. Scholastic theories differed significantly from their modern counterparts by firmly anchoring conscience in God as the source of moral precepts.

Scholastic philosophers were predominantly occupied with the question of how the comparison between conduct and the moral standard works. The relationship between divine law and human judgement was framed within the division between conscience and synderesis. Discussions of the two emerged during the thirteenth century, within the wider

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<sup>25</sup> Timothy C. Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, ix.

<sup>27</sup> Douglas Langston, “The Spark of Conscience: Bonaventure’s View of Conscience and Synderesis,” *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993): 79.

<sup>28</sup> Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy*, ix.

context of debates between intellectualist and voluntarist schools of thought that disputed the role of reason and will in human action.<sup>29</sup> The treatises on conscience began in commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor*, as attempts to solve Peter's question of "how the will can be bad."<sup>30</sup> Martina Stepinova summarises the problem as how a "person acts against his knowledge of what is best for him," the debate that "is today known and carried on under the name 'weakness of the will.'"<sup>31</sup> The distinction between conscience and synderesis allowed for two levels of moral knowledge. Both need to operate properly for moral knowledge to be put into practice. If either conscience or synderesis fails to perform its duty, then moral decisions will be unsound. It is therefore possible that a person may retain some knowledge of what is in their best moral interests, and yet act differently.

Conscience and synderesis are interrelated, although the precise nature of their relationship varies depending on the individual writer. Thomas Aquinas held synderesis to be the basis of human knowledge of divine law, which Stepinova describes as "the most common criterion which is the foundation of all other evaluations of things."<sup>32</sup> Synderesis belongs to the reason; conscience emerges as the application of synderesis to individual situations.<sup>33</sup> Aquinas' position is thus broadly construed as intellectualist in contrast to the view of his contemporary and sometime colleague at the University of Paris, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio.

Bonaventure maintains in his commentary on the *Sententiarum* that conscience is essentially rational.<sup>34</sup> Douglas Langston notes that Bonaventure's conscience is itself

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<sup>29</sup> Tobias Hoffmann, "Intellectualism and Voluntarism," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 414.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy C. Potts, "Conscience," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, Jan Pinborg, and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 687. See Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor* II.39, (PL 192:745).

<sup>31</sup> Martina Stepinova OP, "Aquinas' Solution of Aristotle's Incontinent Man and Augustine's Two Wills," *New Blackfriars* 92 (2009): 322.

<sup>32</sup> Stepinova, "Aquinas' Solution," 332. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia. Q79. A12.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia. Q79. A.13.

<sup>34</sup> Langston, "Spark of Conscience," 79. See Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros*

subdivided into two parts. The first part is “a light on a par with the power of the intellect to discover the truth of first principles of theoretical reason,” but its domain is practical rather than theoretical.<sup>35</sup> It corresponds more or less with Aquinas’ synderesis. Langston terms the second part of Bonaventure’s conscience “applied conscience.”<sup>36</sup> The label is essentially self-explanatory. It is analogous to Aquinas’ conscience, although they differ in that Bonaventure’s applied conscience is not an event or action but a part of the faculty of the conscience that operates within the reason. Nevertheless, Langston points out, it is the sphere of moral growth and it is therefore necessary “to educate one’s self properly so that the applied conscience can be brought into conformity with ... authority.”<sup>37</sup>

Bonaventure’s synderesis further distinguishes him from Aquinas. According to Bonaventure, synderesis is the innate affection that renders obedience to conscience desirable. It “is the desire to do good and avoid evil” by which “we are directed to the good found in objects.”<sup>38</sup> Thus “conscience works with the mediation of synderesis.”<sup>39</sup> The affectivity of synderesis explains the positive and negative emotional responses of subsequent conscience, since “failure to follow the principles of conscience effectively thwarts the desire for good, and the frustration of this desire leads to the emotions of guilt and remorse.”<sup>40</sup>

Aquinas and Bonaventure stand here as illustrations of two different scholastic approaches to the nature and operation of conscience. Their differences highlight two important features of the scholastic conscience: firstly, its connectedness to God as a source of moral awareness, and secondly, its fallible application in individual situations. Moral operations as a whole involve both knowledge and action. They pertain, therefore, to the rational and affective parts of the person.

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*Sententiarum: In Secundum Librum Sententiarum* XXXIX. A. 1. Q. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 80.

<sup>36</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 81.

<sup>37</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 83.

<sup>38</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 86.

<sup>39</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 86.

<sup>40</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 87.

The majority of scholarly attention to the medieval conscience has focused on scholasticism because, as noted above, modern approaches to conscience are developments of and reactions against scholasticism. Scholasticism is a stage within the development of today's mainstream theories of conscience. The scholastic debates, however, postdate the *AW* by several decades. It is wholly anachronistic to read the modern conscience back into the *AW*'s *inwit*.

### **b. Conscience and Inwit**

The Middle English word *conscience* is a problematic term. C. S. Lewis notes that its appearance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* “must mean ‘mind’ or ‘thought.’”<sup>41</sup> Chaucer’s usage differs, and “some such meaning as ‘tenderness’ (vulnerability, even excessive sensibility) seems to be required.”<sup>42</sup> Chaucer describes the Prioress’s “conscience and tendre herte” in relation to her emotional sensitivity: “She was so charitable and so pitous | She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous | Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.”<sup>43</sup> Michael Calabrese thus argues that Chaucer’s use of *conscience* in his description of the Prioress “produces a merciless pathos, at the centre of which is the unrelenting image of an anxious widow.”<sup>44</sup> The Prioress utilises an “emotionalism that charms but also affronts” in order to evoke a response of “sorrow and hatred” in her fellow pilgrims.<sup>45</sup> *Conscience*, then, is the sort of emotion that can be aroused by rhetoric and, once aroused, overshadows other considerations.

R. D. Eaton surveys the glossaries to various editions of Chaucer’s works and

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<sup>41</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 183. The word ‘conscience’ appears in stanza 48 of the poem. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 33, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=cme;cc=cme;view=to;idno=Gawain>.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 183.

<sup>43</sup> Chaucer, “The General Prologue,” *Canterbury Tales*, fragment 1, line 150; Chaucer, fragment 1, ll. 143-45.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Calabrese, “Performing the Prioress: ‘Conscience’ and Responsibility in Studies of Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44, no. 1 (2002): 77.

<sup>45</sup> Calabrese, “Performing the Prioress,” 77.



finds the reading of the Prioress's *conscience* as 'sensibility' dominant and "active since the middle of the twentieth century."<sup>46</sup> Eaton himself disagrees, and argues that Chaucer intends a moral sense of the term *conscience*: "[the Prioress's] display of emotion is evidence not of her conscience, but rather, of her *charite* and *pite* that in her eyes justify her claim to ... conscience."<sup>47</sup> Even when *conscience* describes feelings of anxiety elsewhere in Middle English literature, "this is the anxiety we feel when called upon to appear before a stern judge."<sup>48</sup> Thus Eaton stresses *conscience* as morally prescriptive, but allows that it has affective properties such as fear and moral anxiety. The uses of *conscience* in Chaucer and the *Gawain*-poet are, however, considerably later than the *AW*.

*Conscience* would later come to mean the soul or spirit as a whole but, according to the Middle English Dictionary, not before 1382 when it appears in the Wycliffite Bible.<sup>49</sup> *Inwit*, by contrast, had a similar meaning much earlier. The MED defines an earlier usage of *inwit* as "[m]ind, reason, intellect, comprehension, understanding," but this too postdates the *AW* by almost eighty years. It first appeared around 1300, according to the MED, in the *South English Legendary*'s life of St Brendan. An even later usage of *inwit* refers to "[t]he collection of inner faculties" or "one of five inner faculties" more generally. This sense does not appear before the late 1370s. The final and only remaining definition offered by the MED is "Inward awareness of right or wrong, conscience." Its earliest cited appearance is the *AW*.

The Medieval Latin *conscientia* yields a similar set of dictionary definitions. The first two meanings given by the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, "shared or mutual knowledge" and "complicity in guilt" are clearly irrelevant here.<sup>50</sup> The second set

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<sup>46</sup> R. D. Eaton, "Sin and Sensibility: The Conscience of Chaucer's Prioress," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 104, no. 4 (October 2005): 497.

<sup>47</sup> Eaton, "Sin and Sensibility," 506.

<sup>48</sup> Eaton, "Sin and Sensibility," 505.

<sup>49</sup> Robert E. Lewis, ed., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>, s.v. 'inwit.'

<sup>50</sup> R. E. Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), s.v. 'conscientia.'

of definitions is, however, possible: “consciousness, (inner) awareness,” “knowledge, cognisance,” and “conscious choice, deliberate decision.”<sup>51</sup> Finally, *conscientia* could refer to “conscience, sense of right and wrong,” or a “point of conscience, scruple.”<sup>52</sup>

The second definition, “consciousness, (inner) awareness” is a direct and literal equivalent of the English *inwit*, understood as a compound of *in* and *wit*. The MED does not list this as a possible definition of *inwit* but it should not be excluded as a possibility in the *AW*, since the *AW* contains the earliest extant appearance of *inwit*. The “cleane ant schir inwit” is, after all, “wiðuten weote of sunne” (P.40-41). It must, therefore, necessarily have the capacity to be aware of sin. There is no evidence thus far, however, that its awareness is exclusively limited to sin.

Eaton argues that *inwit* is not identical to the *conscience* that eventually replaced it. *Conscience* “took on meanings, connotations and associations that *inwit* had never had or would have.”<sup>53</sup> The transition between the two occurred “when English culture adopted, next to the traditional idea of conscience, a new and more complex one.”<sup>54</sup> *Inwit*, according to Eaton, represents the traditional conscience, and *conscience* represents the newer idea. Eaton’s main source for the meaning of *inwit* is the *AW*. The definition he arrives at is insightful, but limited since he only considers instances of either *inwit* or *conscience* in the text. A more comprehensive definition of the *AW* author’s *inwit* would require an analysis of the heart in the text since, as indicated above, the *AW* author equates heart and *inwit*.

Eaton argues that *inwit* in the *AW* is “self-consciousness or moral introspection” based on the author’s description of it as “cleane ant schir.”<sup>55</sup> *Inwit* is “a faculty of self-

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<sup>51</sup> Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, s.v. ‘conscientia,’ 2. a, b, c.

<sup>52</sup> Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, s.v. ‘conscientia,’ 3. a, b.

<sup>53</sup> R. D. Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience in Late Middle English Literature,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 105, no. 4 (2004): 424.

<sup>54</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 424.

<sup>55</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 426.

awareness and not a moral state or condition.”<sup>56</sup> It follows, in Eaton’s argument, that “[a] pure conscience is ... not a repository of spiritual history which is free of stain or corruption, but a self-consciousness which is aware of no instance of sin.”<sup>57</sup> Eaton’s definition does not account for the *AW* author’s description of the pure heart as “efne ant smeðe wiðute cnost ant dolc of woh inwit” (P.13-14).

The *AW* author strongly associates *inwit* with moral awareness at this early stage of the text. Its specified “weote” is “of sunne” or, at least, unconfessed sin (P.41-42). Its relationship with sin, however, goes deeper than mere awareness or introspection. The Inner Rule “makeð efne ant smeðe wiðute cnost ant dolc of woh inwit” (P.13-14). Sin thus exists within the *inwit* insofar as it has the power to change *inwit*, to make it “woh.” The condition of the *inwit* is determined by one’s spiritual history. It is therefore misleading to draw too sharp a distinction between spiritual history and *inwit* as a faculty. *Inwit* is the means by which spiritual history interacts with life in the present.

Eaton implicitly affirms as much when he notes that “[b]ecause of [the *AW* author’s] great respect for the moral integrity of the women ... his first concern is that they should not be too severe on themselves” and “especially in women of [their] moral calibre ..., the conscience fuels pride by its very relentlessness.”<sup>58</sup> The nature of the conscience, or *inwit*, is dependent upon the ‘moral calibre’ of the person. Eaton maintains that *inwit* “is a purely human faculty” and takes the *AW*’s precautions against scrupulosity to indicate that “the influence of conscience can be counter-productive and even dangerous.”<sup>59</sup> His observation here is certainly valid. *Inwit*, then, grows from rather than transcends the person. Spiritual history has a part to play in its growth. The condition of *inwit* reflects the condition of the person. It “functioned like a moral immune system, with much the same strengths and

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<sup>56</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 426.

<sup>57</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 426.

<sup>58</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 425.

<sup>59</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 424.

weaknesses that we understand our bodily immune systems to have.”<sup>60</sup> It follows that “[a] conscience out of control, like a bodily immune system out of control, could do more damage than the infections it sought to destroy.”<sup>61</sup>

Eaton uses the immune system for purely illustrative purposes. He does not make any anachronistic suggestions that the *AW* author actually bases his understanding of conscience on the immune system. The illustration nevertheless accentuates the historical discrepancy. A modern writer could easily model an understanding of conscience on the immune system. A medieval writer could not. The problem highlights a fundamental flaw in Eaton’s approach. He posits that the *inwit* of the *AW* reflects an older English tradition of conscience.<sup>62</sup> He also follows the view that the *AW* author coins the term *inwit*.<sup>63</sup> If there were a specifically English tradition of conscience available to the *AW* author, it would be highly unlikely that he would need to coin a new word for it. What resources, English or Latin, did an early-thirteenth-century author have to formulate such an idea of the conscience? How would he think about conscience? What role could it play in devotional writing?

The philosophical sources for later medieval thought on conscience are readily identifiable, albeit infrequently studied. Eaton uses scholastic writing on conscience to support his reading of *conscience* in Chaucer. He does not, however, consider the philosophical and theological writing on conscience contemporary with the *AW*.

Internal evidence within the *AW* reveals a more expansive understanding of conscience. Purity of heart is also love of God. The author develops this second sense throughout the work, but especially in Part VII. Baldwin reads the *AW* against John Cassian’s *Collationes* and argues that a clean conscience takes precedence in the *AW*, even if love of

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<sup>60</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 424-25.

<sup>61</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 425.

<sup>62</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 424.

<sup>63</sup> Eaton, “From Inwit to Conscience,” 423.

God follows it as a result. Love potentially brings with it the joy of the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> Baldwin nonetheless follows Geoffrey Shepherd's position that the *AW* only refers to this kind of spiritual joy cryptically and fleetingly in contrast to Cassian's overt statement of it as a goal of the spiritual life.<sup>65</sup> Baldwin's distinction between love and conscience, once again, reflects a scholastic or modern understanding of the conscience.

### c. Outside Scholasticism

Non-scholastic conscience texts do not always distinguish between conscience and synderesis. Writers prior to the 1230s, as G. R. Evans observes of Bernard of Clairvaux, “[lack] the materials, and the terminology, to advance far along the road of the discussion of synderesis of the thirteenth century.”<sup>66</sup> The earlier conscience could, nevertheless, involve both the rational and affective parts of the person.

Work on conscience in the twelfth century has tended to focus on the subsequent conscience. Thus Evans notes that Bernard's conscience “has some independence of the mind in which it works and can see its conduct clearly and critically.”<sup>67</sup> It “gnaws at us within, like a worm,” but “[i]f we behave rightly, conscience is silent.”<sup>68</sup> Bernard's conscience is more concerned with past than future conduct. Peter Godman similarly addresses the subsequent conscience when he explores the phenomenon of monks feigning faults in confession in order to paradoxically appear holier. Godman describes such a fabricated confession as a “*fictio* constructed by a spiritual sophist who, through his pyrotechnics of auto-execration, aims at a

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<sup>64</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 319-20.

<sup>65</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 323-24. Baldwin here compares the *AW* with John Cassian, *Collationum XXIV Collectio* I.13, (PL 49:497).

<sup>66</sup> G. R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 36.

<sup>67</sup> Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 35. Evans cites Bernard's description of the conscience as a witness. See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Epistolae* CCLXXX.1, (PL 182:485B).

<sup>68</sup> Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 35. For Bernard's image of the conscience as a gnawing worm, see Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Conversione* V.7, (PL 182:838C-D). For the silence of the good conscience, see Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae* XXVIII.47, (PL 182:967C).

pre-eminence of humility.”<sup>69</sup> The monk lies about what his subsequent conscience contains. These approaches restrict their focus to only one of the multiple facets of the twelfth-century conscience.

Other scholars have focused on the conscience in later devotional writing. Alison Renshaw argues that the conscience in fourteenth-century English confessional manuals is “promised as the clearest way to God. It is a channelling and apparently restricting, focusing force, that at the same time affords man the ultimate freedom in his potential to escape from sin.”<sup>70</sup> She describes the conscience in texts like the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* and the *Pricke of Conscience* as “a residue of the ideal relationship once shared by man and God.”<sup>71</sup> The torments of a guilty conscience could be transfigured into spiritual joys as the person learned to heed the reproaches of conscience and use them to harmonise conduct with divine law: “The sinner . . . can in fact find himself working with rather than against his desires, when his desires are reconciled or coincide with his higher reason.”<sup>72</sup> There is, then, a relationship between God and the conscience inasmuch as “[t]he conscience is God’s agent on the inside.”<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the conscience “is an individual drive sending man back to communion with God” and not the actual presence of God within the person.<sup>74</sup> In this, the manualists participate in a much older tradition of thought on conscience.

The idea of the conscience dates back to classical antiquity. The Latin *conscientia* was a literal translation of the Greek *suneidesis*. Both terms could mean “either the state (or act) of sharing knowledge or else simply knowledge, awareness, apprehension – even something like mind or thought.”<sup>75</sup> Moral applications of the term are more common in Latin

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<sup>69</sup> Peter Godman, *Paradoxes of Conscience in the High Middle Ages: Abelard, Heloise, and the Archpoet*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>70</sup> Alison Renshaw, “The Authoritative Conscience,” in *Authority and Community in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ian P. Wei, Donald Mowbray, and Rhiannon Purdie (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 148.

<sup>71</sup> Renshaw, “The Authoritative Conscience,” 141.

<sup>72</sup> Renshaw, “The Authoritative Conscience,” 145.

<sup>73</sup> Renshaw, “The Authoritative Conscience,” 148.

<sup>74</sup> Renshaw, “The Authoritative Conscience,” 149.

<sup>75</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 181.

than in Greek, particularly in the writings of Cicero and Seneca.<sup>76</sup> Linda Hogan notes, however, that “[t]he relative absence of the term ... should not suggest a lack of ways of speaking of ... moral self-awareness.”<sup>77</sup> Words referring to wisdom and prudence “carry with them the sense of ethical self-consciousness.”<sup>78</sup> The classical moral conscience was the subsequent conscience. Eric D’Arcy notes that “[a]fter an action is performed conscience passes moral judgement upon it.”<sup>79</sup> The conscience then “rewards or punishes a man in a peculiarly interior and effective way.”<sup>80</sup> Lewis notes that the classical conscience “bears witness to the fact ... that we committed a murder. It does not tell us that murder is wrong; we are supposed to know that in some other way.”<sup>81</sup> He thus maintains that “[t]o talk of ‘obeying’ or ‘disobeying’ your conscience ... would be nonsensical” since “I cannot by any present action ‘obey’ my future privity to the fact of having done that action itself.”<sup>82</sup> Conscience had not yet “passed from the witness-box to the bench and ... to the legislator’s throne.”<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, Hogan notes that anticipation of the torment wrought by a guilty conscience could serve as motivation to behave ethically, even if the conscience did not specify what ethical behaviour involved.<sup>84</sup>

There is some debate about when the conscience became the anterior conscience, the inner lawgiver. D’Arcy traces the transformation of the term to the New Testament. He notes that the Greek word “occurs twenty-three times in [Paul’s] epistles, and in fifteen of these it has the meaning and function it had in the pagan writers,” but “[i]n eight places ... we encounter something quite new.”<sup>85</sup> Hogan disagrees. She argues that “[a]ll one can

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<sup>76</sup> Linda Hogan, *Confronting the Truth: Conscience in the Catholic Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001), 42.

<sup>77</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 40.

<sup>78</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 40.

<sup>79</sup> Eric D’Arcy, *Conscience and Its Right to Freedom* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 8.

<sup>80</sup> D’Arcy, *Conscience and its Right to Freedom*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 190.

<sup>82</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 190-91.

<sup>83</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 191.

<sup>84</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 43.

<sup>85</sup> D’Arcy, *Conscience and Its Right to Freedom*, 8, 9.

confidently say is that Paul prepared the ground for and occasionally hinted at a guiding role for conscience.”<sup>86</sup> Lewis notes, however, that “[w]hat St Paul really meant is a question for theologians,” and that “what he would possibly, or probably, or almost inevitably, be taken to mean by succeeding generations” is much more significant for the history of the idea of conscience.<sup>87</sup> Eric Jager argues that Paul was highly influential in that he “anticipates the frequent conjunction of heart and conscience in later writers, especially under the metaphor of a ‘book’ containing *both* a record of divine ideals and an account of individual sins.”<sup>88</sup> Paul thus bequeathed to future writers a conscience synthesised from both the classical conscience and the Old Testament’s heart.

The anterior conscience began to flourish during the patristic period.<sup>89</sup> Jerome’s brief discussion of the conscience in his commentary on Ezekiel 1:5-6 is the most frequently cited patristic conscience text in modern scholarship. Jerome notes that some, “qui philosophorum stultam sequuntur sapientiam,” interpret the four faces on the creatures in Ezekiel’s vision as the constituent parts of the soul.<sup>90</sup> Three of these are Plato’s rational, irascible, and concupiscible parts. The fourth, however, “super haec et extra haec tria est.”<sup>91</sup> Jerome notes that Greek calls it *synderesis*, but in Latin it is “scintilla conscientiae.”<sup>92</sup> Jerome suggests that the conscience is an additional part of the soul, distinct from the others. His text provided the basis for later distinctions between conscience and *synderesis*, and is therefore significant to the development of the scholastic conscience.<sup>93</sup>

Conscience and *synderesis* were not treated as separate entities, however, until Peter Lombard cited Jerome’s text in the 1150s and, as D’Arcy puts it, “the mould of a

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<sup>86</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 54.

<sup>87</sup> Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 192-93.

<sup>88</sup> Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>89</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 59.

<sup>90</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem Prophetam* 1:7, (PL 25:22A), “...who follow the foolish wisdom of the philosophers...”

<sup>91</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem* 1:7, (PL 25:22B), “...is above and beyond these three.”

<sup>92</sup> Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem* 1:7, (PL 25:22B), “...the spark of conscience.”

<sup>93</sup> Douglas Kries, “Origen, Plato, and Conscience (‘Synderesis’) in Jerome’s Ezekiel Commentary,” *Traditio* 57 (2002): 67.



century's debate was cast."<sup>94</sup> Manfred Svensson, however, argues that Augustine uses the distinction between *uti* and *frui* to formulate a bipartite conscience akin to the scholastic division between conscience and synderesis: "only through the right delight (*fruitio Dei*) are we capable of judging about other things, and this judgement is a precondition of the *usus*."<sup>95</sup> It follows, therefore, that "the judgement that guides our *uti*, as well as the judgement passed on our own delight, can aptly be described as acts of conscience."<sup>96</sup> *Frui* bears similarities with Bonaventure's synderesis, in that it is the affective orientation towards the good that impels the pursuit of the good within particular choices. *Usus* resembles Bonaventure's conscience in that it is the rational outworking of the love of goodness that makes the particular choices. Delight anchors the person in the good; use applies the good to specific situations. Augustine's conscience, according to Svensson, "is part of a process of moral reasoning."<sup>97</sup> Svensson may accurately identify the dynamic at play within Augustine's *frui-uti* division, but his reading is problematic since, as he concedes, "the word *conscientia* cannot be found in any of these texts" on *frui* and *uti*.<sup>98</sup> The phenomenon he observes in Augustine may fit later definitions of conscience, but it does not follow that it aligns with patristic thought on conscience. The patristic period may have sown the seeds for the scholastic debates, but reading patristic thought solely as a precursor to scholasticism overlooks and obscures the range of patristic approaches to the conscience.

The patristic conscience could be both anterior and subsequent, although patristic writers themselves never acknowledge such a distinction.<sup>99</sup> Philippe Delhaye has written the most comprehensive survey of patristic thought on conscience, and this section of the

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<sup>94</sup> D'Arcy, *Conscience and its Right to Freedom*, 18. See Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor*, II.39, (PL 192:747).

<sup>95</sup> Manfred Svensson, "Augustine On Moral Conscience," *The Heythrop Journal* 54, no. 1 (January 2013): 45-6.

<sup>96</sup> Svensson, "Augustine On Moral Conscience," 46.

<sup>97</sup> Svensson, "Augustine On Moral Conscience," 51.

<sup>98</sup> Svensson, "Augustine On Moral Conscience," 46.

<sup>99</sup> Philippe Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (New York: Desclee Company, 1968), 92.

introduction relies heavily on his work. Delhayé notes that the patristic conscience “as a moral guide of life is ... the lot not only of good men but also of the wicked.”<sup>100</sup> It follows that “man knows his moral duty, solely from the governing force of the natural law speaking in his conscience.”<sup>101</sup> Delhayé finds general consensus amongst the patristic writers that “insofar as man is endowed with reason, he perceives good and evil, and bears within himself, in his conscience, the essence of his law.”<sup>102</sup> The conscience was characterised as “God’s representative, defender of order, master and judge of our conduct, a kind of living law inscribed in our nature.”<sup>103</sup> In short, “[t]he conscience in us is the judge who lays down the law: saying about what we have done and what we are thinking of doing, whether there is or would be room for praise or disapproval.”<sup>104</sup> Both anterior and subsequent functions of the conscience come together within this description.

The conscience thus assumes a unique spiritual importance because it enables the person to harmonise their own life with God’s will. Delhayé finds that, for Ambrose of Milan, “God enters in some way into us to lead us, thanks to the sense he gives us of good and evil.”<sup>105</sup> Augustine similarly regarded “the conscience as being in reality the result of an inspirational grace.”<sup>106</sup> Delhayé argues that there is a “privileged encounter between God and man which is to be found in the moral conscience.”<sup>107</sup> The conscience is “God’s abode in us,” and “the conscience truly realises the conditions of a contact between God and the soul.”<sup>108</sup> The contact Delhayé describes is moral rather than contemplative, mystical, or experiential. It consists in the alignment of one’s life with divine law as revealed in the conscience. The elevated language used to describe the conscience nevertheless had profound effects on the

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<sup>100</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 78.

<sup>101</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 80.

<sup>102</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 82.

<sup>103</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 89.

<sup>104</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 92.

<sup>105</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 90.

<sup>106</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 84.

<sup>107</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 19.

<sup>108</sup> Delhayé, *The Christian Conscience*, 19.

devotional conscience texts contemporary with the *AW*.

Patristic writers typically follow the biblical practice of treating the heart and conscience as synonymous.<sup>109</sup> Delhaye notes that the identification of the conscience with the heart likely seemed natural because the heart “beats much faster under the influence of certain violent feelings, anger or love for example. It races at times under the influence of fear or a vivid apprehension.”<sup>110</sup> The physical heart was an apt metaphor for the moral heart. The literal and metaphorical hearts, however, remained clearly distinct. Augustine, for instance, is careful to correct those who take the word *cor* to mean the “particulam corporis quam in visceribus dilaniatis videmus.”<sup>111</sup> He accounts for its usage by explaining: “hoc [cor] enim abutendo vel transferendo vocabulo ducitur a corpore ad animum.”<sup>112</sup>

Delhaye lists five attributes of the biblical heart that influenced patristic thought. The heart is “the witness of the moral value of our acts,” “the place where the divine law is interiorised,” “the source of moral life,” it has “influence on the understanding of value,” and “God ... can convert it and bring it back to himself.”<sup>113</sup> The heart, in this sense, is closer to the subsequent than the anterior conscience. Delhaye maintains that “the conscience is ... dependent upon the moral attitude or disposition of each man; the more delicate and sensitive it is in these reactions, the more persuasive are its remonstrances.”<sup>114</sup> In other words, the heart in this sense is not the voice that reprimands, but rather the person’s response to the reprimands. The reprimands are still present, but the heart hardened by persistent misconduct ceases to feel them or to regard them as important.

Some patristic writers conflated the conscience with personal response to the

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<sup>109</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 69. For a survey of the biblical heart-as-conscience trope, see Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 50-58.

<sup>110</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 51.

<sup>111</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* X.9, (PL 42:978), “the small part of the body which we see amidst the dismembered innards.”

<sup>112</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* X.9, (PL 42:978), “this word, [heart], by misuse or transference of its name, is brought from the body to the soul.”

<sup>113</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 56.

conscience, so that “we are no longer dealing with the impartial judge that we are conscious of possessing within ourselves, but with the responsible subject that we are ourselves.”<sup>115</sup> The conscience thus becomes “all our moral and spiritual history, the whole gamut of choices with which we shape our good or bad destiny.”<sup>116</sup> Delhaye observes that “[i]n this new light, the conscience is a power of choice. Too often it sins.”<sup>117</sup> This unique conscience ceases to be either anterior or subsequent. It does not give directions, nor does it punish poor choices. It makes choices in the present. The conscience is “a sort of tilyard where we must come to a decision to declare ourselves for the spirit or for the flesh.”<sup>118</sup> Its capacity to judge rightly in the present issues from the choices it has made in the past. This conscience thus absorbs the role of the subsequent conscience since “after having been the responsible agent of sin, the conscience becomes in a manner of speaking its seat or receptacle.”<sup>119</sup> The conscience does not document or record past behaviour. It is the product of past behaviour: “the subject retains deep within himself the imprint of his acts. Choice after choice, he builds his ‘self,’” a self that Augustine identifies with the conscience.<sup>120</sup> The bad conscience “should show its wounds to the physician, but its evil state tends to draw it away from prayer.”<sup>121</sup> The struggle, then, “is a question ... of freeing oneself through penance.”<sup>122</sup>

Both sides of the patristic conscience – the law of God in the soul and the person shaped by past conduct – come together in twelfth-century monastic writing on conscience. Delhaye notes three twelfth-century conscience texts: Peter of Celle’s *De Conscientia*, the pseudo-Bernardine *Tractatus de Conscientia*, and *De Interiori Domo*.<sup>123</sup> Delhaye has called

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<sup>115</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 94.

<sup>116</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 94.

<sup>117</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 95.

<sup>118</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 95.

<sup>119</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 97.

<sup>120</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 97. Delhaye here cites Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 45.3, (*PL* 36:515).

<sup>121</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 98.

<sup>122</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 98.

<sup>123</sup> Philippe Delhaye, “Dans Le Sillage De S. Bernard Trois Petits Traités De Conscientia,” *Citeaux in Der Nederlanden*, no. 5 (1954): 92. Delhaye refers to the *Tractatus de Conscientia* and *De Interiori Domo* by their

attention to the texts in a short essay, but subsequent scholarship has barely acknowledged them. The texts build upon, adapt, and sometimes radically transform the patristic ideas that have been outlined here. They represent an intensely affective, personal approach to conscience that lay well outside of scholasticism. The two pseudo-Bernardine texts have not previously been translated into English. I have therefore included my original translations of the *Tractatus de Conscientia* and the first twenty-two chapters of *De Interiori Domo* as appendices to this thesis.

This thesis argues that these twelfth-century conscience texts fuse ethical life and transcendent experience together to produce a contemplative conscience. The contemplative conscience houses God's presence, and not merely God's law. The patristic moral conscience was shaped by past conduct, and then applied its contents to present life. The contemplative conscience does much the same thing: it applies the presence of God to every present thought, act, and situation. The moral conscience was the means by which the past impacted the present moment. The contemplative conscience is the means by which God's presence is realised in the present moment. The result is that the twelfth-century texts incorporate language and ideas from conventionally understood mysticism, but they do not adopt the corresponding framework of graduated spiritual ascent. They reappropriate mystical language within a different framework, a framework modelled on the dynamics of the patristic moral conscience.

The three monastic texts are devotional treatises on conscience and are more concerned with life and practice than theory and, as such, they are the closest context available for the conscience of the *AW*. *De Interiori Domo*, in particular, circulated widely during the thirteenth century as the third book of a *De Anima* attributed at the time to Hugh of

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incipits, "Petis a me" and "Domus haec" respectively.

St Victor (its attribution to Bernard is more recent).<sup>124</sup> The fourth book of the *De Anima* contains the Latin text that became the basis of *Sawles Warde*. *Sawles Warde* was an English text closely related to the *AW* and possibly written by the same author. It is therefore highly likely that the author of the *AW* was familiar with *De Interiori Domo*. The *AW* states that the inner rule “riwleð ant rihteð ant smedeð þe heorte ant te inwit of sunne” and this “is of each religiun ant of each ordre þe god ant al þe strengðe” (P.42-45).<sup>125</sup> A treatment of the *AW*'s religious life must, therefore, take the contemplative conscience texts into account. No scholarship on the *AW* has yet done so.

## **2. The Contemplative Conscience and Mystical Consciousness**

Current scholarship on medieval mystical literature frequently reconsiders the role of experience. Denys Turner remarks: “when I read any of the Christian writers who were said to be mystics I found that many of them ... made no mention at all of any such experiences.”<sup>126</sup> Those who “did make mention of ‘experiences’ ... certainly did not think the having of them to be definitive of ‘the mystical.’”<sup>127</sup>

Bernard McGinn similarly regards the insistence on mysticism involving experience as both reductive and anachronistic. Medieval writers themselves did not share the insistence. McGinn observes that “‘mystical experience,’ to the best of [his] knowledge, was not an expression used by mystics or students of mysticism before the nineteenth century.”<sup>128</sup> He prefers to formulate a definition of mysticism based on consciousness, “because

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<sup>124</sup> The first book of the *De Anima* was attributed to Bernard as early as the fifteenth century. George R. Keiser, “The Mystics and the Early English Printers: The Economics of Devotionalism,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 23. The attribution of *De Interiori Domo* to Bernard is at least as early as the seventeenth century. Hugh of St Victor, *Opera Omnia Tribus Tomis Digesta*, ed. Ioannis Berthelin, vol. 2 (Area Palatij.: Rothmagi, 1648), 132. For a more detailed discussion, see pp. 106-108 of this thesis.

<sup>125</sup> “... rules the heart, and makes the conscience straight and smooth of sin ...”; “... is all the strength and good of all religion.”

<sup>126</sup> Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>127</sup> Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 2.

<sup>128</sup> Bernard McGinn, “Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal,” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 8, 1 (2008): 45.

consciousness emphasises the entire process of human intentionality and self-presence, rather than just an originating pure feeling, sensation, or experience easily separable from subsequent acts of thinking, loving, and deciding.”<sup>129</sup>

Mark McIntosh further describes medieval Christian mysticism as “more like the lenses for viewing what cannot be seen; it is describing in a simple or direct sense neither God nor the mystic’s experiences but evoking an *interpretive framework* within which the readers of the text may come to recognise and participate in their own encounters with God.”<sup>130</sup> McIntosh’s definition risks reductionism, implying that all medieval mystical texts fit a single mould. He writes as a theologian before he writes as an historian, and his project aims to synthesise personal spirituality and the discipline of academic theology. It risks becoming prescriptive in evaluating what he deems authentic spiritual practice. In spite of these shortcomings, his description of “lenses for viewing what cannot be seen” is especially apt for guidance literature, as opposed to literature that recounts experience. Guidance literature aims to facilitate contemplative life. Contemplative conscience literature aims to facilitate the recognition of the otherwise hidden divine presence within ordinary life.

Newer approaches like McGinn’s accommodate a more expansive range of texts and writers than traditional approaches to ‘mysticism.’ McGinn briefly addresses Peter of Celle and the *AW* (on separate occasions), but he does not fully apply his theory to either one. McGinn states that Peter “has little to say about union with God here below,” and that his “work does not contain any real theory of mysticism” comparable with those of the Victorines or Cistercians.<sup>131</sup> Peter, rather, “reflects older traditions by interweaving his views on contemplation and vision within his overriding interest – the exposition of the meaning of

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<sup>129</sup> McGinn, “Mystical Consciousness,” 46.

<sup>130</sup> Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 124.

<sup>131</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, vol. 2, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 345.

the claustral life as preparation for heaven.”<sup>132</sup> He was “a biblical mystic in the tradition stretching back to Origen nine centuries before.”<sup>133</sup> McGinn observes, however, that “a newer note is sounded in the emphasis Peter gives to sacramental confession and especially to the reception of the Eucharist.”<sup>134</sup> Peter is unique amongst his contemporaries “for the central role he gives to the reception of Christ in the sacrament of his Body and Blood” which is “the basis for the believer’s access to God.”<sup>135</sup> McGinn says much less about the *AW*. He notes that it was “[i]mportant for the growth of the vernacular tradition of spiritual writing in England.”<sup>136</sup> He also observes that it employs “metaphors of sexual love between Christ and the soul that are reminiscent of Cistercian mysticism.”<sup>137</sup>

‘Mysticism,’ however, remains a nebulous and often misleading term. Nicholas Watson acknowledges that the word has some ongoing value in interdisciplinary dialogue, but he argues that “for the present an historical field of study cannot readily be sustained using this imported, anachronistic, and, above all, essentially evaluative term.”<sup>138</sup> He prefers the term ‘contemplation,’ since it “has a real, if complex, historical relationship, both with the activity of contemplation itself, and with the writing that developed, in England and elsewhere, around that activity.”<sup>139</sup> The *AW* contains the first appearance of the word in English (III.340). ‘Contemplative’ is thus the most appropriate label for the kind of conscience discussed here. I argue throughout this thesis that the contemplation this conscience involves is most appropriately described by McGinn’s approach to mystical consciousness.

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<sup>132</sup> McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 345.

<sup>133</sup> McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 343.

<sup>134</sup> McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 344.

<sup>135</sup> McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 344.

<sup>136</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism (1350-1550)*, vol. 5, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2012), 332.

<sup>137</sup> McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, 332-33.

<sup>138</sup> Nicholas Watson, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>139</sup> Watson, “Introduction,” 11.



### 3. Thesis Outline

There is almost no scholarship on the monastic conscience texts, and as such the first two chapters of my thesis lay the necessary groundwork for reading the *AW* as a conscience text. The first two chapters analyse the nature of conscience in the monastic conscience texts, as well as the workings of the texts themselves. The first chapter of this thesis focuses on Peter of Celle. Peter's *De Conscientia* is the most extensive of the contemplative conscience texts and, as such, receives the most attention. I argue that Peter transforms the moral conscience into the contemplative conscience outlined above. Peter's conscience is shaped by meditation and devotion as much as by moral or immoral living. His work is vibrant and richly imaginative, and I argue that meditative reading of the text itself is integral to the acquisition of conscience. The creation of conscience is, in large part, a literary process, built and edified by imaginative engagement with the text. I argue that what McGinn describes as Peter's interweaving of "contemplation and vision within ... the exposition of the meaning of the claustral life" is best understood in terms of McGinn's concept of mystical consciousness.<sup>140</sup>

My second chapter deals with two pseudo-Bernardine conscience texts. I argue that the first, the *Tractatus de Conscientia*, demonstrates an understanding of conscience similar to Peter's even though it does not cite him, and is formally very different from his work. It demonstrates that the contemplative conscience was not restricted to Peter, but that Peter reflects and expresses more widespread attitudes within the monastic world of the twelfth century. The second text, *De Interiori Domo*, directly incorporates passages from Peter's *De Conscientia*. I argue Peter's influence extends beyond the passages that are immediately taken from him. The author shows care in incorporating Peter's ideas from the *De Conscientia* as a whole, indicating that he considered Peter's work to be important and it

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<sup>140</sup> McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 345.

is therefore likely that others did as well. It is likely that Peter's ideas were known and transmitted in other collections and compendia that are either no longer extant or not yet identified. *De Interiōri Domo* itself was just such a vehicle and means of transmission.

The third and final chapter of this thesis reads the *AW* in light of the conscience texts. I argue that the *AW* author's conscience is the contemplative conscience of the monastic texts. Reading the *AW* in this light solves the problem of the text's treatment of the spiritual life. The *AW* incorporates both moral prescriptions and contemplative allusions without the framework of spiritual ascent because the author regards the contemplative life as the life of the contemplative conscience. The spirituality of the *AW*, like that of the conscience texts, is best described by McGinn's concept of mystical consciousness.

## Literature Review

The Introduction to this thesis alludes to the history of scholarly debates about the nature and role of experience in the *AW*, and whether or not the text ought to be considered ‘mystical.’ This Literature Review traces those debates in detail, and demonstrates how reference to contemplative conscience literature helps to resolve them.

Gerard Sitwell wrote in 1955 that the author of the *AW* “considered the anchoresses to be contemplative, in the sense that contemplation would play a definite part in their lives. Yet he mentions this only incidentally.”<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Shepherd similarly maintained that “[t]here is little point in speaking of *AW* as a mystical work,” because it “is not concerned with the experience of union with God” and, moreover, “shows no trace of the teaching of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite.”<sup>2</sup> Peter Hackett essentially agreed that the *AW* contained only “light hints of mystical possibility.”<sup>3</sup> Hackett accounts for this state of affairs by stressing that the *AW* “was a rule. It was not a treatise on prayer.”<sup>4</sup> As a rule “it had to be lived and therefore had to be liveable.”<sup>5</sup> It exists to answer practical questions about how one ought to live, and not describe the spiritual experiences one may or may not encounter. Wolfgang Riehle similarly describes the *AW* as only a “partly mystical text.”<sup>6</sup> He notes that it introduced a number of mystical tropes and images into English literature, such as the foot as a metaphor for love and the kiss of the spiritual bridegroom.<sup>7</sup> G. V. Smithers suggested that the author of the *AW* was a Neoplatonist, and that he alludes to Plato’s doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> Gerard Sitwell, OSB, “Introduction,” introduction to *The Ancrene Riwe*, trans. M. B. Salu (London: Burns & Oates, 1955), xii.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Shepherd, ed., *Ancrene Wisse Parts 6 and 7* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1959), lvii.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Hackett, SJ, “The Anchoresses’ Guide,” in *Pre-Reformation English Spirituality*, ed. James Walsh, SJ (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), 67.

<sup>4</sup> Hackett, “The Anchoresses’ Guide,” 69.

<sup>5</sup> Hackett, “The Anchoresses’ Guide,” 69.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. Bernard Standring (London: Routledge, 1981), 68.

<sup>7</sup> Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, 68; Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, 39.

of ideas as mediated by Christian theories of typology.<sup>8</sup> Bella Millett, however, has since shown that this is highly unlikely. She traces the author's perceived Platonism to the preaching techniques of Alan of Lille, and argues that the *AW* "should be linked less with the high theory of Victorine tradition than with a late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century context of practical pastoral writing."<sup>9</sup>

Mary Baldwin's doctoral thesis, *Ancrene Wisse and its Background in the Christian Tradition of Religious Instruction and Spirituality*, is a thorough and invaluable source study of the *AW* that establishes the text's links with the traditional ascetic emphases on penance and spiritual combat. I have already dealt with Baldwin's work at some length. Her general argument is worth noting here. Baldwin holds that "the contemplative aim of the anchoritic life ... has to be pieced together from separate and scattered passages" in the *AW*.<sup>10</sup> Its patristic sources such as Augustine, Gregory, and Cassian, are much clearer. Baldwin argues, therefore, that "the author quite deliberately does not direct himself to the higher reaches of the spiritual teaching of his sources."<sup>11</sup> Baldwin asks, "[i]f extended discussions of temptation and confession can be included in a rule, why should a discussion of prayer be excluded?"<sup>12</sup> She concludes that the *AW* author demonstrates a "quite deliberate choice not to talk explicitly about" contemplation.<sup>13</sup> The text "contains allusions to [contemplation], but the presence of those allusions only emphasises the absence of any development in *AW* of some of the themes connected with contemplation."<sup>14</sup> The author replaces the life of contemplation with what Baldwin considers to be the much more limited life of conscience.<sup>15</sup>

The argument of Janet Grayson's 1974 book, *Structure and Imagery in Ancrene*

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<sup>8</sup> G. V. Smithers, "Two Typological Terms in the *Ancrene Riwe*," *Medium Ævum* 34, no. 2 (1965): 126.

<sup>9</sup> Bella Millett, "Peintunge and Schadewe in *Ancrene Wisse* Part 4," *Notes and Queries* 13, no. 4 (December 1996): 403.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background in the Christian Tradition of Religious Instruction and Spirituality" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1974), 324.

<sup>11</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 331.

<sup>12</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 341.

<sup>13</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 346.

<sup>14</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 346.

<sup>15</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 341.

*Wisse*, is strongest when it traces the development and evolution of various images throughout the course of the *AW*. It highlights and explores the way these images are transformed as they chart a spiritual progression, culminating with “body and soul in tension reconciled finally by love, transformed into light by the Word.”<sup>16</sup>

Subsequent scholarship has occasionally acknowledged Grayson, but her book has more or less disappeared from contemporary work on the *AW*. The main hindrance to the impact Grayson’s work might otherwise have had is probably her lack of interest in the *AW*’s relation to its historical situation. She notes sources and analogues for images, but these are usually relegated to footnotes and are brought up as points of curiosity rather than points relevant to her project. The consequence is that, while Grayson illuminates the *AW*’s patterns of imagery, she focuses on how those patterns of imagery might appeal to modern rather than medieval aesthetic sensibilities.

Another hindrance to Grayson’s influence is her self-contradiction: she says in her introduction that “there is no instant of mysterious transport into contemplation, as we might expect if this were a mystical work,” implying that the *AW* is not a mystical work.<sup>17</sup> She then proceeds to describe it as one. She refers to the anchoress as a “mystic” and discusses “[t]he mystical presence of the Bridegroom comforting the spouse.”<sup>18</sup> The anchoress engages in “a mystical flight” and the *AW* is replete with “mystical symbolism.”<sup>19</sup> If we overlook Grayson’s initial claim, then her analysis of the imagery is particularly useful since it traces the anchoress’s contemplative progress and how “the spiritual *affectus* by which the soul is drawn to God grows at the expense of physical things” as “the anchoress passes through graduated stages of purification or trial which prepare her for the advent of

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<sup>16</sup> Janet Grayson, *Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1974), 180.

<sup>17</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 34; Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 81. See also Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 151, 153.

Christ.”<sup>20</sup>

Grayson organises her discussion of imagery according to the division of inner and outer rules that the *AW* author sets out in his introduction. The heart is central, but Grayson differs from most other scholars of the *AW* in that she attempts to define the heart. It “is the symbol of spiritual life in the Rule” where “the love of God is nurtured and good works are born. The ‘nest of the heart’ is inviolable, a sacred place of retreat for the Bridegroom and spouse.”<sup>21</sup> She refers to it again later as the “life of the soul.”<sup>22</sup>

Grayson later comments that the “beasts and demons,” personifying temptation, arise “from within the heart itself – the nest where the young cubs are whelped.”<sup>23</sup> She thus indicates that good and evil works have the same origin within the anchoress, but surely this would call for some qualification of her claim that the heart symbolises ‘the spiritual life’ which is an inviolable nest and the ‘life of the soul.’ Grayson does not reconcile, or even address, the contradiction. However, if the heart is the conscience as represented by the monastic conscience texts, then the contradiction ceases to be a problem. The monastic conscience, as the first two chapters of this thesis show, is the origin of good and evil actions. It contains both.

Linda Georgianna’s highly influential book, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse*, addresses the alleged contradiction in the *AW* between the ascetic solitary life and the text’s copious worldly imagery. Georgianna uses this contradiction to frame an exploration of the nature of the self in the *AW* and its relationship to the world. She claims that the solitary life presented in the text differs significantly from the traditional solitary life. She argues that, in the *AW*, “the life of a solitary has become a socialised and worldly life.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 106.

<sup>23</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 101.

<sup>24</sup> Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 65.

The *AW* author constantly undermines the text's apparent "traditional, otherworldly desert ideals" with his "awareness that an anchoress, like all other Christians, lives and dies in the world."<sup>25</sup> The author reinvents the ascetic ideal because of "a growing feeling that salvation, even sanctity, is possible in the world" as opposed to the monastery alone.<sup>26</sup>

Confession is the focal point of Georgianna's work. She examines the relationship between inner contrition and the external sacrament of confession with particular attention to the *AW*'s allegorical retelling of the Judith story. She argues that the author rearranges the events in the story upon each telling, in order to demonstrate "that the drama of confession is not a linear story but a circular one."<sup>27</sup> The material and spiritual components of confession "are inextricably bound together as two concurrent parts, one outer and one inner, of the same act."<sup>28</sup>

Georgianna's statement that the anchoress "lives and dies in the world" betrays a misunderstanding. She seems to suggest that the 'world,' in Christian theology, is synonymous with 'physical reality.' If that were the case, then she would be right: so much material imagery would be inappropriate for those trying to live apart from the world. Solitaries, however, are not trying to escape physical existence. Anchoritism meets the basic requirements for solitude. Material imagery would only be a problem if the *AW* were a specifically negative mystical text, and Georgianna argues that it is not.<sup>29</sup> She does seem, in spite of her claims, to be reading it as one by stressing the tension between the spiritual life and the presence of material imagery. Where does this tension come from?

The *AW* contains ample instances of conflict between the spiritual and physical. The text stresses the importance of leaving the senses behind, and yet its imagery and conception of the contemplative life are strongly incarnational. The tension Georgianna

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<sup>25</sup> Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 107.

<sup>28</sup> Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 107.

<sup>29</sup> Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 69. See Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 73.

observes thus needs to be refocused. The conflict between the physical senses and the spiritual life is not inherent within solitude, but rather inherent within the *AW* author's own description of the spiritual life. Thus, the circular narrative, the "constant shifting from ideal to real, or from inner to outer" is not – as Georgianna holds – "the very texture of the solitary life," but rather the texture of the *AW*'s contemplative life.<sup>30</sup> Her reading of the interrelationship between spirituality and materiality or interiority and exteriority reveals the closeness of the *AW* to the monastic conscience texts. The *AW*, like the conscience texts, cultivates a view of the material that sees it interwoven and fused with the spiritual. Material things can be made a part of the life of the conscience if the conscience interprets them correctly. Interiority is preserved when spiritual realities are mapped onto external ones.

Nicholas Watson was the first to argue that the *AW* and its associated texts represent a distinct kind of contemplative spirituality. He argues that "the alien quality of the anchoritic material" sets it apart from the forms of mysticism that preceded and came after it.<sup>31</sup> The spirituality of the conventionally recognised Middle English mystics was "concerned at its most ambitious with a schematic interior ascent."<sup>32</sup> The *AW*, by contrast, "makes considerable use of the external world and is not organised around a concept of ascent."<sup>33</sup> Earlier meditations like those of Aelred of Rievaulx as well as later meditations like those of Margery Kempe involved practitioners imagining themselves present during episodes of Christ's life.<sup>34</sup> Watson argues that in the *AW*, however, meditations "acquire a real emotional intensity" in their "brilliant change of focus, in which Christ first becomes dramatically animate, stretching himself out as a child would, and then becomes figuratively an

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<sup>30</sup> Georgianna, *The Solitary Self*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholas Watson, "The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 134.

<sup>32</sup> Watson, "Methods and Objectives," 137.

<sup>33</sup> Watson, "Methods and Objectives," 137.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Vita Eremitica* 47, (PL 32:1465); Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 32.



anchorite.”<sup>35</sup> Meditative “intensity is not primarily centred on Resurrection or Incarnation, but on a reinterpretation of the anchoresses’ condition in terms of those events.”<sup>36</sup> It involves “a sudden and illuminated return to an awareness of their own condition.”<sup>37</sup> The *AW* presents a “multitude of images that both replace and transfigure the world outside the cell.”<sup>38</sup> The meditative life of the *AW* is intimately interwoven with the unique material conditions of the anchoritic life: “the anchoresses are already as it were enclosed within a powerful imaginative structure, and require only a personal and affective realisation of its significance.”<sup>39</sup>

Watson does not address the conscience or the importance with which the *AW* author imbues it. The particular kind of meditative interplay between spiritual and material reality that Watson identifies is, however, the kind of interplay found in the contemplative conscience texts. The conscience enables the interplay to operate continuously and uninterrupted as the contemplative reads their immediate surroundings in a spiritual light. Watson calls attention to the physical anchoritic situation and its role in meditation. He does not note that the anchorite in the cell is essentially an embodiment of the metaphor for conscience given in the conscience texts. Conscience is a house shut against external threats, a place to be alone with God. Anchoritism thus facilitates the life of conscience in a uniquely intense way. Watson concludes that “the best image for the spiritual life is this constancy of suffering, this positive activity of the manufacture of joy out of pain.”<sup>40</sup> The anchoritic texts are not concerned with ascent, but “joyful crucifixion: the transformation of suffering into joy.”<sup>41</sup> The texts work to enable the reader “to comprehend and to realise the spiritual reality

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<sup>35</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 141.

<sup>36</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 141.

<sup>37</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 141.

<sup>38</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 141.

<sup>39</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 141.

<sup>40</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 144.

<sup>41</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 143.

which underlies her way of life, to penetrate the image which she is herself living.”<sup>42</sup> The first two chapters of this thesis contend that the reinterpretation of suffering is a key feature of the conscience texts.

Anne Savage’s article, “The Solitary Heroine: Aspects of Meditation and Mysticism in *Ancrene Wisse*, the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group,” builds on Watson’s account of spirituality in the *AW* and attempts to harmonise it with traditional models of contemplation. Savage notes the appearance of “[o]utward blindness, inner light resulting in the sight of God, a kindled heart, the tasting and knowing of God through removal from worldly sensation into spiritual sensation” in the *AW* as “aspects of mystical experience.”<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, “[n]o precise terminology of purgation, illumination, and union is used,” thus placing the *AW*’s spirituality outside the prevalent tradition of mystical literature.<sup>44</sup> Savage attempts to resolve the problem by arguing that, in the *AW*, “constant attention is devoted to the physical details of anchoritic life, so that the life itself becomes an object of meditation.”<sup>45</sup> The anchoritic “way of life is by definition purgative; illumination is ... meant to be the fruit of the purgation of the world from her senses and heart; the union is promised as marriage to Christ in eternal life.”<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, “there are foretastes of this intimate knowledge of God. The language of romantic love and marital union with Christ runs through” the anchoritic literature.<sup>47</sup> Savage’s observations are sound, but they serve more to highlight the problem rather than solve it: why does the author omit traditional language of purgation, illumination, and union? The answer, I argue, is because he follows the tradition of conscience literature which frames union with God in the dynamics of

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<sup>42</sup> Watson, “Methods and Objectives,” 144.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Savage, “The Solitary Heroine: Aspects of Meditation and Mysticism in *Ancrene Wisse*, the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group,” in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 81.

<sup>44</sup> Savage, “The Solitary Heroine,” 81.

<sup>45</sup> Savage, “The Solitary Heroine,” 80.

<sup>46</sup> Savage, “The Solitary Heroine,” 81.

<sup>47</sup> Savage, “The Solitary Heroine,” 81.

conscience rather than ascent.

Savage's arguments in her more recent chapter, "From Anchorhold to Cell of Self-Knowledge: Points along a History of the Human Body," are nearer the mark. She observes that discussion of enclosure and contemplative life has frequently "been overcast with the rhetoric of the divided person, the body as chaff and the spirit as wheat."<sup>48</sup> She argues that the *AW* and its related texts work against that division, "striving towards a unified understanding of the embodied spirit, the ways in which every impulse which flickers in the body flickers in the spirit as well, and vice versa."<sup>49</sup> She describes the anchoritic life as "knitting them together again: the careful research of people pursuing body and spirit in every detail of their mutual dependence."<sup>50</sup> This closely reflects the conscience texts, which see the conscience as unifying the spiritual with the material by recognising the presence of God within every moment and action.

Christopher Cannon's 2001 article, "The Form of the Self: *Ancrene Wisse* and Romance," attempts to resolve what Cannon sees as a contradiction inherent in the solitary life. "It is difficult," he claims, "to separate the self from the world. To lock oneself away ... is still to *be* somewhere."<sup>51</sup> He argues that the *AW* also recognises this difficulty, and is structured to create an idea of the body as a vessel or enclosure. The body contains the soul in the same way that the anchorhold contains the body of the anchoress. Thus, when the *AW* shows that the body is vulnerable to compromising the eremitic life, it also shows the anchorhold susceptible to the same weaknesses.

Cannon argues that the tensions between external and internal that permeate the *AW* (and upon which it is structured) "are not simply the result of general assumptions about

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<sup>48</sup> Anne Savage, "From Anchorhold to Cell of Self-Knowledge: Points along a History of the Human Body," in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 157.

<sup>49</sup> Savage, "From Anchorhold to Cell of Self-Knowledge," 157.

<sup>50</sup> Savage, "From Anchorhold to Cell of Self-Knowledge," 157.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Cannon, "The Form of the Self: *Ancrene Wisse* and Romance," *Medium Ævum* 70, no. 1 (2001): 47.

how the body works, they are the set of relations out of which ‘the body,’ as an idea, is itself constructed.”<sup>52</sup> The text “shows that the body allows for sin precisely *because* it encloses things. The most important of those things is, of course, the anchoress’s heart, which ... turns out to be quite difficult to keep ‘within.’”<sup>53</sup>

Love resolves the contradiction, the problem “that any body in isolation remains connected to something else precisely because it *is* a body.”<sup>54</sup> The placement of the romance of Christ as lover-knight at the end of Part VII structurally and thematically connects the inner and outer rules since love is the only legitimate way in which the anchoress can connect herself with others. Love is for *another* rather than oneself, and therefore “anneals the boundaries of the self,” and so the anchoress is truly enclosed by loving Christ and neighbour.<sup>55</sup> Love “actually protects the self from the world.”<sup>56</sup> Cannon elaborates in his book, *The Grounds of English Literature*, that “the connection between selves usually called ‘love’ secures the integrity of each self.”<sup>57</sup>

Solitude, as Cannon reads it, is sought by the hermit because of its negative qualities rather than for any positive virtues of its own. Its appeal lies in its protection of the inside from the outside. The problem with Cannon’s reading is that love is simply a means of self-protection, for which reason it comes to appear disingenuous and even narcissistic. Simply put, it stops looking much like love.

A more fundamental problem underlies Cannon’s approach. It is founded on a misunderstanding of religious solitude. Cannon’s article, like Georgianna’s book, blurs the definition of the ‘world’ from which religious hermits withdraw. The ‘world,’ in Christian theology, is not identical with physical reality, and so it *is* entirely possible for a hermit to

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<sup>52</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 51.

<sup>53</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 55.

<sup>54</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 55.

<sup>55</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 60.

<sup>56</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 60.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 159.

withdraw from the ‘world’ while remaining in a physical body. The problem of being ‘somewhere,’ as Cannon puts it, is no problem at all for the solitary. Henrietta Leyser has shown that the new hermits of the twelfth century “both expected and welcomed companions; solitude did not mean for them to be without the company of fellow religious but to be apart from secular society.”<sup>58</sup> Michelle Sauer likewise argues that anchoritic solitude is closer to modern conceptions of exile than modern conceptions of privacy.<sup>59</sup>

The cultivation of love in the *AW* is actually an end of, rather than a means to, the solitary life. The focus of the *AW* is not on the self for the sake of the self and self-protection, but on the cultivation of love. The paradox Cannon identifies, that “the heart must be ruled by exercising it,” is less a paradox when understood in this light.<sup>60</sup> Solitude and asceticism aim to cultivate the pure heart, not to negate or annihilate the heart.

Once we have adjusted Cannon’s reading of the text, his argumentation leaves us with the centrality of the heart. Cannon identifies the heart only as “[t]he most important of those things” that the self contains.<sup>61</sup> If love constitutes solitude as Cannon argues, but the *AW* treats love as an end and solitude as a means, then the *AW* emphasises solitude because solitude is constitutive of love. Solitude is valuable because it rightly positions the heart in relation to God and others. The *AW* identifies the heart as the conscience. Love and solitude are thus the attuning of the conscience, bringing it into right relation with the external world. Solitude, or the set of ascetic disciplines that anchoritism involves, cannot be separated from love.

Cate Gunn’s book, *Ancrene Wisse: From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality*, situates the *AW* in its context of the lay piety and religious reform that followed

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<sup>58</sup> Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000-1150* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 19.

<sup>59</sup> Michelle M. Sauer, “Privacy, Exile and the Rhetoric of Solitude in the Medieval English Anchoritic Tradition,” in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 107.

<sup>60</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 60.

<sup>61</sup> Cannon, “Form of the Self,” 55.

in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council. Gunn explores the *AW*'s use of techniques that rose to prominence in twelfth and thirteenth century rhetoric, sermons, *summa confessorum* and other pastoral guidance literature. Two of the areas that Gunn examines are especially relevant for present purposes: affective Eucharistic piety and the *AW*'s place within contemplative literature.

Gunn describes the text's spirituality as incarnational and physical. Contemplation centres on the Eucharist and the humanity of Christ, while the anchoress's material circumstances are the most distinctive feature of her vocation. Gunn looks to the *AW*'s use of the soul's hunger as an image to demonstrate that "the soul is conceived as a spiritual reality on the model of the body" and the "conception of the concrete reality of the spiritual world and its intimate interaction with the material world."<sup>62</sup> Thus, the anchoritic situation of enclosure "had both symbolic and material meaning" and these "symbols allowed the anchoresses to interact with a spiritual dimension."<sup>63</sup>

Gunn notes that, although the *AW* author predicates contemplation on Christ's incarnation, withdrawal from materiality paradoxically precedes contemplation. Gunn maintains that the *AW* author has a firm conviction that "contemplation of divine things is possible only for those who have rejected the sensual world."<sup>64</sup> She never quite addresses this paradox, but claims instead that "there is no ascent to God; rather, Christ is invited down into the hearts of the anchoresses."<sup>65</sup> It is important that the rejection of the sensual world not be confused with the project of asceticism. The paradox that appears here is not between the anchoritic rejection of the world and contemplation predicated on physical things. It is the contradiction between the *AW*'s injunction "forȝeoteð al þe world, þer beoð al ut of bodi" (I.241-2) and the presence of God "as the image on the crucifix and in the consecrated Host

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<sup>62</sup> Cate Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse: From Pastoral Literature to Vernacular Spirituality* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 106.

<sup>63</sup> Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse*, 169.

<sup>65</sup> Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse*, 173.

which is the very body and blood of Christ.”<sup>66</sup> Gunn concludes that “the anchoresses should be content with ... God through his descent in the humanity of Christ, rather than through ascent to him,”<sup>67</sup> for which reason the text represents a mysticism that differs from apophatic, negative contemplation. The *AW* is nevertheless essentially contemplative in nature and so must be considered in the context of other contemplative works. The contradiction between being “al ut of bodi” and incarnational devotion goes unresolved, nor does Gunn present it as a contradiction. Reading the *AW* as conscience literature reconciles the two conflicting elements within the *AW*. The attuned conscience places the anchoress into right relation with material things. The conscience is able to read the spiritual significance in ordinary things.

Anna McHugh argues in her chapter, “Inner Space as Speaking Space in *Ancrene Wisse*,” that the anchoritic cell “is vital for signifying not only the enclosed heart of the anchoress, but the enclosed spaces of her intellectual functions, specifically the memory.”<sup>68</sup> She follows Georgianna in seeing the anchorhold as the objective correlative of the inner life.<sup>69</sup> The *AW* gains access to the inner life via the gateway of memory, since the anchoress will eventually be committing the *AW* and other devotional texts to memory through repeated rereading. McHugh interprets the *AW*’s frequent references to enclosed spaces as metaphors for the enclosed spaces of the heart, which becomes “a speaking space, where the anchoress’s outpouring can be made to God in a semiotically rich dialogue with the secret sharer of her hidden inner cell.”<sup>70</sup>

The heart is central to McHugh’s chapter and to her reading of the *AW*, but as was the case in Cannon’s article, the heart’s precise identity remains unspecified. At first it would appear that the heart is identified with the rational component of the soul. There is a “vital

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<sup>66</sup> Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse*, 162.

<sup>67</sup> Gunn, *Ancrene Wisse*, 174.

<sup>68</sup> Anna McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space in *Ancrene Wisse*,” in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 84.

<sup>69</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 84.

<sup>70</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 84.

connection between the metaphorical enclosed spaces of the mind and heart ... and the rhetoric of the heart which these intellectual chambers facilitate.”<sup>71</sup> It is both the seat of memory and the place where the anchoress is to ‘contain’ Christ.<sup>72</sup> It is also an intellectual space, “where the movements of the intellect aid meditation.”<sup>73</sup> Thus far there is nothing surprising; the features described are typically associated with the rational soul. McHugh, however, in arguing that the cell does not represent the body, maintains instead that “[t]he visions of enclosed space in *Ancrene Wisse* are visions of the enclosed space of the heart, or the mind, perhaps even the soul.”<sup>74</sup>

The obvious question to ask is whether or not the text of the *AW* supports McHugh’s fragmenting of mind, heart and soul. The answer is that it does, at least partially. McHugh observes that the heart is “an enclosed, generative ... space from which life comes forth.”<sup>75</sup> She refers to the *AW*’s citation of Proverbs 4:23, which the author modifies slightly in his gloss, to indicate that the heart is the vessel of the soul’s life and distinct from the soul.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the *AW* distinguishes heart and soul, and regards them as discrete entities.

McHugh devotes little attention to the distinctions between heart and soul or their implications; her chapter seems to take them for granted. However, if the heart – where McHugh maintains the internal rhetoric of prayer takes place – is distinct from the mind and the soul, then what is it? McHugh shows that it is intimately related to memory, and she makes the innovative contribution of reading the text in the context of memory literature “of which *Ancrene Wisse* is a tangential member.”<sup>77</sup> She draws on the work of Mary Carruthers and identifies a number of tropes and references to memory literature within the *AW*: “the anchoress is encouraged not to recollect her sins but to ‘gather’ them,” and “mnemonics, such

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<sup>71</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 83-84.

<sup>72</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 86.

<sup>73</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 90.

<sup>74</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 93.

<sup>75</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 87.

<sup>76</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 87.

<sup>77</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 85.



as that of the five senses, [are] rife throughout the text as an organising principle for the material which the anchoress must memorise and make her own.”<sup>78</sup> The heart is related to the memory, but the author of the *AW* identifies it as conscience rather than memory. McHugh thus indirectly lays the groundwork for reading the *AW* as conscience literature by identifying its relationship with literature on memory, and by revealing the complexities in the heart’s relationship to the soul.

Mary Agnes Edsall’s article, “‘True Anchoresses are Called Birds’: Asceticism as Ascent and the Purgative Mysticism of the *Ancrene Wisse*,” challenges the general conclusion that the *AW* is not a mystical or contemplative text. She identifies the shortfall of the usual scholarly approach as an over-reliance on “models that are heavily influenced by pseudo-Dionysian Neoplatonism and its elitist conceptions of the ascent of the mind to God.”<sup>79</sup> The over-reliance obscures readings of other forms of contemplation. Edsall follows more recent approaches to mystical literature, approaches which reject the earlier “lens of ill-defined or rigid conceptions of mystical experience.”<sup>80</sup> She aims to “read certain patterns of imagery in this self-reflexive, highly metaphorical text on their own terms.”<sup>81</sup> Edsall thus builds upon the work of Savage and Watson. She critiques both, however, because “for both critics, a mysticism of ascent and union remains a touchstone for their arguments and neither fully fleshes out the particular ways that *AW* configures contemplative experience.”<sup>82</sup>

Edsall argues that the *AW* author collapses “what is usually three steps into one action.”<sup>83</sup> The mystical stages of purgation, ascension and union become “a purgative mysticism.”<sup>84</sup> The *AW* presents a mysticism that centres on meditation on the suffering of

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<sup>78</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 84-85.

<sup>79</sup> Mary Agnes Edsall, “‘True Anchoresses Are Called Birds’: Asceticism as Ascent and the Purgative Mysticism of the *Ancrene Wisse*,” *Viator* 34 (2003): 158.

<sup>80</sup> Edsall, “‘True Anchoresses are Called Birds,” 159.

<sup>81</sup> Edsall, “‘True Anchoresses are Called Birds,” 158.

<sup>82</sup> Edsall, “‘True Anchoresses are Called Birds,” 163.

<sup>83</sup> Edsall, “‘True Anchoresses are Called Birds,” 175.

<sup>84</sup> Edsall, “‘True Anchoresses are Called Birds,” 165.

Christ. Christ's wounds cure sin in the senses and make the anchoress into a stigmatic.<sup>85</sup> Anchoritic asceticism has a strongly penitential character. The author illustrates the inner disciplines with the flight of birds and "uses language that recalls descriptions of ascent."<sup>86</sup> The description of penitential suffering "unites the anchoress with the parallel, saving sacrifice of Christ," and thus the anchoress achieves ascension and union whilst in the midst of purgation.<sup>87</sup>

The *AW*'s mysticism is designed specifically for anchoritism.<sup>88</sup> The anchoress "fully experiences her sin, her suffering, and her worldly abasement, yet continually and completely refers them to Christ, thereby transfiguring them into joy."<sup>89</sup> The text thus emphasises the transformation that results from contact with Christ, contact obtained through suffering and asceticism.

Most of Edsall's observations and conclusions are valid. Her argument, however, succumbs to the problems she identifies in the preceding scholarship on the *AW*. She still treats the mysticism of the *AW* as lying within the traditional categories of purgation, ascent, and union despite her stated attempt to liberate the text from the conventional models that have overshadowed it. The *AW* is mystical because she is able to find the three stages within it, albeit rearranged and relocated. Her approach is therefore still reductive in that it makes the text's spirituality reducible to the traditional triad and isolates those elements from the text as a whole.

Edsall's conclusion thus accounts for the data just as inadequately as Baldwin's conflicting conclusion does. Baldwin argues that traces, tropes, images, and allusions to contemplation appear within the *AW* because they are a feature of the author's world, and not because they are a part of the text's spirituality. Edsall brings into focus what those images,

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<sup>85</sup> Edsall, "True Anchoresses are Called Birds," 169.

<sup>86</sup> Edsall, "True Anchoresses are Called Birds," 174.

<sup>87</sup> Edsall, "True Anchoresses are Called Birds," 176.

<sup>88</sup> Edsall, "True Anchoresses are Called Birds," 184.

<sup>89</sup> Edsall, "True Anchoresses are Called Birds," 185.

references and allusions are. She does not disprove Baldwin's conclusion that they are only incidental, because she does not address Baldwin's argument that the *AW* focuses on conscience rather than contemplation. We need to consider the *AW* author's understanding of conscience and participation in the genre of conscience literature in order to demonstrate that Edsall's conclusion is preferable to Baldwin's. Nevertheless, Edsall valuably solidifies the connection between the *AW* and monastic spirituality. She argues that "the author builds his text around the doctrine of double complementary compunctions of fear and love," influenced by Gregory the Great.<sup>90</sup> Gregory's work, as Jean Leclercq notes, "bridges the gap between the patristic age and the monastic culture of the Middle Ages."<sup>91</sup>

Mari Hughes-Edwards concurs that contemplative prayer forms a part of the *AW*'s spirituality. She maintains, however, that its understanding of contemplation is traditional, and only plays a very minor or incidental role. Meditation is more prominent than contemplation in the *AW*.<sup>92</sup> Hughes-Edwards notes that "meditation can involve the deliberate imagination of a spiritual subject ... or focus on an inanimate object ... or on the ruminative reading of a spiritual text."<sup>93</sup> She argues that this "fosters a cognitive relationship with God," but one "more apt to be comprehended intellectually than felt experientially."<sup>94</sup> The meditative "scene remains a tableau: an imaginary landscape, intensely visual, but cognitively intellectualised nonetheless, despite all attempts to draw the recluse literally into it."<sup>95</sup>

Hughes-Edwards' conclusion misjudges the role that images played within

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<sup>90</sup> Edsall, "True Anchoresses are Called Birds," 165. Edsall refers to Gregory the Great, *Dialogorum Libri IV* III.34, (PL 77:300C).

<sup>91</sup> Jean Leclercq, OSB, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 25. For an account of compunction in England, see Sandra McFentire, "The Doctrine of Compunction from Bede to Margery Kempe," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987).

<sup>92</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 83.

<sup>93</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 84.

<sup>94</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 84.

<sup>95</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 85.

medieval psychology of imagination. Jennifer Bryan, for instance, argues that “[t]he transformative power of vision-with-desire was in fact one of the central tenets of late medieval devotion.”<sup>96</sup> Bryan, nevertheless, takes a dimmer view of earlier medieval devotional writing with its “interiority of the cloister and anchorhold” which she argues “was a matter not of refined spiritual sensibilities, but of enclosure and inviolability.”<sup>97</sup> She maintains that the interiority of texts like the *AW* was not crafted through positive imaginative meditation, but rather “[t]roped as a small, tightly contained space, ... created and maintained through an obsessive attention to its borders.”<sup>98</sup>

Other scholarship, by contrast, has described a perceptual shift that the *AW* effects through its reinterpretation of material circumstances. Gunn argues that “[t]he devotions of the anchoresses were centred not on the consumption of the body of Christ but on his presence to them.”<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Robertson argues that “[t]he anchoress is taught to leave the world ... of objects perceived through the senses, and to transcend from these objects into connections to the transcendental signified, God.”<sup>100</sup> The anchoress’ “body becomes Christ’s body on the cross” through “the redirection of the senses ... to Christ’s suffering.”<sup>101</sup> The *AW* thus conveys “more than just knowledge, it is a guide to practice that enables expansiveness.”<sup>102</sup>

Susannah Mary Chewning similarly argues that anchoritic devotion “recognises Christ’s body and its beauty in abjection as a means of identifying with his loss of subjectivity” which is “crucial to the mystic’s expression of her own loss of identity.”<sup>103</sup> The

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<sup>96</sup> Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 123.

<sup>97</sup> Bryan, *Looking Inward*, 45.

<sup>98</sup> Bryan, *Looking Inward*, 45.

<sup>99</sup> Cate Gunn, “‘After the Measse-cos, Hwen the Preost Sacreð’: When Is the Moment of Ecstasy in *Ancrene Wisse*?” *Notes and Queries* 48, no. 2 (June 2001): 108.

<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth Robertson, “Savouring ‘Scientia’: The Medieval Anchoress Reads *Ancrene Wisse*,” in *A Companion to “Ancrene Wisse,”* ed. Yoko Wada (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 139.

<sup>101</sup> Robertson, “Savouring ‘Scientia,’” 138.

<sup>102</sup> Robertson, “Savouring ‘Scientia,’” 140.

<sup>103</sup> Susannah Mary Chewning, “Gladly Alone, Gladly Silent: Isolation and Exile in the Anchoritic Mystical

anchoress “is ‘glad’ that Christ has been humiliated; soon she will take his suffering as her own.”<sup>104</sup> The anchoress thus comes to perceive Christ present in her life by reinterpreting her suffering as Christ’s, which in turn becomes a source of paradoxical joy.

Carmel Bendon Davis notes that the *AW* author “was at particular pains to make the connection between the anchoresses’ choice to follow Christ and their own cramped living conditions.”<sup>105</sup> The connection manifests itself as an “inversion of light and dark, of life and death” that unites the anchoress to Christ inasmuch as she is “ostensibly dead to the world but ‘alive’ to spiritual possibilities just as Christ was alive after death.”<sup>106</sup> Vincent Gillespie argues to similar effect that the inner rule of the *AW* acts “as a training ground in exegetical gestures and interpretative appropriation of symbolic spaces of gradually increasing complexity.”<sup>107</sup> Gillespie notes the domestic imagery in the *AW* and argues that “[t]he key point ... is almost certainly the *alterity* of the social model provided.”<sup>108</sup> The imagery invests the anchoritic situation with an alien quality that works to facilitate the creation of a devotional space. The creation of images that surprise or inspire the reinterpretation of one’s environment is a trait of the contemplative conscience texts.

A persistent debate runs throughout the scholarship on the *AW*, as charted here: a debate caused by the uneasy tension of material and spiritual, ethical and contemplative components of the *AW*. This thesis resolves the question by reading the *AW*’s conscience within the context of the conscience literature of its time.

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Experience,” in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards, Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 108.

<sup>104</sup> Chewning, “Gladly Alone, Gladly Silent,” 108.

<sup>105</sup> Carmel Bendon Davis, *Mysticism and Space: Space and Spatiality in the Works of Richard Rolle, The Cloud of Unknowing Author and Julian of Norwich* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 55.

<sup>106</sup> Davis, *Mysticism and Space*, 55.

<sup>107</sup> Vincent Gillespie, “Meat, Metaphor and Mysticism: Cooking the Books in *The Doctrine of the Hert*,” in *A Companion to “The Doctrine of the Hert”: The Middle English Translation and Its Latin and European Contexts*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), 141.

<sup>108</sup> Gillespie, “Meat, Metaphor and Mysticism,” 145-46.

## Chapter One

### Peter of Celle

#### 1. Introduction

Peter of Celle, a twelfth-century Benedictine, served as abbot first at Celle then subsequently St Remi. He enjoyed a brief appointment as bishop of Chartres before his death in 1183. Peter's career and influence were mostly public rather than theological. He has, nevertheless, since come to be regarded as a contemplative figure. Hugh Feiss notes that "[t]he word 'contemplation' occurs frequently in his writings, as do other expressions used by medieval writers to describe the life of prayer," but "his vocabulary is not precise, so ... it is difficult to know what he means by contemplation."<sup>1</sup> Peter wrote four treatises on monastic themes, including his *De Conscientia*. Portions of his *De Conscientia* were later incorporated into the pseudo-Bernardine *De Interiori Domo*, evidencing circulation and readership of Peter's text. This chapter argues that Peter's *De Conscientia* adapts the patristic moral conscience, creating a new kind of contemplative conscience that served as a paradigm for contemplative life.

Feiss notes that Peter's work on conscience "is one indication of a pervasive concern for interiority," but says little about the relationship between conscience and contemplation in Peter's writings.<sup>2</sup> He observes, however, that "[c]onscience is the sanctuary of self-awareness, self-possession and the intentionality which animates one's activities."<sup>3</sup>

Intentionality is an important aspect of Peter's writings. Intent, for Peter, is "a particular perspective or resonance" that, along with *similitudo*, constitutes memory.<sup>4</sup> Mary

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<sup>1</sup> Peter of Celle, *Selected Works*, trans. Hugh Feiss (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Peter, *Selected Works*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Peter, *Selected Works*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Carruthers, "On Affliction and Reading, Weeping and Argument: Chaucer's Lachrymose Troilus in Context," *Representations* 93 (2006): 4.

Carruthers argues that, for Peter, “all learned matters have some ‘intention’ built into the way they are perceived and recollected.”<sup>5</sup> She observes that his treatise *De Afflictione et Lectione* “analyses the fundamental monastic task of knowing self and God . . . , in response to a hostile new milieu (as [Peter] saw it) of Aristotelian-based scholastic rational argument.”<sup>6</sup> Peter followed the classical Stoics and early Christian monastic writers, for whom theory and practice are inseparable. It follows as a consequence that “there is no such thing as truly disinterested reading or learning.”<sup>7</sup> Monastic writers held “aesthetic experience . . . to be an essential cognitive experience, a necessary aspect of the process of human understanding.”<sup>8</sup> This “addition of emotion to rational activity does not make it therefore irrational. It makes it aesthetic, fully rational but, as human reason was understood to be, bound within sensory experience.”<sup>9</sup>

Intentionality is also central to McGinn’s concept of mystical consciousness, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. McGinn follows Bernard Lonergan’s account of consciousness. Lonergan defines intentionality as transitivity “in the psychological sense that by the operation one becomes aware of the object.”<sup>10</sup> The operations in question are the constitutive elements of waking, human consciousness. They encompass the four, dialectically ascending levels of empirical perception, understanding, reasoning, and moral responsibility. McGinn argues that, in mystical texts, this organisation of consciousness is affected and transformed as “perception [of God] restructures the subject’s drive to understand, affirm, and live out the gift received.”<sup>11</sup> McGinn has more conventionally acknowledged mystical texts in mind. He specifically applies his theory to the works of

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<sup>5</sup> Carruthers, “Affliction and Reading,” 5.

<sup>6</sup> Carruthers, “Affliction and Reading,” 2.

<sup>7</sup> Carruthers, “Affliction and Reading,” 5.

<sup>8</sup> Carruthers, “Affliction and Reading,” 7.

<sup>9</sup> Carruthers, “Affliction and Reading,” 6.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, SJ, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 7.

<sup>11</sup> McGinn, “Mystical Consciousness,” 51.

Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa and John of the Cross.<sup>12</sup> I contend, however, that this model is also useful for interpreting Peter of Celle's writing on conscience.

Peter wrote his *De Conscientia* at the request of Alcher of Clairvaux, a request Feiss speculates was prompted by Bernard's numerous undefined references to conscience.<sup>13</sup> Peter's treatise represents distinctly monastic, as opposed to scholastic, thought. Feiss notes that Peter "was not a logical writer, and does not seem in fact to have esteemed logic very highly."<sup>14</sup> The observation holds true of Peter's writing on conscience: he provides a succinct definition of conscience but writes a long and meandering treatise that is not always consistent with his definition. Feiss designates it the "least organised" of Peter's treatises.<sup>15</sup> Very little of it actually concerns the meaning of 'conscience.' Indirectness and frequent obscurity are integral to his work, constructing a highly affective and imaginative picture of the process by which conscience must be acquired.

Peter does not seek to define conscience purely as an abstraction. He sums up his approach: "[q]uid itaque sit conscientia, non diffinitione, sed quadam descriptione uideamus" (199/25-26).<sup>16</sup> He writes, as he states, to improve the life of the reader as well as his own (193/17-18). The goal of the treatise is that Alcher may know and have a good conscience; the work's emphasis falls heavily on the second of those two objectives. None of this prevents Peter from offering a definition of conscience. Peter's definition is, like much of his treatise, convoluted and contradictory. This chapter elucidates Peter's understanding of self-knowledge and untangles his conceptualisation of conscience. It then proceeds to examine Peter's highly imaginative account of how conscience is to be acquired and the life of conscience lived. The tension between Peter's definition and description of conscience is an

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<sup>12</sup> McGinn, "Mystical Consciousness," 53-59.

<sup>13</sup> Peter, *Selected Works*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Peter, *Selected Works*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> Peter, *Selected Works*, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Peter of Celle, *De Conscientia*, in *La Spiritualité De Pierre De Celle*, by Jean Leclercq, OSB, vol. 7, *Etudes De Theologie Et D'Histoire De La Spiritualité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1946), 199, "... thus let us see what conscience is, not by definition but by a certain description."



integral part of his treatise.

## 2. Memory in the Present: Peter's Definition of Conscience

Peter expresses his intention to follow established conventions used “a doctoribus” in writing treatises (198/39-199/2).<sup>17</sup> He nevertheless distinguishes his work from theirs and insists that his reader “in his litteris non scientiam quaerere, sed conscientiam” (199/21).<sup>18</sup>

The opposition between knowledge and conscience (*scientia* and *conscientia*) recurs throughout the treatise. Its centrality to the work comes from Peter's definition of conscience: “[c]onscientia est sui ipsius scientia uel de bono praesumens uel de malo diffidens” (199/26-27).<sup>19</sup> The definition is recursive. How can conscience be ‘knowledge of itself’? In order to have conscience, one must already have a conscience of which to have knowledge. Peter does not explicitly attempt a solution to the problem, but one begins to take shape when he subsequently appeals to the supposed etymology of ‘conscience’: “conscientia est cordis scientia” (199/29).<sup>20</sup> He concedes that “[v]idetur forte secundum hanc etymologiam non aliud esse conscientiam quam scientiam” (199/30-31).<sup>21</sup> The etymology engenders confusion and thus leads Peter to distinguish between two kinds of knowledge within the heart. The first kind is “quae in corde est ad concipiendam forinsecae philosophicae disciplinam” (199/31-32).<sup>22</sup> The second kind is “quae de corde intelligendo in corde melius moratur et utilius consecratur” (199/32-33).<sup>23</sup> The former is *scientia*, the latter *conscientia*.

*Conscientia* is therefore not reducible to *cordis scientia*, but is a specific instantiation of it. *Cordis scientia* itself – the knowledge within the heart – does not have

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<sup>17</sup> “... by the learned.”

<sup>18</sup> “... not to seek knowledge amongst these letters, but conscience.”

<sup>19</sup> “... conscience is knowledge of itself, either anticipating good or distrusting evil.”

<sup>20</sup> “... conscience is knowledge of the heart.”

<sup>21</sup> “... perhaps it seems, according to this etymology, that conscience is nothing other than knowledge.”

<sup>22</sup> “... that which is in the heart in order to understand the instruction of external philosophy.”

<sup>23</sup> “... the knowledge which, as a result of understanding the heart, stays in the heart better and is more usefully set apart.”

specific content. It is the precondition for knowledge, the raw materials that make knowledge a possibility. The two kinds of *cordis scientia* are interchangeable until they are directed towards their object. Their point of origin is the same: “[q]uando nouit se appellatur conscientia, quando praeter se alia, nominatur scientia” (199/37-38).<sup>24</sup> This precondition of knowledge is not self-aware and must be realised as *conscientia* by inquiry and investigation into one’s life. If the investigation is not undertaken, then conscience is not realised, but the *cordis scientia* still exists.

Thus, when Peter began to write his treatise, he discovered that he was ignorant of conscience. Soon, “meam magis erubescere coepi putrefactam conscientiam in operibus mortuis” (193/21-22).<sup>25</sup> Peter acquires his conscience by investigating his life, and discovers that the newfound conscience is in a dire condition. The kind of conscience that emerges from the investigation will depend on the moral quality of the *cordis scientia* that is shaped and formed by conduct. The newly acquired conscience is not a clean slate.

The conscience does not evaluate moral behaviour, although the moral quality of behaviour contributes to its condition. Conscience is, first and foremost, dependent on pursuit of conscience. Peter laments that, as it stands, “[m]ulti proinde quaerunt scientiam, pauci conscientiam” (200/4-5).<sup>26</sup> The lack of conscience is not a result of sin, but of a failure to seek conscience.

Success in the investigation is guaranteed if the necessary effort is expended on it, since the monk will not find anything in himself other than himself (200/7-9). Peter states that there is only one other possibility: “ad suam animam operante gratia inclinatam Dei imaginem occuparet” (200/10-11).<sup>27</sup> This is the “creatrix imago in imagine creata” (200/11-

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<sup>24</sup> “... when it knows itself, it is called ‘conscience’; when it knows other things beside itself, it is called ‘knowledge.’”

<sup>25</sup> “... I began to be greatly ashamed of my rotten conscience in its dead works.”

<sup>26</sup> “... as many seek knowledge, so few seek conscience.”

<sup>27</sup> “... he may seize the image of God inclined towards his soul.”

12).<sup>28</sup> If this happens, “tunc illustratur conscientia, tunc cordis impletur scientia, tunc in se Deum et in Deo mutua reuolutione recipit se ipsam imago creata” (200/13-15).<sup>29</sup> The edification of conscience is a necessary prerequisite for this condition. The search for one’s conscience turns out to be the search for God.

The uninformed conscience, by contrast, is “misera ... caeca ... stulta” (194/10).<sup>30</sup> Its misery comes about because “amat tenebras et quod miserius est, quaerit etiam miseriam cum miseria” (194/10-11).<sup>31</sup> If the conscience were informed and “se agnosceret pulchra inter mulieres” (194/4), Peter is confident that “post uestigia gregum a se abiens paludosa itinera incideret” (194/5).<sup>32</sup> Peter thus depicts the uninformed conscience as wandering. It does not interrogate the created order in search for God, as Augustine does in Book 10 of his *Confessiones*, but pursues worldly goods and ambitions because it knows no better.<sup>33</sup> Worldly fortune “non miseria aestimatur” (194/14) to the point where not even “miseria detrahit difficultas” (194/14).<sup>34</sup> Thus, unlike Augustine, Peter finds that dissatisfaction is not a sufficient impetus to keep the conscience searching. The conscience needs moral education. That education consists principally in apprehending affectively what the conscience is, hence Peter’s preference for description over definition.

The discovery of God in the course of acquiring self-knowledge is rooted in Augustinian thought. Phillip Cary argues that the very idea of an ‘inner self’ within Western thought stems from Augustine’s implementation of Plotinus’ Neoplatonism in the service of Christian theology. Cary writes that, “[i]n contrast to Plotinus, the inner space of the Augustinian soul is not divine but is beneath God, so that turning into the inside is not all

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<sup>28</sup> “... the creator image in the created image.”

<sup>29</sup> “... the conscience is made bright, then the knowledge of the heart is fulfilled, then the created image receives God in itself, and in the same way, itself in God.”

<sup>30</sup> “... wretched ... blind ... foolish.”

<sup>31</sup> “... it loves darkness and – what is more woeful – it even seeks out woe with woe.”

<sup>32</sup> “... recognised itself as beautiful amongst women”; “it would break off departing from itself on marshy paths after the tracks of the herds.” See Cant. 1:7.

<sup>33</sup> See Augustine of Hippo, *Confessionum Libri Tredecim* X.6.9, (PL 32:783).

<sup>34</sup> “... is not deemed misery”; “hardship draws it away from misery.”

there is to finding God.”<sup>35</sup> Augustine’s modification of Plotinus produced a non-divine self that is inner and in relation to God. For Augustine, “God is not only within the soul but above it as well,” and thus “Augustine’s inward turn requires a double movement: first in then up.”<sup>36</sup> Ann Hartle notes similarly that Augustine’s “mind (his self) is to be understood only in terms of what is other than (above) his mind.”<sup>37</sup> There is such thing as a self to be known, and it exists as a result of Augustine’s influence. That influence was especially pronounced at the time Peter was writing, as Robert Crouse notes: “So far as the twelfth century is concerned, ... everything is Augustinian.”<sup>38</sup>

Denys Turner reads two kinds of self-knowledge in Augustine’s thought. He designates the first as pre-reflexive, “simply the kind of self-awareness which is given in any conscious activity.”<sup>39</sup> Augustine’s goal is to actualise reflexive self-knowledge which consists in “the redirecting of the mind upon its own activities so as to explicitate that inexplicit self-awareness which is present in them.”<sup>40</sup> The division of knowledge along these lines enables Turner to read Augustine’s writing as “a potential critique of ‘introspectionism.’”<sup>41</sup> He concludes that “there is no such thing in Augustine as the experience, explicitly, of ourselves.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, the “act of self-knowledge is primarily an act of epistemological inference, not an act of psychological introspection.”<sup>43</sup> Attempts to directly ‘experience’ or ‘perceive’ the mind succumb to the error Augustine cautions against: no mirror can possibly

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<sup>35</sup> Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39.

<sup>36</sup> Cary, *Augustine’s Invention*, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Ann Hartle, “Augustine and Rousseau: Narrative and Self-Knowledge in the Two *Confessions*,” in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 264.

<sup>38</sup> Robert D. Crouse, “What Is Augustinian in Twelfth-Century Mysticism?,” in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. Frederick Van Fleteren, Joseph C. Schnaubelt, OSA, and Joseph Reino, *Collectanea Augustiniana* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 408.

<sup>39</sup> Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 88.

<sup>40</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 89.

<sup>41</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 88.

<sup>42</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 89.

<sup>43</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 88.

reflect the mind.<sup>44</sup>

The division between pre-reflexive and reflexive knowledge helps solve the recursivity of Peter's conscience. It reveals *conscientia* as a third stage, an intermediary between pre-reflection and reflection. It provides the necessary ground for reflection. *Cordis scientia* exists pre-reflexively. It possesses the central attribute Turner ascribes to Augustine's pre-reflexive knowledge: it is experiential. Peter does not expressly address or explain the experiential properties of *cordis scientia* but they are implicit within his text. *Cordis scientia* is yet to be directed either internally (and thus converted into *conscientia*) or externally (and thus converted into *scientia*). Peter therefore implies that one is unaware of its presence in much the same way that Augustine is able to be conceptually unaware of the mind's workings. *Cordis scientia* is thus, like Augustine's pre-reflexive knowledge, "experiential" in the sense that it is an intrinsic constituent of all conscious human experiencing."<sup>45</sup> If one has lived in a morally deficient way, the *cordis scientia* they have accrued will unreflectively cause them to experience worldly prosperity as attractive when, in reality, it is a source of "miseriam cum miseria" (194/10-11).<sup>46</sup> Turner illustrates his reading of Augustine with the example of playing golf: "enjoyment is the form consciousness of playing takes; it is the golf not the enjoyment we are conscious of."<sup>47</sup> *Cordis scientia* similarly needs an object in order to be realised.

*Cordis scientia* retains its character and condition once it becomes realised as *conscientia*. Peter is thus able to say that "[s]ecundum qualitatem namque uitae nascitur qualitas conscientiae" (227/4-5).<sup>48</sup> It is therefore not innate or intrinsic but rather it grows, aggregates, and develops as life progresses. Nevertheless, conscience is not reducible to its moral quality. Even the chaste conscience "[d]ecore etenim immundo atque sterquilinio

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<sup>44</sup> See Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* X.5, (PL 42:975).

<sup>45</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 89.

<sup>46</sup> "... woe with woe."

<sup>47</sup> Turner, *Darkness of God*, 83.

<sup>48</sup> "... for according to the quality of a life a conscience is given birth."

sordidior est sine Deo” (220/22-23).<sup>49</sup> The moral life is an essential (but not the sole) ingredient in a good conscience – “ad conscientiam bonam non uenitur nisi per bonam uitam” (227/9-10).<sup>50</sup> The immoral life results in a bad (but not a guilty) conscience. Life without seeking conscience results in no conscience at all.

*Conscientia* emerges when *cordis scientia* remains within the heart, rather than being directed externally. Peter uses language of seeking and self-knowledge: “[s]i enim non longe a se peteret et se, intra seipso doctore, cum gratia inuestigans quid mirum si inueniretur?” (200/7-9).<sup>51</sup> He parts company with Augustine, however, in his understanding of what self-knowledge means. Peter supplies several scriptural citations which he reads as descriptions of “illa sapientia quae in corde est” (199/38-39) after he has already said that “aequis passibus ad mentem ueniunt sapientia et conscientia, ut nunquam ueniat sapientia sine conscientia, nunquam conscientia sine sapientia” (196/34-36).<sup>52</sup> The scriptural texts Peter selects do not depict an Augustinian conceptual knowledge of the soul’s nature, but a knowledge that informs or characterises its possessor’s approach to external things. Thus he cites Exodus 30:32: “Dedit Deus sapientiam in corde Beseleel ad facienda omnia opera siue ex auro, siue et argento” (199/39-40).<sup>53</sup> Here conscience is not Beseleel’s self-knowledge but the practical skill God gives him to construct the Tabernacle and its associated objects. Peter writes that “de quodam dicitur” (200/1) in Job 9:4, “sapiens corde est et fortis robore” (200/1).<sup>54</sup> Strength accompanies wisdom in the same way that wisdom accompanies conscience. Conscience thus results in a quality or condition – in this case, strength. It is, once again, an orientation of the *cordis scientia* analogous to a virtue rather than conceptual

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<sup>49</sup> “... without God, is more sordid than a dung heap – even with its filthy glory.”

<sup>50</sup> “... good conscience is not arrived at except by a good life.”

<sup>51</sup> “... if, indeed, he would seek himself not far from himself, within himself, with a teacher, investigating with grace, what marvel is it if he is found?”

<sup>52</sup> “... that wisdom which is in the heart”; “... wisdom and conscience come to the mind with equal step, so that wisdom never comes without conscience and conscience never comes without wisdom.”

<sup>53</sup> “God gave Beseleel wisdom in his heart for the purpose of making all works, whether of gold or of silver as well.”

<sup>54</sup> “... it is said concerning a certain man”; “... the wise of heart is also strong with might.”

self-knowledge. Wisdom 7:15, “[u]tinam det mihi Deus dicere haec ex sententia” (200/2-3), requests a condition (‘ex sententia’) from which the asker can act and live. The final text in Peter’s list is Psalm 36:28, “[o]s iusti meditabitur sapientiam, et lingua eius loquetur iudicium” (200/3-4).<sup>55</sup> It, like the other texts, describes the condition that results from conscience which in this case is discernment.

Peter’s conscience is a condition that must be cultivated and not an abstract knowledge of the mind’s nature and operation. It is better understood as a condition of self-awareness that informs and shapes experience of other things. It also enables moral reflection.

Peter introduces a step that is not present in Augustine’s account of self-reflection. Conscience requires further scrutiny if one is to evaluate the moral character of their life. Peter makes conscience the “[s]peculum ... mundum, clarum et purum totius religionis” (209/30).<sup>56</sup> He goes so far as to state that “[n]on nouit se anima quae sine speculo est” (209/28-29).<sup>57</sup> Peter justifies his comparison of conscience to a mirror as “[p]lane non inconsulte” (209/35) on the grounds that “in eo [forma] faciei expressae se ipsam solo intuitu oculorum interpretatur” (209/36-37).<sup>58</sup>

Peter’s handling of the soul’s mirror differs from the use of the image familiar from patristic texts. Gregory the Great succinctly summarises the traditional idea: “Scriptura sacra mentis oculis quasi quoddam speculum opponitur ut interna nostra facies in ipsa videatur.”<sup>59</sup> Augustine himself writes that “[p]osuit tibi speculum Scripturam suam.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “... the mouth of the righteous shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak judgement.”

<sup>56</sup> “... clean, bright and pure mirror of all religion.”

<sup>57</sup> “... the soul which is without a mirror does not know itself.”

<sup>58</sup> “... clearly not careless”; “in it [a mirror], the form of the face shown is interpreted to itself by the regard of the eyes alone.” The word ‘forma’ is absent from Leclercq’s edition of the text. Feiss includes it in his list of emendations from MS Lisbon Alcobaça 232. Peter, *Selected Works*, 39.

<sup>59</sup> Gregory the Great, *Moralium Libri Sive Expositio in Librum Job* II.1, (PL 75:553C), “Sacred Scripture is placed before the eyes of the mind like a certain mirror, so that our inner face may be seen in it.”

<sup>60</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* CII.1, (PL 37:1138), “... he has placed his Scripture as a mirror for you.”

Augustine urges, “vide quod es; et si tibi displicet, quaere ut non sis.”<sup>61</sup> Here, however, Augustine makes Scripture a mirror only insofar as it is a standard or ideal for comparison. Gregory likewise elaborates that “[i]bi etenim foeda, ibi pulchra nostra cognoscimus.”<sup>62</sup> Scripture’s function as a moral mirror relies on the prior assumption that we know and understand our own conduct. Scripture makes the reader aware of moral shortcomings by supplying the standard. Its similarity to a mirror lies in the fact that both a mirror and Scripture make the viewer aware of shortcomings, not because it actually reflects like a mirror.

Peter transfers the mirror from Scripture to conscience. Its primary use as a mirror is to make the monk aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in his life: “in speculo conscientiae exitum et reditum illorum contemplemur” (209/17-18).<sup>63</sup> Anyone who examines it “in speculo tam quod decens quam quod indicens in se est apprehendere poterit” (210/7-8).<sup>64</sup> Peter also makes a more dramatic claim for the mirror of conscience: “anima in quibus ab imagine ueritatis decebat uel in quibus uestigia creatricis imaginis recipiat in tabulis conscientiae relegit et intellegit.” (209/33-35).<sup>65</sup> The mirror thus allows reflexive self-awareness: an apprehension of what the *imago Dei* is and the failure to live in accordance with it. *Conscientia* is not itself this knowledge. *Conscientia* is the mirror. Examination of the mirror “solo intuitu oculorum” (109/37) leads to this knowledge. Peter’s mirror, unlike the patristic mirror, actually reflects something and the reflection itself is interpretative.<sup>66</sup>

Peter’s *conscientia* is still *cordis scientia* in the sense that it is an integral component of all knowing and thinking, but it has been shaped and ordered in a particular

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<sup>61</sup> Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* CII.1, (PL 37:1138), “... see what you are. If that displeases you, seek that you should not be so.”

<sup>62</sup> Gregory the Great, *Moralium Libri* II.1, (PL 75:553C), “there, indeed, we recognise our foulness; there we recognise our beauty.”

<sup>63</sup> “... in the mirror of conscience we contemplate the exit and return of those [gifts].”

<sup>64</sup> “... in this mirror shall be able to apprehend in himself what is becoming as well as what is unbecoming.”

<sup>65</sup> “... the soul rereads and understands from the tablets of conscience in which things it was made suitable by the image of truth, or in which things it recovers the traces of the creative image.”

<sup>66</sup> “... by the regard of the eyes alone.”



way. Mary Carruthers argues that medieval “[m]emoria was ... an integral part of the virtue of prudence, that which makes moral judgement possible,” and as such “it was in trained memory that one built character, judgement, citizenship, and piety.”<sup>67</sup> Peter compares *conscientia* and *memoria* during his description of *conscientia* as a mirror. Even “quod memoria labilis obliuionis diluuiio forte amitteret tabularum beneficio etiam in tempora saecularia perpetuat” (210/1-3).<sup>68</sup> Likewise, “anima, quantum attinet ad praesentiam, tamquam speculo utitur conscientia sua, quantum ad praeterita more tabularum fideliter conseruat” (210/3-5).<sup>69</sup> Peter’s conscience is memory in the present rather than the past.

Peter’s obscure and contradictory definition of conscience reveals some key features. Conscience needs to be acquired and cultivated because it is neither innate nor intrinsic. It is essential to cultivate conscience in order to apprehend the *imago Dei* in the soul which is, in turn, essential for attaining union with God both in the present and future life. Conscience is therefore a point of exchange between the soul and God. It is a kind of knowledge that exists between pre-reflexive and reflexive self-knowledge. The conscience can be either good or bad, but it is not a moral director. A bad conscience, therefore, is not a guilty conscience but a conscience that misunderstands the nature of things and actively desires what is evil rather than what is good. Conscience thus desires things and as such possesses affectivity. It is therefore intentional and not purely abstract knowledge. It is similar to memory in this respect, but unlike memory it is concerned with the present rather than the past. It is, as Peter puts it, “sui ipsius scientia uel de bono praesumens uel de malo diffidens” (199/26-27).<sup>70</sup> It anticipates goodness and distrusts evil because it has been cultivated and shaped to do so. How, then, does one acquire a good conscience? What form does the pursuit

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<sup>67</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, vol. 10, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

<sup>68</sup> “... that which fallible memory loses to the flood of oblivion may endure for future eras with the benefit of tablets.”

<sup>69</sup> “... the soul uses its conscience as a mirror for present things, as it is the property of tablets to preserve past things faithfully.”

<sup>70</sup> “... conscience is knowledge of itself, either anticipating good or distrusting evil.”

of conscience take?

### **3. Acquiring a Conscience: Peter's Description of Conscience**

Peter explains how to acquire a good conscience on at least four different occasions throughout the text. Each account maps a similar trajectory: fear results in disciplined living. Discipline cultivates and then culminates in the love of God. Peter depicts the process differently in each instance. The first characterises disciplined living as a fiery chariot bearing the soul towards heaven (196/34-197/28). The second creates an image of the conscience as God's guest chamber, prepared by purity and grace (200/16-34). The third and longest of the four accounts focuses on the work of God as Trinity in the construction of conscience as a building (203/24-206/37). The fourth similarly depicts the conscience as the construction of a building, this time a tower. The fourth account inverts the third, however, by describing the life of the person pursuing conscience rather than God's involvement (211/1-212/8). Each account is complete and could potentially stand alone. Why, then, does Peter provide four? What do they reveal about conscience and its acquisition? I shall answer this question by explicating how Peter's approach to the composition of his treatise relates to the acquisition of conscience, and then consider each individual account of the acquisition of conscience.

#### **a. Description and Composition**

The first line of Peter's treatise equates the process of acquiring good conscience with inquiry into conscience: "[r]eligiosa mens religiosa curiositate quaerit de religione conscientiae ut sciat, imo ut habeat conscientiam bonam" (193/3-4).<sup>71</sup> Peter's composition of the treatise therefore participates in the pursuit of conscience insofar as it is an inquiry into conscience; he writes "[a]mplector questionem, magis quidem ut discam quam ut doceam"

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<sup>71</sup> "... the religious mind seeks with religious eagerness concerning the religion of conscience, so that it may know or, rather, so that it may have a good conscience."

(193/4-5).<sup>72</sup> Peter also introduces the distinction between *conscientia* and *scientia* in the opening of his treatise. He describes himself “sicut talpa quaerens uenire ad lucem conscientiae, quamuis caream lumine scientiae” (193/8-9).<sup>73</sup> The distinction recurs later when Peter also distinguishes between definition and description. He notes that the reader may look elsewhere for *scientia*, but “habeat hanc membranulum ad inuestigationem et informationem conscientiarum. Quid itaque sit conscientia, non diffinitione, sed quadam descriptione uideamus” (199/24-26).<sup>74</sup> The two distinctions go together. Definition pertains to *scientia* and description pertains to *conscientia*. The second citation from Peter’s treatise illuminates the first. The kind of inquiry that Peter undertakes is the kind of inquiry that results in conscience: a wide-ranging, image-rich, descriptive exploration.

Peter’s treatise brims with vivid and frequently obscure imagery. The imagery is deliberately difficult. Carruthers writes that within monastic literature, “[t]he more [rhetorical tropes] need ‘chewing,’ the more difficult they are, the richer their nourishment for a mind engaged in memory work,” and “by the time of Hugh of St Victor, obscure figures have become the particular object of meditation.”<sup>75</sup> Imagery is vital because it “signals not just a subject-matter (*res*) but a ‘mood’ (*modus, color*), an ‘attitude’ (*intentio*), and a reading ‘tempo.’”<sup>76</sup> Peter acknowledges that definition and description can serve the same end inasmuch as both enable the reader to know what conscience is. However, he contrasts the two and specifies that one cannot be substituted for the other. His description is not a definition and should not be read as one. It is possible to glean details about conscience from it, but that is not its primary function. Its primary function is the edification of the conscience. Peter states early in the treatise that “[p]erutile namque est conscientiam lentis et diuturnis

<sup>72</sup> “... I embrace the question so that I might learn rather than so I might teach.”

<sup>73</sup> “... like a mole seeking to come to the light of conscience even though I am without the light of knowledge.”

<sup>74</sup> “... let the reader have this little parchment for the investigation of and information about consciences.”

<sup>75</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, vol. 34, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 124.

<sup>76</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 117.

confricationum meditationibus ad seipsam confouere ut lata quiescat” (194/1-3).<sup>77</sup> Carruthers’ observation holds true for Peter: “[t]he first question one should ask of ... an image is not ‘What does it mean?’ but ‘What is it good for?’”<sup>78</sup> What, then, is Peter’s imagery good for?

There are two broad categories of imagery within the treatise. The first includes imagery that depicts the conscience. The second, by contrast, includes imagery that depicts the attainment of conscience. The first category describes conscience in grandly panegyric terms: “[s]olor angelorum est” (195/23), “titulus est religionis ... templum est Salomonis, ... ager est benedictionis, ... hortus est deliciarum, ... est arca faederis, ... est scyphus Ioseph, ... est thesaurus regius, ... est aula Dei, ... est liber signatus et clausus, ...” (195/26-31).<sup>79</sup> Such imagery fosters an affective apprehension of what conscience is and stimulates desire for it.

Peter relies especially on the rhetorical device of *enargeia*. He discusses it at length as the crowning achievement of a good conscience, and he also makes use of it throughout the text. *Enargeia* was a trope typical of classical rhetoric. Carruthers argues that it was adopted by Christian writers as well, although they did not use the term.<sup>80</sup> She describes *enargeia* as “vivid, sensuous word-painting.”<sup>81</sup> Heinrich Plett notes that *enargeia* renders things “present and, as it were, visibly exhibited. This comes about primarily through a detailed description that makes use of *circumstantiae* ..., which lend immediacy and concreteness.”<sup>82</sup> Thus “the orator is able to create ... imaginary scenes. These present the verbal utterance of a *narratio* in such a way that the events described seem to be happening

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<sup>77</sup> “... it is thoroughly useful that the conscience attend itself with the vigorous rubbing of long slow meditations so that it may rest happy.”

<sup>78</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 118.

<sup>79</sup> “[Conscience] is the sister of the angels”; “it is the title of religion, ... it is the temple of Solomon, ... it is the field of blessing, ... it is the garden of delights, ... it is the Ark of the Covenant, ... it is the goblet of Joseph, ... it is the royal treasure, ... it is the court of God, ... it is the book sealed and closed.”

<sup>80</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 133.

<sup>81</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 130.

<sup>82</sup> Heinrich F. Plett, *Enargeia in Classical Antiquity and the Early Modern Age: The Aesthetics of Evidence*, vol. 4, *International Studies in the History of Rhetoric* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 8.

*hic et nunc* before the inner eye of the recipient.”<sup>83</sup> The primary function of *enargeia* is “to evoke affects, either of pleasantly moderate *ethos* or of intensely passionate *pathos*.”<sup>84</sup> Jane Heath distinguishes between two moments ingredient in *enargeia*. The first, “the ‘ontological moment’ of *enargeia* persuades the audience that what is absent is really present,” and the second, “the ‘affective moment’ of *enargeia* makes the audience aware of the tension between seeming presence and real absence. Longing for real presence ensues.”<sup>85</sup>

*Enargeia* thus naturally lends itself to meditations in the tradition of Anselm’s: meditations that invite the reader to envision historical events from the life of Christ and eschatological scenes such as the Last Judgement.<sup>86</sup> McGinn notes a metamorphosis in the practice of *meditatio* during the eleventh century.<sup>87</sup> Earlier *meditatio* consisted of “the repeating of a scriptural text in order to commit it to memory.”<sup>88</sup> Scripture was its principal subject matter and it “aimed at an internal effect, the personal appropriation of the word of God.”<sup>89</sup> Later meditations such as Anselm’s build on the earlier foundation but also involve “a transposition of ... theology into a different key, a prayerful melody that is meant to inspire our gratitude to the Redeemer and to inflame our longing for heaven.”<sup>90</sup> However, they still retain “*meditatio* in the traditional monastic sense, that is, internalisation.”<sup>91</sup> *Enargeia* facilitates internalisation through its affective engagement of the reader. The text provides impetus for the image, but the reader mentally constructs it from the resources contained within the memory.<sup>92</sup> Carruthers summarises: “What matters is not whom we raise

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<sup>83</sup> Plett, *Enargeia*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Plett, *Enargeia*, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Jane M. F Heath, “Absent Presences of Paul and Christ: *Enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians 1–3,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32, no. 1 (2009): 5.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Anselm of Canterbury, *Liber Meditationum et Orationum* II, (PL 158:722).

<sup>87</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, vol. 2, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 135.

<sup>88</sup> McGinn, *Growth of Mysticism*, 135.

<sup>89</sup> McGinn, *Growth of Mysticism*, 135.

<sup>90</sup> McGinn, *Growth of Mysticism*, 137.

<sup>91</sup> McGinn, *Growth of Mysticism*, 138.

<sup>92</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 131.

up before our minds' eyes, but the gist ... which our images convey.”<sup>93</sup>

Peter utilises *enargeia* during his protracted image of conscience as a lady at a banquet (200/34-202/9). Peter states that he shall fashion an image: “[d]e cuius habitudine ut tibi exemplum faciam” (200/34).<sup>94</sup> He then shifts creative responsibility by impelling the reader to imaginative creation of their own: “in animo finge, quod etiam ad pietatem deuotionis mentem compungat” (200/34-35).<sup>95</sup> He hopes that doing so will “de uisibili exemplo ad inuisibilem contemplationem animam accendat” (200/36-37).<sup>96</sup>

The image of the lady at the banquet thus operates according to the two moments Heath identifies as constitutive of *enargeia*. Peter constructs the ontological moment with a series of imperatives and subjunctives commanding the reader to envision the scene, while he simultaneously paints the scene for the reader to envision: “Pone itaque mensam uarietate et plenitudine diuersorum ferulorum refertam” (200/37-38), “Constituere regem in diademate suo coronatum” (201/1), “Sint uasa aurea et argentea” (201/4).<sup>97</sup> He creates a sense of anticipatory immediacy and invites the reader’s creative involvement, asking “[q]uid plura?” (201/11).<sup>98</sup>

Carruthers observes that the reader’s participation in creating the scene is necessary, since “Peter does not describe each detail: as he says, he fashions an example to be imitated, not a recipe.”<sup>99</sup> She especially notes Peter’s use of “the locational verb *pono*, which is the root of ‘dispose,’ at work.”<sup>100</sup> She describes Peter’s scene as an instance of ‘locational memory’ in that Peter instructs the reader to “make a place for [the] mind’s eye.”<sup>101</sup> It is therefore an instance of ekphrasis – the specific subset of *enargeia* that consists of

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<sup>93</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 131.

<sup>94</sup> “... in order to make an example for you from its condition.”

<sup>95</sup> “... shape within your mind that which might inspire the mind even to the piety of devotion.”

<sup>96</sup> “... it might kindle the soul to invisible contemplation from the visible example.”

<sup>97</sup> “Set a table replete with a variety and plenitude of diverse dishes.”; “Establish a king adorned with his crown.”; “Let there be gold and silver vessels.”

<sup>98</sup> “... what more?”

<sup>99</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 207.

<sup>100</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 206.

<sup>101</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 206.

“description of a work of art or architecture, imagined or actual.”<sup>102</sup>

The affective moment within Peter’s *enargeia* occurs on two levels. On one level, the lady of the banquet is initially absent. Peter’s description of the scene creates a sense of anticipation for her eventual appearance. The second affective moment underlies the first. It arises from the nature of the image as an image rather than materially perceptible reality. The imaginative scene intrinsically contains an affective moment since, as Heath notes, “[e]nargeia ... achieves only a *seeming* presence, not the solid reality.”<sup>103</sup> The image thus retains this quality even after the lady arrives. The second affective moment therefore eclipses the first, but derives momentum from it.

The lady of the banquet only appears once the scene has been set. Peter has his reader envision the *circumstantiae* of the banquet in order to foreground her absence. He introduces her to the reader by describing her empty seat: “Vacet tamen interim locus prae aliis spatiosus et speciosus, reginae et matrifamilias singulariter praeparatus” (201/12-14).<sup>104</sup> Finite verbs immediately preceding this line have appeared later in or at the end of their sentences (e.g. 201/7, 9, 12). Peter reverses the word order, placing the verb *vacet* in the sentence-initial position.

The absence of the lady is jarring. Peter directs the reader’s affective response by describing the guests at the feast. The reader, like the dinner guests, is to eagerly anticipate the lady’s arrival: “[o]mnia interim et uultus et singultus sedis illius repletionem exoptent” (201/15-16).<sup>105</sup> Peter once again emphasises the lack, the inconsistency in the picture of an otherwise perfect banquet. ‘Repletionem’ of the vacant seat is the object of expectation and not the arrival of the lady herself.

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<sup>102</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 130.

<sup>103</sup> Heath, “Absent Presences,” 28.

<sup>104</sup> “... meanwhile, let the space that is spacious and beautiful before the others, singularly prepared for the queen and lady of the household, remain vacant.”

<sup>105</sup> “... meanwhile, both faces and sighs long for that seat to be filled.”

The lady arrives “[t]andem ueniens” (201/15).<sup>106</sup> The sun and moon “pulchritudinem ... mirantur” (201/17).<sup>107</sup> Her name is finally revealed from “[s]crinia mystica” (201/18) after all of the anticipation and wonder has been established: “conscientia appellatur haec domina” (201/19-20).<sup>108</sup> Peter then proceeds to describe her beauty and attire, “typice legens” (201/27).<sup>109</sup> He thus pairs the lady’s physical features (usually drawn from the Song of Songs) with the abstract qualities they allegorically represent: “habet oculos smaragdinos propter castitatis perpetuum uireorem” (201/30-31) and “labia fauo et melle redundantia, propter mystici eloquii suauitatem” (201/34-35).<sup>110</sup>

What, returning to Carruthers’ question, is this particular image ‘good for’? She concludes that “[t]he sequential phrases of this *descriptio* are used as a thematic outline for the rest of this whole section of the meditation. Biblical texts and commentary continue to be attached to the picture elements, in the manner of [this] brief excerpt ... Peter refers to this as a habitual way of reading.”<sup>111</sup> Her answer is certainly correct, but the passage is much more. Peter stipulates that he intends it to “ad inuisibilem contemplationem animam accendat” (200/37).<sup>112</sup> The image accordingly relies on the power of the affective moment in *enargeia* to orchestrate anticipation and desire. The reader desires to see the lady of conscience while she is absent from the feast. The whole scene fades when she appears, since “gaps between a real absence and a vivid presence characteristically occasion a shift in thought and sentiment to desire for that which is absent.”<sup>113</sup> The initial anticipation and desire to see the lady of the banquet amplifies the longing for what the imaginary scene as a whole signifies.

We have seen that Peter defines conscience as an affective knowledge insofar as it

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<sup>106</sup> “... coming at last”

<sup>107</sup> “... marvel at her beauty.”

<sup>108</sup> “... secret scrolls”; “... this lady is called ‘conscience.’”

<sup>109</sup> “... reading [them] figuratively.”

<sup>110</sup> “... she has emerald-green eyes because of the eternal freshness of chastity”; “her lips overflow with honeycomb and honey, because of the sweetness of mystical speech.”

<sup>111</sup> Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 207.

<sup>112</sup> “... kindle the soul to invisible contemplation from the visible example.”

<sup>113</sup> Heath, “Absent Presences,” 22.



is a kind of knowledge that desires or is affectively oriented towards different things. It is in need of moral education in order for it to desire as it ought. Peter asks rhetorically, “Putas si se agnosceret pulchra inter mulieres, quod deinceps post uestigia gregum ... incideret?” (194/4-5).<sup>114</sup> The image of the lady at the banquet presents the conscience as “pulchra inter mulieres.”<sup>115</sup> The image thus shows the good conscience as desirable and thereby focuses desire on attaining it. The image creates an instantiation of conscience in the reader insofar as it creates desire for conscience in the reader, because conscience itself desires either good or bad.

The image, therefore, is valuable *as* an image and not merely as an allegorical representation of the qualities that the reader ought to cultivate. Conscience is the kind of knowledge that an image can create and the condition that can be brought about by meditating on an image. Peter uses Solomon’s temple as an image for the conscience and writes: “De silua enim motuum ac phantasmatum nostrorum idonea et habilia structurae templi Salomonis ligna uelut bona materia sunt eligenda” (204/20-23).<sup>116</sup> Reading and meditation are integral in shaping stirrings and fantasies. Peter thus writes four separate accounts of how to acquire conscience. Imagery and imaginative engagement are more important than doctrinal exposition or theological instruction. Peter is concerned to facilitate the acquisition of conscience and, as such, there is no need for him to avoid doctrinal repetition. This is the form that the acquisition of conscience takes. I will now turn to its content by comparing how each of Peter’s accounts characterises the three stages of conscience delineated earlier: fear, discipline, and love.

### **i. The Chariot**

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<sup>114</sup> “... do you think, if it recognised itself as beautiful among women, that it would fall into the tracks of the herds?”

<sup>115</sup> “... beautiful amongst women.”

<sup>116</sup> “Even from the forest of our stirrings and fantasies, suitable and fit beams for the construction of Solomon’s temple must be chosen as good material.”

The sequence of discipline and love first appears in Peter's introductory epistle. Discipline enables its possessor to ascend "non cursu praecipiti et inordinato ut Satan" (297/10-11) and makes its possessor a child of God (197/13-15).<sup>117</sup> Peter therefore commands his reader "[a]pprehende itaque disciplinam ubi caeduntur et dolantur ligna cedrina" (297/12-13).<sup>118</sup> This is the first appearance of the image of cutting wood for construction which, as we have seen, takes on vital importance in Peter's approach to the cultivation of conscience. The soul is "[c]aesura uero disciplinae conquadatus et coaptatus" (197/15).<sup>119</sup> The use of the image connects this earlier passage with the later, "[d]e silua enim motuum ac phantasmatum nostrorum idonea ... ligna ... sunt eligenda" (204/20-23).<sup>120</sup> The necessary discipline thus consists of both moral observance and disciplined thought.

Peter stresses the desire for discipline more than discipline itself, citing Wisdom 6:18-21 to say that "initium illius uerissima est disciplinae concupiscentia" (197/3-4) and "concupiscentia itaque sapientiae deducet ad regnum perpetuum" (197/6-7).<sup>121</sup> Peter urges "[d]esideras regnum et praecipue perpetuum" (197/9-10).<sup>122</sup> The kingdom is reached by a horse-drawn chariot, an image that recurs throughout Peter's treatise: "sapientia scilicet et conscientia, tanquam uehiculum proprium animam deducunt" (196/37-38).<sup>123</sup>

Peter adapts Jerome's image of the soul as a heaven-bound chariot, and urges his reader: "Ecce currus igneus et equi ignei" (197/8).<sup>124</sup> Wisdom and conscience are the two horses that draw it, replacing the virtues in Jerome's text.<sup>125</sup> Jerome has the chariot carry the

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<sup>117</sup> "... not by a precipitous and disorderly course, like Satan."

<sup>118</sup> "... therefore seize discipline, where cedar beams are cut and hewn."

<sup>119</sup> "... truly squared and assembled by the cutting of discipline."

<sup>120</sup> "Even from the forest of our stirrings and fantasies, suitable and fit beams for the construction of Solomon's temple must be chosen as good material."

<sup>121</sup> "... the beginning of wisdom is the truest desire for discipline"; "thus desire for wisdom shall draw [you] to the Eternal Kingdom."

<sup>122</sup> "... you desire a kingdom and particularly an eternal one."

<sup>123</sup> "... clearly wisdom and conscience draw the soul like its own vehicle."

<sup>124</sup> "Behold the flaming chariot and flaming horses."

<sup>125</sup> Jerome, *Epistolae* 52:13, (PL 22:538). See István B. Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 202, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Boston: Brill, 2011), 18.

person “velut aurigam Christi,” but Peter makes God the charioteer (197/8).<sup>126</sup> Peter does not specify what the chariot itself signifies. His only clue is that God and the two horses “deferunt non amphoram, sed animam” (197/8-9), making the chariot the disciplined life that is necessary in order to attain the “regnum ... perpetuum” (197/9).<sup>127</sup> Several lines later, Peter enjoins the reader to “[r]egna ergo in regno conscientiae” (197/27).<sup>128</sup> Peter’s injunction is the first of his equations of conscience and the Kingdom of Heaven. The attainment of conscience is therefore more than a monastic discipline performed with the goal of eventually attaining the vision of God in heaven. Peter collapses the means and the end. God is present within the conscience.

Discipline aims to attain freedom from corruption and “[i]ncorruptio facit proximum esse Deo” (197/6).<sup>129</sup> Peter writes, “[s]ed uenienti Domino oppone et expande palliolum incorruptionis, ut inuoluas sindone tali, non iam corpus Iesu, sed ipsam Trinitatis gratiam ad te uenientem et in te manentem” (197/22-25).<sup>130</sup> Peter references the Resurrection of Christ in Matthew 27:59 but replaces Christ’s body in the shroud with the grace of the Trinity. The effect is twofold. Peter invokes Christ bodily and causes the reader to think about Christ’s body even by negating its presence. The reader becomes the burial shroud, free from corruption because dead to the world. The second effect replaces the envisioned body with the living grace of the Trinity. It draws the reader’s attention to the presence of God within the conscience. The image thus, like that of the banquet, “de uisibili exemplo ad inuisibilem contemplationem animam accendat” (200/36-37).<sup>131</sup>

Love completes the creation of the conscience because love and discipline are

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<sup>126</sup> Jerome, *Epistola 52:13*, (*PL 22:538*), “... as Christ’s charioteer.”

<sup>127</sup> “... carry not a jug but the soul”; “eternal kingdom.”

<sup>128</sup> “... reign, therefore, in the kingdom of conscience.”

<sup>129</sup> “... freedom from corruption makes one close to God.”

<sup>130</sup> “... but set out and spread out a cloak of incorruptibility before the approaching Lord, so that you may enwrap with fine linen not now the body of Jesus but the very grace of the Trinity coming to you and remaining within you.”

<sup>131</sup> “... kindles the soul to invisible contemplation from the visible example.”

synonymous. Peter's citation of Wisdom 6:18-21 introduces discipline first, but then reveals it to be love, "[c]ura ergo disciplinae, dilectio est, et dilectio custodia legum illius est" (197/4-5).<sup>132</sup> The discipline that equates to love – namely, the observance of the law – is also the freedom from corruption Peter discusses, "[c]ustoditio autem legum, consummatio incorruptionis est" (197/5-6).<sup>133</sup>

Peter elucidates the congruence of love and discipline with an allegorical reading of the New Jerusalem. He alludes to the apocalyptic description of the heavenly city in Revelation 21:16, "quae in quadro posita est" (197/16).<sup>134</sup> He replaces the city with the person shaped by the cutting and hewing of discipline (197/15). The heavenly city's dimensions become the "latitudinem, longitudinem, profunditatem et altitudinem charitatis" (197/16-17).<sup>135</sup> *Caritas* is Peter's innovation; it is absent from the biblical text he references. Its presence in Peter's text converts the work of discipline into love and renders them both the dwelling place of God. Peter accordingly instructs the reader, "apprehende et tene ipsam dilectionem" (197/17-18) in the same way that he instructs, "[a]pprehende itaque disciplinam" (197/13).<sup>136</sup> Love is present within discipline. The relationship between the presence of God and the conscience becomes clearer in light of Peter's subsequent accounts of the acquisition of conscience.

## ii. The Guest Chamber

The second of Peter's accounts returns to the theme of incorruptibility embracing grace. It comes after Peter discusses the soul's apprehension of the *imago Dei*. Then "[p]uritas uero suscipit praeparare animam, ne uerbi maiestas recuset gremium cordis"

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<sup>132</sup> "... therefore, concern for discipline is love, and love is the keeping of its laws."

<sup>133</sup> "... observance of laws is the consummation of freedom from corruption."

<sup>134</sup> "... which has been built in a square."

<sup>135</sup> "... width, length, depth, and height of charity."

<sup>136</sup> "... seize and hold love itself"; "therefore seize discipline."

(200/17-19).<sup>137</sup> Peter does not expressly discuss discipline in this passage, but his emphasis on purity of heart clearly implies it. Purity works hand-in-hand with grace to effect “hanc animae nostrae et uerbi Dei refusionem” (200/16) because “uelit Deus in nobis infundi” (200/17).<sup>138</sup> The conscience is thus the soul’s capacity for receiving God.

Peter depicts the good conscience as God’s guest-chamber: “Istae quae ... conscientiam gratam Deo exhibent angelis et hominibus reuerendam, sibi ipsi pacatam et quietam.”<sup>139</sup> The things referenced are grace (200/19, 20), piety (200/19), and purity (200/17, 20). All collaborate: “Gratia deducit Deum ad hositium nostrum, pietas satagit circa fidele obsequium” (200/19-20).<sup>140</sup> Peter once again alludes to the life of Christ. His verbiage recalls Christ’s visit to the home of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:40: “Martha autem satagebat circa frequens ministerium.”<sup>141</sup> The invocation of the scene from the gospel once again draws the reader’s mind meditatively to the earthly life of Christ and thus, once more, shapes thought in the necessary pattern for conscience. The use of the verb *satago* links Peter’s passage with the scriptural text, but unexpectedly compares the preparation of conscience with the active life of Martha. The implication, however, is that the resulting “conscientiam ... pacatam et quietam” (200/22-23) parallels the contemplative life of Mary.<sup>142</sup>

The conscience as a chamber recalls Peter’s earlier characterisation of it as an inner room. Peter interprets Christ’s commandment to “[i]ntra in cubiculum tuum” (194/30) in Matthew 6:6 as a command to withdraw into the chamber of conscience: “Quod est cubiculum tuum nisi conscientiae secretum?” (194/30-31).<sup>143</sup> The withdrawal into conscience is implicitly synonymous with freedom from corruption insofar as withdrawal into

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<sup>137</sup> “... truly, purity undertakes to prepare the soul, lest the majesty of the Word reject the bosom of the heart.”

<sup>138</sup> “... this outpouring of the Word of God and our soul”; “God wishes to be poured into us.”

<sup>139</sup> “Those very things which present the conscience as pleasing to God, worthy of reverence to angels and men, and peaceful and restful to itself.”

<sup>140</sup> “Grace leads God to our guest chamber, piety busies about faithful obedience.”

<sup>141</sup> “... but Martha was busying about constant service.”

<sup>142</sup> “... peaceful and quiet conscience”

<sup>143</sup> “... enter into your room”; “What is your room but the secret place of conscience?”

conscience keeps the conscience from desiring the miseries that would otherwise make it wicked – namely, the temptations of worldly vanity (194/13-15) and prosperity (194/16-17).

Entry into conscience requires the shutting out of all external things: “clauso ostio exteriorum sensuum” (195/1).<sup>144</sup> It also requires silence: “[q]uod ostium nisi os tuum?” (194/31-32).<sup>145</sup> It is undertaken “ut uoce sua cor clamet ad Dominum” (194/35).<sup>146</sup> Peter depicts someone who has withdrawn into conscience as a wife who speaks to her husband silently, “[u]xor enim illa quae non per arterias gutteris aerem istum molestat, sed secreto itinere spiritus in spiritu et ueritate Spiritum Sanctum pulsatur” (195/1-3).<sup>147</sup> Her silent prayers contrast with spoken prayers, “[a]uditur autem sine pulsu soni” (195/4), and she is much more effective at prayer, “efficacior est in petitionibus suis” (195/3).<sup>148</sup> Her silent, spiritual prayers consist of affections rather than ordered words, “cito mouetur affectio cordis” (195/5).<sup>149</sup> The stirring of affection is powerful because “[a]ffectio enim ... Deo et sibi concordat” (195/5).<sup>150</sup>

Peter turns immediately from the description of conscience as guest chamber to a heavenly scene in the throne room of God. The purity and grace that have prepared the guest chamber suddenly become the “duae oliuae et duo candelabra lucentia ante Dominum” (200/23-24) of Revelation 11:4.<sup>151</sup> The two candelabras and trees affect the eyes of both God and the contemplative: “una qua compassione miserarum nostrarum reflectitur sublimis ille oculus maiestatis” (200/24-25) and “altera qua ... oculus faciei nostrae conturbatus ad medelam inungitur” (200/26-28).<sup>152</sup> Their eyes are drawn together in a mutual gaze.

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<sup>144</sup> “... with the door of the exterior senses closed.”

<sup>145</sup> “... what is the door but your mouth?”

<sup>146</sup> “... so that the heart may cry to God with its voice.”

<sup>147</sup> “... indeed, the wife who does not burden the very air with the passages of her throat, but strikes the Holy Spirit with a secret journey of the spirit, in spirit and in truth.”

<sup>148</sup> “... but she is heard without a pulse of sound”; “she is more efficacious in her petitions.”

<sup>149</sup> “... the affection of the heart is swiftly stirred up.”

<sup>150</sup> “... affection, indeed, ... brings God and itself into harmony.”

<sup>151</sup> “... two olive trees and two candelabras shining before the Lord.”

<sup>152</sup> “... one by which that eye of sublime majesty is turned back with compassion for our miseries”; “the other by which the diseased eye of our face is anointed for its cure.”

The transformation of the house servants to the candelabras and trees is abrupt, without transition or explanation. The inner room, which is simultaneously God's guest chamber that must be prepared for him, is also the court of heaven. Peter's interiority is more affective than intellectual and, as such, imagination and the use of images are appropriate for it.

### iii. Solomon's Temple

Peter returns to the image of the chariot in the third of his four accounts of conscience. The meaning of the image has undergone a shift. The chariot earlier represented the disciplined life, drawn by the two horses of conscience and wisdom. The chariot now represents the soul (203/17). God remains the charioteer (203/16), but now – as in Jerome's image – he “in quatuor equis principalium uirtutum, id est prudentia, iustitia, fortitudine, temperantia ad suam dirigat uoluntatem” (203/17-19).<sup>153</sup> The chariot is “ad coelum tollitur” (203/21).<sup>154</sup> Peter uses the movement of the horses to envision the disciplined life that leads to heaven, “frena ab anteriori parte trahit prudentia; a dextra, iustitia; a sinistra, fortitudine; posteriori, temperantia non discordi motu, sed consono” (203/19-21).<sup>155</sup> Peter concludes his discussion of the chariot by equating the life of discipline he has just described with heaven: “Parum denique est bonae conscientiae esse in coelis nisi et ipsa coelum fiat” (203/22-23).<sup>156</sup> He once more transposes the earthly life of the conscience with the life of heaven. God becomes present within the conscience by transforming the conscience into heaven: “Efficitur enim coelum per inhabitantem Spiritum eius qui fecit coelum et terram et habitat in coelis” (203/24).<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> “... directs it to his will in the four horses of the cardinal virtues – that is, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.”

<sup>154</sup> “... carried to heaven.”

<sup>155</sup> “... prudence draws the reins from the front part, justice from the right, fortitude from the left and temperance from behind – not with discordant movement, but harmonious movement.”

<sup>156</sup> “Finally, it is insufficient for the good conscience to be in heaven unless it, itself, becomes heaven.”

<sup>157</sup> “Indeed, it is turned into heaven through the habitation of the Spirit in it of the one who made heaven and earth and who dwells in the heavens.”

Peter explains the transformation of conscience into heaven with his most extensive and complex description of the acquisition of conscience. The description envisions the conscience as a construction project: “Fundamentum iacit timor, parietes construit humilis subiectio, tectum supraedificat sublimis dilectio” (204/15-17).<sup>158</sup> Peter stresses that the human activity necessary to acquire conscience corresponds to divine activity. God is present and involved from the earliest stages of the process: “scilicet Verbum, Dominus et Spiritus oris eius creant, formant et ornant caelum conscientiae: Dominus quidem creat, Verbum firmat, Spiritus ornat” (203/26-28).<sup>159</sup>

Peter interprets each stage as evidence of God’s specifically Trinitarian presence. His account of conscience results in a decidedly non-Augustinian interpretation of the *imago Dei* when “ad conscientiae trinitatem uel dispositionem intentionem nostram uertamus” (203/33).<sup>160</sup> Peter thus equates the arrangement or *dispositio* of conscience with a trinity of sorts. The rightly ordered conscience is a *trinitas creata*. Its three constituents differ sharply, however, from Augustine’s ternary of reason, memory, and will.<sup>161</sup> Peter’s are fear, submission, and love. Peter’s use of the word *dispositio* recalls his earlier use of the verb *pono* to construct the scene of the lady at the banquet. The image of the banquet was an exercise in focusing and shaping thought. Fear, submission or obedience, and love are the goals of the exercise. I shall consider Peter’s handling of fear, obedience, and love.

The process of constructing conscience begins with the conscience in its naturally corrupt moral state, since “[n]isi timeat conscientia, facinus quodlibet attentat uel perpetrat” (204/12-13).<sup>162</sup> Fear is therefore vital. It corresponds to the desire for discipline with which Peter began his first account of conscience. In the first instance, “initium illius uerissima est

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<sup>158</sup> “Fear lays the foundation, humble subjection constructs the walls, sublime love builds a roof over the top.”

<sup>159</sup> “... clearly, the Word, the Lord, and the Spirit of his mouth create, form and ornament the heaven of conscience: the Lord indeed creates, the Word makes strong, the Spirit ornaments.”

<sup>160</sup> “... let us now turn our intention to the trinity or arrangement of conscience.”

<sup>161</sup> See Augustine, *De Trinitate* X.12, (PL 42:984).

<sup>162</sup> “... the conscience attempts or perpetrates whatever crime it pleases, unless it is afraid.”



disciplinae concupiscentia” (197/3-4).<sup>163</sup> In the present instance, the desire for discipline originates with fear since fear lays the foundation of conscience and “certe machinam huius aedificii timor componit” (204/17).<sup>164</sup> The work of fear – “de compositione quam timor facit” (204/31) – consists in the preparation and arrangement of the raw materials it finds within the heart, the hitherto undirected *cordis scientia*: “Timor ad ista omnia tanquam bonus accedat dolator, ut susceptam a corde, quasi a silua, cogitationum materiam disponat eam” (204/23-25).<sup>165</sup> The presence of fear implies the presence of God, “Dominus timore suo conscientiam creat” (203/33).<sup>166</sup>

Obedience, corresponding to discipline, builds walls upon the foundation laid by fear. Obedience consists in adherence to divine commandments (205/5). It is initially prompted by fear, “cum enim a timore ad mandata currimus” (204/33-34).<sup>167</sup> It is also largely penitential. Peter calls upon his reader to envision another scene: “Ecce aliquis forte timore malorum suorum concussus, ad cor redit, culpam et paenam reatum suorum in mensuram apponit ... ac de his incipit paenitentiae et conuersionis muros aedificare” (205/5-8).<sup>168</sup> Fear worked upon the resources of the *cordis scientia*; obedience uses the resources of past action, “de malis prioribus, murum construit, qui ad seipsum conuersus ueteres erratus in nouae uitae meliorationem corrigit” (205/12-13).<sup>169</sup> Obedience brings the penitent sinner into harmony with God, “[c]um quo facimus concordiam si legem mandatorum implemus” (205/24).<sup>170</sup> It thus provides a counterbalance to fear, mitigating fear’s severity, “duritiam timoris

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<sup>163</sup> “... the beginning of wisdom is the truest desire for discipline.”

<sup>164</sup> “... fear certainly assembles the machine of this edifice.”

<sup>165</sup> “... the composition which fear makes”; “Fear comes to all these things, like a good woodcutter, in order to arrange the material of our thoughts, taken up from the heart as from a forest.”

<sup>166</sup> “The Lord creates the conscience with his fear.”

<sup>167</sup> “... when we run from fear to the commandments.”

<sup>168</sup> “Behold someone struck with strong fear of his evils, he returns to his heart, he sets out his fault and punishment for his charges in measure ... and from these things he begins to build the walls of penance and conversion.”

<sup>169</sup> “... he builds a wall from earlier evils who, having turned to himself, straightens old errors into the improvement of new life.”

<sup>170</sup> “... with whom we make concord if we fulfil the law of the commandments.”

exasperantis animam emollit” (204/36).<sup>171</sup> It crucially “ualliculos imperfectionis complemento spei ad aequalitatem unitatis et [unanimitatis] conducit” (204/36-37).<sup>172</sup> Peter cites Psalm 118:104 to emphasise that knowledge of divine law is essential for the attainment of this condition, “a mandatis tuis intellexi” (104/33).<sup>173</sup> Obedience, like fear, implies the presence and activity of God: “Sed quis ad haec idoneus?” (205/16), “quis non deficiat, nisi Spiritus adiuuet infirmitatem nostrum, nisi uirtus supponat manum suam?” (205/19-20).<sup>174</sup> The monk would not be able to live out the life of obedience without the assistance of the Holy Spirit to support and sustain him.

Love finally adorns the structure of the conscience by painting the temple walls (205/29). The pursuit of conscience was begun with imaginative meditation, and now it also concludes with imaginative meditation. Peter designates love’s painting the work of the Holy Spirit, in the same way that fear was the work of God the Father, and submission the work of the Son (203/26-28). The imagery in Peter’s discussion of painting is appropriately visual. Peter renders it especially ocular and corporeal by describing the physiological operation of sense perception. He transfers the imagery of sense perception from physical sight to virtue:

“Viui et ueri colores caritatis, non uolucrum, non quadrupedum, non serpentum phantasticas, immo fanaticas imagines imaginis Dei signaculo exprimunt, sed conformitatem adoptionis filiorum et gratiae reparatio genere pingendi et per neruos et uenas principalium uirtutum in anima componunt” (205/20-24).<sup>175</sup>

The painting of love, the culmination of the good conscience, thus consists in imaginative visualisation akin to the *enargeia* Peter employs throughout the treatise. The painting begins by adorning the temple, but the temple disappears in the course of Peter’s

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<sup>171</sup> “... it softens the hardness of the fear that irritates the soul.”

<sup>172</sup> “... it brings the hollows of imperfection to the equality of unity and concord by filling them with hope.” Leclercq’s text reads ‘unanimitatem.’ I have followed Feiss’s emendation, ‘unanimitatis.’ Peter, *Selected Works*, 39.

<sup>173</sup> “... I have understood by your commandments.”

<sup>174</sup> “But who is capable of these things?”; “... who would not fail unless the Spirit helped our infirmity, unless strength placed its hand beneath [him]?”

<sup>175</sup> “The living and true colours of charity do not express imaginary pictures of birds, of four-footed animals, nor of serpents, with the seal of the image of God, but the likeness of the sons of adoption and grace. They arrange these images in the soul by a reparative kind of painting, through the nerves and veins of the cardinal virtues.”

discussion. A sculpture emerges in its place: “in statua sua caritas pingit” (205/37-206/1).<sup>176</sup> Peter imbues the statue’s attributes with moral significations, just as he did with the lady at the banquet. The statue’s “[c]aput sphaericum et rotundum, ... quia intentionem puram et perfectam” (205/37-206/1), its “manus tornatiles per eleemosynam” (206/2), its “aures patulas per obedientiam” (206/3-4), and its “pedes rectos per incessum misericordiae” (206/4-5).<sup>177</sup>

Peter finds the presence of God within the moral attributes of the statue. Thus love makes the head round to signify its pure intention, and also “[p]ingit trinum et unum Deum in capite, pingit Iesum passum in oculis, pingit librum Euangelii in auribus” (206/6-7).<sup>178</sup> The list continues, containing nineteen clauses beginning with ‘pingit,’ each listing an event from the life of Christ and ending with the Last Judgement (206/6-15). Peter concludes with an exhortation: “Ecce sculptura, ecce pictura caritatis” (206-15-16).<sup>179</sup> The passage causes the reader to visualise each of the items it enumerates. It thus brings about the painting of love, painting the images within the imagination.

The “[u]iui et ueri colores caritatis” (205/20) are the principal instruments in the painting of love. Peter details them after describing the individual scenes that love paints.<sup>180</sup> He synaesthetically associates the scenes with different colours: “rubeum habet colorem in sanguine, nigrum in passione seu in morte, uiride in resurrectione, hiacinthinum in ascensione,” and so on (206/20-21).<sup>181</sup> He then repeats his exhortation, “[e]cce colores” (206/23).<sup>182</sup>

Each of these coloured paints is stored within the horn of conscience: “cornua

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<sup>176</sup> “... charity paints on its statue.”

<sup>177</sup> “... spherical and round head, because its intent [is] pure and perfect”; “... hands finished through almsgiving”; “... ears open through obedience”; “... feet right through the walk of compassion.”

<sup>178</sup> “... it paints the triune and one God on the head, it paints Jesus suffering on the eyes, it paints the book of the Gospel on the ears.”

<sup>179</sup> “... behold the sculpture, behold the picture of charity.”

<sup>180</sup> “... living and true colours of charity.”

<sup>181</sup> “... it has the colour red in his blood, black in his Passion or in his death, green in his resurrection, hyacinth in his ascension.”

<sup>182</sup> “... behold the colours.”

iustitiae colores continent” (206/25), and “humilis conscientia quae sicut cornu de carne quidem procedit” (206/29).<sup>183</sup> Peter specifically likens the conscience to “illud modicum humilitatis cornu de quo Daniel loquitur” (206/27).<sup>184</sup> The horn in question appears in Daniel 8:9, in the midst of a series of visions involving horns and horned animals. The small horn of Daniel 8:9 resembles the “cornu aliud parvulum” of Daniel 7:8, which appears before the throne of judgement when the “libri aperti sunt” (Daniel 7:10).<sup>185</sup>

Eric Jager notes that Ambrose of Milan uses the text of Daniel 7:10 to characterise “the ‘secrets of the heart’ expressly as a book to be opened at the Last Judgement.”<sup>186</sup> Likewise, Jager notes that “[t]he notion of the individual life as a secret narrative destined eventually to be revealed also informs Augustine’s account of the Last Judgement,” and although “Augustine does not mention the heart here, ... he associates this very individualised record with conscience (*conscientia*), memory (*memoria*), and the mind (*mens*).”<sup>187</sup> Augustine’s “ideas would powerfully shape the medieval book of the heart, which incorporated many other Augustinian notions as well.”<sup>188</sup>

Peter’s conception of the conscience differs from Augustine’s, in that Peter’s conscience is much more than a record of one’s life. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the moral quality of life directly impacts the moral quality of the *cordis scientia* (e.g., 227/4-5). Life shapes conscience. The traditional association between the apocalyptic Books of Judgement and the conscience likely informs Peter’s decision to make the conscience the little horn of Daniel’s vision.

The coloured paints that love uses, kept within the “[u]num cornu in quo melius

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<sup>183</sup> “... the horns of the righteous contain the colours”; “the humble conscience, which proceeds from the flesh like a horn.”

<sup>184</sup> “... that small horn of humility, concerning which Daniel speaks.”

<sup>185</sup> “... other very small horn”; “the books have been opened.”

<sup>186</sup> Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 24. Jager here refers to Ambrose of Milan, *Enarrationes in XII Psalmos Davidicos* I.52, (*PL* 14:994).

<sup>187</sup> Jager, *The Book of the Heart*, 42; 43. Jager here refers to Augustine of Hippo, *De Civitate Dei* XX.14, (*PL* 41:680).

<sup>188</sup> Jager, *The Book of the Heart*, 43.

reponuntur” (206/26), are thus the thoughts of the *cordis scientia*.<sup>189</sup> They are the resources for meditation that the disciplined life of humility provides. True contemplative meditation draws upon the life of discipline. It becomes a “reparatio genere pingendi” (205/32-33) that works “per neruos et uenas principalium uirtutum in anima” (205/33).<sup>190</sup> It differs from earlier meditations that produce fear, in that “[p]ingit enim dilectio non stilo ferreo timoris in ungue adamantino obstinati cordis, sed penniculo uolitante ad supereminentem scientiae caritatem Christi” (205/34-36).<sup>191</sup> The former produce the fear that serves as the foundation of conscience, the latter are the products of the properly cultivated conscience.

Peter comments on the Mosaic prohibition of images in Deuteronomy 5:8 (207/31-33) to demonstrate the necessity for discipline in the use of meditative images. The Old Testament law prohibits the creation of images “ne uanitatibus istis occupemur” (208/3-4), since meditation on an image shapes or engraves the “tabula ... internae imaginationis” (208/6-7).<sup>192</sup> It is therefore necessary to ensure that images are used appropriately. Mary Carruthers notes that “Peter interprets this stricture [of Deuteronomy 5:8] ethically, as referring to cognitive *uses* of painting. We can paint pictures and make statues for ourselves to use in contemplation so long as we are not sidetracked into error.”<sup>193</sup> Peter holds that, “for cognitive purposes, we need to remember all kinds of artefacts. But we should also freely ‘refashion’ these remembered images as our cognitive focus requires.”<sup>194</sup>

Love is able to discern and make the necessary adjustments to meditative images, as Peter exclaims, “[q]uam pulchras et quam decoras nouit depingere formas dilectio!” (205/36-37) and “[u]itia artis lex ostendit, scientiam et consummationem uirtutis caritas

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<sup>189</sup> “... the one horn in which they are better stored.”

<sup>190</sup> “... a reparative kind of painting”; “in the soul, through the nerves and veins of the cardinal virtues.”

<sup>191</sup> “... love paints, not with the steel stylus of fear on the adamant claw of the obstinate heart, but with a feather, flying toward the love of Christ that overtops knowledge.”

<sup>192</sup> “... so that we should not be occupied with vanities”; “tablet of the internal imagination.”

<sup>193</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 209.

<sup>194</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 209.

reddit” (208/1-2).<sup>195</sup> The unity of life and meditation that constitutes Peter’s conscience is thus interpretative. It enables its possessor to rightly interpret and then use the images and events of life for contemplation.

Peter provides a gruesome illustration of the conscience’s interpretative work, early in his treatise. Torture and martyrdom do not harm the conscience, “[s]ubigatur ergo corpus in paena ... quid ad conscientiam?” (196/4-6).<sup>196</sup> Suffering adorns the body rather than harms it. Peter exploits the similarity between the Latin verbs *pungo* and *pingo*: “Quo, inquit conscientia, tortor maligne, acrius pungis, eo decentius pingis pellem carnis meae quae est una de pellibus Salomonis” (196/9-10).<sup>197</sup> Peter places the two verbs in close proximity and rapidly alternates between them, melting their sounds and meanings together, “ut pingas cum pungis; pungendo enim et pungis et pingis” (196/11-12).<sup>198</sup> The correctly attuned conscience reinterprets the external wounds, “[p]unctura tua est mihi pictura” (196/10-11).<sup>199</sup> The wounds become images, “candentia lilia ... rosam de spina” (196/15).<sup>200</sup> They are thus a means of meditation, transforming the outward reality into the locus of union with God, “singulas depingunt mansiones caelestium cellarum; quid gloriae, quid gratiae tunc prae gaudio superebullit conscientia?” (196/17-18).<sup>201</sup>

An unspoken element underlies Peter’s characterisations of fear, obedience, and love: they are conditions that the reader must cultivate. They are practical aspects of monastic thought and discipline. They do not depend on any extraordinary spiritual experience. Peter, nevertheless, sees God present in their acquisition. God is ultimately behind them, and the condition that results from them is heaven on earth. Peter’s characterisation of the acquisition

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<sup>195</sup> “... how beautiful and how honourable are the forms that love knows how to depict!”; “... the law shows the vides of art, love returns the knowledge and consummation of virtue.”

<sup>196</sup> “... the body is subjugated in punishment, ... what is it to conscience?”

<sup>197</sup> “Puncture”; “paint”; “The conscience says, ‘O spiteful torturer! As sharply as you puncture me, so honourably you paint the skin of my flesh, which is one among the skins of Solomon.’”

<sup>198</sup> “... so that you paint when you puncture, indeed, by puncturing you paint and puncture.”

<sup>199</sup> “... your puncture is a picture to me.”

<sup>200</sup> “... fair lilies, ... a rose from the thorn.”

<sup>201</sup> “... they paint individual mansions of celestial chambers, then the conscience bursts for joy at such glory and grace.”

of conscience thus has strong parallels with Turner's reading of Augustine's acquisition of self-knowledge within the *Confessiones*: God is present within the search. The divine presence drives and motivates it. Turner writes, "Augustine's seeking God is of God. From the beginning of his life, even when Augustine was far from consciously seeking God, God was in his seeking."<sup>202</sup> Peter is seeking conscience rather than God, but God exists within the search for conscience. The outcome of Peter's search is not Augustine's reflective self-knowledge, but a *trinitas creata* that pertains to the soul's moral character rather than its essential nature.

#### **iv. The Tower, Temptation, and Confession**

The fourth and final of Peter's accounts concretises the human involvement in the acquisition of conscience. The most practical of Peter's descriptions of the attainment of conscience significantly comes last. The imagery has done its work; the mind has been treated and cultivated as necessary. Peter still relies on vivid imagery, but his instructions are much clearer than in the previous descriptions of conscience. The structure of the fourth account imitates the sequence of accounts: Peter begins by describing the conscience as the construction of a tower. He explains the image's significations afterwards, once he has finished describing the tower's construction. He does not, however, specify that he is explicating the image of the tower. Instead, the explanation repeats words used in the description. Peter relies on the shared vocabulary to connect the image and the explanation. Clarity, practicality, and imagery all combine to make this final of Peter's accounts distinctly homiletic.

The fourth account contrasts with the third. The third describes the human role in passive terms; God builds the temple of conscience in the reader. The fourth account provides the other side of the story. Fear laid the foundation before. Now "fundamentum suum ponit

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<sup>202</sup> Turner, *The Darkness of God*, 66.

conscientia bona trinum et unum Deum in personis trinum, in essentia unum” (211/4-5) and “super hoc fundamentum conscientia turrim seu fabricam conuersationis suae constituere uoluerit” (211/28-29).<sup>203</sup> The third account had love paint the triune God on the head. Now God is the foundation (206/6-7). The action is inverted as in the “mutua reuolutione” that Peter describes earlier in the treatise (200/14).

Peter also inverts the structure of the third account. The third began with the list of God’s actions in the creation of conscience (203/28-29). Peter’s image of the construction of Solomon’s Temple came after the list, illustrating it (204/15-17). The fourth account begins with construction of the tower. Peter then specifies that “[t]ria denique ista concurrunt ut constituent conscientiam puram, sanctam, deuotam et integram, bona uidelicet actio, protensa oratio et desiderium ardens in Deum” (212/2-4).<sup>204</sup> The explanation of the constituents of conscience only comes after the image of the tower has been completed. The fourth account works in tandem with the overarching structure of the treatise, replicating it in microcosm. The reader’s imaginative cooperation with the text is necessary to shape thought and affect, before the discursive explication of doctrine becomes appropriate, “non ut infletur de scientia, sed ut adificetur in conscientia” (211/13-14).<sup>205</sup>

Good action corresponds to discipline, purity, and obedience in each of Peter’s preceding accounts of conscience. It consists in monastic observance – “[f]raterna obsequia et quotidiana manuum opera, quae in claustro siue in agro aguntur” (212/9-10), but Peter also uncharacteristically describes the good works of those outside the cloister – “eleemosynarum largitio, infirmorum uisitatio, desolatorum consolatio, uiduarum sustentatio, pauperum et peregrinorum susceptio, oppressorum defensio” (212/11-14).<sup>206</sup> Each of these good works

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<sup>203</sup> “... the good conscience places the single and triune God as its foundation – three in person, one in essence”; “... upon this foundation, it wishes to establish the tower or construction of its way of life.”

<sup>204</sup> “... finally, these three things come together in order to establish the pure, holy, devout, complete conscience: clearly, good action, extensive prayer and burning desire for God.”

<sup>205</sup> “... not so that it becomes puffed up with knowledge, but rather so that it becomes built up in conscience.”

<sup>206</sup> “... fraternal obedience and daily works of the hands, whether those which are done in the cloister or in the



contributes to the transformation of the conscience into heaven insofar as each “ad manifestationem Spiritus pertinet” (212/15-16).<sup>207</sup> The good actions performed outside the monastery also recall Peter’s allusion to the active life of Martha in his second account of conscience (200/19-20). Good action thus corresponds to the purity that prepared God’s guest chamber earlier in the treatise.

Peter especially emphasises resistance to temptation. It is as vital as positive action. Peter describes the effects of sin much more vividly than the good works he lists. The conscience desires, and as a desiring capacity must be kept pure: “ab omni prurigine mali desiderii tamquam a putredine cor castigandum” (212/19).<sup>208</sup> Lust is thus especially harmful, “a leprae immunditia corpus refrenandum est” (212/20), and “prurigo corrumpit messem castitatis, luxuria seu immunditia exterminat uirgorem et uigorem honestatis et boni nominis” (212/21-22).<sup>209</sup> Good works “rami sunt huius arboris non mortis, sed uitae” (212/14), but “[m]alitia enim urit siluam bonitatis” (212/20-21).<sup>210</sup>

The forest of goodness invokes Peter’s earlier treatment of the forest of inclinations and thoughts, from which the materials for building conscience must be taken (204/20-23). Peter’s use of the image unifies thought and action. The destructive forces are *malitia*, a *prurigo*, and *luxuria*. They are desires rather than actions, but they undermine good action and render it impossible. They also oppose the third constituent of the good conscience: “desiderium ardens in Deum” (212/4).<sup>211</sup> Temptation is therefore a threat to the good conscience insofar as it is a temptation or a corrupted desire, even if it does not lead to sinful action. I will discuss this further below, in conjunction with Peter’s treatment of desire.

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field”; “... generosity of alms, visitation of the sick, consolation of the lonely, sustaining of widows, taking in the poor and pilgrims, and defence of the oppressed.”

<sup>207</sup> “... pertains to the manifestation of the Spirit.”

<sup>208</sup> “... the heart must be corrected from every itch of evil desire as from putrefaction.”

<sup>209</sup> “... the body must be restrained from the uncleanness of leprosy”; “the itch corrupts the crop of chastity, lust or uncleanness exterminates the greenness and vigour of honesty and a good name.”

<sup>210</sup> “... are branches of the tree, not of death, but of life”; “malice, indeed, burns the forest of goodness.”

<sup>211</sup> “... burning desire for God.”

Peter interweaves the first and third constituents of the good conscience.

The second constituent of the good conscience – protracted prayer – also relates to both good action and desire. Peter says little about prayer. He only writes that “*orat ut de carcere caeco ad tam lucidas mansiones transferatur*” (211/36-37).<sup>212</sup> He therefore closely aligns it with desire inasmuch as the conscience “*cupit ut inhabitet in domo Domini omnibus diebus uitae suae ut uideat uolputatem Domini et maneat in atriis Dei*” (211/37-212/1).<sup>213</sup>

Burning desire for God, the third constituent of conscience, is the most important for Peter. It corresponds to love in the previous accounts of conscience. Desire is the means by which the good conscience pursues God. The good conscience “[s]i uero caput infra nubes retulerit, oculo non pede, desiderio non incessu corporeo post eum uadit” (211/22-23).<sup>214</sup> Christ is the object of desire, “*donec homo ille ad opus sui iudicii redeat, ad postes eius obseruat uigil et deuotus*” (211/23-24).<sup>215</sup> Peter reveals that the exchanges between God and the conscience are specifically with the person of Christ, “[i]ntroitus tamen et exitus Dei seu reditus personae Filii specialiter attribuitur quae per incarnationem Verbi a Patre exiuit et in mundum uenit” (211/24-26).<sup>216</sup> The conscience is especially devoted to him, as we have seen from Peter’s copious allusions to the earthly life of Christ. Peter writes that “*lectulum conscientiae in ea collocare praeparare et ornare regni Salomoni cuius ultum desiderat uniuersa terra debemus*” (210/35-37).<sup>217</sup>

Desire is corrupted when temptation inclines it away from Christ, its proper object. Peter illustrates the process later in his treatise: sexual temptations are like “*facibus*

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<sup>212</sup> “... [the conscience] prays to be transferred from its dark prison to such bright mansions.”

<sup>213</sup> “... desires to dwell in the house of the Lord for all the years of its life, to see the pleasure of the Lord and remain in the courts of God.”

<sup>214</sup> “... if its head withdraws beneath the clouds, it follows after him with the eye and not with the foot, with desire and not with bodily walking.”

<sup>215</sup> “... vigilant and devout, it watches its doorway until that man returns to the work of his judgement.”

<sup>216</sup> “... however the entrance and exit of God or his return are specially attributed to the person of the Son, who, through the incarnation of the Word, went out from the Father and came into the world.”

<sup>217</sup> “... we ought to arrange, prepare, and adorn the bed of conscience within it for king Solomon, whose face the whole earth desires.”

uerborum quae totam siluam occupant cogitationum seu desideriorum” (218/24-25).<sup>218</sup> The forest of thoughts and desires that the torches occupy recalls the “siluam bonitatis” (212/20-21) that malice burns, and connects it with the “silua ... motuum ac phantasmatum nostrorum” (204/20) that provides the resources for the construction of conscience.<sup>219</sup>

Pure desire unites the conscience with God. Impure desire, even in the form of temptation, is therefore inimical to conscience. It is vital to conscience that desire remains pure from temptation. Peter is so concerned that he draws upon homiletic martial imagery to describe the assault of temptation and the necessary resistance to it. Martial imagery is notably scarce in the treatise. Peter, as we have seen, prefers imagery of construction or of the temple and private chamber. The text configures its contemplative reader as an “uxor” (195/1-3) rather than a *miles Christi*.<sup>220</sup> The conscience is a cell besieged by the world. Its only proper course of action is to shut temptation out, rather than to openly combat it (194/20-23, 194/130-32, 194/35-195/1).

The fourth account reinforces temptation’s threat by depicting the devil as a military attacker who “suggestionum aculeos immittit” (212/28).<sup>221</sup> The devil possesses a “malitiarum suarum pharetram” (212/26) and he “de nouis adinventionibus elimare iacula sua in incude insidiarum suarum non desinit (212/26-28).<sup>222</sup> The reader remains on the defence, passively besieged by external temptations. The reader is powerless against their assault, unless God intervenes: “Vincis enim, sed per Deum, uinceris, sed ex te” (213/6).<sup>223</sup> The conscience is vulnerable because of its bodily weakness and therefore in need of divine aid: “Secura sis, sed in Creatoris auxilium, suspecta, sed propter fragile corpus tuum” (213/5-

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<sup>218</sup> “... torches of words, which occupy the whole forest of our thoughts or desires.”

<sup>219</sup> “... forest of goodness”; “... forest ... of our stirrings and fantasies.”

<sup>220</sup> “Wife.”

<sup>221</sup> “... hurls the barbs of temptations.”

<sup>222</sup> “... quiver of his malice”; “... does not cease to refine his spears from new inventions on the anvil of his snares.”

<sup>223</sup> “You conquer indeed, but through God; you are conquered, but because of yourself.”

6).<sup>224</sup>

Peter intermittently returns to the theme of resisting temptation throughout the remainder of his treatise. His discussions of it are not a part of the action-prayer-desire sequence that constitutes the fourth account of conscience. Peter links them with it, however, through the repeated use of fire and martial imagery. Peter briefly deviates from his practice of characterising the contemplative as defensive when he stipulates that some vices demand active combat, for instance “[u]itium autem impatientiae non ita euincitur, scilicet si materiam patientiae subtrahes” (218/28-29).<sup>225</sup> Likewise, “superbia uincitur consuetudine” (218/30) and “gula usu ieiunandi et abstinentia ciborum” (218/32-33).<sup>226</sup> The ‘vices’ that call for active resistance are not temptations. Peter cites 1 Corinthians 6:18, and insists that temptation must be fled rather than resisted (218/20).

Peter follows the conventional wisdom that people within the cloister are more vigorously tempted than those outside it; the devil “tentat eremitas et claustrales nostros” (221/28).<sup>227</sup> He reframes the struggle against temptation by situating the battle within the conscience: the conscience is tempted, rather than being the voice that condemns temptation. Claustrals and hermits are especially attacked by fleshly lusts: “Violentior namque ex inuidia daemonum tentatio carnis, impetuosior ex otio quietis impulsio passionis, contumelia ex uetito inconcessae libidinis surgit ardentior” (220/35-37).<sup>228</sup> Peter depicts these temptations as fire that the devil kindles: “collectis sarmentis malitiae et nequitiae caminum succendit tentationis diabolus” (221/12-13).<sup>229</sup> The various kinds of kindling, “stuppa ... sarmentum ... malleolus” (221/17-18), and the flames unite the present image with Peter’s earlier forests of desire and

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<sup>224</sup> “You should be secure, but in the help of your Creator; you should be doubtful, but because of your fragile body.”

<sup>225</sup> “... but clearly the vice of impatience is not thus overcome, if you withdraw the matter for patience.”

<sup>226</sup> “... pride is conquered by custom”; “... gluttony by the use of fasting and abstinence from foods.”

<sup>227</sup> “... tempts our hermits and claustrals.”

<sup>228</sup> “For the temptation of the flesh is more violent because of the envy of demons, the impulse of passion more impetuous because of the peace of quiet, the insult of forbidden lust rises more ardently because it has been forbidden.”

<sup>229</sup> “... after the twigs of malice and of wickedness have been collected, the devil lights the furnace of temptation.”

the fires of temptation that set them ablaze (204/20, 212/20-21, 218/24-25).<sup>230</sup> These temptations, like the earlier temptations in the treatise, threaten conscience because they are corrupt desires and the conscience is the part of the person that desires.

The devil is ultimately behind the temptations. Peter reveals the only weapons that can combat him: “iacula orationum et confessionum spicula” (221/33).<sup>231</sup> Peter does not relate them to temptation, which must be fled, but his discussion of them follows immediately on the heels of his discussion of temptation. The structure and sequence of images implies that, if the devil is removed, so are the temptations. Peter strikingly reverses the roles. The devil “[n]oua et exquisita multiplicat consilia” (221/31-32).<sup>232</sup> These are paradoxically pictured as simultaneously “clypeum, lorica et scutum ... nouae oppugnationis et reluctationis” (221/31-32) and “gladiis” (221/35) with which the devil “[i]mpedit denique puritatem confitentis uel intentionem confitendi” (221/33-34).<sup>233</sup> The devil’s attacks are simultaneously his defences against confession. Confession, the remedy for sin, is therefore also an attack against the devil which he hopes to elude (221/33). Confession has positive value: it counters the devil, “princeps mundi per ueram confessionem eiicitur foras” (224/26-27), and therefore temptation as well.<sup>234</sup> Confession becomes a means of purifying desire, the integral component of conscience.

## **b. A Rule of Life**

Discipline and love are the two key constituents of conscience. They are inseparably joined and interwoven with one another, and they unite the soul with Christ. Careful, meditative reading cultivates them, but discipline implies more than meditation and

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<sup>230</sup> “... flax ... twigs ... brushwood.”

<sup>231</sup> “... the spears of prayers and the arrows of confession.”

<sup>232</sup> “... multiplies new and carefully devised plans.”

<sup>233</sup> “... buckler, mail, and shield ... of a new attack and resistance”; “swords”; “... finally, he impedes the purity of one confessing, or the intention to confess.”

<sup>234</sup> “... the prince of the world is thrown outside through true confession.”

spontaneous good works. Peter specifies that the conscience needs a rule of life: “anima quae legem non habet, quae sub regula non est, cum consummauerit peccatum, fertur in damnationis baratrum” (213/31-32).<sup>235</sup> The rule works in conjunction with meditative reading. Both are instruments for the production of conscience.

The rule corrects the errors of both insufficient and excessive zeal. Peter particularly emphasises the perils of excess in novices who “uno [anhelitu] stadium aestimet se totum euolare quod triginta tribus annis Iesus proficiens cum patientia longanimitatis suae cucurrit et consummauit” (218/38-219/2).<sup>236</sup> Their motivations are misguided, since they are “sui cordis leges uoluntarias sequens” (219/8).<sup>237</sup> Zeal and love are not synonymous, “[t]aedio enim, non desiderio, afficiuntur qui non ad metas praedestinationis patienter tendunt” (219/2-3).<sup>238</sup> The rule restrains them and fosters authentic desire.

The rule’s restraints facilitate imitation of Christ and union with him. Christ lived according to a rule: “Christus enim non uenit facere uoluntatem suam, quae utique bona erat, sed uoluntatem eius qui misit eum” (219/10-12).<sup>239</sup> The contemplative reader must do likewise, otherwise “Christum ... non apprehendit” (219/9-10).<sup>240</sup> The rule keeps the contemplative on the correct path, in pursuit of Christ “neque ad dexteram in prosperis excedens, neque ad sinistram in aduersis diuertans” (219/13-14).<sup>241</sup> Moderation is the key to pursuing Christ: “Semper medium tene quia medius est, immo mediator Dei et hominum Iesus Christus” (219/35-36).<sup>242</sup>

The rule and meditation come together when Peter returns from his discussion of

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<sup>235</sup> “... the soul which does not have a law, which is not under a rule, is carried into the hell of damnation when it has completed its sin.”

<sup>236</sup> “... he thinks with one gasp to rush over the whole course which Jesus ran and completed with his patience and forbearance – completing it over thirty-three years.” Leclercq’s text reads ‘anhelita.’ I have followed Feiss’s emendation, ‘anhelitu.’ Peter, *Selected Works*, 39.

<sup>237</sup> “... following the voluntary laws of his own heart.”

<sup>238</sup> “... indeed, they are stirred by boredom and not by desire who do not patiently strive for the goals of predestination.”

<sup>239</sup> “Indeed, Christ did not come to do his own will, which was good, but the will of the one who sent him.”

<sup>240</sup> “... he does not take hold of Christ.”

<sup>241</sup> “... neither passing to the right in prosperity, nor turning away to the left in adversity.”

<sup>242</sup> “Always hold the middle, because Jesus Christ, the mediator of God and men, is the middle.”

moderation to the image of the lady at the banquet: “Haec, o anima, ad discretionem bonae conscientiae pertinent qua crines actionum et motuum suorum discriminat et aequa liberatione omnia sua temperat” (219/36-37).<sup>243</sup> The rule is the practical outworking of life that accompanies imaginative meditation. It structures and ensures the cultivation of love since, as Peter said towards the opening of his treatise, “[c]ura ergo disciplinae, dilectio est, et dilectio custodia legum illius est” (197/4-5).<sup>244</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Peter’s conscience is neither the anterior conscience (the moral director of scholastic philosophy), nor the subsequent conscience (the personal record of antiquity). Peter’s conscience desires and knows. It is an affective knowledge that is synthesised from the raw material of *cordis scientia*, which is the pre-condition of knowledge, the experience that accrues from life. Imaginative meditation works upon the *cordis scientia* to produce discipline and love, which constitute the good conscience. Peter’s accounts of conscience arrange discipline and love sequentially. Peter, however, interweaves the two together, so that they cannot be separated from each other. The sequence works for narrative and imaginative effect, but in reality discipline and love are inextricable and work alongside one another. The life of conscience is worked out practically through obedience to a rule of life. Obedience to the rule is also love. The intersection of discipline and love, focused and shaped by meditation, becomes the dwelling place of God. God is present within the good conscience, in the way that God’s law was present within the patristic conscience. The patristic conscience applied God’s law to ordinary life in order to make moral decisions. God’s presence in the contemplative conscience informs and illuminates images, experiences, and events that would otherwise be mundane and part of ordinary life.

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<sup>243</sup> “These things, O soul, pertain to the discretion of the good conscience, by which it separates the hairs of its actions and stirrings, and tempers all its things with equal freedom.”

<sup>244</sup> “... therefore, concern for discipline is love, and love is the keeping of its laws.”

The contemplative conscience exemplifies and embodies Bernard McGinn's concept of mystical consciousness. McGinn writes that "[a]ll forms of consciousness involve both the consciousness of the objects intended by operations of feeling, knowing, and loving, as well as the consciousness or self-presence of the agent in such acts," but "[m]ystical consciousness ... adds another dimension that transforms the usual components."<sup>245</sup> God becomes "active in the human agent as the source, or co-author, of our acts of experiencing (that is, the reception of inner and outer data), knowing, and loving."<sup>246</sup>

Peter accordingly sees God's presence within conscience, from the earliest stages of its inception though to its perfection, when it is finally able to recognise his presence. Peter's text is therefore mystical in that it fosters awareness of God's presence within ordinary thought and life. Mark McIntosh describes the "fundamental assumption of earlier eras ... that living, practical involvement in reality is not a recipe for subjective beclouding of our understanding but is rather the prerequisite for true insight in conceptualisation."<sup>247</sup> This assumption is at work in Peter's treatise. *Cordis scientia* is pre-reflexive, experiential knowledge. Conscience, as *cordis scientia* synthesised by practice and meditation, informs reflexive thought and awareness. Conscience therefore becomes the basis for a scheme of mysticism that is not based around extraordinary experiences or paradigms of graduated ascent. Peter makes the conscience the point of exchange and communion with God, and particularly Christ.

The permeation and illumination of the ordinary by the extraordinary gives rise to Peter's distinctive literary style, a style that McGinn notes is simultaneously "poetical and concrete."<sup>248</sup> The twin elements of the poetical and the concrete fuse together, and produce a textual structure governed by imagery rather than logic. Concrete, sensual images evoke

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<sup>245</sup> McGinn, "Mystical Consciousness," 47.

<sup>246</sup> McGinn, "Mystical Consciousness," 47.

<sup>247</sup> Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 24.

<sup>248</sup> McGinn, *Growth of Mysticism*, 343.



Christ's earthly life and intersect with the spiritual, as when Peter describes the spiritual grace of the Trinity enwrapped in Christ's bodily burial shroud.<sup>249</sup> One image leads to another by associational play, which Peter uses to guide the reader's meditation through an affective landscape that will cultivate a good conscience. Peter works to transfigure concrete material imagery by infusing it with spiritual meaning for the conscience to unlock as it progresses. Peter's text thus anticipates the style as well as the thought of the *AW* author, who similarly utilises mundane, sensual imagery to stimulate his readers' reinterpretation of their physical situation. The *AW* author, like Peter, sees this reinterpretation as the function of the conscience inhabited by God. The English author most likely encountered Peter's thought via its circulation and dissemination in other texts, especially *De Interiori Domo*. The next chapter of this thesis explores those texts.

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<sup>249</sup> See p. 73 of this thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Two Pseudo-Bernardine Conscience Texts

#### **1. Introduction**

Two texts incorrectly attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux exhibit the contemplative approaches to conscience available to twelfth-century writers. They both treat the conscience as the means by which the person encounters God, and the way that person's interpretation and experience of life is transformed as a result. The conscience is the realm of thought, and especially imagination. Imaginative meditations shape and prepare it for the divine encounter. Reading thus facilitates the transformation of its experience of life, insofar as it imaginatively engages the reader. This chapter examines the definition and characterisation of conscience in each text. I argue that the first of these texts, the *Tractatus de Conscientia*, does not draw from Peter of Celle, and is formally very different from Peter's *De Conscientia*. It nevertheless demonstrates a similar understanding of the conscience as contemplative, and is therefore evidence that Peter's ideas were not idiosyncratic but shared throughout the monastic world during this period. This chapter then argues that the second text, *De Interiori Domo*, draws extensively from Peter's work. *De Interiori Domo* lifts several passages directly from Peter's *De Conscientia*, but also shows signs of his influence elsewhere. It is a more overtly contemplative text than Peter's *De Conscientia*, and is therefore evidence that Peter's thought was favourably received and consequently transmitted within the monastic world, and deemed especially applicable to the contemplative life.

#### **2. *Tractatus de Conscientia***

The author of the *Tractatus*, like Peter of Celle, ostensibly writes in response to a request. The *Tractatus* attempts to resolve the contradiction between two Pauline texts on

conscience. 1 Corinthians 4:3 reads, “mihi autem pro minimo est ut a vobis iudicer aut ab humano die sed neque me ipsum iudico,” and 2 Corinthians 1:12 reads, “nam gloria nostra haec est testimonium conscientiae nostrae.”<sup>1</sup> The author of the *Tractatus* states the problem by saying that the apostle Paul “ex parte intelligit, et ex parte non intelligit” (*Tractatus* 2).<sup>2</sup>

The author’s solution consists of a systematic exposition on the different kinds of conscience. His treatise is clearer, more succinct than Peter’s *De Conscientia*, and its imagery is sparser. The *Tractatus* neither explicitly defines conscience, nor provides instructions for attaining one, although it describes the different kinds of conscience available. It does not use the expression *cordis scientia*, but treats the heart and conscience as interchangeable from the first chapter, where “conscientia hominis” and “cor hominis” alternate freely (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>3</sup> Nor does the text emphasise the presence of God in the way that Peter does, and it is almost wholly devoid of his Christocentric affectivity. The *Tractatus*, nevertheless, shares a number of features with Peter’s text, without referring to or citing it. The *Tractatus* author’s presentation of the conscience arises from his reading and exegesis of the two New Testament passages in question. The points of concurrence between the *Tractatus* and Peter which are simultaneously points of divergence from their philosophical predecessors and successors are evidence that Peter’s conscience did not exist in isolation and was not unique to him.

The *Tractatus* presents the conscience as the soul’s orientation, either towards what is good or what is evil. Its conscience, like Peter’s, is born of life but characterised by what it desires in addition to what it has done. It is ultimately unknowable, but manifests itself in the way its possessor experiences life.

There is no one type of conscience that everyone possesses. There are, rather,

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<sup>1</sup> “For me, it is the smallest thing that I be judged by you, or by human judgement, nor do I judge myself”; “... for our glory is this: the witness of our conscience.”

<sup>2</sup> *PL* 184:554A, “He understands in one instance and he does not understand in the other.”

<sup>3</sup> *PL* 184:553B, “Conscience of a man”; *PL* 184:553B, “heart of a man.”

“quatuor conscientiarum rivi de voluntatis fonte currentes” (*Tractatus* 8).<sup>4</sup> The different consciences are good and tranquil, good and disturbed, bad and tranquil, and bad and disturbed (*Tractatus* 3).<sup>5</sup> The goodness or badness of the conscience describes what that conscience desires, rather than its innocence or guilt in past conduct.

The good conscience “et praeterita peccata punit, et punienda committere refugit” (*Tractatus* 3).<sup>6</sup> The clause “punienda committere refugit” implies that the conscience could, theoretically, commit acts worthy of punishment. The conscience of the *Tractatus* differs, then, from the later scholastic synderesis. Douglas Langston describes Bonaventure’s synderesis “as that which stimulates us to the good.”<sup>7</sup> It follows that “synderesis can be found in what is corrupted without itself being corrupted.”<sup>8</sup> The person who fails “to follow the principles of conscience effectively thwarts the desire for good, and the frustration of this desire leads to the emotions of guilt and remorse.”<sup>9</sup> The conscience of the *Tractatus* is therefore not a director that indicates which choice is right and which is wrong, nor a natural inclination towards the good. It could choose to do what it knows to be bad if it wanted. The good conscience is good because “etsi peccatum sentiat, peccato non consentit” (*Tractatus* 3).<sup>10</sup> The bad conscience, on the other hand, “nec Deum timet, nec hominem reveretur” (*Tractatus* 6).<sup>11</sup> The conscience is not a person’s moral director, but moral direction.

The tranquillity or disturbance of the conscience describes its attitude towards external life, and not a state of moral satisfaction or torment. Thus the good conscience is tranquil if “ipse Spiritus testimonium perhibet spiritui ejus quod filius Dei sit” and it, in turn, “omnibus dulcis est, nulli gravis; utens amico ad gratiam, inimico ad patientiam, omnibus ad

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<sup>4</sup> PL 184:558A-B, “... four streams of conscience flowing from the fount of the will.”

<sup>5</sup> PL 184:554D.

<sup>6</sup> PL 184:554D, “... punishes past sins and flees back from things worthy of punishment.”

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Langston, “The Spark of Conscience: Bonaventure’s View of Conscience and Synderesis,” *Franciscan Studies* 53, no. 1 (1993): 80.

<sup>8</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 91.

<sup>9</sup> Langston, “Spark of Conscience,” 87.

<sup>10</sup> PL 184:554D, “If it senses sin, it does not consent to sin.”

<sup>11</sup> PL 184:556D, “... neither fears God nor reveres man.”

benevolentiam, quibus potest ad beneficentiam” (*Tractatus* 3).<sup>12</sup> The good conscience is disturbed, by contrast, when “[d]ura enim videtur ei via rector, et austerior vita” because “videt quod carni displicet” (*Tractatus* 4).<sup>13</sup> The troubled conscience is not afflicted by guilt; it is afflicted by temptation.

The bad conscience is tranquil when “mundi hujus prosperitas alludit et illudit; cum laudatur peccator in desiderii animae suae, et iniquus benedicitur” (*Tractatus* 7).<sup>14</sup> Once again, its tranquillity does not derive from a sense of moral satisfaction, but from its response to its external situation. The bad conscience is disturbed when “dum pasci se voluptatibus credit, anxietatibus cedit humanis, pudoribus” (*Tractatus* 8).<sup>15</sup> This is the closest the *Tractatus* comes to a traditional accusing conscience. The anxieties, however, are human anxieties rather than moral ones. They are the “verecundiam et angustiam hominis qui hominem et vivit, et sapit” (*Tractatus* 8).<sup>16</sup> The conscience does not torment. It desires illicit pleasure and is tormented, much like Peter’s uninformed conscience which “amat tenebras et quod miserius est, quaerit etiam miseriam cum miseria” (194/10-11).<sup>17</sup>

Eric D’Arcy writes that, according to classical and early Christian thought, “[t]he evil man has a conscience too; it knows his wrongdoing and condemns it, and torments him with its memory.”<sup>18</sup> The *Tractatus* does not share this view. Its conscience is judged; it is the object and not the agent of judgement. It remains purely human, and is not anchored in any transcendent knowledge of divine law: “Hoc autem tertium iudicium Dei, quod etiam illa

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<sup>12</sup> PL 184:555B, “... the Spirit himself gives testimony to its spirit that it is a son of God”; PL 184:555B-C, “... is sweet to everyone, harsh to none, enjoying a friend for grace and an enemy for patience, all for kindness, whomever it is able for generosity.”

<sup>13</sup> PL 184:555C, “The more righteous way and more austere life seem hard to it”; PL 184:555C, “It sees that [such a life] displeases the flesh.”

<sup>14</sup> PL 184:557B, “... the prosperity of this world toys about with it and dupes it. The sinner is praised in the desires of his soul and the unjust is blessed.”

<sup>15</sup> PL 184:557D, “It yields to human anxieties and shames as long as it believes itself to be fed with pleasures.”

<sup>16</sup> PL 184:558A, “... the shame and anguish of a man who lives and knows himself to be a man.”

<sup>17</sup> Peter of Celle, *De Conscientia*, in *La Spiritualité De Pierre De Celle*, by Jean Leclercq, OSB, vol. 7, *Etudes De Theologie Et D’Histoire De La Spiritualité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1946), 194, “... loves darkness and – what is more woeful – it even seeks out woe with woe.”

<sup>18</sup> Eric D’Arcy, *Conscience and Its Right to Freedom* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 7.

purgatissima non comprehendit conscientia, nesciens juxta Scripturam, utrum amore an odio digna sit” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>19</sup>

The conscience of the *Tractatus* bears a partial resemblance to the subsequent conscience, the conscience that lets the person know whether they have conducted themselves in a morally sound way or not. The conscience of the *Tractatus* comes into being as a result of its possessor’s living, much like the subsequent conscience, and it describes the way in which the person experiences their present situation as a result of their past conduct.

Its difference from the subsequent conscience is, however, acute: the conscience of the *Tractatus* is not self-aware. The text emphasises the unknowability of conscience and its potential for evil, even more than Peter does. Its contents are ultimately inscrutable: “Conscientia hominis abyssus multa. Sicut enim profundum abyssi exhauriri non potest, ita cor hominis evacuari non potest a cogitationibus suis” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>20</sup> Likewise, “in hominis conscientiam venenatae cogitationes suaviter intrans et exeunt; ut nesciat homo unde veniant, aut quo vadant” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>21</sup> The conscience is therefore incapable of evaluating action, even though it exists as a result of action. D’Arcy finds that, classically, “[a]fter an action is performed conscience passes moral judgement upon it ... If its verdict is favourable, peace of soul is our reward; if unfavourable, we suffer the pangs of remorse.”<sup>22</sup> Linda Hogan notes similarly that “[t]he conscience is so powerful an accuser that, according to Cicero, it is the judgement of conscience and not the fear of the gods that determines and regulates our conduct.”<sup>23</sup> Likewise, “[t]hemes of anguish and remorse that result from wrongdoing frequently occur in [patristic] texts ... leaving the faithful in no doubt as to the torment

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<sup>19</sup> *PL* 184:553D, “Even the most purified conscience cannot comprehend this third judgement, the judgement of God. The conscience is ignorant – according to Scripture – whether it is worthy of love or hatred.”

<sup>20</sup> *PL* 184:553B, “The conscience of man is a great abyss. As even the depth of the abyss cannot be drained, so the heart of man cannot be emptied of its thoughts.”

<sup>21</sup> *PL* 184:553B, “... poisonous thoughts sweetly enter and exit the conscience of man. The man knows neither whence they come nor where they go.”

<sup>22</sup> D’Arcy, *Conscience and its Right to Freedom*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Hogan, *Confronting the Truth: Conscience in the Catholic Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001), 43. Hogan here cites Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* III.85. See Cicero, *De Natura Deorum Academica*, trans. H. Rackham, vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1961), 370.

visited by the conscience as a result of bad behaviour.”<sup>24</sup> The conscience of the *Tractatus*, however, does not share any of these attributes. Its bad conscience is a corrupted conscience, a conscience that does not care: “cum venerit in profundum malorum, contemnit” (*Tractatus* 6).<sup>25</sup> C. S. Lewis observes of more recent uses of English *conscience* that “[w]e can still have a ‘guilty conscience,’ that is [an awareness] of guilt; for it is certainly not the inner lawgiver who is guilty.”<sup>26</sup> The *Tractatus*, by contrast, maintains that the soul’s moral direction has become evil.

Timothy Potts notes that “a person who has successfully examined his conscience is then in a position to witness as to what he did or failed to do.”<sup>27</sup> Such an evaluation is not possible for the *Tractatus* since, as we have seen, its contents are not knowable. The conscience is our “in ignorantiam concaptivans” (*Tractatus* 2).<sup>28</sup> The author describes the apostle Paul as “unicum scrutatorem conscientiae suae,” (*Tractatus* 1) and yet even he “[d]eficit ... scrutinio conscientiam suam” (*Tractatus* 2).<sup>29</sup> Jeremiah 17:9 reads: “Pravum est cor hominis et inscrutabile; et quis, inquit, cognoscet illud?” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>30</sup> The *Tractatus* author comments that “[n]ec dicit quis, pro difficili, sed pro impossibili: quia quod scrutiny non recipit, nec cognitionem” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>31</sup>

Eric Jager notes that Ambrose of Milan, who was influential on the development of the heart-as-book metaphor, held that “the heart also contains a personal record of sins that will be opened at the Last Judgement” and “intensifies the picture of the heart as a record of hidden things.”<sup>32</sup> The *Tractatus* deviates from the traditional Ambrosian picture. Its

<sup>24</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> *PL* 184:556D, “... when it has come into the depth of evil, it only shows scorn.”

<sup>26</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Words*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 196.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy C. Potts, *Conscience in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 4.

<sup>28</sup> *PL* 184:554C, “... fellow captive in ignorance.”

<sup>29</sup> *PL* 184:553C, “... the only scrutiniser of his conscience”; *PL* 184:554C, “... fails the scrutiny of his conscience.”

<sup>30</sup> *PL* 184:553B-C, “The heart of man is crooked and inscrutable, and who can know it?”

<sup>31</sup> *PL* 184:553C, “He does not ask ‘who?’ to express difficulty but rather impossibility, because the heart is not receptive to scrutiny or thought.”

<sup>32</sup> Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 24. Jager here refers to

conscience bears a closer resemblance to the divergent strand in patristic thought that Philippe Delhaye identifies. The conscience sometimes ceased to be “the impartial judge that we are conscious of possessing within ourselves” and instead becomes “the responsible subject that we are ourselves.”<sup>33</sup> The conscience is thus shaped by action, whether or not it keeps a record of each individual act: “after having been the responsible agent of sin, the conscience becomes in a manner of speaking its seat or receptacle.”<sup>34</sup>

The conscience of the *Tractatus* functions in a similar capacity. It is more repository than record. It contains things rather than documenting them, “[c]onscientia hominis est quasi mare magnum et spatiosum, ubi reptilia quorum non est numerus” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>35</sup> The contents betray their quality by colouring the person’s experience of life in the present, but they cannot be read like a book. The *Tractatus* thus reverses the conventional order of moral examination. According to convention, if you want to know the moral quality of your life you need to consult your conscience. According to the *Tractatus*, if you want to know the moral quality of your conscience you need to examine your life at the moment. The *Tractatus* furnishes the reader with tools for identifying the quality of their conscience. The descriptions of the four kinds of conscience serve as benchmarks that the reader can use to measure their own life. If the reader’s life meets any of the descriptions, they may reasonably infer that they have the corresponding conscience.

The author’s formulation prompts the question: why does the conscience matter? Does this scheme not demote it to something secondary? The author does not explicitly answer. The text implies, however, that everyone will be judged according to their conscience at the Last Judgement. This does not mean that they will be judged by their own standards,

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Ambrose of Milan, *Enarrationes in XII Psalmos Davidicos* 1.52, (PL 14:994).

<sup>33</sup> Philippe Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (New York: Desclee Company, 1968), 94.

<sup>34</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 97.

<sup>35</sup> PL 184:553B, “The conscience of man is as a ‘great and spacious sea’ where ‘there are reptiles beyond number.’”



but that their conscience is the part of them that will be judged. As noted earlier, the four consciences are “rivi de voluntatis fonte currentes” (*Tractatus* 8).<sup>36</sup> The conscience originates in the will, and the author claimed earlier in the *Tractatus* that “propriam voluntatem ... quae salvationis et damnationis est causa” (*Tractatus* 2).<sup>37</sup> The person is saved or damned by the conscience which flows from the will because “in quibus justi purgantur, inquinantur injusti” (*Tractatus* 8).<sup>38</sup> The conscience cleanses or stains the person and not vice versa. The conscience, then, is responsible for the outcome of the Final Judgement.

The author solves the Pauline dilemma by charting a progression of judgements. Paul is not concerned about the judgements of others in 1 Corinthians 4:3 because, according to the author of the *Tractatus*, “humanum iudicium evaserat, nihil dubitans ab his qui foris sunt” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>39</sup> The apostle does not judge himself either. In the following verse, “[n]ihil, ait, mihi conscius sum” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>40</sup> Hogan concludes from this and similar New Testament passages that “Paul can make these astoundingly positive statements because of his sense that he is doing God’s will” and as such “[h]is judgements are not purely personal and autonomous.”<sup>41</sup>

Paul’s affirmation of his own innocence prompts the author of the *Tractatus* to exclaim that “[f]elix conscientia non sibi in aliquo conscia, quae nec proprium iudicium, nec alienum veretur” (*Tractatus* 1).<sup>42</sup> He does not linger on the thought long, however. His reading of Paul is sharply different from Hogan’s. Human judgement counts for very little since it inevitably falls short of God’s judgement which has the final say in the matter of salvation and is impenetrable to the conscience: “Etsi enim exi iudicium mundi, et iudicium

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<sup>36</sup> PL 184:558A-B, “... streams flowing from the fount of the will.”

<sup>37</sup> PL 184:554B, “... our own will, which is the cause of salvation and damnation.”

<sup>38</sup> PL 184:558B, “The just are cleansed in these streams and the unjust are polluted.”

<sup>39</sup> PL 184:553C, “... he escaped human judgement, not hesitating at all on account of external things.”

<sup>40</sup> PL 184:553C, “... he says, ‘I am conscious of nothing against myself.’”

<sup>41</sup> Hogan, *Confronting the Truth*, 52.

<sup>42</sup> PL 184:553C-D, “... the blessed conscience is not aware of anything against itself. It fears neither its own judgement, nor another’s.”

mei; restat tamen iudicium Dei, quod me non sinit intelligere quod operor, quia nescio si acceptet illud quod operor” (*Tractatus 1*).<sup>43</sup> Paul is still able to maintain that his conscience is his glory “quia et suum aliorum supergressus est iudicium” (*Tractatus 2*).<sup>44</sup> He is not aware of any problems with his conscience, and neither is anyone else.

Paul’s condition of innocence according to temporal judgements “quodammodo certa significatio est ... futurae glorificationis, cum nos in ipso erimus et ipse in nobis, cum ipse erit omnia in omnibus” (*Tractatus 2*).<sup>45</sup> The clause “certa significatio est” should not be taken to mean that eternal salvation is somehow guaranteed, since the author almost immediately contradicts it by saying that “[d]eficit ergo Apostolus scrutans scrutinio conscientiam suam” because “incurrit profundum, scilicet iudicium Dei penetrare non valens” (*Tractatus 2*).<sup>46</sup> The *certa significatio* is thus not a guarantee of salvation but an indication that the present situation is in some way analogous to salvation. The conscience facilitates something akin to heaven in the present life. Humility and fear are still necessary because the conscience may easily contain evils of which its owner is unaware. The combination of unknowability and glorification creates a sense of urgency and incites the reader to follow the narrow middle road between hope and despair that Peter’s *De Conscientia* describes as the road to union with God.

The *Tractatus* author also shares Peter’s interest in the use of thoughts to cultivate the conscience. He warns that harmful thoughts can spontaneously appear in the good conscience. He later reveals that this is spiritual warfare at work, since “[h]is omnibus cogitationibus cordium humanorum quatuor spiritus loquuntur assidue: spiritus mundi,

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<sup>43</sup> PL 553D-54A, “And so the judgement of God remains, even if I leave behind both the judgement of the world and my own judgement. God’s judgement does not permit me to understand what I do, for I do not know if he will accept what I do.”

<sup>44</sup> PL 184:554A, “... because he has passed beyond both his own and others’ judgement.”

<sup>45</sup> PL 184:554B, “... in some way, a sure sign ... of future glorification, when we shall be in him and he in us, when he shall be all in all.”

<sup>46</sup> PL 184:554C, “... the searching apostle fails the scrutiny of his conscience”; PL 184:554C, “he ran into the depths, clearly not strong enough to penetrate the judgement of God.”

spiritus carnis, spiritus diaboli, Spiritus Dei” (*Tractatus* 12).<sup>47</sup> The imagery becomes uncharacteristically sensory and corporeal: “sed velit nolit, irruit in oculos mentis muscarum Aegypti pestilentia, et perstrepunt ranae in penetralibus cordis ejus” (*Tractatus* 9).<sup>48</sup> The various kinds of thoughts impact the heart in different ways, and thus they each play a role in shaping the conscience: “Aliae namque cor inflant, aliae elevant, aliae perturbant, aliae dissipant, aliae confundunt, aliae distendunt, aliae ligant, aliae inquinant, aliae contrahunt, aliae corrumpunt” (*Tractatus* 11).<sup>49</sup> Harmful thoughts call for a two-stage defence. They must be shut out, and then “mens purgatur, si sanctis cogitationibus jugiter exerceatur” (*Tractatus* 11).<sup>50</sup> The author alludes to Proverbs 2:11 to demonstrate that holy thoughts become defensive weapons: “Cogitatio sancta custodiet te” (*Tractatus* 11).<sup>51</sup>

Holy thoughts are useful insofar as they evoke an affective response in the reader. Thus “[d]ebemus enim cogitare de Deo, ut delectemur in illo,” and similarly “de Redemptoris nostri passione, quam pro nobis sustinuit in crucis patibulo, ut et nos parati simus tribulationes et angustias libenter sustinere pro illo” (*Tractatus* 11).<sup>52</sup> The four final things – death, judgement, heaven, and hell – also make good weapons in the fight against the assaults of unwelcome thoughts and the evil spirit behind them (*Tractatus* 11). They invoke the presence of God inasmuch as “Spiritus Dei loquitur, quando dulcia meditatur et loquimur” (*Tractatus* 12).<sup>53</sup>

The spiritual component to thought reveals that the conscience of the *Tractatus*, like Peter’s conscience, is a point of intersection between divine and human life. The

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<sup>47</sup> PL 184:559C-60A, “... four spirits continually speak by these thoughts of the human heart: the spirit of the world, the spirit of the flesh, the spirit of the devil, and the spirit of God.”

<sup>48</sup> PL 184:558C, “Whether [the righteous man] wishes it or not, the pestilence of the mice of Egypt rush into the eyes of his mind, and frogs echo in the inner chambers of his heart.”

<sup>49</sup> PL 184:559B, “Some inflate the heart, others elevate it. Some perturb it, others dissipate it. Some confound it, others busy it. Some bind it, others stain it. Some contract it, others corrupt it.”

<sup>50</sup> PL 184:559B, “... the mind is cleansed if it is continually trained with holy thoughts.”

<sup>51</sup> PL 184:559B, “Holy thought shall protect you.”

<sup>52</sup> PL 184:559C, “... we ought to think about God, so that we should delight in him”; PL 184:559C, “we ought to think about the Passion of our Redeemer, which he endured for us on the gibbet of the cross, so that we should be prepared to freely endure tribulations and anguish for him.”

<sup>53</sup> PL 184:560A, “The spirit of God speaks when we meditate on and speak sweet things.”

construction of the conscience requires the participation of God and the reader: God speaks in the conscience when the reader meditates on profitable things. The conscience is inscrutable yet identifiable by its impact on daily life. The good conscience thus results in the presence of God within the life of the reader, shaping and transforming ordinary perceptions and experiences. The text makes no mention of or allusion to Peter, and yet it arrives at a very similar picture of the conscience. Its main differences from Peter are points of emphasis rather than points of doctrine. Both Peter and the *Tractatus* differ radically from the scholastic philosophical thought on conscience that came after them.

### 3. *De Interiori Domo*

*De Interiori Domo* has been most recently attributed to Bernard. It was, however, the third of four books in a *De Anima* compendium earlier attributed to Hugh of St Victor. Hugh's authorship of the text is almost impossible. The four books were printed together as part of Hugh's *Opera Omnia* by Ioannis Berthelin in 1648. The editor notes that the first and third books "ob summum in eis rutilantem piae deuotionis affectum, sub meditationum & de interior domo titulis, deuoto Doctori beato Bernardo Claraeuallensis ascripti sunt."<sup>54</sup> Migne reproduced the note from Berthelin's edition in the works of Hugh, but included the text of *De Interiori Domo* itself in the works of Bernard. A note accompanying *De Interiori Domo* in the *Patrologia Latina* suggests that the author of the text was most likely a Cistercian (and not an Augustinian) because he refers to wearing a cowl and therefore likely followed the Benedictine Rule.<sup>55</sup> The same note rules out Bernard's authorship with the terse observation that the text is "sine ordine et methodo," and that it frequently resorts to compiling other texts and repeating itself.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *Opera Omnia Tribus Tomis Digesta*, ed. Ioannis Berthelin, vol. 2 (Area Palatij.: Rothmagi, 1648), 132. "have been attributed to the devout doctor, St Bernard of Clairvaux, under the titles "Meditations" and "On the Inner House," because of the highest golden love of righteous devotion in them.

<sup>55</sup> *PL* 184:508. For the reference to the cowl see *Domo* 37, (*PL* 184:528A)

<sup>56</sup> *PL* 184:508, "... without order or method."

Doubts about Hugh's authorship of the *De Anima* appear at least as early as the fifteenth century. The first of the four books was translated into English by a student at Cambridge, who then had his translation printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1496 "in the hope of displacing an unauthorised earlier version circulating in manuscript."<sup>57</sup> Some of its subject matter overlaps with *De Interiori Domo*: both discuss the image of God and the importance of restoring its likeness, stress the superiority of the inner life over the outer life of the body, and the necessity of confession.<sup>58</sup> The first book of the *De Anima*, however, makes the inner life the life of the soul, whereas *De Interiori Domo* makes it the life of the conscience.<sup>59</sup> The first book generally places much more emphasis than *De Interiori Domo* on the original dignity of human beings. It resembles Anselm's first meditation in that its emotive force consists in juxtaposition of humanity's original goodness and present fallen condition. The conscience only appears eleven times. It generally acts as the subsequent conscience, the conscience that bears witness to sinful actions and then accuses its possessor of them at the Last Judgement.<sup>60</sup>

The second book of the *De Anima* is more in keeping with typical medieval philosophical treatments of the soul.<sup>61</sup> It offers definitions and discusses the nature of the soul's powers and senses, but also includes a discussion of the *imago Dei*.<sup>62</sup> It was sometimes attributed to Augustine. The editor of Berthelin's edition notes that's Augustine's authorship is impossible, since the text cites Boethius.<sup>63</sup> A note in the *Patrologia Latina* further identifies

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<sup>57</sup> George R. Keiser, "The Mystics and the Early English Printers: The Economics of Devotionalism," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 23. For the text itself, see *Medytac[i]ons of Saynt Bernarde* (Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1496), Early English Books Online [ProQuest].

<sup>58</sup> The first book of the *De Anima* appears in the *Patrologia Latina* under the title *Meditationes Piisimae*, (PL 184:485).

<sup>59</sup> See, for instance, *Meditationes Piisimae* III.7, (PL 184:489C).

<sup>60</sup> There is one notable exception which refers to carrying Christ in the conscience. *Piisimae Meditationes* I.2, (PL 184:486A).

<sup>61</sup> The second book of the *De Anima* appears in the *Patrologia Latina* under the title *De Spiritu et Anima* (PL 40:779).

<sup>62</sup> *De Spiritu et Anima* VI, (PL 40:783).

<sup>63</sup> Hugh, *Opera Omnia*, 132.

material drawn from Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, Bede, Alcuin, Hugh of St Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, Isaac of Stella, and others. The text appears to be little more than a collection of citations, which the note describes as being “quasi arenam sine calce.”<sup>64</sup>

The fourth book of the *De Anima* mostly consists of meditations on the goodness and power of God, and the joys of heaven.<sup>65</sup> Chapters 13-15, “De Custodia Interioris Hominis,” depict the conscience as a house, “cujus familia sint cogitationes et motus earum, sensus quoque et actiones, tam exteriores quam interiores,” which must be protected against the thief of Hell.<sup>66</sup> These chapters became the basis of the thirteenth-century English *Sawles Warde*.<sup>67</sup>

*De Interiori Domo*, the third book of the *De Anima*, shares some passages in common with Peter of Celle, and with the *Tractatus de Conscientia*. Delhaye suggests that *De Interiori Domo* was the last of the three to be written, and that it borrows the passages in question from the other texts.<sup>68</sup>

*De Interiori Domo* comprises roughly five sections. The first section (the preface to the ninth chapter) uses the traditional penitential image of the conscience as a house.<sup>69</sup> The construction of the house gives the text its title and its central theme. The second section (chapters 10-15) continues to describe the conscience and the struggle to attain a good conscience. The remainder of the text consists of the first-person reflections of an ‘everyman’ monk. Thus the third section (chapters 16-19) is devoted to the speaker’s psychological anguish as he describes his helplessness in the face of a sin so pervasive that it is even present

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<sup>64</sup> PL 40:780, “... like sand without lime.”

<sup>65</sup> The fourth book of the *De Anima* appears in the *Patrologia Latina* under the title *De Anima Liber Quartus* (PL 177:165).

<sup>66</sup> *De Anima Liber Quartus*, PL 177:185B, “... whose household are thoughts and all their sittings, each sense and action, the external ones as much as the internal ones.”

<sup>67</sup> Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 210; Anne Eggebroten, “*Sawles Warde*: A Retelling of the *De Anima* for a Female Audience,” *Mediaevalia* 10, no. 1 (1984): 27.

<sup>68</sup> Philippe Delhaye, “Dans Le Sillage De S. Bernard Trois Petits Traités De Conscientia,” *Citeaux in Der Nederlanden*, no. 5 (1954): 100-103.

<sup>69</sup> Susan R. Kramer, “The Priest in the House of Conscience: Sins of Thought and the Twelfth-Century Schoolmen,” *Viator* 37 (2006): 150.

in his good works. The fourth section (chapters 20-36), begins a dialogue between the monk and his confessor. The monk makes his confession and the confessor provides consolations and remedies against sins. He does not prescribe penance, but rather advice for preventing these sins from recurring. This section is often repetitive: chapters 23 and 32-33 both treat the sin of envy. Chapters 26 and 31 both deal with gluttony, and the judgement scenes of chapter 18 and chapter 22 share some material. Wandering in thought is the most frequently visited subject throughout both this individual section and the treatise as a whole. The fifth and final section (chapters 37-41) turns to the contemplation of God and the relationship between God and the soul.

The author of *De Interiori Domo* adapts several passages from Peter's *De Conscientia* in chapters 10-11. The order of the passages differs from their order in Peter's text, and they are seldom verbatim. They are clearer and more concise in *De Interiori Domo*, simplified from Peter's prolix original. Close reading of the passages confirms that they are, in fact, originally Peter's. It also reveals that the author of *De Interiori Domo* was careful in his adaptation. The work overall may be "sine ordine et methodo," but the author was careful in his appropriation of other texts.<sup>70</sup>

The tenth chapter opens with a combination of three separate passages from Peter:

"Multi quaerunt scientiam; pauci vero conscientiam. Si vero tanto studio et sollicitudine quaeretur conscientia, quanto quaeritur saecularis et vana scientia, et citius apprehenderetur, et utilius retineretur. Cogitare namque de conscientia, sensus est consummatus; et qui custodit illam, semper erit securus. Salva reverentia sapientiae, utilius est currere ad conscientiam, quam ad sapientiam; nisi sapientia illa sit quae aedificet conscientiam. Tunc enim se intelligit anima, cum illustratur conscientia; tunc impletur cor bona conscientia, cum in se Deum, et in Deo mutua revolutione seipsam receperit imago creata. Creatrix imago in imagine creata, nihil aliud est nisi sapientia in anima, nisi gloria in conscientia, nisi sanctificatio in arca." (*Domo* 17).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> "...without order and method."

<sup>71</sup> *PL* 184:516B-C, "Many people seek knowledge but few seek conscience. But if conscience were sought with as much zeal and concern as worldly and empty knowledge is sought, it would be more swiftly apprehended and

Peter's text reads:

“Vnum dico, quia cogitare de illa sensus consummatus est, etiam qui uigilauerit ad illam semper erit securus. Salua reuerentia sapientiae, utilius est currere ad conscientiam quam ad sapientiam, nisi sapiens sit quae aedificat conscientiam (196/30-3). Multi proinde quaerunt scientiam, pauci conscientiam. Et si forte tanto labore et sollicitudine quaereretur conscientia, quanto sine dubio uana et saecularis scientia, et citius apprehenderetur et fructuosius retineretur” (200/4-6). Quid enim est creatrix imago in imagine creata nisi sapientia in anima, nisi gloria in conscientia, nisi sanctificatio in arca? Tunc enim se intellegit anima, tunc illustratur conscientia, tunc cordis inpletur scientia, tunc in se Deum et in Deo mutua reuolutione recipit se ipsam imago creata (200/11-5).<sup>72</sup>

The differences in the first of these passages mostly amount to the omission of adverbs and the contraction of adverbial phrases. Thus the first sentence is almost identical in the two texts, except for *De Interiori Domo*'s omission of Peter's "proinde." It likewise omits Peter's "sine dubio" in the second sentence. The meaning of the second sentence is essentially the same, although *De Interiori Domo* replaces Peter's "labore" and "fructuosius" with "studio" and "utilius" respectively. The substitution of "utilius" for "fructuosius" is particularly significant. A similar statement appears later when Peter defines conscience as the *cordis scientia* that "in corde melius moratur et utilius consecratur" (199/33).<sup>73</sup> *De Interiori Domo* thus demonstrates its author's care to adapt Peter's thought into something more internally consistent by applying "utilius" to the conscience in this passage as well. *Usus* is also doctrinally preferable. *Usus* and *fructus* are traditionally opposed to one another. One ought to enjoy (*frui*) God alone and use (*uti*) created things in the service of that

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more usefully preserved. For to meditate on conscience is perfect sense, and whoever guards conscience shall always be secure. With a healthy reverence for wisdom, it is more useful to run to conscience than to wisdom, unless it is the wisdom which builds conscience. Indeed, the soul understands itself when conscience is illuminated. The heart is filled with good conscience when the created image has received God in itself and itself in God by a mutual exchange. The creator image in the created image is nothing other than wisdom in the soul, glory in the conscience, sanctification in the ark."

<sup>72</sup> "I will say one thing: that to think about it is perfect sense, he who watches for it shall always be secure. With a healthy reverence for wisdom, it is more useful to run to conscience than to wisdom, unless it is wisdom which edifies conscience. As many seek knowledge, so few seek conscience. If, perchance, they would seek conscience with as much labour and anxiety as they doubtlessly do empty and secular knowledge, it would be more swiftly seized and more enjoyably retained. What is the Creator image in the created image except wisdom in the soul, glory in the conscience, and sanctification in the ark? The conscience is illuminated, then the knowledge of the heart is fulfilled, then the created image receives God in itself, and in the same way, itself in God.

<sup>73</sup> "... stays in the heart better and is more usefully set apart"



enjoyment.<sup>74</sup> The conscience in *De Interiori Domo* facilitates the enjoyment of God, rather than being a source of enjoyment in itself.

A partial citation from Wisdom 6:16 – (“Cogitare namque de conscientia ...”) – follows the second sentence in *De Interiori Domo*. The quotation appears prior to the first sentence of Peter’s text, and includes verse 15 as well. Peter’s citation is closer to the wording of the Vulgate, which reads: “cogitare ergo de illa sensus est consummatus et qui vigilaverit propter illam cito erit securus” (Wisdom 6:16).<sup>75</sup> Peter preserves the demonstrative “illa,” but *De Interiori Domo* substitutes its referent, “conscientia.” Both Peter and *De Interiori Domo* omit “propter” and “cito.” Peter retains the verb “uigilauerit,” but *De Interiori Domo* replaces it with “custodit.” Wisdom, personified as a woman, is the object of “uigilaverit” in the scriptural text, but “custodit” makes more sense with regard to conscience. Conscience is not looked out for as something approaching externally, but guarded internally. Thus the author of *De Interiori Domo* makes the same omissions as Peter, but further modifies the biblical quotation. His modification supports the priority of Peter’s text. His hand is once again at work editing and clarifying Peter’s writing.

The following line – (“Salva reverentia sapientiae...”) – is similar in both Peter’s *De Conscientia* and *De Interiori Domo*. The main difference is the presence of “illa” in *De Interiori Domo*. The demonstrative renders *De Interiori Domo* more specific than Peter. It also more explicitly indicates that there is a kind of wisdom that does not edify conscience. This accords with Delhay’s observation of the difference between practical or worldly wisdom that can be directed towards immoral living and the virtuous prudence that is oriented towards living a moral life.<sup>76</sup> Peter, as seen in Chapter 1, often treats wisdom and conscience interchangeably. *De Interiori Domo* does not: there is a kind of wisdom that

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas M. Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 20.

<sup>75</sup> “... therefore to think about it is perfect sense, and he who watches for it shall swiftly be secure.”

<sup>76</sup> Delhay, *The Christian Conscience*, 60.

“aedificet conscientiam” but does not constitute conscience.

*De Interiori Domo* then proceeds to adapt Peter’s sequence of four clauses beginning with “tunc,” each describing the attainment of conscience. Peter lists the soul understanding itself, the *cordis scientia* being fulfilled, and the soul receiving God into itself. He places these events alongside the illumination of the conscience, and therefore allows the possibility that they are distinct from it. The vagueness evaporates in *De Interiori Domo*. The “tunc” clauses alternate with “cum” clauses; the statements now correlate with one another and explain their relationship to the conscience. Peter’s verb forms are preserved except for his present indicative “recipit,” which becomes the perfect subjunctive “recepit,” indicating that God’s presence within the soul is a necessary condition of the good conscience.

Peter moves immediately from the passage cited to his image of the conscience as a guest chamber. *De Interiori Domo* includes a similar image adapted from Peter, but delays it by several lines.<sup>77</sup> It introduces a new idea first. God is not merely a guest in the house of conscience, but the reader gives birth to Christ within the conscience: “Qui creavit nos, creatur in nobis: et quasi parum esset nos Deum patrem habere, vult etiam nos fieri sibi fratrem et matrem” (*Domo* 17).<sup>78</sup> God becomes more intimately related to the soul than Peter’s guest does. The reader assumes the role of the Virgin Mary when the author urges: “O fidelis anima, expande sinus, dilata affectus; ne angustieris in visceribus tuis concipere, quem totus orbis non potuit comprehendere, donec Virgo beata illum fide concepit” (*Domo* 17).<sup>79</sup> The birth of Christ in the conscience allegorically maps onto daily monastic life. The reader becomes Christ’s “mater, per aliorum instructionem” (*Domo* 17).<sup>80</sup> Further, “[f]ide namque Christus concipitur, verbi praedicatione nascitur, devotione nutritur, amore tenetur” (*Domo*

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<sup>77</sup> Peter, *De Conscientia*, 200/19-23 becomes *Domo* 17, (PL 184:516D-17A).

<sup>78</sup> PL 184:516C-D, “He who created us is created in us. And, as if it were not enough for us to have God as our Father, he even wishes for us to become his brother and mother.”

<sup>79</sup> PL 184:516D, “O faithful soul, open wide your bosom, spread your affection. Do not be distressed to conceive within your innermost parts the one whom all the world was not able to embrace until the Blessed Virgin conceived him by faith.”

<sup>80</sup> PL 184:516D, “... mother, through the instruction of others.”

17).<sup>81</sup>

The author returns to and elaborates on the theme of familial relations with God when God becomes the reader's "amicus et sponsus, frater et filius" (*Domo* 80).<sup>82</sup> The soul gives birth to Christ when the human will is aligned with God's, since "[v]oluntas hominis nihil aliud est, quam quaedam proles mentis" (*Domo* 80).<sup>83</sup> It follows that "[s]i igitur eadem est voluntas tua, et voluntas Patris; idem est filius tuus, et filius Patris" (*Domo* 80).<sup>84</sup> The process is straightforward and uncomplicated: "Nosti voluntatem Dei? consenti ei, et concepisti" (*Domo* 81).<sup>85</sup> The author maps the spiritual birth onto concrete activities. Thus, in the first instance, it equates to the "aliorum instructionem" (*Domo* 17).<sup>86</sup> The second instance likewise specifies that "[p]otes namque eum gignere in corde tuo, et in corde alieno" when "veritatem intelligis, vel alium intelligere facis, Christum gignis" (*Domo* 81).<sup>87</sup> The understanding involved is affective rather than intellectual or speculative, since it is understanding of and alignment with the will, or love, of God. The spiritual birth thus describes an internal condition that correlates with external behaviour.

The alignment of the human will with the will of God is especially characteristic of Bernardine mysticism. Étienne Gilson describes "mystical union and unity as St. Bernard conceived them" as the point when the human and divine wills become "two wills ... in which intention and object coincide to such an extent that the one is a perfect image of the other."<sup>88</sup> Union is "a perfect accord between the will of the human substance and the will of

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<sup>81</sup> *PL* 184:516D, "Christ is conceived by faith, born by the proclamation of the Word, nourished by devotion, and held by love."

<sup>82</sup> *PL* 184:548A, "... lover and spouse, brother and son."

<sup>83</sup> *PL* 184:548A, "The will of man is nothing other than a certain offspring of the mind."

<sup>84</sup> *PL* 184:548A, "If, therefore, your will is the same as the will of the Father, your son is the same as the Son of the Father."

<sup>85</sup> *PL* 184:548B, "Do you know the will of God? Consent to it, and you have conceived."

<sup>86</sup> *PL* 184:516D, "... instruction of others."

<sup>87</sup> *PL* 184:548B, "For you are able to give birth to him in your heart, and in the heart of another"; *PL* 184:548B, "you understand truth, or you make another understand, you give birth to Christ."

<sup>88</sup> Étienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 123.

the Divine substance.”<sup>89</sup> *De Interiori Domo* thus reinterprets Bernard’s mystical union within Peter’s spirituality of the conscience: Peter’s house guest becomes the Christ child of the mind. *De Interiori Domo* situates Bernard’s union of wills within Peter’s guest chamber of the conscience, and maps the inner relations between God and the conscience onto the outer relations that are involved in daily monastic life. It embodies Mark McIntosh’s description of early Christian spirituality as “inherently mutual, communal, practical and oriented towards the God who makes self known precisely in this new pattern of life called church.”<sup>90</sup> The spiritual union is inseparable from love for one’s neighbour and good works, both of which constitute its material flesh and bones: “Amando parturis, operando nutris” (*Domo* 81).<sup>91</sup> Conscience is the connection between them, joining the two together and reading the spiritual in the material.

*De Interiori Domo* also incorporates Peter’s definition of conscience as *cordis scientia*. Chapter 11 of *De Interiori Domo* contains four passages from Peter. The first is Peter’s description of *cordis scientia* (199/34-8). The second is his extensive list of images of the conscience (195/26-34). The third is his description of the conscience’s indifference towards worldly suffering (196/2-6), and the fourth is his discussion of the conscience as a mirror (209/30-210/3).

Peter’s recursive and contradictory definition of the conscience as “sui ipsius scientia” (199/26) is omitted.<sup>92</sup> *De Interiori Domo* retains Peter’s distinction between *scientia* and *conscientia*, but simplifies it (*Domo* 18). Peter’s list of images of the conscience is mostly intact. His superfluous verbiage has been excised: the clause “bona conscientia est” no longer precedes each item on the list.<sup>93</sup> The only image missing is the obscure “scyphus

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<sup>89</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology*, 125.

<sup>90</sup> Mark McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 7.

<sup>91</sup> *PL* 184:548B, “You give birth by loving, you nourish by working.”

<sup>92</sup> “... knowledge of itself.”

<sup>93</sup> “... the good conscience is...”

Joseph, in quo auguriari, imo inebriari solet” (195/29).<sup>94</sup> There are three additions to the list: the “aureum reclinatorium,” “gaudium Angelorum,” and “habitaculum Spiritus sancti” (*Domo* 18).<sup>95</sup> The additions are, however, not entirely new. They appear very close to the list in Peter’s text. Thus, before the list commences, Peter cites Luke 15:7: “Gaudium est enim angelis in coelis” (195/20).<sup>96</sup> Peter’s chariot image appears shortly after the list (197/8), although it is a *currus* rather than a *reclinatorium*. Finally, the “habitaculum Spiritus sancti” is a transformation of the “cubiculum” (194/35) of conscience which Peter instructs the reader to enter in order to “Spiritum Sanctum pulsat” (195/3).<sup>97</sup> The list in *De Interiori Domo* is thus a compressed and more straightforward form of Peter’s. It reveals that the author of *De Interiori Domo* holds Peter’s thought in high regard, and seeks to incorporate it even when he does not cite it. His list preserves the affective impact of Peter’s, but the stranger and more alien image (the cup of Joseph) has been left out.

The introduction of “secura” in *De Interiori Domo* is the main difference between the two descriptions of the conscience’s indifference towards external tribulation. Peter enumerates the bodily tortures and then asks rhetorically, “quid ad conscientiam?” (196/6).<sup>98</sup> *De Interiori Domo* substitutes the clause “et secura erit conscientia” (*Domo* 18).<sup>99</sup> The author repeats the expression several times to establish the internal security in contrast to external harms: “Bona conscientia secura erit cum corpus morietur; secura, cum anima coram Deo praesentabitur; secura, cum utrumque in die iudicii” (*Domo* 18).<sup>100</sup>

The emphasis on security reflects the author’s embellishment of Peter’s material for his purposes rather than the simplification or clarification of Peter’s text. Inner security

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<sup>94</sup> “... cup of Joseph in which he is accustomed to do divination and become intoxicated.”

<sup>95</sup> *PL* 184:517A, “The golden chariot”; *PL* 184:517B, “The joy of angels”; *PL* 184:517A, “The dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>96</sup> “There is joy to the angels in heaven.”

<sup>97</sup> “... dwelling place of the Holy Spirit”; “chamber”; “... knock upon the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>98</sup> “What is that to conscience?”

<sup>99</sup> *PL* 184:517B, “... and conscience shall be secure.”

<sup>100</sup> *PL* 184:517B, “Good conscience shall be secure when the body dies, secure when the soul shall be presented in the presence of God, secure also when it is placed before the terrifying judgement seat of the just Judge on the Day of Judgement.”

and the establishment of a firm boundary between the inner house of conscience and the outer world are the central ideas that underlie *De Interiori Domo* as a whole. Thus, the author writes that “[b]eata illa anima, quae in pace Christi fundata est et in Dei amore solidata: quae cum exterius bella patitur, pax interius non turbatur” (*Domo 2*).<sup>101</sup> The soul is “tota per amorem intus requiescit” because “nihil est quod foris appetit” (*Domo 2*).<sup>102</sup> It has everything it needs within the enclosed house of conscience. The author contrasts it with the soul which “nec in amore Dei desiderium figere” but leaves the safety of the conscience when “per oculos et aures, aliosque corporis sensus foras egreditur, atque in his exterioribus delectatur” (*Domo 3*).<sup>103</sup> That soul “mundi consolationem quaesivit,” and as such “illam quae a Deo intus in conscientia datur, non habebit” (*Domo 3*).<sup>104</sup> The soul must abstain from company and pleasure in the present, in order to remain within its conscience through love of God. Present company is only transitory and passing, “[c]ogita ergo in societate aliorum nunc positus, quia non poteris semper manere cum illis,” therefore the author instructs “elige tibi socium illum ... Deus tuus ille est, quem eligere debes” (*Domo 3*).<sup>105</sup> The reader may be assured, “Ipse enim frequenter visitat et libenter inhabitat tranquillitatem cordis,” but first “te praepara, ut tecum adsit Deus; sit in ore, sit in corde” (*Domo 4*).<sup>106</sup> Thus, “qualicumque mentis vagatione inde abstractus fueris, illuc semper redire festina” (*Domo 12*).<sup>107</sup> The necessary preparation is withdrawal into the secret and secluded chamber of conscience. The

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<sup>101</sup> *PL* 184:509C, “The soul is blessed which has been established in the peace of Christ and made strong in the love of God. Its inner peace is not disturbed when it suffers external conflicts.”

<sup>102</sup> *PL* 184:509C, “... it rests all within, through love”; *PL* 184:509C, “... when there is nothing outside that it desires.”

<sup>103</sup> *PL* 184:509D, “... does not fix its desire in the love of God”; *PL* 184:509D-10A, “... it goes out through the eyes and the ears and the other corporeal senses. It delights in these external things.”

<sup>104</sup> *PL* 184:510A, “... sought the consolation of the world”; *PL* 184:510A, “... it shall not have the consolation which is given by God within, in its conscience.”

<sup>105</sup> *PL* 184:510A, “Consider now, while you are situated in the society of others, because you shall not always be able to remain with them”; *PL* 184:510A-B, “... choose for yourself that companion ... He is your God, whom you ought to choose.”

<sup>106</sup> *PL* 184:510B, “... he frequently visits and gladly dwells within tranquillity of heart”; *PL* 184:510B, “... prepare yourself in such a way that God will come to be with you, so that he shall be in your prayer, so that he shall be in your heart.”

<sup>107</sup> *PL* 184:513D, “... regardless of whatever wandering of mind draws you away from it, always hasten to return there.”

withdrawal does not compete with or contradict the communal monastic observance discussed above. On the contrary, “[s]tudeamus ergo templum Deo aedificare in nobis: primo quidem ut in singulis nobis, deinde ut in omnibus simul inhabitet” (*Domo 5*).<sup>108</sup>

The text contrasts the conscience with both the body and the soul. The conscience is distinct from the body in that it is the “alia nobis est aedificanda” whereas the body is “[d]omus haec, in qua habitamus” and it “ruinam nobis minatur” (*Domo* “Prologue”).<sup>109</sup> The conscience is like the soul in that “[c]onscientia vero perpetua est, quae nunquam finitur, sicut nec anima” and “sicut non potest esse non anima, sic nunquam potest esse sine conscientia” (*Domo* “Prologue”).<sup>110</sup> It is, however, also distinct from the soul in that conscience is the house “in qua anima perpetuo mansura est” (*Domo 1*) as opposed to the body in which the soul now dwells.<sup>111</sup> The relationship between the conscience and the soul is likened to the relationship between the soul and the body: just as “[v]ult habere anima corporis sui domum integram, et exire eam necesse est, si fuerint a se invicem membra dispersa,” so the person who desires a conscience must “videat et sollicite caveat, ne a se invicem membra ejus dissideant; id est, ratio, voluntas, et memoria” (*Domo 5*).<sup>112</sup> The enumeration of reason, will, and memory indicates that conscience does not exist within any one of the three powers of the rational soul and is not a fourth power alongside them. It is, rather, the condition that results from all three operating rightly and harmoniously: “Dignum habitaculum parat Deo, cujus nec est ratio decepta, nec voluntas perversa, nec memoria inquinata” (*Domo 5*).<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *PL 184:510C*, “Let us strive, therefore, to build the temple of God within us: first, so that he may simultaneously dwell within each of us, then so that he shall dwell in all of us.”

<sup>109</sup> *PL 184:507C*, “... other house that we must build up”; *PL 184:507C*, “... the house in which we dwell”; *PL 184:507C*, “... threatens us with ruin.”

<sup>110</sup> *PL 184:508C*, “Conscience is eternal. It never ends, just like the soul”; *PL 184:508C*, “... as the soul is not able to not exist, so it is not possible to exist without conscience.”

<sup>111</sup> *PL 184:509A*, “... in which the soul shall eternally remain.”

<sup>112</sup> *PL 184:510C-D*, “The soul wishes to have the house of its body intact, and it is necessary for the soul to leave it if its members have each been separated from it”; *PL 184:510D*, “... look and take care anxiously, lest its members (that is, reason, will, and memory) are each separated from it.”

<sup>113</sup> *PL 184:510D*, “The one whose reason is not deceived, nor his will perverse, nor his memory polluted,

The final borrowing from Peter, the description of the conscience as a mirror, differs slightly from its original. The passage in Peter's text involves the conscience as both a mirror and a tablet. Peter's soul "in tabulis conscientiae relegit et intellegit" (209/34-35).<sup>114</sup> The tablets are absent from *De Interiori Domo*. Its soul "in conscientia relegit et intelligit" (*Domo* 19).<sup>115</sup> The traces of Peter's tablet remain. It makes sense to read in a tablet; it does not make sense to read in a mirror. The author thus collapses Peter's dual image of mirror and tablet into the simpler image of a mirror. This mirror otherwise fulfils much the same purpose as Peter's. The conscience is able to reflect the moral quality of life, but only once it has been cultivated to do so. It enables the soul to recognise "in quibus vestigia creatricis imaginis recipiat" (*Domo* 19).<sup>116</sup> The conscience must be cleansed in order for this to happen, otherwise the soul's moral vision is obscured and its capacity for reflection diminished. The author writes earlier in the treatise that "[h]aec ergo conscientia, in qua anima perpetuo mansura est, aedificanda est, sed prius mundanda" (*Domo* 1).<sup>117</sup> *De Interiori Domo* then follows Peter in saying that, once properly cultivated, "[s]peculum mundum, clarum et purum totius religionis, bona conscientia" (*Domo* 19).<sup>118</sup>

The description of conscience thus far closely resembles the subsequent conscience, the conscience that judges past action. The conscience comes about as a direct result of how one has lived: "ille recte militat, qui per militiam quam exercet in corpore, domum aedificat conscientiae" (*Domo* "Prologue").<sup>119</sup> Several other references throughout the text indicate that the author has the subsequent conscience in mind. Jager notes chapter 18 of *De Interiori Domo* as an instance of the trope of "an inner scribe who writes down every

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prepares a fit dwelling for God."

<sup>114</sup> "... rereads and understands in the tablets of conscience."

<sup>115</sup> *PL* 184:517C, "... rereads and understands in its conscience."

<sup>116</sup> *PL* 184:517C, "... in which things it may recover the traces of the creator image."

<sup>117</sup> *PL* 184:509A, "This conscience in which the soul shall eternally remain must be built up, but first it must be cleansed."

<sup>118</sup> *PL* 184:517D, "The good conscience is the clean, bright and pure mirror of all religion."

<sup>119</sup> *PL* 184:508B, "... he fights well who builds the house of conscience through the fight which he exercises in the body."



deed in ... a book,” a trope that was “used to interpret the opened books of the Last Judgement.”<sup>120</sup> The book, however, does not pronounce judgement. It merely records, and the record it keeps will be set on display at the Final Judgement: “aperto libro conscientiae, omnis culpa ante oculos reducetur” (*Domo* 30).<sup>121</sup> Then “cogente conscientia, unusquisque erit accusator et iudex suus” (*Domo* 30).<sup>122</sup> This state of affairs only comes about once the conscience has been exposed for all to see, and thus it is the contents of conscience and not any judgements that conscience pronounces that force everyone to become their own judge. The conscience itself does not judge one way or the other. Thus, when the speaker exclaims that “[d]amnat me conscientia mea, quanquam divinum iudicium nondum me damnet” (*Domo* 30), he refers to the contents of the conscience which he independently recognises to be guilty.<sup>123</sup> The speaker is therefore equally able to say that “[c]onscientia mea meretur damnationem” (*Domo* 35).<sup>124</sup> This is the meaning of conscience when the speaker also says, “[p]roprii reatus conscientia non me requiescere sinit, sed de die in diem vehementer me torquet, et de die iudicii vehementius terret” (*Domo* 30).<sup>125</sup> The torment is fear of future judgement upon recognising that the contents of the conscience are morally deficient.

The conscience of *De Interiiori Domo* thus follows Peter and collapses the subsequent moral conscience with the other variant of the patristic conscience that Delhaye describes: “the subject retains deep within himself the imprint of his acts. Choice after choice, he builds his ‘self’; he fashions for good or ill his moral interior.”<sup>126</sup> *De Interiiori Domo* contains both ingredients of the contemplative conscience. The moral interior becomes the space of thought, imagination, and affection. It becomes the most intimate meeting place

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<sup>120</sup> Jager, *Book of the Heart*, 54.

<sup>121</sup> *PL* 184:523D, “... every fault shall be brought back before the eyes by the open book of conscience.”

<sup>122</sup> *PL* 184:524A, “... everyone’s conscience shall force him to become his own accuser and judge.”

<sup>123</sup> *PL* 184:524A, “My conscience condemns me, even though divine judgement does not condemn me yet.”

<sup>124</sup> *PL* 184:526B, “My conscience merits damnation.”

<sup>125</sup> *PL* 184:523D, “Awareness of my own guilt does not permit me to rest, but tortures me vigorously from day to day, and terrifies me more vigorously about the Day of Judgement.”

<sup>126</sup> Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, 97.

between man and God.

The good conscience is not natural or inborn. It must be pursued and constructed. *De Interiori Domo*, like Peter, maintains that the acquisition of conscience requires the collaborative effort of God and man. The author asks: “Et quis eam mundabit?” to which he answers, “Profecto Deus et homo: homo, per cogitationes et affectiones; Deus vero, per misericordiam et gratiam” (*Domo 1*).<sup>127</sup>

The conscience, then, as the realm of thought and affection, is shaped by thought and affection. The pillars that support the house of the good conscience are “bona voluntas, memoria, scilicet memorem esse beneficiorum Dei; cor mundum, animus liber, spiritus rectus, mens devota, ratio illuminata” (*Domo 6*).<sup>128</sup> Memory supports the conscience insofar as it evokes love: “Recordemur ergo misericordiarum Dei, ut sic accendamus in ejus amorem” (*Domo 7*).<sup>129</sup> The cleansed heart is the conscience in microcosm. The author applies the same descriptions and instructions to it as he does to the conscience as a whole. It must be cleansed, like the conscience, “ut totius immunditiae spurcitas respuens, cogitationum sicut actionum peccata deploret” (*Domo 8*).<sup>130</sup> It also “[s]it purum, ut nihil morari intra se patiatur mali” (*Domo 8*).<sup>131</sup> It is therefore a moral space in addition to an affective one: “eum, a quo tanta beneficia accepimus, toto corde diligamus” (*Domo 8*).<sup>132</sup> The soul similarly “[s]it consummatus in Dei dilectione” (*Domo 9*).<sup>133</sup>

Reason is more affective than intellective. Its role is determining action, rather than understanding or conceptual knowledge. It overlaps with the will in that “[s]i vero aliquem motum ad id quod non debet, vel quomodo non debet, moveri senserit, non

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<sup>127</sup> PL 184:509A, “And who shall wash it?”; PL 184:509A, “Surely, God and man – man through thoughts and affections, but God through mercy and grace.”

<sup>128</sup> PL 184:511A, “... the good will, memory – that is, to be mindful of the gifts of God – a cleansed heart, a free soul, a right spirit, a devout mind and illuminated reason.”

<sup>129</sup> PL 184:511C, “Let us therefore remember the mercy of God, so that we shall be set afire with love for him.”

<sup>130</sup> PL 184:512B, “... so that it deploras the sins of thought as of action, rejecting the filth of all uncleanness.”

<sup>131</sup> PL 184:512A, “Let it be pure, so that it suffers nothing evil to remain within itself.”

<sup>132</sup> PL 184:512A, “We should love with a whole heart him from whom we have received such great gifts.”

<sup>133</sup> PL 184:512C, “Let it be complete in the love of God.”

consentiat, sed illico resistat” (*Domo* 15).<sup>134</sup> Consent is the preserve of reason and not the will: “Tunc enim anima mori, sicut scriptum est, dicitur cum ipsa ratio ad peccatum per consensum curvatur” (*Domo* 15).<sup>135</sup> The author notes that “solus consensus reos nos facit, etiamsi aliquid impediat ne opera subsequantur” and as such “[n]on nocet sensus, ubi non est consensus” (*Domo* 15).<sup>136</sup>

The house of conscience is constructed by reading the text. The image of the seven pillars has mnemonic value. Mary Carruthers notes that, in medieval memory technique, “[t]he fundamental principle is to ‘divide’ the material to be remembered into pieces short enough to be recalled in single units and to key these into some sort of rigid, easily reconstructable order.”<sup>137</sup> The seven pillars representing the seven qualities constitutive of the conscience meet these criteria. The image is an instance of ekphrasis. Carruthers notes comparable instances in early Christian writers who used the Heavenly Jerusalem to similar effect: “The various details are moralised and spiritualised on the basis of an internal picture which the words paint in our mind. We have an internal temple and tabernacle....”<sup>138</sup> Reading and internalising the pillars of conscience effectively builds the house within the mind. *De Interi Domo* thus engages the imagination in much the same way as Peter in order to build the conscience, as it says, “per cogitationes et affectiones” (*Domo* 1).<sup>139</sup>

The reader must also take on a practical and involved role in constructing conscience. The work is hampered by the mind’s propensity to wander and become distracted. Thus, in addition to reading, self-examination and confession are the primary

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<sup>134</sup> *PL* 184:515C, “If it perceive any motion stirred against it – either that ought not to be stirred up, or in a way that it ought not be stirred – let reason not consent, but let it resist there.”

<sup>135</sup> *PL* 184: 515C-D, “Then, indeed, the soul is said to die, as it is written, when the reason itself is bent towards sin through consent.”

<sup>136</sup> *PL* 184:515C, “... consent alone makes us guilty, even if something impedes works from following”; *PL* 184:515D, “The temptation does no harm where there is no consent.”

<sup>137</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, vol. 10, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7.

<sup>138</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, vol. 34, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 133-34.

<sup>139</sup> *PL* 184:509B, “... through thoughts and affections.”

mechanisms for the edification of conscience. The author urges the reader to envision a judgement scene: “se ante se statuat, et tanquam alium se iudicet; se equidem culpatum, ante se afflictum; se reum, ante se iudicem severum; se impium, ante se ad pietatem reversum” (*Domo* 20).<sup>140</sup> Remaining within the conscience means remaining within examination of one’s life: “De diversis igitur mundi partibus, in quibus cor vagum et profundum tenetur, vel vane occupatur, ad seipsum redeat, et seipsum discutiat: cumque invenerit culpam, timeat poenam” (*Domo* 20).<sup>141</sup>

The author portrays the struggle for conscience vividly in the first-person reflections that begin in chapter 16. The speaker is powerless to control his heart and its thoughts, which are captivated and led astray by external temptations. He laments, “[n]on enim est in potestate mea cor meum et cogitationes meae,” but “[i]decirco crebra terrenarum cupiditatum illecebra, et vanitatum effusio ita cor meum occupant” (*Domo* 25).<sup>142</sup> He confesses to God, “[a]udi quam saepe de memoria mea te expulit irruens turba plurimarum cogitationum” (*Domo* 25).<sup>143</sup>

The worst temptations are external, because they draw the mind outside the enclosure of the conscience. Lustful thoughts are therefore especially pernicious: “quod saepe mihi nocuit mortifera delectatio” (*Domo* 26).<sup>144</sup> Lust “caeteris vitiis est mihi familiarior,” and he confesses that “[c]arnis libidinem nunquam fugere potui” (*Domo* 26).<sup>145</sup> He is similarly afflicted by vengefulness for past insults and injury, fantasising about getting even: “Saepe namque aliqua injuria commotus, densis cogitationum tumultibus in corde premor” (*Domo*

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<sup>140</sup> *PL* 184:518A, “... let it set itself before itself for punishment and let it judge itself as though it were another: the culpable self before the troubled self, the guilty self before the severe judge self, the wicked self before the self turned back to piety.”

<sup>141</sup> *PL* 184:517D-18A, “Therefore, let the wandering and insatiable heart return to itself from the diverse parts of the world in which it is held or pointlessly occupied, and let it examine itself. When it has found a fault, let it fear punishment.”

<sup>142</sup> *PL* 184:521A, “My heart and my thoughts are not in my power”; *PL* 184:520D, “the constant allure of earthly desires and the profusion of vanities so occupy my heart.”

<sup>143</sup> *PL* 184:520D, “Hear how often the rushing crowd of many thoughts expels you from my memory.”

<sup>144</sup> *PL* 184:521C, “... death-bearing delight has often harmed me.”

<sup>145</sup> *PL* 184:521C, “... is more familiar to me than other vices”; *PL* 184:521C, “I have never been able to escape the lust of the flesh.”

27).<sup>146</sup> He is similarly guilty of idle gossip: “Verbositati deserviens, detractio[n]i studens, os meum mendacio et detractio[n]e inquinavi” (*Domo* 28).<sup>147</sup> He laments that his motivation has been evil, even when doing good or necessary things: “[s]aepissime namque comedi et bibi non ad necessitatem, sed ad voluptatem” (*Domo* 28).<sup>148</sup> The threat to conscience is still external. His intention is at fault because it was externally oriented; it desired sensual pleasure. He was concerned about external appearances rather than internal realities, “[s]aep[e] jactavi me fecisse quod non feceram” and “[d]issimulavi etiam me non fecisse quod feceram” (*Domo* 37).<sup>149</sup>

The confessor does not prescribe penance for these sins, but instead he proposes remedies against them. The remedies are imaginative meditations that can keep the conscience free from sin because “[i]bi namque est cogitatio tua, ubi est affectio tua; ibi cor tuum, ubi est desiderium tuum” (*Domo* 47).<sup>150</sup> They keep thought from straying outside the conscience: “Quoties te sentis turpibus cogitationibus pulsari, et ad illicitam delectationem allici; toties pone ante mentis oculos quomodo Christus in cruce crucifixus est pro te” (*Domo* 44).<sup>151</sup> The author proceeds to paint the scene “ante mentis oculis,” as Peter had suggested (206/6-7).<sup>152</sup> Thoughts of Christ’s Passion evoke a strong affective response. They keep desire within, and noxious thoughts out: “Sufficere posset haec cogitatio ad excludendas omnes illicitas cogitationes” (*Domo* 44).<sup>153</sup>

Meditation on the Final Things is also an effective antidote to wandering

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<sup>146</sup> *PL* 184:522A, “Often, provoked by some injury, I am overwhelmed by constant disturbances of thought in my heart.”

<sup>147</sup> *PL* 184:523A, “Devoting myself to verbosity and eager for slander, I have stained my mouth with deception and slander.”

<sup>148</sup> *PL* 184:522D, “For I have eaten and drunk most often not for necessity, but for pleasure.”

<sup>149</sup> *PL* 184:527C, “Often I have put myself forth as having done something which I did not do”; *PL* 184:527C, “I have even pretended not to have done what I had done.”

<sup>150</sup> *PL* 184:532B, “For your thought is the place where your affection is, where your heart is, and where your desire is.”

<sup>151</sup> *PL* 184:530B-31A, “As often as you feel yourself beaten with poisonous thoughts and allured to illicit delight, place before the eyes of your mind how Christ was crucified on the cross for you.”

<sup>152</sup> “... before the eyes of the mind.”

<sup>153</sup> *PL* 184:531A, “This thought shall be sufficient to exclude all illicit thoughts. But behold, let us pass to others.”

thoughts. The author devotes much more time (one full column of the *Patrologia Latina*) to graphically describing death and the Last Judgement than he does to the Passion (a quarter of a column in the *Patrologia Latina*). His preference for the macabre scenes of death, judgement, and hell accords with the earlier injunction to envision a trial scene as a means of evaluating past conduct (*Domo* 20).<sup>154</sup> The meditation also fulfils the same purpose as meditation on the Passion in that it evokes an affective response in the reader. Fear restrains the wandering mind as much as love, and keeps it within the conscience. The author borrows a passage from Anselm of Canterbury's second meditation to describe the judgement: "Hinc erunt accusantia peccata; inde, terrens justitia: subtus, patens horridum chaos inferni; desuper, iratus Judex: intus, urens conscientia; foris, ardens mundus" (*Domo* 46).<sup>155</sup> The conscience mirrors the outer world in its destruction. Both are destroyed for sin. The purpose of the meditation, however, is to keep sin from the conscience. The image of the burning conscience thus reinforces that the conscience can contain either sin or love for God. It is the instrument of union with or separation from God, and thus the space of both.

The meditation on Final Things performs three functions simultaneously: it facilitates the self-knowledge that constitutes the withdrawal into conscience, it arouses the affection of fear that keeps the mind within, and it solidifies the idea that conscience is the sphere occupied both by sin and love of God. If the conscience is not properly constructed and fortified, and if God is not properly loved within it, "eritque templum Dei spelunca diaboli" (*Domo* 47).<sup>156</sup>

These meditations are also vital for prayer. *De Interiori Domo* defines prayer: "[o]ratio est mentis devotio; id est conversio in Deum per pium et humilem affectum" (*Domo*

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<sup>154</sup> *PL* 184:517D-18A.

<sup>155</sup> *PL* 184:531D, "Here your sins shall be accusing, there justice terrifying. The horrible chaos of Hell shall be below; the angry Judge shall be above. Conscience shall burn within; the world shall burn outside." For the passage from Anselm's meditation see Anselm of Canterbury, *Liber Meditationum et Orationum* II, (*PL* 158:724B).

<sup>156</sup> *PL* 184:532B, "... the temple of God shall be the cave of the devil."

56).<sup>157</sup> The meditations are intended to evoke right affective responses and thus turn them towards God. Prayer is more difficult “dum converti ad Deum post perpetrata vitia studeo” because “occurrunt cordi phantasmata peccatorum quae feci” (*Domo* 57).<sup>158</sup> Imaginative meditation provides images to counter the phantasms of previous vices and thus bring the conscience into a position for prayer. Meditation, the weapon for combating sinful thoughts, and prayer go hand in hand because “[o]ratio cordis est, non labiorum,” and “[n]eque enim verba deprecantis Deus intendit; sed orantis cor aspicit” (*Domo* 56).<sup>159</sup> All of this takes place within the house of conscience.

God visits the soul once it has withdrawn into the enclosure of conscience. The author describes union with God as a momentary ascent: “[p]ia devotione ascendat, et visitet supernas sedes, et multas quae in domo Patris sunt mansiones” (*Domo* 10).<sup>160</sup> The language of ascent, however, is brief and metaphorical. The ascent of the conscience is simultaneously God’s descent into the conscience. Thus the conscience must be cleansed and guarded so that “qui ad ostium stat et pulsat, quacunq[ue] hora intrare voluerit, receptaculum mundum inueniat” (*Domo* 11).<sup>161</sup> The author then describes contemplation as a flight, rather than an ascent. Withdrawal and flight occur concomitantly. The author instructs the reader: “redi ad cor tuum, et ibi intrare et habitare omni modo stude” so that they “potest ad ea quae supra ipsam sunt, penna contemplationis evolare” (*Domo* 13).<sup>162</sup> Withdrawal into conscience and contemplative flight are in apposition to one another: “jam fortassis ascendisti, jam ad cor

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<sup>157</sup> *PL* 184:536A, “Prayer is devotion of the mind: i.e., turning to God through faithful and humble affection.”

<sup>158</sup> *PL* 184:536D, “... when I desire to turn back to God after I have committed sins”; *PL* 184:536D “... phantasms of the sins I have committed assail my heart.”

<sup>159</sup> *PL* 184:536C, “It is prayer of the heart, not of the lips”; *PL* 184:536C “God does not reach out for the words of the intercessor, but he looks at the heart.”

<sup>160</sup> *PL* 184:512D, “Let it ascend by faithful devotion, and let it visit the high seats and the many mansions which are in the house of the Father.”

<sup>161</sup> *PL* 184:513B, “he who stands at the door and knocks may find a clean shelter at whichever hour he wishes to enter.”

<sup>162</sup> *PL* 184:514A, “... return to your heart and strive in every way to enter and to dwell in it”; *PL* 184:514B, “be able to fly up by the wing of contemplation to the things which are above themselves.”

tuum rediisti” (*Domo* 12).<sup>163</sup> The flight is not a hierarchical ascent towards union. Rather, the presence of God within the conscience transforms experience of external things: “Huic itaque qui sic affectus est, non est onerosa paupertas: iste non sentit injurias: ridet opprobria, contemnit damna, mortem lucrum reputat” (*Domo* 14).<sup>164</sup>

*De Interiori Domo* depicts conscience as an inner chamber prepared for the meeting of God and the soul. It is the point of continuity between the present and future life of beatitude. All the powers of the rational soul contribute to it. Every action of life shapes it and determines its moral quality. Outward conduct is therefore key to the conscience, even though the conscience itself is internal. Exteriority remains vital to interiority. The person who wants to attain a good conscience must exert considerable effort in keeping it free from impure thoughts. The conscience is the realm of thought, and its impure thoughts are combated by imaginative meditation on the Passion and the Final Things. Wholesome thought orients the conscience towards God. Orientation towards God brought about by wholesome thought is the text’s definition of prayer. Meditation and prayer are inseparable.

The author of *De Interiori Domo* evidently found Peter of Celle’s thought on conscience a fruitful resource for the contemplative life. He integrates Peter’s contemplative conscience with Bernardine mysticism, but relies more heavily on Augustine’s anthropology than Bernard did.<sup>165</sup> Richard Upsher-Smith Jr. has argued that Augustine’s ternary of understanding, memory, and will plays an important part in Bernard’s thought, that “the Augustinian triad is deeply woven into the fabric of Bernard’s spirituality.”<sup>166</sup> Bernard, nevertheless, emphasised the role of the will in attaining union with God. He more often

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<sup>163</sup> PL 184:513D, “... perhaps you have already ascended, already returned to your heart.”

<sup>164</sup> PL 184:514C-D, “To one thus affected, poverty is not burdensome. He does not feel injuries. He laughs at his shame, scorns his loss, and considers his death as profit.”

<sup>165</sup> *De Interiori Domo* particularly echoes Bernard’s emphasis on self-examination and knowledge. For an overview of the role self-knowledge plays in Bernard’s thought, see Gilson, *Mystical Theology*, 34-35.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Upsher-Smith, Jr., “Saint Bernard’s Anthropology: Traditional and Systematic,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2011): 427. Upsher-Smith analyses a selection of Bernard’s writings. He bases this conclusion particularly on Bernard’s sermons *In Festivitate Omnium Sanctorum*. For a brief account of Augustine’s ternary of memory, understanding, and will as expressed in his *De Trinitate*, see Upsher-Smith, “Saint Bernard’s Anthropology,” 423.



“speaks of the location of God’s image and likeness in the will.”<sup>167</sup> Illia Delio writes that, for Bernard, “[t]he human person becomes a distorted image of God when the free will, the image of the Word in the soul, clings voluntarily to what is evil and turns away from what is good.”<sup>168</sup> *De Interiori Domo*, by contrast, emphasises all the Augustinian powers of the rational soul coming together within the house of conscience. The soul interprets external asceticism as giving birth to Christ within the house of the conscience. God’s presence within the conscience in turn shapes perception and experience of external things. *De Interiori Domo* uses the paradigm of conscience as an alternative to the paradigm of contemplative ascent based on the hierarchical tiers of purgation, illumination and union.

#### 4. Conclusion

The *Tractatus de Conscientia* and *De Interiori Domo* reveal a spirituality of conscience that lies outside the main tradition of medieval contemplation. Both texts arrive at their picture of conscience by different means, and for different purposes. The *Tractatus* reaches its view of conscience by biblical exegesis, and offers a practical guide to life in light of its conclusions. It places less emphasis on contemplation or contemplative prayer than either Peter of Celle or *De Interiori Domo*, yet it maintains that the present, earthly life of the good conscience is analogous to eternal life in heaven. The conscience is not directly accessible, but its contents inform and shape ordinary experiences. Thus, the conscience does not apprehend God as the direct object or phenomenon of spiritual experience. Rather, the good conscience reinterprets ordinary life in order to recognise God’s presence. The analogy between earthly and heavenly life lies in the transformation of thought and perception rather than isolated mystical experiences.

*De Interiori Domo* is a treatise on the inner life and contemplation that eschews

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<sup>167</sup> Illia Delio, “Bonaventure and Bernard: On Human Image and Mystical Union,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1999): 254.

<sup>168</sup> Delio, “Bonaventure and Bernard,” 255.

the ascending triad of purgation, illumination, and union. It bases its definition of conscience on Peter of Celle, but absorbs elements of Bernardine mysticism. Peter receives priority over Bernard. The text's governing metaphor is a house that is closed to the outside world. The life of conscience is the life of solitude, and yet this solitude is mapped onto life in the monastic community.

The conscience in both texts is the product of the synthesis of different patristic approaches to conscience, which in turn build on ambiguous Pauline conscience texts and the Stoic tradition. The contemplative conscience draws on the idea of the anterior conscience, the moral director, but replaces the law of God with the presence of God. The contemplative conscience also draws from the idea of the subsequent conscience, in that it is shaped by past conduct. The contemplative conscience differs from the patristic conscience in that it is not inborn, but needs to be constructed and edified if God is to dwell within it. Moral living is only one of the tools for its creation. The conscience is the domain of thought and affect, and thus meditations that engage imagination and emotion are also vital to shaping it.

*De Interiori Domo* circulated as part of a popular *De Anima* attributed to Hugh of St Victor. It is almost certain that the English author of the *AW* had read it. Mari Hughes-Edwards notes that anchoritic “guidance writers wish to enclose [their readers] within an elaborate system of metaphor and simile, intending such descriptions to be affective actualisations and codifications of ... their perceptions of the vocation.”<sup>169</sup> The discourse of interiority based on the image of a house closed to the world thus proved to be an optimal structure for conceptualising the inner life of anchoritic readers who literally inhabited small houses closed to the world which were also understood as “an antechamber to heaven.”<sup>170</sup> The *AW* author found the contemplative conscience the perfect inner appropriation of the outer

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<sup>169</sup> Mari Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 36.

<sup>170</sup> Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 123.

anchoritic situation. Metaphor and reality become one and the same, and thus the kind of contemplation the *AW* author intends for his readers is the type of contemplation found in the conscience texts. The next chapter of this thesis explores the *AW* author's adaptation of the contemplative conscience.

## Chapter Three

### The *Ancrene Wisse*

#### 1. Introduction

The author of the *AW* instructs his readers to accompany the Mass with several Latin prayers. The prayers include a series of lines adapted from the beginning of Augustine's *Confessiones*. Augustine and the anchoress at prayer ask how it is possible for the heart to contain God: "Angusta est tibi domus anime mee, quo uenias ad eam; dilatetur abs te. Ruinosa est; refice eam" (*AW* I.227-28).<sup>1</sup> Anna McHugh notes this passage as "one of many metaphors of enclosed space" in the *AW* that "rely on the poetics of space to give form to concepts of memory and mental activity."<sup>2</sup> The house, for McHugh, is the house of memory "which the text seeks to train and improve. It is delegated to memory to manipulate the significance of the outer world."<sup>3</sup> The *AW* author's overt discussion of memory is minimal, but inner space figures prominently in his work. He prefers discussion of the heart to discussion of the memory, and he equates the heart with the conscience. The heart in the *AW* is imagined in terms closely analogous to the conscience in the monastic texts considered in the first two chapters. This chapter argues that the heart relates to the powers of the rational soul in the same way that the conscience relates to them in the contemplative monastic conscience texts. The heart-conscience becomes the inner house that the anchoress must learn to inhabit with God. McHugh is correct that memory is important in that, as she observes, "the work will be read and re-read every day for years, perhaps decades" and as such "it

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<sup>1</sup> "The house of my soul is too narrow for you. Where can you come into it? May you enlarge it? It is ruined. Restore it." See Augustine of Hippo, *Confessionum Libri Tredecim* I.5.6, (PL 32:663).

<sup>2</sup> Anna McHugh, "Inner Space as Speaking Space in *Ancrene Wisse*," in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 84.

<sup>3</sup> McHugh, "Inner Space as Speaking Space," 84.

forms a paradigm within which other material will be organised.”<sup>4</sup> This chapter maintains, however, that the role of memory in the *AW* echoes its role in *De Interiori Domo*. It is one of many pillars. The inner house of the *AW*, the house of the soul that is ruined and must be remade, is the conscience. The spirituality of the *AW* is the spirituality of the contemplative conscience texts.

The heart possesses a range of attributes and performs a range of functions: the heart is a moral faculty, the heart is the locus of desire and love, the heart is the locus of thought and memory, and finally the heart is the dwelling place of God. All of these categories are closely intertwined with one another and this chapter demonstrates that they all operate in the *AW* as they do in the contemplative conscience texts. By reading the *AW* as a conscience text, this discussion contributes towards a resolution of the debates within scholarship as to what sort of spirituality the author intends for his anchoritic readers.

## **2. The Heart as a Moral Faculty**

The *AW* author equates purity of heart with a clean *inwit*. The *inwit* makes its first appearance in the text as the subsequent conscience, the judge evaluating past action and behaviour. It tells the anchoress: “‘Her þu sunegest,’ oper ‘þis nis nawt ibet 3et as wel as hit ahte’” (P.14-15).<sup>5</sup> Its moral judgements are always *post factum*. The author stipulates that adherence to a rule mitigates its accusations. It follows that the *inwit* does not provide moral direction, but needs it. *Inwit*, like Peter of Celle’s conscience, needs a rule of life in order to be good.<sup>6</sup> *Inwit*, or the heart, does surprisingly little accusing throughout the Rule. Its moral function is usually closer to the conscience that has become inclined towards evil and requires education and cultivation. The author presents the heart as morally vulnerable. It is more likely to be wounded than to evaluate. Moral wounds and sicknesses come in two

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<sup>4</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 84.

<sup>5</sup> “‘Here you sinned,’ or ‘This has not yet been atoned for as well as it ought to be.’”

<sup>6</sup> See p. 91 of this thesis.

varieties that frequently overlap.

The first type of wound involves the heart being injured by the wrongdoing of its possessor. Thus the author discourages the sisters from taking any vows in addition to poverty, chastity and fixity of place, lest breaking them “walde to swiðe hurten ower heorte.” (P.84).<sup>7</sup> Vowing additional observances would convert them from observances into obligations. Failure to keep those obligations would then be a moral wrong and therefore a moral wound.

The second type of moral injury is much more prevalent in the text. The heart’s wounds are the cause and not only the results of sinful actions. The idea derives from Christ’s words in Matthew 15:19: “de corde enim exeunt cogitationes malae homicidia adulteria fornicationes furta falsa testimonia blasphemiae.”<sup>8</sup> Good and evil have their origin in the heart. The author’s imagery vividly depicts a corrupt heart as diseased, recalling Peter’s image of the putrified conscience.<sup>9</sup> The “[p]rude ant onde ant wreaððe, heorte sar for wortlich þing dreori of longunge, ant ʒisceunge of ahte ... ant al þet of hem floweð” are “heorte wunden.” (IV.1398-400).<sup>10</sup> The backbiter likewise “speoweð ut his atter ... þet te attri heorte sent up to þe tunge.” (II.594-95).<sup>11</sup> A life “bittre ant attrie, wið heorte tobollen” (II.894) is the antithesis of spiritual life.<sup>12</sup> The “neddre atter” makes the “heorte wið luue falle to eani þing eawt ouer mete.” (IV.1689-91).<sup>13</sup>

The brief allegory in Part II of the text illustrates how the two categories of moral wound overlap one another. It presents Lechery laying siege to the Lady of Chastity in a

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<sup>7</sup> “... would too greatly hurt your heart.”

<sup>8</sup> “... out of the heart indeed come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies and blasphemies.”

<sup>9</sup> See p. 56 of this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> “Pride and envy and wrath, grief of heart for worldly things, misery of longing and avarice for possessions ... and all that flows from them [i.e., all that flows from the evils just enumerated]”; “... heart wounds.”

<sup>11</sup> “... spews out his poison, which the poisonous heart sends up to the tongue.”

<sup>12</sup> “... bitter and poisonous, with a puffed-up heart.”

<sup>13</sup> “... snake poison”; “... the heart fall with love to anything excessively.”

castle reminiscent of Peter's tower.<sup>14</sup> Lechery makes use of three weapons. "[P]e arewen of þe licht echnen" that "stikeð i ðere heorte," (II.166-67) are the first.<sup>15</sup> Lechery is the vice personified for the purposes of allegory. The victim, of course, is the anchoress. The point wants some clarification because the allegory is preceded in the text by the stories of Dinah and Bathsheba, the fault of whom was that they showed themselves to lustful eyes. The allegory then opens with a citation from Augustine, "inpudicus oculus inpudici cordis est nuncius," (II.151) and the author elaborates "þet þe muð ne mei for scheome, þe licht echþe spekeð hit" (II.151-52).<sup>16</sup> The biblical narratives combine with the quote from Augustine to suggest that the victims of lechery's arrows must be anyone led astray by the light eyes, anyone who sees the anchoress but not the anchoress herself. The corrupt anchoress shoots the arrows.

The allegory also has a second meaning. The author concludes his depiction of the inner struggle between lechery and chastity with a practical warning that the anchoress should not look out her windows. The anchoress who pays no heed to the injunction is like a "chang ... þe hald hire heved baltliche forð vt i þe opene carnel hwil me wið quarreus vtewið assaileð þe castel." (II.175-76).<sup>17</sup> The heart that falls prey to lechery's arrows belongs, in this reading, to the anchoress rather than those who see her. Her heart is wounded by the arrows; theirs are not.

The light eyes are thus both the eyes that are careless of being seen and the eyes that are careless of seeing. Neither are gravely sinful in themselves. The grave sin comes about when Lechery deals the sword-blow of physical contact which "þeveð deaðes dunt"

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<sup>14</sup> See p. 85 of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> "The arrows of the light eyes"; "... stick into the heart."

<sup>16</sup> "... the shameless eye is the herald of the shameless heart"; "... the light eye says what the mouth cannot for shame."

<sup>17</sup> "... fool ... who holds her head boldly forth, out in the open battlements while people outside assail the castle with arrows."

(II.170).<sup>18</sup> The eyes are dangerous because they blind the heart and “ablinde þe heorte, ho is eað to ouercumen” (II.182-83).<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the light eyes are “as erende-beorere of þe licht heorte” (II.152-53).<sup>20</sup> Their danger, in this second sense, is that they entice others. The author equates the two, once again borrowing from Augustine, “[n]on solum appetere sed et appeti uelle crimosum est” (II.157-58).<sup>21</sup> The light eyes do not just wound the heart, rather they are the heart’s wound. They are symptomatic of lechery’s victory in the heart. Janet Grayson notes the interrelationship of the allegory’s two meanings when she observes that “sin is reciprocal in a very real sense in this colourful passage, and the darts of wanton looks strike the heart itself.”<sup>22</sup> She leaves it there, but the implications of the two meanings reach further. The two types of moral wound overlap: the anchoress conducts herself improperly because her heart has been wounded by lechery, but the heart is also wounded by the improper conduct when the blinded heart is “ibroht sone þurh sunne to grunde” (II.183).<sup>23</sup> The wounded heart does not condemn improper conduct. The wounded heart perpetrates it, and receives further wounds as a result.

The heart of the *AW* thus operates in the same way as the contemplative conscience. Its direction either towards good or evil characterises it, but it is also a repository or – to use Philippe Delhaye’s term – a ‘receptacle’ of good or evil actions. The conscience of the *Tractatus de Conscientia* is evil if it desires what is wrong, regardless of whether or not it feels any emotion of guilt, accuses itself, or recognises itself to be guilty. It would be subjected to scrutiny at the Last Judgement and found to contain evil.<sup>24</sup> The heart of the *AW* is the same.

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<sup>18</sup> “... gives death’s blow.”

<sup>19</sup> “... blind the heart and it is easy to overcome.”

<sup>20</sup> “... as the errand-bearer of the light heart.”

<sup>21</sup> “Not only to desire, but to wish to be desired is shameful.”

<sup>22</sup> Janet Grayson, *Structure and Imagery in Ancrene Wisse* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1974), 45.

<sup>23</sup> “... soon brought to the ground by sin.”

<sup>24</sup> See pp. 102-103 of this thesis for discussion of this concept in the *Tractatus*.



The author develops the moral wound further in Part IV of the text. Sexual sin takes place in the heart, not in physical contact. The author develops the temptation to lust as a wound: “[f]lesches lust is fotes wunde,” (IV.1389) which is only a “lah wunde” (IV.1393) and harmless enough in itself.<sup>25</sup> It need only be feared if “hit to swiðe swelle þurh skiles ʒettunge, wið to muchel delit up toward te heorte” (IV.1393-94).<sup>26</sup> The author cites Gregory the Great’s depiction of lechery’s violence, reminiscent of the allegory in Part II, though his adaptation of Gregory is telling.

Gregory equates the physical action with an inner wound. Both occur simultaneously: “In inguine ferire est uitam mentis carnis delectatione perforare” (IV.1354-55).<sup>27</sup> *Est*, the copula, is the only finite verb in the passage. The *AW* author renders the two infinitives as finite verbs in his English gloss and introduces the temporal preposition *hwen*: “þe feond þurhsticheð þe schere hwen delit of leccherie þurleð þe heorte” (IV.1355-56).<sup>28</sup> The rearrangement introduces causality as well as temporality into the passage. *Hwen* leaves the first clause contingent upon the second. The fiend would not injure the body if lechery did not pierce the heart. The impetus to sin begins within the heart in the same way that evil affection begins within the conscience of the monastic texts.

The sequences in the castle allegory and the image borrowed from Gregory are fundamentally similar. The allegory in Part II represents improper activity (looking, speaking, handling) as the symptoms of lechery’s attack on the heart. The second allegory, in Part IV, likewise presents the physical actions as having a prior and corresponding condition of heart.

The second portrayal of lechery’s assault also introduces the heart’s most vital moral function. The heart’s condition imbues actions with moral goodness or badness. “Flesches lust” is inconsequential without the attendant “delit” of heart (IV.1389-94). The

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<sup>25</sup> “... the lust of the flesh is a foot wound”; “... low wound.”

<sup>26</sup> “... it should swell too greatly up towards the heart by reason’s consent.”

<sup>27</sup> “To wound in the groin is to pierce the life of the mind with delight of the flesh.”

<sup>28</sup> “... the fiend pierces the groin when the delight of lechery pierces the heart.”

author explicates this concept more clearly when he discusses anger.

Wrath, like lechery, assails the heart and “ablinded swa þe heorte” with the added consequence that the heart “ne mei soð icnawen” (III.30-31).<sup>29</sup> Right judgement is absent “hwil þe heorte walleð inwið of wreaððe,” (III.21-22) and the situation is the same when “lust is hat toward eani sunne” (III.22-23).<sup>30</sup> Sin transforms the heart so that prayer and devotions are rendered ineffective. This clearly pertains to the heart as a moral faculty, but it also introduces the heart as nature or *cunde* of the person: “[s]one se he leoseð mildheortnesse he leoseð monnes cunde” (III.43-44).<sup>31</sup> The passage presents the heart as the seat of virtue as well as vice. Virtue is interwoven with *cunde*, and *cunde* confers moral worth upon actions. The heart thus functions like wisdom or prudence which are closely related to conscience in the monastic texts as seen in the first chapter of this thesis.<sup>32</sup> The heart, like the monastic conscience, can be trained and cultivated to discern correctly, but any moral judgements it makes are a result of its cultivation. It is not an authoritative guide grounded in a transcendent knowledge of divine law.

The heart’s virtue, especially humility, appears elsewhere in the text as the antithesis of the wounded or sick heart. Thus “eadmodnesse of milde ant meoke heorte” (III.532-34) is the second of two virtues to which the anchoress must devote especial attention (the first is “þolemodnesse”).<sup>33</sup> “[F]reolec of heorte” joins an array of armaments in the fight against temptation (IV.872).<sup>34</sup> Fleshly temptations are powerless over those who are “swote iheortet, eadmod, ant milde” (IV.1507).<sup>35</sup> The life of holiness is impossible without the “heorte þeawas” of “deuotium, reowfulness, riht luue, eadmodnesse, ant uertuz oþre

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<sup>29</sup> “... so blinds the heart”; “cannot know truth.”

<sup>30</sup> “... while the heart within boils with wrath”; “lust is hot towards any sin.”

<sup>31</sup> “... as soon as he loses mild-heartedness, he loses human nature.”

<sup>32</sup> See p. 60 of this thesis.

<sup>33</sup> “... humility of a mild and meek heart”; “endurance of suffering.”

<sup>34</sup> “Generosity of heart.”

<sup>35</sup> “... sweet-hearted, humble and mild.”

swucche” (VI.288-89).<sup>36</sup> The anchoress is to imitate the contemplative Mary “wið griðfullnesse of heorte” (VIII.93-94).<sup>37</sup>

The heart, and therefore *inwit*, is more than a moral judge. It, like the monastic conscience, is the moral centre of the person that is wounded by wrong actions and produces wrong actions when wounded. But even that is reductive. The moral faculty is nature or *cunde*. It is therefore insufficient to read the *AW* author’s stated emphasis on conscience as reductive because conscience in the text refers to the nature in which one exists and not just the impartial moral evaluation of actions. It is a nature that is wounded and diseased, but can be restored to spiritual health. The alignment of the moral faculty with *cunde* is thus an indirect affirmation of the goodness that endures in fallen human nature, a positive expression of human dignity that scholarship on the text has seldom acknowledged. The author does not dwell on the image of God within the soul to the extent that a writer like Bernard of Clairvaux does, but his affirmation of the soul’s initial goodness reflects Peter of Celle’s emphasis on the conscience that must come to know itself “pulchra inter mulieres” (194/4).<sup>38</sup>

### 3. Will and Desire

The author of the *AW* associates the will with the heart. He exhorts the sisters “beon aa wið anness of an heorte ant of a wil ilimet togederes” (IV.1073-74).<sup>39</sup> The commandment comes after an excursus on unity, than which the author claims “nis þing under sunne þet me is leouere, ne se leof þet 3e habben” (IV.1016-17).<sup>40</sup> The heart is therefore volitional. Its choosing facilitates unity and harmony between the anchoresses and, by implication, the larger Christian community from which they are physically isolated. The

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<sup>36</sup> “... heart virtues”; “... devotion, compassion, right love, humility and other such virtues.”

<sup>37</sup> “... serenity of heart.”

<sup>38</sup> Peter of Celle, *De Conscientia*, in *La Spiritualité De Pierre De Celle*, by Jean Leclercq, OSB, vol. 7, *Etudes De Theologie Et D’Histoire De La Spiritualité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1946), 194, “... beautiful amongst women.” See p. 57 of this thesis. For an account of the role of the image and likeness of God in Bernard’s thought, see Étienne Gilson, *The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 116.

<sup>39</sup> “... be always joined together with the unity of one heart and of one will.”

<sup>40</sup> “... there is nothing under the sun that is dearer to me, nor that you should hold so dear.”

heart thus chooses, prefers, and inclines towards things as the monastic conscience does.<sup>41</sup> The author instructs the anchoress to offer prayers in honour of the saints “as ow bereð on heorte” (I.181), indicating that the heart’s inclinations can be attuned so that pursuing them is beneficial rather than detrimental.<sup>42</sup> Anyone who submits to temptation is, by contrast, is said to “buheð hire heorte” (IV.1274).<sup>43</sup> The instrument that enables the outworking of the spiritual life, inclining the person towards God and beneficial things, is also the part of the person that consents to and participates in sin.

The will, more importantly, is the principal victim of the heart’s moral wounds. Lechery’s arrows are the light eyes. In other words, the will is corrupted before corrupted action comes about; the eyes would not be light if the will did not make them light. The will makes them light because it is wounded, diseased, and morally infected by lechery.

The heart’s choosing and preferring in particular foregrounds the identification of will with desire. The two were traditionally identified with one another, and are here as well.<sup>44</sup> Desire is central to the anchoritic life and the spirituality of the text. The anchoress “fleoð uppart toward heouene” by means of “ʒirnunge of heorte to heouenliche þinges” (III.173-74).<sup>45</sup> Desire also directly affects the heart’s moral capacity; the heart’s moral wounds principally involve desire. Spiritual blindness, in particular, comes about when “lust is hat toward eani sunne.” (III.22-23).<sup>46</sup> The “beore of heui slawðe,” (IV.350) fourth of the deadly sins, has eight whelps, the first three of which are conditions of the heart’s desire.<sup>47</sup> *Torpor* is the “heorte vnlust to eni þing þe schulde leitin al o lei i luue of ure Lauerd” (IV.350-

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<sup>41</sup> See pp. 63, 88, and 97 of this thesis.

<sup>42</sup> “... as [it] come to you in the heart.” See also Alison Renshaw, “The Authoritative Conscience,” in *Authority and Community in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ian P. Wei, Donald Mowbray, and Rhiannon Purdie (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 145, for discussion of a similar phenomenon in later English confessional literature.

<sup>43</sup> “... bow her heart.”

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Martina Stepinova, OP, “Aquinas’ Solution of Aristotle’s Incontinent Man and Augustine’s Two Wills,” *New Blackfriars* 92 (2009): 325.

<sup>45</sup> “... flies upwards towards heaven”; “... yearning of heart for heavenly things.”

<sup>46</sup> “... lust [or desire] is hot towards any sin.”

<sup>47</sup> “... the bear of heavy sloth.”

52).<sup>48</sup> *Pusillanimitas* is the heart that is too poor to hope for God's help and grace (IV.352-55). The third, *Cordis Grauitas*, affects the heart much like anger. It afflicts "hwa-se wurcheð god," but does so "mid a dead ant mid a heui heorte" (IV.355-56).<sup>49</sup> Desire, in this case, is vital since rightly directed desire is a flight toward heaven and wrongly directed desire prevents prayer, devotion, and any other good work. The morally wounded heart inclines towards evil and bars itself from heaven because it cannot desire correctly. Moral wounds and corrupt desire are therefore one and the same; they cannot be distinguished. Since moral wounds are a property of the conscience, it follows that desire is as well. Cultivation of the conscience is therefore also cultivation of desire.

Will and desire give rise to enjoyment. Augustine defines enjoyment as a function of the will, thus the person who enjoys "assumit ... aliquid in facultatem voluntatis."<sup>50</sup> The *AW* author concurs, and this too appears in the discussion of morality. Hence fleshly lusts become culpable when they cause the heart "delit." (IV.1394).

Past scholarship on the *AW* has questioned the nature of desire in the text. Elizabeth Robertson argues that the *AW* focuses on bodily rather than spiritual desire. Union with God in the text involves "transformation of earthly desire into desire for Christ."<sup>51</sup> Robertson argues that the text's "experience of Christ is not a transcendence of the desires of the flesh, but rather a transference of those desires to Christ."<sup>52</sup> Robertson is certainly correct that the *AW* is rife with corporeal imagery. Her reading raises the question: is the heart's desire only bodily, or can it also desire God? Is it simply a means of regulating spiritually troublesome bodily inclinations, making the most of defective resources, or does it have spiritually positive value as in the conscience texts?

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<sup>48</sup> "... the heart not desirous for anything, which should blaze all on fire in the love of our Lord."

<sup>49</sup> "... whosoever does good"; "... with a dead and heavy heart."

<sup>50</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate*, X.17, (PL 42:982), "takes something up in the faculty of the will."

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 58.

<sup>52</sup> Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*, 67.

Robertson's reading employs modern rather than medieval categories and as such obscures the distinctions relevant to medieval readers. Her reading depends largely on a distinction between reason and emotion. The dichotomy of reason and emotion is certainly relevant to medieval literature. Alastair Minnis describes the thirteenth-century view that "human sciences work through the comprehension of truth by human reason, whereas sacred Scripture works through the inculcation of a pious disposition (*secundum affectum pietatis*) in men."<sup>53</sup> Robertson's application of the reason-emotion dichotomy, however, is problematic. Robertson designates the mysticism of Bernard of Clairvaux as intellectual, because Bernard uses material reality as a starting point for theological abstraction.<sup>54</sup> The *AW* author stops short of teaching doctrine, instead preferring the material imagery of Christ's Passion in order to evoke desire and love.<sup>55</sup> Robertson thus classifies the *AW* author's approach emotional. Intellect, according to Robertson, is more spiritual and emotion less.

The problem with this reading becomes apparent when Bernard's spirituality is considered in context. Robertson is right to note a difference between Bernard and the *AW*, but the difference is not based on the opposition between intellect and emotion. Étienne Gilson has shown that Bernard's mysticism focuses on the cultivation of a pure and selfless love.<sup>56</sup> Gordon Rudy argues that, for Bernard, "the human person has a single sensorium that can be directed both to material and bodily things and to spiritual and divine things."<sup>57</sup> Bernard accordingly "uses sensory language extensively to discuss how we know and achieve

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<sup>53</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 119.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Robertson's comparison of Bernard's *De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae* with the *AW*. Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*, 55.

<sup>55</sup> Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*, 69-70, 72.

<sup>56</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology*, 86.

<sup>57</sup> Gordon Rudy, *The Mystical Language of Sensation in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2002), 45. Rudy conducts an extensive survey of Bernard's sensory language in the *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*. Of particular note here, Rudy observes that "Bernard emphasises that 'it is not our bodies but our sins that stand in the way' of union with God ... [obstant, non corpora, sed peccata]." Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation*, 47. See Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum* LVI.3, (*PL* 183:1048).

union with God.”<sup>58</sup> Gilson writes that Bernard’s aim is “to restore a love of God, corrupted into love of self, to its original state of a love of God.”<sup>59</sup> Emotion is an integral part of the goal. Denys Turner finds an “emotional continuity between the language of the Song and the language of [Bernard’s] *Sermons*,” which is not always the case in the medieval Song commentary tradition.<sup>60</sup> James Zona analyses Bernard’s varied lexis of love and finds that, for Bernard, “[d]esire should burn for the pleasure of the Beloved’s presence ardently and grow in the intensity of its longing for delight in him if it is to become love.”<sup>61</sup> The final union with God remains spiritual rather than corporeal and is not devalued on account of its emotional qualities. Gilson notes that “union with God must be exclusively spiritual. ... [I]t is not to be effected by any knowledge of God in the mirror of creatures, nor even by any vision of God clothed in sensible images.”<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, “the body is necessary for the acquisition of ... science of God without which it would be impossible to hope for beatitude,” and the body “is so necessarily a part of man that it is no less than the cognitive instrument without which we could never attain our supernatural end.”<sup>63</sup> Zona further concludes that “Bernard never leaves behind this psycho-physical feeling of passionate and desirous love.”<sup>64</sup> Raffaele Fassetta similarly notes that Bernard’s nuptial allegory “expresses a profound truth, namely that our relationship with God involves not only our intellect but also our *affectus*, our affective powers, our desire.”<sup>65</sup>

Later English mystics take a similar approach. Walter Hilton, for instance, divides contemplation into three parts. The first part corresponds with Robertson’s

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<sup>58</sup> Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology*, 86.

<sup>60</sup> Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the “Song of Songs”* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 171.

<sup>61</sup> James W. Zona, “‘Set Love in Order in Me’: *Eros*-Knowing in Origen and *Desiderium*-Knowing in Saint Bernard,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1999): 170.

<sup>62</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, 93.

<sup>63</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, 109.

<sup>64</sup> Zona, “Set Love in Order,” 180.

<sup>65</sup> Raffaele Fassetta, OCSO, “The Christocentric and Nuptial Mysticism of Saint Bernard in the *Sermons on the Song of Songs*,” trans. Paul Rowe, OCSO, *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2014): 356-57.

intellectual spirituality. It consists of “knowynge of God and goosteli thynges geten by resoun” (*Scale* I.4). It is not a bad state of being, but Hilton designates it the lowest and least spiritual because “this maner of knowinge is comone to gode and to badde, for it may be had withoute charité” (I.4).

Hilton’s second part of contemplation corresponds to Robertson’s emotional spirituality. It “lieth principali in affeccoun, withoute undirstondynge of gosteli thynges” (I.5). It is the superior of the two, because it “mai not be had without greet grace” (I.5) and yet is open to “simple and unlettrid men” (I.5). The feelings involved result from meditation on Christ’s “passioun or of ony of His werkes in His manhede” (I.5) but are nevertheless a “fervour of love and gostli swettenesse” (I.5). Hilton’s third and final stage of contemplation “lieth bothe in cognicion and in affeccion: that is for to seie, in knowyng and in perfight lovyng of God” (I.8). Hilton is only one example of affective piety but he is not alone.<sup>66</sup>

The difference between Bernard and the *AW*, then, is not the opposition of reason and emotion. There is some contrast between emphasis on Christ incarnate and Christ ascended, but this is more a matter of emphasis than a matter of doctrine. The more significant difference between Bernard and the *AW* is an outgrowth of this different emphasis: the extent to which Christ is loved selflessly. Robertson’s reading maintains that the *AW* enjoins its anchoritic readers to love Christ on account of the goods he can give them.<sup>67</sup> The emphasis falls on Christ incarnate, Christ as a man and therefore the material, corporeal goods his incarnation might yield. Christ’s wooing speech in the *AW*, for instance, enumerates the benefits an anchoress might obtain by returning his love (VII.186-94). Robertson argues that love of Christ in the *AW* is therefore self-interested. Bernard, by contrast, would have his reader love God selflessly, and not on account of any goods God

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<sup>66</sup> See, for instance, Peter Dinzelbacher, “The Beginnings of Mysticism Experienced in Twelfth-Century England,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), for an account of affective piety prior to the *AW*.

<sup>67</sup> Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*, 70.



might give.

Robertson thus implicitly distinguishes two kinds of desire. She delineates the two kinds of desire based on the objects of desire. Desire for immaterial union with God is spiritual; desire for Christ depicted as a lover-knight is non-spiritual because bodily. Robertson's distinction corresponds to Bernard's distinction between *caritas* and *cupiditas*. Gilson describes Bernard's *cupiditas* as "a decision to will nothing save for ourselves and for our own sake" with the result that the "will becomes alienated from God's will."<sup>68</sup> It is, in short, "the twisting back upon self of a charity which has degenerated into cupidity."<sup>69</sup> Bernard's goal, then, is return right order by refocusing love back on God.<sup>70</sup>

The distinction between *caritas* and *cupiditas* was heavily influenced by Augustine. Augustine divides love, *amor*, into two categories based on the object of love. Love directed to the creature is *cupiditas* but love directed towards the Creator is *caritas*.<sup>71</sup> Peter Burnell argues that Augustine does not understand "*caritas* and *cupiditas* as exactly the same emotion differently directed," but rather that "each love is made what it is precisely by its object," and "[b]y virtue of its object each kind of love differently informs the soul."<sup>72</sup> Burnell goes as far as to argue that, for Augustine, the "soul's shape, as it were, is changed" by the object of love.<sup>73</sup> *Caritas* and *cupiditas* are therefore categorically different from one another.

Thomas Osborne argues that Peter Lombard, as one of the most influential theologians of the twelfth century, "presented Augustine's understanding of love in a context which was clearly influenced by Hugh [of St Victor]."<sup>74</sup> Hugh "emphasised the connection

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<sup>68</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, 55.

<sup>69</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, 55.

<sup>70</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, 86.

<sup>71</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, IX.13, (PL 42:967-68).

<sup>72</sup> Peter Burnell, *The Augustinian Person* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 60.

<sup>73</sup> Burnell, *The Augustinian Person*, 60.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas M. Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God in Thirteenth-Century Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 23. See also Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God*, 26. Osborne refers particularly to Peter Lombard *Sententiarum Libri Quatuor*, III.27, (PL 192:812).

between loving God and loving one's own good."<sup>75</sup> This resulted in the conclusion that "created goods are to be loved because God can be loved by loving them."<sup>76</sup> The distinction between *caritas* and *cupiditas* depends on the ordering of love rather than purely on its objects. The *AW* author expresses a similar view when he defines the pure heart: "þet 3e na þing ne wilnin ne ne luuien bute Godd ane, ant te ilke þinges for Godd þe helpeð ow toward him – for Godd, Ich segge, luuien ham, ant nawt for ham seoluen" (VII.31-33).<sup>77</sup> Images of Christ as a lover-knight may be material images, but they direct love to Christ. Thus the distinction between *caritas* and *cupiditas*, in contrast to Robertson's distinction, does not depend upon either the body or emotion. Robertson is right that the text exhibits a profusion of material, bodily images used as aids and means to spiritual devotion. Emotion and corporeality are not impediments to the cultivation of charity but, in fact, facilitate it.

The images in the *AW* evoke desire, but since the desire leads to God, it would fall under the heading of *caritas* rather than *cupiditas*. Robertson's characterisation of the desire as fleshly is therefore problematic because the desire of the *AW* does not belong to the sinful, fleshly, nature.<sup>78</sup> The presence of corporeal imagery in the *AW* reveals what kind of desire the author wished his readers to develop. It is a desire that can appropriate material and bodily images for spiritual purposes, much like desire in the conscience texts discussed thus far.<sup>79</sup> Robertson's reading of the *AW*, however, contributes a valuable and important insight: both beneficial and harmful desires occupy the heart. Her reading falls short, because the incitement to beneficial desire for Christ is not merely a means of regulating the sinful desires of the body. It has positive value in the same way that the conscience must be focused on

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<sup>75</sup> Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God*, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God*, 27.

<sup>77</sup> "... that you will nor love anything but God alone and the things for God's sake which help you toward him – love them for God, I say, and not for themselves."

<sup>78</sup> See Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*, 67.

<sup>79</sup> See pp. 65-69 of this thesis.

Christ in the monastic texts.<sup>80</sup>

Desire for God and worldly desire both occupy the heart and therefore the conscience. The need to focus desire on God, as opposed to anything or anyone else, is consequently urgent. Thus the images of Christ as a knight are not supposed to inspire love of knights, but love of Christ. The monastic conscience was oriented towards either good or evil. It is only a good conscience once this focusing of desire has been achieved.<sup>81</sup> The heart in the *AW* operates in the same way.

The imagery used to depict desire in the *AW* differs from the closely related AB language text, *Sawles Warde*. Comparison of the two further reveals the continuity between the *AW* and the conscience texts. *Sawles Warde* depicts the person as an unruly household that must be regulated by the virtues. Two messengers visit the house. The first relates the terrors of hell; the second describes the joys of heaven. The heart has little to do in *Sawles Warde* until the text's end, after the two messengers have finished speaking. The negligent man must "awecchen his heorte, þe i slep" by remembering the sights of hell and heaven.<sup>82</sup> He must "habben farlac of þet an, luue toward þet oðer."<sup>83</sup> Thoughts of this kind "ontent his heorte toward þe blisse of heouene."<sup>84</sup>

The main players in the text prior to that point are the virtues defending the house. The house, however, is embroiled in a conflict between the husband and wife. Wit is the husband and Will is the "fulitohe wif."<sup>85</sup> *Sawles Warde*, then, draws a distinction between the will and the heart that desires. Will in *Sawles Warde* is concerned with decidedly unspiritual interests when it is left to itself, much like *cupiditas*. The text concludes with the will being made subject to and ordered according to reason. The desiring subject ceases to be

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<sup>80</sup> See pp. 81 and 88 of this thesis.

<sup>81</sup> See pp. 97-98 of this thesis.

<sup>82</sup> R. M. Wilson, ed., *Sawles Warde: An Early Middle English Homily* (Leeds: Kendal, 1938), 186, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/Sawleswd>, "Awaken his heart which is asleep."

<sup>83</sup> Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 186, "... have fear of the one, love towards the other."

<sup>84</sup> Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 186, "... kindle his heart towards the bliss of heaven."

<sup>85</sup> Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 166, "... ill-mannered wife."

the troublesome, querulous will, and instead becomes the heart. The heart is concerned with matters of eternity in the same way that *caritas* is.

The *AW*, unlike *Sawles Warde*, envisions a strong connection between the heart and the will. The heart contains both *caritas* and *cupiditas*. Spiritually beneficial and harmful desires occupy the same space; desire for sin is an alternative to desire for Christ. Thus the heart can love Christ by meditating on his life and Passion, or it can escape into sin by way of the senses. King David's heart, for instance, "edbrec ... ut" at his sight of Bathsheba (II.17).<sup>86</sup>

The heart in the *AW*, then, differs from the heart in *Sawles Warde*. *Sawles Warde* treats the heart as a purely spiritual part of the person. It is the desire that has been awakened by thoughts of heaven or hell. The *AW*, by contrast, treats the heart as accessible by the senses, and thus it is the locus of both spiritual and non-spiritual desire.

The reason for the difference between the *AW* and *Sawles Warde* stems from the organising image in *Sawles Warde*. The narrative of *Sawles Warde* centres on the protection of a house from the incursions of a thief. The text defines the house vaguely as "seolf þe mon."<sup>87</sup> The Latin original, by contrast, makes the house the conscience: "domus est conscientia."<sup>88</sup> If the vague "seolf þe mon" is, in fact, the conscience then the heart in *Sawles Warde* is not the conscience because the heart is not the house. The heart in the *AW* and the heart in *Sawles Warde* are therefore not the same entity. The conscience in *Sawles Warde* contains both the heart and the will which it identifies as the inclination towards good and the inclination towards evil respectively. The heart in the *AW* is the conscience and contains both *caritas* and *cupiditas*. Thus the English texts diverge in imagery and terminology but express the same underlying conception of desire and conscience which is also the same conception found in the contemplative conscience texts.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> "... broke out."

<sup>87</sup> Wilson, *Sawles Warde*, 166, "... the man's self."

<sup>88</sup> *PL* 177:185B, "... the house is the conscience."

<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, p. 98 of this thesis.

The *AW* also participates in the classical conception of *caritas* with regards to the fulfilment of desire. Augustine, for instance, makes the love of virtue its own satisfaction since “[q]ui ... perfecte novit, perfecteque amat justitiam, jam justus est,” and thus “voluntas in ipsa ... conquiescit.”<sup>90</sup> One can therefore be satisfied in the absence of any action. *Cupiditas* lacks this property. Its satisfaction requires activity. It is not enough for greed “nosse et amare aurum, nisi et habeat.”<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Osborne notes that the older “Augustine became pessimistic about the possibility of happiness in the present life” since “[t]he cardinal virtues are not of themselves sufficient for a happy life, because they involve an element of struggle or imperfection.”<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, “charity will be augmented and fulfilled” in heaven, but not until then.<sup>93</sup> Gilson similarly notes that, for Bernard, “never, in any state, is human love for God in this life an absolutely pure love.”<sup>94</sup>

Rightly-directed desire is not fulfilled in the *AW*. The *AW* converts the chasm between desire and fulfilment into a spiritually beneficial condition, because it enables the heart or conscience to exist in a state of continual desire focused on God. Satisfaction of desire would, in fact, undermine desire. The author borrows from Gregory the Great’s *Moralia in Iob* and likens the spiritual life to digging for buried treasure: “eauer se he mare nahheð hit, se his heortes gleadschipe madeð him mare lusti ant mare fersch to diggin, ant deluen deoppre ant deoppre aðet he hit finde” (II.914-16).<sup>95</sup> The treasure is in heaven, and thus the author explains the digging as “beon bisiliche ant ʒeornfulliche eauer her-abuten, wið anewil ʒirnunge, wið heate of hungri heorte waden up of unþeawes” (II.923-25).<sup>96</sup> Desire

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.14, (PL42:968), “... the one who perfectly knows and perfectly loves justice is already just”; Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.14, (PL42:968), “... the will rests in itself.”

<sup>91</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX.14, (PL 42:968), “... to know and to love gold, unless it should also have [gold].”

<sup>92</sup> Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Osborne, *Love of Self and Love of God*, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Gilson, *Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard*, 88.

<sup>95</sup> Bella Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 98-99; “always, the more he nears it the joy of his heart makes him more desirous and more eager to dig and delve deeper and deeper until he find it.” See Gregory the Great, *Moralium Libri Sive Expositio in Librum Job* V.5.7, (PL 75:683).

<sup>96</sup> “... to be busily and eagerly always about it, with single-willed yearning, with the heat of a hungry heart to

increases the closer its fulfilment becomes. The implication is, however, that the fulfilment of desire is not obtained because the anchoress must always cultivate desire. The digging image appears within the context of another image borrowed from Gregory: the boat rowing upstream. The treasure-digging is also “þe uprowunge aʒein þis worlde stream – þa þe heorte walde lihten lihtliche adun mid te stream, driven hire aʒeinward to deluen” (II.918-21).<sup>97</sup> The author links the two images together with the verb *waden* when he says that the anchoress must “waden up of unþeawes” (II.925).<sup>98</sup> Desire is the means to counter the constant deluge of worldly vices. It is also the means by which the anchoress “fleoð uppart toward heouene” (III.173-74).<sup>99</sup> Moral wellbeing and desire for God once again occupy the same space – namely, the heart-conscience. They result in an ongoing contemplative flight, rather than ascent to a final point of union.

#### 4. Charity

Love, understood as *caritas*, belongs to the heart and therefore the conscience in the *AW*. The author makes it the basis of his text and spirituality. The Preface opens with a citation from Canticles 1:3: “Recti diligunt te” (P.1).<sup>100</sup> The author explains “þeo beoð rihte þe liuieð efter riwle” (P.9).<sup>101</sup> There are many kinds of rule, but the important one for the author is the inner rule, and “þeos riwle is chearite of schir heorte and cleane inwit” (P.17-18).<sup>102</sup> The object of the rule and therefore of the text is cultivating the love of God. The relationship between charity and *inwit* has been, as we have seen, a source of difficulty for modern readers of the *AW*. Mary Baldwin, in particular, problematizes the relation when she states that “[c]onscience receives a greater emphasis in the Introduction [to the *AW*] than

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wade up from vices.”

<sup>97</sup> Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 2:97; “... the rowing against this world’s stream – though the heart would lightly fall down with the stream – and to drive against the stream, to dig.” See Gregory the Great, *Regulae Pastoralis Liber III.34*, (PL 77:118).

<sup>98</sup> “... to wade up out of vices.”

<sup>99</sup> “... flies upwards towards heaven.”

<sup>100</sup> “The righteous love you.”

<sup>101</sup> “... they are righteous who live according to a rule.”

<sup>102</sup> “... this rule is the charity of a pure heart and a clean conscience.”

love,” placing the conscience and love in opposition to one another.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen from the preceding chapters, however, love and conscience should not automatically be regarded as opposing faculties.

The moral life is indisputably central to the *AW*. The text’s longest section is devoted to combating temptation, and the two succeeding sections focus on confession and penance. The *Concordance to Ancrene Wisse* nevertheless notes that *luue* and its various forms appear at least two hundred and forty-eight times throughout the text.<sup>104</sup> The love-conscience relationship thus raises some important questions. Is it necessary, as Baldwin maintains, to reconsider “the meaning of charity in *AW* as a whole,” or would it be better to reconsider the meaning of conscience?<sup>105</sup> What is the relationship between love and the moral life?

The question has two potential answers. The implication of Baldwin’s reading is that love of God is associated with the heart because the heart is a moral faculty and it is a moral duty to love God. Love, according to Baldwin, “seems to consist in a pure heart and a clear conscience, and it rules the heart by keeping it free from sin.”<sup>106</sup> Baldwin understands the *AW* author’s statement that a clean conscience is “freedom from sin that has not been amended in confession” as an exhaustive statement of his definition of conscience.<sup>107</sup> Conscience, in Baldwin’s reading, is a record of actions. If charity is reduced to conscience, then love of God simply means having a clean behavioural record. The author, in this reading, does not intend the anchoresses to love God in any sort of positive way.

The alternative to Baldwin’s position is that the *AW* author associates love with the heart because he understands conscience in a way similar to, and influenced by, the

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<sup>103</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 33.

<sup>104</sup> *Concordance to Ancrene Wisse*, s.vv. ‘luue,’ ‘luuede,’ ‘luueden,’ ‘luuedest,’ ‘luuen,’ ‘luues,’ ‘luuest,’ ‘luueð,’ ‘luuie,’ ‘luuien,’ ‘luuieð.’

<sup>105</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 33.

<sup>106</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 33.

<sup>107</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 32.

monastic conscience texts. The conscience is the capacity to love God.<sup>108</sup> Heart and conscience are aligned and, as we have seen, the will and desire belong to the heart.

Baldwin supports her position with the author's enumeration of moral obligations in the Preface. The author, she argues, undermines love's primacy by placing charity in the midst of a list of virtues and practices: "chearite, þet is luue, ant eadmodnesse ant þolemmodnesse, treowschipe ant haldunge of alle þe ten heastes, schrift ant penitence, þeos and þulliche oþre, þe beoð summe of þe alde lahe, summe of þe neowe" (P.75-78).<sup>109</sup> Everyone, but especially the anchoress, must carry out each of these practices. Baldwin rightly finds it "noticeable that charity is listed as a requirement on the same level with the other virtues and is not distinguished from the commandments of the old law, or from confession and penance."<sup>110</sup> *Chearite* comes first on the list, but is still only one of at least ten behaviours, some of which are categorical labels rather than individual commandments. The list's conclusion – "for þeos riwlið þe heorte" (P.80) – implies that each of the obligations itemised is equal with the others and therefore equal to the love that constitutes the inner rule (P.17-18).<sup>111</sup> The arrangement thus, according to Baldwin, dethrones *chearite* from its earlier position as that which rules the heart. It only pertains to the heart insofar as the heart is a moral faculty, a record of unbecoming behaviour. Baldwin claims that conventionally understood charity cannot be central to the *AW* because "it does not emerge until Part 7."<sup>112</sup>

The list in the Preface, however, does not exist in a vacuum and is not isolated from the rest of the text. The remainder of this section uses a close reading of the *AW* to argue that, contrary to Baldwin's position, the *AW* agrees with the contemplative conscience texts in its understanding of charity.

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<sup>108</sup> See, for instance, p. 64 of this thesis.

<sup>109</sup> "... charity, that is love, and humility, and suffering, faithfulness and the holding of all the Ten Commandments, confession and penitence, these and similar others, some of which are from the old law and some from the new."

<sup>110</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 33.

<sup>111</sup> "... for these rule the heart."

<sup>112</sup> Baldwin, "*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background," 33.



The author declares at the outset that the inner rule is charity, first in Latin then in English. The Latin passage is partially his own and partially an abbreviated biblical citation from 1 Timothy 1:5 (P.16-17). An English gloss follows: “[þ]eos riwle is chearite of schir heorte ant cleane inwit ant treowe bileaue” (P.17-18).<sup>113</sup>

The citation differs from the author’s usual style. He customarily cites a text in Latin. If his citation is incomplete, he uses an *et cetera* as indication. Most of his creative appropriations of texts appear in his vernacular glosses. These become a useful avenue through which to approach the *AW* and the ideas within it as distinct from the sources it follows.<sup>114</sup> The author modifies 1 Timothy 1:5 in Latin, however, instead of in English. He omits the first part of the quoted sentence rather than its end, and introduces it with an original Latin clause of his own. The modifications allow him to cite the biblical text verbatim, but altering the grammar and therefore the emphasis of the passage.

The Vulgate text of 1 Timothy 1:5 reads: “finis autem praecepti est caritas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta.”<sup>115</sup> The *AW*, by contrast, has: “Et hec est caritas quam describit Apostolus de corde puro et consciencia bona et fide non ficta” (P.16-17).<sup>116</sup> Charity is no longer the end or goal of instruction. It is the instruction itself, and the *praeceptum* is transformed into a *riwle* in English. Charity, then, is the heart’s discipline and not the outcome of discipline. The *AW* thus concurs with Peter of Celle, for whom love and discipline are ultimately synonymous, as the first chapter of this thesis demonstrates.<sup>117</sup> The *AW* author revisits this claim in the seventh part of the text, which he devotes to love and the inner rule as “þe riwle þe riwleð þe heorte” (VII.167).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> “... this rule is charity of a pure heart and clean ‘inwit’ and true faith.”

<sup>114</sup> See Nicholas Perkins, “Reading the Bible in *Sawles Warde* and *Ancrene Wisse*,” *Medium Aevum* 72 no. 2 (2003): 207-237 for a lengthier analysis of the author’s reappropriation of biblical within the literary and rhetorical framework of the *AW*.

<sup>115</sup> “... but the end of the instruction is charity from a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith.”

<sup>116</sup> “And this is the charity which the apostle describes, concerning the pure heart and good conscience and unfeigned faith.”

<sup>117</sup> See pp. 73-74 of this thesis.

<sup>118</sup> “... the rule that rules the heart.”

The seventh part of the *AW* is the most relevant to our understanding of the relation between heart and love since it “is al of luue þe makeð schir heorte” (VI.497).<sup>119</sup> The author clearly distinguishes love from the other virtues when he invokes Paul’s authority and claims that “al is ase nawt azeines luue, þe schireð ant brihteð þe heorte” (VII.2-3).<sup>120</sup> The gloss once again proves illuminating. Nicholas Perkins observes that “[t]he scriptural ‘pietas’ is assimilated to the English ‘schir heorte’ without further explanation.”<sup>121</sup> The scriptural text cited (1 Timothy 4:8) refers to righteousness rather than charity, and makes no mention of the heart at all. The author interpolates *caritas* from 1 Corinthians 13, the chapter which he proceeds to cite in the following sentence.

Baldwin notes as much but argues that, since “Part 7 does not define purity of heart as purity of conscience but as charity,” it is at variance with the author’s preface.<sup>122</sup> The author’s gloss on 1 Timothy 4:8, according to Baldwin, makes “clear that ‘love that makes pure and brightens the heart,’ ‘piety,’ and ‘sweet and pure heart’ are equivalent terms in opposition to ‘exterior hardships,’ ‘mortification of the flesh,’ ‘corporal works,’ ‘discipline of the body,’ [and] ‘physical activity.’”<sup>123</sup> Baldwin uses the contrasting sets of terms to cement her conclusion that the Preface and Part VII of the *AW* are at odds with one another. Her reading of the gloss on 1 Timothy 4:8, however, hinges on an unsupported assumption: she maintains that “the author translates the ... text from St. Paul.”<sup>124</sup> We have already seen, however, that the vernacular glosses on Latin texts are closer to adaptations than direct translations.

The Latin version of the *AW* provides evidence of how the text was understood by its medieval readers. The *AW* author’s method of glossing presented a problem that further

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<sup>119</sup> “... all about the love that makes the heart pure.”

<sup>120</sup> “... all is as nothing against love, which purifies and brightens the heart.”

<sup>121</sup> Nicholas Perkins, “Reading the Bible in *Sawles Warde* and *Ancrene Wisse*,” *Medium Aevum* 72 no. 2 (2003): 207-237, 217.

<sup>122</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 101.

<sup>123</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 95.

<sup>124</sup> Baldwin, “*Ancrene Wisse* and its Background,” 95.

highlights the inexactness of the vernacular glosses. Perkins, for example, finds the Latin translator's handling of 1 Corinthians 13 in Part VII a "relative failure" since "[t]he Latin text, of course, cannot translate scriptural citations."<sup>125</sup> The translator's treatment of 1 Timothy 4:8 is just as awkward. The Latin introduction to Part VII of the *AW* reads much like the English: "Beatus Paulus testatur quod omnes exteriores asperitates, omnes carnis afflictiones et corporis labores sunt quasi nichil in comparatione ad dilectionem que serenat et clarificat cor."<sup>126</sup> It is, in other words, a paraphrase of 1 Timothy 4:8. Direct citation of the biblical passage follows and thus renders the paraphrase redundant since the whole text is already in Latin. The difference between text and gloss is sufficient to warrant the translator's inclusion of both if he is to accurately convey the sense of the *AW* author's English original. The Pauline text refers to *pietas* but the paraphrase refers to *dilectionem*. The two words are not equivalent. The translator attempts to resolve the problem by reconciling 1 Timothy 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 13 with the explanatory note "[c]aritatem, id est, dilectionem ad Deum."<sup>127</sup> *Pietas* simply disappears, rushed out of sight as quickly as possible. The *AW* author's use of the English *luue* to gloss *pietas* is therefore insufficient grounds for concluding that he redefines charity as duty.

Perkins' reading of Part VII is more convincing than Baldwin's. He argues, in direct response to Baldwin, that "the author fuses both concepts – those of purity in the sense of piety, and the heart as the seat of love" by predicating the adjective *schir* of both.<sup>128</sup> The author only applies *schir* to three things throughout the text: *inwit* (P.41), *heorte* (e.g. P.18), and *bone* (IV.962). *Chearite* and *cleane inwit* are clearly, as Perkins argues, closely related throughout the *AW*. Baldwin's differentiation of the pure heart in the Preface and the pure

<sup>125</sup> Perkins, "Reading the Bible," 218.

<sup>126</sup> Charlotte D'Evelyn, ed., *The Latin Text of the Ancrene Riwe Edited from Merton College MS 44 and British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius E vii* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 150-51, "Blessed Paul witnesses that all external severities, all afflictions of the flesh and labours of the body are as nothing in comparison to the love which brightens the heart and makes it clear."

<sup>127</sup> D'Evelyn, *Latin Text*, 151, "... charity, that is love towards God."

<sup>128</sup> Perkins, "Reading the Bible," 223-24.

heart in Part VII is unnecessary. Love as love retains distinctive characteristics of its own. It changes the quality and character of the heart throughout the text in ways that the other virtues do not.

Love “makeð schir heorte” (VI.497) and “schireð ant brihteð þe heorte” (VII.2-3); the only appearance of the verb *schireð* in the *AW*.<sup>129</sup> The *schir heorte* is thus the resultant condition that love creates by working upon the heart. Love’s distinctness from and priority over the other virtues lies herein. It effectively alters the character of the heart. The author’s imagery, particularly the imagery of fire, supports this idea.

Fire and burning signify love’s presence and the change it effects in the heart. An observer “maht underȝeoten þet ter was lute fur of chearite, þet leiteð al of ure Lauertes lue; lute fur wes þer þrof þet a puf acwencte” (III.94-96).<sup>130</sup> Insults from others ought to aid spiritual progress by kindling love “for þear-as muche fur is, hit waxeð wið winde” (III.96).<sup>131</sup> The author instructs his reader to think of the insults they receive as air and only air. The air ought to fan the reader’s love of God into flame. The metaphor serves two purposes. It affords the opportunity to depict love while teaching moral discipline (in this case, patience). It also allows the author to simultaneously stir the reader’s affections by way of the traditional image of fire. The author enables the reader to affectively experience love of God by opposing the image of fire to the experience of the insults that must be endured. If the insults of others are affectively felt, then the fire they kindle can be felt as well.

Fire resurfaces as love in the description of “þe beore of heui slawðe” (IV.350) amidst the catalogue of temptations in Part IV.<sup>132</sup> The occurrence of fire language here is more expressly affective. *Torpor* is a vice because the heart “schulde leitín al o lei i lue of

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<sup>129</sup> *Concordance to Ancrene Wisse*, s.v. ‘schireð.’

<sup>130</sup> “... might understand that there was little fire of charity, which blazes all for love of our Lord; it was a little fire that was quenched by a puff.”

<sup>131</sup> “... for where there is much fire, it grows with wind.”

<sup>132</sup> “... the bear of heavy sloth.”

ure Lauerd” (IV.351-52).<sup>133</sup> The characterisation of a heart “o lei i luue” carries more affective force than the “fur of chearite” in Part III. The “fur of chearite” was the subject of the verb *leiteð* in Part III. There charity and not the heart “leiteð al of ure Lauerdes luue” (III.95). Part IV differs. The heart is now the subject of the verbal construction “schulde leitin.” Charity transforms the quality of the heart by setting it on fire.

The fire imagery reaches its climax in Part VII. The author uses fire and burning to depict Christ’s wooing. Christ himself appears as “þe soðe sunne” (VII.230) who “spreaden oueral hate luue gleames” (VII.231).<sup>134</sup> The author explains that Christ’s words in Luke 12:49, “[i]gnem veni mittere in terram” (VII.233), refer to “bearninde luue into eorðlich heorte” (VII.235).<sup>135</sup> The heart receives its love for Christ from Christ. It is essentially passive. The construction of this love thus requires Christ’s participation, much as Peter of Celle’s conscience did.<sup>136</sup>

The allegory that immediately follows reverses the passivity of love and instructs the anchoress to “gederið wude” (VII.244), specifically “twa treon” (VII.247) which “bitacnið ... þe deore rode” (VII.248-49).<sup>137</sup> The author proceeds to reconcile the two opposing images of passivity and activity by assuring the anchoress that if God “ifint ow þeos twa treow gederin, he wule gestnin wið ow, ant monifalden in ow his deorewurðe grace” (VII.253-56).<sup>138</sup> The burning of love, then, is sent from God into the heart. It is received, but it has an important precondition: the allegorical gathering of wood with which “þe schulen ontende fur of luue inwið ower heorte” (VII.249-50).<sup>139</sup> The fire comes about as the culmination of the collaborative labours undertaken by God and the anchoress.

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<sup>133</sup> “... should blaze all alight in love of our Lord.”

<sup>134</sup> “... the true sun”; “... spreads hot love-gleams over everything.”

<sup>135</sup> “I have come to send fire into the earth”; “... burning love into earthly hearts.”

<sup>136</sup> See, for instance, pp. 84-85 of this thesis.

<sup>137</sup> “... gather wood”; “... two pieces of wood”; “... signify the dear cross.”

<sup>138</sup> “... finds you gathering these two pieces of wood, he will lodge with you and multiply his precious grace in you.”

<sup>139</sup> “... you shall kindle the fire of love within your heart.”

The love of Christ intensifies into “Grikisch fur” (VII.257). It is stronger than other kinds of fire because “ne mei na þing bute migge ant sond ant eisil ... acwenchen” it (VII.258-59).<sup>140</sup> It represents a fusing of the passive love received from Christ, and the active love wrought by the earlier gathering of wood. The anchoress “hit schule makien” from Christ “ireadet wið his ahne blod o þe deore rode” (VII.259-261).<sup>141</sup> The author switches from the passive to active voice at the mention of the cross. Now Christ’s “blod, for ow isched upo þe earre twa treon, schal makien ow ... ontende mid tis Grickisch fur” (VII.263-64).<sup>142</sup>

Gathering wood and production of Greek fire encompass two activities. Meditation is the first. The anchoress must “[b]iseoð ofte towart ham; þenched 3ef 3e ne ahen eaðe to luuien þe king of blisse” (VII.250-51).<sup>143</sup> The meditation signified by gathering wood becomes, by implication, the essential ingredient in Greek fire. The author does not explain the practical signification of the metaphorical instruction to make fire from Christ’s blood, but the context of the passage indicates that it also involves meditation. The second activity does not produce Greek fire, but prevents the fire from going out. It is to “[s]turieð ow cwicliche aa i gode werkes” which “schal heaten ow ant ontenden þis fur a3ein þe brune of sunne” (VII.269-70).<sup>144</sup> The author introduces it as a protective measure against the few things capable of quenching Greek fire. The result of both activities is the same. Meditation on Christ and good works combine in love of God, intersecting like the two beams of the cross. There is no dividing wedge between the two.

Grayson argues that the fire imagery in Part VII serves a much larger purpose:

“The heart fired with love becomes the dominant image into which all the other figures and

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<sup>140</sup> “... nothing but urine and sand and vinegar can quench it.”

<sup>141</sup> “... shall make it”; “... red with his own blood on the dear cross.”

<sup>142</sup> “... blood, shed for you upon the aforementioned two pieces of wood, shall make you burn with this Greek fire.”

<sup>143</sup> “... look often towards him, think whether you ought not readily love the king of bliss.”

<sup>144</sup> “... always stir yourself vigorously in good works”; “shall heat you and kindle this fire against the burning of sin.”

emotional qualities flow.”<sup>145</sup> The appearance of fire draws together and encompasses the disparate strands of thought and imagery that have preceded it. Thus “[t]he two sticks, upright and crossbar, dissolve into the figure of the crucifix” that has featured prominently throughout the *AW*.<sup>146</sup> The fire of love is read back into all the appearances of the crucifix. Similarly, “[t]he figure of the crucified Son ... carries forward the metaphor of radiant sun and calls up the recent elaboration of Christ as shield.”<sup>147</sup> The description of Christ visiting the anchoress as Elijah visited the woman of Sarepta “encloses physically the mystical kiss of the mouth” and recalls “the reference to the kiss of peace in Part One.”<sup>148</sup> The seventh part of the *AW* thus imbues the imagery of the earlier parts with new meaning for future readings and re-readings of the text. The *AW*, as McHugh argues in a passage cited at the opening of this chapter, “forms a paradigm within which other material will be organised.”<sup>149</sup> The author’s reservation of charity until the penultimate section of the *AW* is therefore not evidence of Baldwin’s position that charity is unimportant to the text. Charity is rather the interpretative key that enables the reader to structure their own thought, memory, life, and reading of the text.

The author of the *AW* uses the heart as the conscience to fuse moral discipline and love together. Obedience to a rule fosters both. The author structures the text in such a way that love, the interpretative key to the whole text, is only fully explicated towards the end of the text. Love underlies all the moral and ascetic disciplines that the *AW* author presents and prescribes. This is the same strategy that Peter of Celle employs in his *De Conscientia*. Peter, as argued in the first chapter, divides the acquisition of conscience into three stages: fear, discipline, and love. He sets the stages out sequentially, but reveals that they are inseparable from one another and thus develop simultaneously because love and discipline are ultimately

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<sup>145</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 205.

<sup>146</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 204.

<sup>147</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 203

<sup>148</sup> Grayson, *Structure and Imagery*, 204.

<sup>149</sup> McHugh, “Inner Space as Speaking Space,” 84.

identical.<sup>150</sup> Reading the *AW* in the tradition of conscience literature resolves the perceived contradiction between the text's emphases on conscience and love.

## 5. Thought of the Heart

The *AW* author frequently depicts the heart as both the locus and the means of rational thought. The heart is associated with the understanding, in addition to the will and desire. There are three main kinds of heart-thought association.

The first is the author's association of the heart with reason and understanding as faculties. The citation and gloss of James 1:26 (II.410-13) reveal the heart susceptible to deception.<sup>151</sup> It must, therefore, possess a thinking, believing capacity. The author develops the idea further through his recurrent depiction of reason as a protector or "zeteward" (IV.1340) of the heart, particularly in Part IV. He warns, for instance, that if the devil "sið slepi ure skile" (IV.1364) he will attempt to stir up memories of past sins and parade them "biuore þe heorte ehnen forte bifulen hire wið þoht of alde sunnen" (IV.1369).<sup>152</sup> The reason can thus function as a perverse subsequent conscience that reflects upon past sins in order to enjoy them rather than condemn them. It must be strengthened and fortified in order to judge rightly.

The second association sees the heart's thoughts directed against sin. The author instructs his readers to bear the Cross "i þoht of heorte," (III.185-86). The anchoress has control over the thoughts of her heart and is therefore capable of summoning them so that they "wiðute neod arearet i þe heorte" (IV.904) as a means of combating temptation. The devil himself must be driven back in similar fashion, "mid nempnunge i þi muð, mid te

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<sup>150</sup> See p. 93 of this thesis.

<sup>151</sup> The passage is a quotation from the New Testament, but is significant nonetheless because the author renders it very closely into English, unlike other passages where his translation is considerably freer, depending on the use he makes of a particular text.

<sup>152</sup> "... sees our 'skile' sleep"; "... before the heart-eyes in order to befoul it [the heart] with thought of old sins."



mearke i þin hond, mid þoht i þin heorte” (IV.1601-602).<sup>153</sup>

The third kind of association between heart and thought is similar to the second. The heart’s thoughts are once more directed towards a particular goal, and effective to attain it. They operate in a meditative capacity. The anchoress should “[c]reop in” Christ’s wounds “wið þi þoht ... ant wið his deorewurðe blod biblodge þin heorte” (IV.1630-31).<sup>154</sup> The heart ascends to its rightful, heavenly dwelling by way of “[3]eornful, sechinde þoht” (II.922)<sup>155</sup> about the location of its spiritual treasure. Material concerns pose a threat insofar as they occupy thought, and thus “[a]ncre ne ah to habben na þing þet utward drahe hire heorte” (VIII.98-100).<sup>156</sup>

The following sections demonstrate that reason and thought in the *AW* relate to the heart in the same way that they relate to the conscience in the contemplative conscience texts. Peter of Celle’s reason, for instance, must scrutinise the mirror of conscience. Peter also stresses that thoughts must be used as defences against sin’s encroachment upon the conscience. The *Tractatus de Conscientia* similarly treats the conscience as the locus of thought. It instructs its reader to use concentrated thoughts and meditations as weapons for the spiritual battle with temptation. *De Interiori Domo* makes reason one of the seven pillars in the house of conscience. It is responsible for denying sin access to the house by refusing to consent to temptation.

### **a. Reason and Understanding**

*Skile* is the most relevant term in regards to reason and understanding. Temptation becomes sin when “delit” in it reaches the heart “þurh skiles 3ettunge” (IV.1394). Two elements contribute to the process: *skile* and *delit*. *Delit* has already been examined in the

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<sup>153</sup> “... arise in the heart without [external] cause”; “... saying [Christ’s] name in your mouth, with [his] sign in your hand, and thought in your heart.”

<sup>154</sup> “... with your thought, ... and with his precious blood, bloody your heart.”

<sup>155</sup> “... longing, searching thought.”

<sup>156</sup> “An anchoress ought to have nothing that draws her heart outwards.”

discussions of the heart as a moral faculty and the heart's desire. We turn now to *skile*. The noun *skile* possesses a variety of different uses in Middle English that fall into two broad categories. The first is the reason as a cognitive faculty. The second is a reason as a cause or explanation. The *AW* demonstrates both of these definitions but the author's preferred use clearly fits within the first. His *skile* is a very specific cognitive faculty.

Millett and Dance define *skile* in their glossary to the *AW* as "(the faculty of) reason" and *wittes skile* as the "power of understanding." They contrast it with its alternate meaning: a "reason, cause, explanation."<sup>157</sup> The MED provides a similar set of definitions, but with some further qualifying citations. It lists the thirteenth-century "Dialogue on Virtues and Vices," roughly contemporaneous with the *AW*, as the earliest occurrence of *skile* to mean "[t]he intellectual faculty, reason."<sup>158</sup> The "Dialogue" uses *skele* to translate the Latin *ratio* in contrast with *intellectus*. The primary use of *skile* in the *AW* shares this sense of judgement or discernment rather than more general understanding. The *AW* author narrows the meaning even further. He advises "skile sitte as domesmon upo þe dom-seotel" (V.114-15)<sup>159</sup> during preparation for confession. He also depicts "wittes skile" as a "ȝeteward" (IV.1340) entrusted "þurh bisi warschipe sundri god from uuel" (IV.1342).<sup>160</sup>

The *AW* thus treats *skile* as moral judgement. *Skile* is the reason applied to discernment and performance of moral or immoral actions. It acquires some traits of the will. Ten of the word's fifteen appearances in the *AW* significantly come from Part IV, the section devoted to identifying and combating temptation.<sup>161</sup> Six of these are paired with *ȝettunge*, the act of giving or granting. The author uses "skiles ȝettunge" to gloss "[c]unsense" (IV.1585-86), which he defines as the actual commission of sin, in contrast to temptation. Consent or

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<sup>157</sup> Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 2:435

<sup>158</sup> Robert E. Lewis, ed., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>, s.v. 'skil' 1.a.

<sup>159</sup> "'Skile' ought to sit as a judge upon the judgment-seat."

<sup>160</sup> "... through constant vigilance, to separate good from evil."

<sup>161</sup> *Concordance to Ancrene Wisse*, s.vv. 'skile,' 'skiles.'

*skiles zettunge* occurs “hwen þe delit i þe lust is igan se ouerforð þet ter nere nan wiðseggunge 3ef þer were eise to fulle þe dede” (IV.1586-87).<sup>162</sup>

Will and *skile* remain distinct from one another, in spite of these apparent overlaps. The first part of lechery involves a “ful wil to þet fulðe wið skiles zettunge” (IV.393-94).<sup>163</sup> *Skile* does not desire sin, even in its *zettunge*. It simply fails to perform its proper function, as pictured by the image of the sleeping gatekeeper (IV.1378). It “ah to windwin hweate, schaden þe eilen ant te chef from þe cleane cornes” (IV.1340-41) by which the author intends it “sundri god from uuel” (IV.1342).<sup>164</sup> Consent to sin is a failure to keep watch.

*Skile* here performs the same role as reason in *De Interiori Domo*. The author of *De Interiori Domo* stipulates that “solus consensus reos nos facit” and so he urges: “Locum superiorem ratio semper obtineat,” and “[s]i vero aliquem motum ad id quod non debet, vel quomodo non debet, moveri senserit, non consentiat, sed illico resistat” (*Domo* 15).<sup>165</sup> Reason serves the conscience in both texts by refusing to sin. Reason is therefore responsible if the person commits sin. Reason belongs to the heart-conscience in *AW* and to the house of conscience in *De Interiori Domo* (*Domo* 15).<sup>166</sup> The texts concur that the conscience is the part of the person that commits either good or bad action. The *Tractatus de Conscientia*, as the second chapter of this thesis demonstrates, similarly differentiates the good and bad conscience based on whether or not the conscience itself consents to the temptation around it.<sup>167</sup> The *AW* operates according to the same principles as the conscience texts. The conscience-heart, then, is the part of the person that sins. *Skile* may judge sins after the fact,

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<sup>162</sup> “... when delight in the lust has gone so far over the top that there would be no denying it if there were opportunity to carry out the deed.”

<sup>163</sup> “... foul will to that filth, with ‘skiles zettunge.’”

<sup>164</sup> “... ought to winnow wheat and separate the awn and the chaff from the good grains”; “to separate good from evil.”

<sup>165</sup> “consent alone makes us guilty”; “Let reason always maintain a higher place”; “if it perceive any motion stirred against it – either that ought not to be stirred up, or in a way that it ought not to be stirred – let reason not consent, but let it resist there.”

<sup>166</sup> *PL* 184:515B.

<sup>167</sup> See p. 98 of this thesis.

but it is also the perpetrator of them. The conscience is involved in the activities of the person. The conscience itself must be trained and fortified to resist sin, since its resistance is not an intrinsic property.

Another three uses of *skile* in the *AW* appear in Part V, the instruction on confession. The best way for the anchoress to begin preparations for confession is to imagine Doomsday, and imagine the way in which her sins will be judged. She should then make a similar judgement of herself and her conduct in the present. Neither conscience nor *inwit* are her judge. *Skile* is instead. It sits as the “domesmon upo þe dom-seotel” (V.114-15).<sup>168</sup> The author emphasises this arrangement again, scarcely more than five lines later, “nis nawt þe deme (þet is, Skile) ipaiet” (V.123).<sup>169</sup> *Inwit* appears in these proceedings, but only as a witness who confirms the testimony of *Munegunge* (Memory), lamenting, “Soð hit is, soð hit is, þis ant muchele mare” (V.117-18).<sup>170</sup>

The author envisions “þe ilke eorre Deme þet is ec witesse” above the sinner (V.96-97), “þe wide þrote of helle” below (V.98) and finally “inwið us seoluen ure ahne conscience (þet is, ure inwit) forculiende hire seoluen wið þe fur of sunne” (V.98-100).<sup>171</sup> *Inwit* appears to be something different from *skile*. The author does not speak of *skile* consuming or burning itself up, but only of distinguishing things that ought to be burnt up. All of these uses paint *skile* as akin to moral judgement. It is closer in meaning to the prescriptive, anterior conscience than *inwit* is.

Anselm of Canterbury’s second meditation provides the basis for the *AW* author’s description of the judgement scene.<sup>172</sup> The same passage from Anselm also appears in *De Interiori Domo* (*Domo* 46).<sup>173</sup> Reason judges the conscience, but its judgement is offered in

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<sup>168</sup> “... judge upon the judgement seat.”

<sup>169</sup> “... the judge, that is ‘Skile,’ is not appeased.”

<sup>170</sup> “It is true, it is true – this, and much more.”

<sup>171</sup> “... within ourselves, our own conscience, that is our ‘inwit,’ burning themselves up with the fire of sin.”

<sup>172</sup> See Anselm of Canterbury, *Liber Meditationum et Oratorium* II, (PL 158:724B).

<sup>173</sup> PL 184:531D.

service of the conscience in both the *AW* and *De Interiori Domo*. The judgement scene in the *AW* impels the anchoress to make a thorough confession (V.132-35). The author of *De Interiori Domo* has his hypothetical confessor give it to the penitent as a remedy against the future intrusion of sin into the conscience.

## **b. Thoughts as Meditations and Weapons**

*Skile* is the heart's gate-keeper and *pohtes* are its arms in the fight against sin. Anne Savage notes that, in the *AW*, "[t]he role of prayer and meditation is ... largely protective, directing the imagination to the right things."<sup>174</sup> The centrality of thought and meditation to the *AW* has commonly been observed, but usually in comparison with the later Middle English mystics. Thus the purpose of Savage's chapter is to enquire "whether a successful anchoritic existence entailed ... mystical experience."<sup>175</sup> Mari Hughes-Edwards finds a preponderance of "terms relating to ... spiritual thought" in the *AW*.<sup>176</sup> She maintains, however, that "[m]editation fosters a cognitive relationship with God, more apt to be comprehended intellectually than felt experientially."<sup>177</sup> Hughes-Edwards argues that the reader engaged in meditation remains detached from the meditation since "[t]he earlier medieval recluse is not constructed by the guides as a full participant in her imaginary world."<sup>178</sup> She concedes that the meditations proposed in the *AW* "are affective, intended to foster the recluse's sensory and emotional involvement," but "the scene remains a tableau ... despite all attempts to draw the recluse literally into it."<sup>179</sup> Hughes-Edwards' reading of the meditations is thus similar to Baldwin's. Baldwin argues that "meditation is not the purpose

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<sup>174</sup> Anne Savage, "The Solitary Heroine: Aspects of Meditation and Mysticism in *Ancrene Wisse*, the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group," in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 78.

<sup>175</sup> Savage, "The Solitary Heroine," 80.

<sup>176</sup> Mari Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 83.

<sup>177</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 84.

<sup>178</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 84.

<sup>179</sup> Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism*, 85.

of this instruction at all, since the author's subject is remedies for temptation."<sup>180</sup> The meditations become little more than distractions for the unruly mind, keeping it from mischief.

The problem with these readings is that they overlook the role that meditation played within medieval thought, as explored in the first chapter of this thesis.<sup>181</sup> A second group of readings of the *AW* and its related texts do take medieval thought on meditation into account. They contend that the anchoritic situation uniquely facilitates a heightened and intensive meditation that guidance texts utilise to their full advantage. Denis Renevey, for instance, argues that "[r]ather than reacting against the fundamental design of the anchorhold, the *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group exploit it to strengthen the *affectus mentis*."<sup>182</sup> Thus "[t]he visual representation of the cross within the *reclusorium*, on the altar, supports the affective identification [with Christ] unlocked by the meditation."<sup>183</sup> Kristen McQuinn similarly argues for the significance of "feminised images of enclosure in the context of late-medieval anchoritic devotion" since "[a] female anchorite could well have been able to connect more intimately with an image that was feminised."<sup>184</sup> Nicholas Watson argues that "the anchoresses are ... enclosed within a powerful imaginative structure, and require only a personal and affective realisation of its significance," a realisation that meditation affords them.<sup>185</sup> Jocelyn Price notes Aelred of Rievaulx's description of the church altar cloth and argues that "the cloth serves as the point of departure and return for a meditative process" such that "[t]he white cloth should now instantly summon, whenever the eye falls on it, this

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<sup>180</sup> Baldwin, *Ancrene Wisse and its Background*, 305.

<sup>181</sup> See pp. 64-67 of this thesis.

<sup>182</sup> Denis Renevey, "Enclosed Desires: A Study of the Wooing Group," in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 55.

<sup>183</sup> Renevey, "Enclosed Desires," 57.

<sup>184</sup> Kristen McQuinn, "'Crepe into That Blessed Syde': Enclosure Imagery in Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*," in *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards, Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 95.

<sup>185</sup> Nicholas Watson, "The Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-Century Anchoritic Devotion," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England Exeter Symposium IV: Papers Read at Dartington Hall*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 141.

inner ‘narrative’ of purity” with which meditative reading imbues it.<sup>186</sup> Savage also argues that “in *Ancrene Wisse*, constant attention is devoted to the physical details of anchoritic life, so that the life itself becomes an object of meditation.”<sup>187</sup> This second group of readings argue that meditations encompass all aspects of the anchoritic life, rather than being flights of fancy that are only useful because they are not harmful.

Both groups of readings, however, fail to consider the role meditation plays within the context of monastic conscience literature which treats meditation as a positive means of cultivating and edifying the conscience. Baldwin’s observation that meditation predominantly serves to counter temptation in the *AW* holds true. Reading the *AW* in the context of conscience literature reveals that meditations aimed at countering temptation are a vital component of the good conscience. Peter of Celle, as argued in the first chapter of this thesis, saw meditation and meditative thought as the primary means of acquiring conscience. He treats meditation, along with confession, as a weapon to be used in the fight against temptation. Resistance to temptation, for Peter, is a necessary and effective discipline that has positive value in edifying the conscience.<sup>188</sup> The *AW* conforms to this tradition. Its meditations are mostly directed against temptation, but this does not undermine or counter any of the observations made about meditation by the second group of readings described above. The remainder of this section demonstrates the dual purpose of meditation in the *AW*: that it simultaneously resists temptation and builds the conscience.

Conscience in the *AW*, like the conscience texts, is the locus of both good and evil thoughts. It is therefore the battleground between the two. The author describes lustful “stinkinde þohtes” as the “blodi flehen” on the dog of hell (IV.1597-98).<sup>189</sup> They are the first

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<sup>186</sup> Jocelyn Price, “‘Inner’ and ‘Outer’: Conceptualising the Body in *Ancrene Wisse* and Aelred’s *De Institutione Inclusionum*,” in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), 201.

<sup>187</sup> Savage, “The Solitary Heroine,” 80.

<sup>188</sup> See pp. 87-91 of this thesis.

<sup>189</sup> “... stinking thoughts”; “bloody flies.”

line in temptation's assault, the "cogitatu" followed by "affectiu" and finally "cunsence" (IV.1573). The anchoress is to combat them indirectly by combating the devil whom they attend: "nim anan þe rode steaf mid nempnunge i þi muð, mid te mearke i þin hond, mid þoht i þin heorte" (IV.1600-602).<sup>190</sup> Savage and Watson read this passage as an injunction to "imagine that in making the sign of the cross the anchoress is holding a weapon and dealing her enemy blows."<sup>191</sup> They are certainly correct. The anchoress is to "liðere to him [the devil] luðerliche mid te hali rode steaf stronge bacduntes" (IV.1603-604).<sup>192</sup> The *AW* author here draws from several precedents. Millett and Dance trace the depiction of the sign of the Cross as a weapon to fight the devil as a dog to John Cassian's *Institutiones*, with an analogue to the *AW*'s use in a sermon by Odo of Cheriton.<sup>193</sup>

Cassian's advice follows in the course of his description of the clothing worn by Egyptian hermits. Their practice of carrying staffs signifies the need to combat the "oblatrantes vitiorum canes, et invisibiles nequitiarum spiritualium bestias" by making the sign of the Cross.<sup>194</sup> Thoughts of Christ's Passion and "imitatione illius mortificationis" are the means to "exstinguere" them.<sup>195</sup>

Both the sign of the Cross and thoughts of the Passion figure in the *AW* but, unlike in Cassian's *Institutiones*, they do not overcome the vices. The author vividly describes fighting the devil, and then explicates the image: "Þet is, rung up, sture þe. Hald up ehnen on heh ant honden toward heouene. Gred efter sucurs" (IV.1604-605).<sup>196</sup> If the desired

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<sup>190</sup> "... seize at once the crucifix, with the name in your mouth, with the sign in your hand, with the thought in your heart."

<sup>191</sup> Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson eds., *Anchoritic Spirituality*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 385.

<sup>192</sup> "Beat him harshly with the holy crucifix, with strong blows to his back."

<sup>193</sup> Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 2:195.

<sup>194</sup> John Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis* 1.9, (PL 49:76A), "barking dogs of vices and invisible beasts of spiritual evils" (NB: Millett and Dance cite the *Sources Chrétiennes* and thus give the reference as I.8; I am using the text of the *Institutiones* from the *Patrologia Latina*).

<sup>195</sup> John Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis* 1.9, (PL 49:76A), "by imitation of his mortification"; John Cassian, *De Coenobiorum Institutis* 1.9, (PL 49:76A), "extinguish."

<sup>196</sup> "That is, rise up, stir yourself. Hold up your eyes on high and your hands toward heaven. Cry after succour."



*sucurs* is not forthcoming, “gred luddre wið hat heorte” (IV. 1610).<sup>197</sup> The *poht in heorte* (presumably of Christ’s Passion as signified by the crucifix) therefore works in conjunction with the specified prayers (IV.1605-12) to elicit divine aid and assistance. It counters sinful thoughts with virtuous ones, but also invokes the presence of God. In this the *AW* resembles the *Tractatus de Conscientia* which holds that God is present within the good thoughts of the conscience: “Spiritus Dei loquitur, quando dulcia meditatur” (*Tractatus* 12).<sup>198</sup>

“Hali meditatiuns” are offered earlier in Part IV as a remedy to temptation. The author recommends meditation on “[m]ors tua, mors Christi, nota culpe, gaudia celi, iudicii terror” (IV.877-78).<sup>199</sup> He then prescribes an additional, similar remedy: “opre þohtes” (IV.901) that “wiðute neod arearet i þe heorte” (IV.904).<sup>200</sup> They include four kinds of earthly thought helpful to combat temptation. The author interrupts the two kinds of prescription (holy meditations and ‘other thoughts’) with a short excursus on the relationship between material and spiritual things.

He offers an English mnemonic verse on fitting objects of spiritual meditation that urges “þench of helle wa, of heouenriches wunnen” (IV.81).<sup>201</sup> The author notes that each of the poem’s topics calls for further elaboration, but he singles this one out for discussion. He tells the anchoresses to “understodeð þet Godd walde o sum wise schawin ham [the sorrows of hell and joys of heaven] i þis world” (IV.889-90).<sup>202</sup> Worldly pains and joys are “as schadewe” (IV.891) and no nearer their eternal correlatives “þen is shadewe to þet þing þet hit is of schadewe” (IV.891-92).<sup>203</sup> The anchoress is not to be affected by these shadows. They belong to “þis worldes sea” (IV.893) whereas she is “upo þe brugge of heouene”

<sup>197</sup> “... cry louder with a hot heart.”

<sup>198</sup> *PL* 184:560A, “The spirit of God speaks when we meditate on sweet things.”

<sup>199</sup> “Your death, the death of Christ, the knowledge of sin, the joy of heaven, the terror of judgement”;

<sup>200</sup> “... other thoughts”; “... without need, arise in the heart.”

<sup>201</sup> “... think of hellish woe, of heavenly joys.”

<sup>202</sup> “... understand that God wishes to show in some way [the sorrows of hell and joys of heaven] in this world.”

<sup>203</sup> “... as a shadow”; “than a shadow is to the thing of which it is a shadow.”

(IV.893-94).<sup>204</sup> The author cautions his reader not to be “þe hors eschif iliche þe schuncheð for a schadewe, ant falleð adun i þe weater of the hehe brugge” (IV.894-96).<sup>205</sup> Anyone who does is “[t]o childene” (IV.896).<sup>206</sup>

The placement of this discussion is especially striking because the author immediately turns to his concessive prescriptions. Four kinds of thought “arearet i þe heorte” (IV.904) can be effective measures against temptation: “dredfule, wunderfule, gleadfule, ant sorhfule” (IV.903-904).<sup>207</sup> Various hypothetical scenarios arouse such thoughts. Some of them expressly contradict the foregoing warning about the relationship between temporal and eternal affairs. One of the dreadful thoughts, for instance, involves the church burning down around the anchoress (IV.907). The joyful thoughts, by contrast, include the miraculous papal election of “þet mon þet te is leouest” (IV.913-14).<sup>208</sup> The author recommends these earthly thoughts on the grounds that they “i fleschliche sawlen wrencheð ut sonre fleschliche temptatiuns þen sum of þe oþre [i.e., the meditations on final things]” (IV.918-20).<sup>209</sup>

The author specifies that these other thoughts are not “hali meditatiuns” on Christ and his works or words (IV.899-900). His specification is, however, an inconsistency. Most of the ‘other thoughts’ deal with temporal, earthly matters, but the dreadful thoughts also include the sight of the devil (IV.905-906). The wonderful thoughts likewise include the sight of Christ, promising to grant the anchoress what is dearest to her, provided she resist the temptation (IV.909-12).

Thoughts of Christ and the devil would seem to fall under the first heading of holy meditations, but the author does not place them there. He emphasises the effects that the thoughts have on the heart. Dread, wonder, joy, and sorrow – not the thoughts themselves –

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<sup>204</sup> “... this world’s sea,” “... upon the bridge of heaven.”

<sup>205</sup> “... like the nervous horse that jumps at a shadow, and falls down into the water from the high bridge.”

<sup>206</sup> “... too childish.”

<sup>207</sup> “... raised in the heart”; “... dreadful, wonderful, joyful, and sorrowful.”

<sup>208</sup> “... the man who is dearest to you.”

<sup>209</sup> “... in fleshly souls, [they] sooner wrench out fleshly temptations than some of the others.”

overcome temptation. The holy meditations, on the other hand, are different. The author does not discuss the effects of holy meditations, but only holy meditations themselves. Holy meditations overcome temptation by virtue of being meditations, and not by any conditions of heart they engender. The so-called ‘other thoughts’ are instruments. The holy meditations are ends. The ‘other thoughts’ are interchangeable with one another, but the holy meditations have value in themselves. The holy meditations, unlike the ‘other thoughts,’ situate the anchoress on the bridge of heaven above the sea of the world. The meditations directed against temptation thus perform the same function as the meditations in Part VII, signified by the “*twa treon*” (VII.247) that kindle love of God. Even meditations intended as counter-measures against temptation have positive value in kindling love of God and edifying the contemplative conscience.

## 6. The Guest Chamber

Meditation, charity, and anchoritic discipline aim to produce the pure heart, synonymous with the clear conscience. Part II of the *AW* begins with a free English gloss on Proverbs 4:23: ““*Wið alles cunnes warde, dohter,*’ seið Salomon, ‘*wite wel þin heorte; for sawle lif is in hire, ʒef ha is wel iloket*”” (II.1-3).<sup>210</sup> The author uses the word *heorte* in Part IV to translate Gregory the Great’s expression “*vita mentis*” (IV.1354-56), which becomes significant in light of the claim that life of the soul is in the heart.<sup>211</sup> The heart contains the life of the soul if its integrity is preserved, if “*ha is wel iloket.*”<sup>212</sup> The senses must be guarded, temptations resisted, sins confessed, penance performed, meditations practiced, and the love of God cultivated. The heart is protected by the “*fif wittes*” which are the “*heorte wardeins*” (II.5-6).<sup>213</sup> The outer wits protect *inwit*, the inner wit. The “*weote of sunne*” (P.41)

<sup>210</sup> ““With all kinds of guard, daughter,’ says Solomon, ‘guard well your heart, for the soul’s life is in it if it is well protected.””

<sup>211</sup> “... life of the mind.”

<sup>212</sup> “... if it is well protected.”

<sup>213</sup> “... five senses”; “... heart guardians.”

obstructs the inner wit and must be removed.<sup>214</sup> The heart-conscience, then, is construed as an inner space that must be locked against the outer world by meditatively reinterpreting the outer world to its spiritual advantage. Renevey sums up the relationship between inner and outer world when he notes that “[t]he interplay between image and text allows the mind to effect solid affective links between the exterior world of the *reclitorium* and the inner world of the anchorite.”<sup>215</sup>

The inner space of the heart-conscience possesses the attributes that have been examined thus far throughout this chapter: it is a moral faculty as well as the location of the will, desire, charity, and thought. These, as we have seen, are the attributes of the contemplative conscience. The conscience of the *AW*, like the contemplative conscience, is the space that God comes to occupy within the person. It has a knowing capacity insofar as it can be aware of sin. The heart-conscience that is free of sin “mei cnawen Godd” and “gleadien of his sihðe” (VII.19-20).<sup>216</sup> It has a desiring, loving capacity that must be directed towards God, as the author tells the anchoress: “schulden ontende fur of luue inwið ower heorte” (VII.249-50).<sup>217</sup> The author assures the anchoress that “þe soðe Helye, þet is, Godd almihti ... wule gestnin wið ow, ant monifalden in ow his deorwurðe grace” (VII.253-55).<sup>218</sup> Lusts, temptations, and sins are problematic because they draw the anchoress out of the inner chamber. The author describes Christ speaking to the anchoress, telling her that “schuldest i þin heorte bur biseche me cosses, as mi leofmon” (II.284-85).<sup>219</sup> Christ thus inhabits the good conscience, the pure heart. The good conscience is able to interpret the world the anchoress inhabits, recognising the meaning within the symbolism and objects of the anchorhold, using the anchoritic life itself for meditation. The good conscience is thus the conscience that is

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<sup>214</sup> “... knowledge of sin.”

<sup>215</sup> Renevey, “Enclosed Desires,” 60.

<sup>216</sup> “... can know God”; “rejoice at the sight of him.”

<sup>217</sup> “You must kindle the fire of love within your heart.”

<sup>218</sup> “... the true Elijah (that is, Almighty God) will visit you, and increase his precious grace in you.”

<sup>219</sup> “... you should, in the bower of your heart, beseech me for kisses as my beloved.”

able to recognise the presence of God. The inner chamber of the heart becomes the guest chamber that appears in Peter of Celle's *De Conscientia* and the pseudo-Bernardine *De Interiori Domo*. The aim of conscience literature is to prepare the guest chamber, to awaken the soul to the presence of God in the conscience by reshaping and restructuring ordinary processes of perception and thought. It is the aim of the *AW* as well.

## 7. Conclusion

The heart in the *AW*, like the conscience of the contemplative conscience texts, does not easily fit into a single modern category. It is a knowing and volitional part of the person. It has the potential to apprehend both spiritual and earthly things. Its life is lost if it becomes diseased and wounded. The wounded heart produces morally corrupt actions that further its deterioration. Measures must be taken to prevent this from happening. It is a moral entity insofar as it is shaped by its possessor's life, and produces morally good or morally evil action.

It is the location of desire and love. The anchoress must "ontenden þis fur [of charity] azen the brune of sunne; for alswa as þe an neil driueð ut þen oþer, alswa þe brune of Godes luue driueð brune of ful luue ut of þe heorte" (VII.270-72).<sup>220</sup> Desire for God characterises the healthy, living heart. Fire imagery depicts both love of God and sin. The paradigm explains the description, borrowed from Anselm, of the sinner's *inwit* at Doomsday "forculiende hire seoluen wið þe fur of sunne" (V.98-100).<sup>221</sup> The precise role of *inwit* is unclear from the immediate context and appears to have baffled some medieval readers. The Cotton MS Titus D.xviii replaces *forculiende* with *forcweðinde* ('reproaching') and the Latin translation has no equivalent term.<sup>222</sup> Destruction by the fire of sin is antithetical to the burning of charity in the heart. Sacramental confession undoes the damage and thus removes

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<sup>220</sup> "... kindle this fire [of charity] against the burning of sin; for just as the one nail drives out the other, so the burning of God's love drives the burning of foul love out of the heart."

<sup>221</sup> "... burning themselves up with the fire of sin."

<sup>222</sup> Millett, *Ancrene Wisse*, 2:207; D'Evelyn, *Latin Text*, 116.

the “weote of sunne þet ne beo þurh schrift ibet” (P.41-42).<sup>223</sup> The heart can then burn with the love of God. The author is therefore able to declare without contradiction that “[s]chirnesse of heorte is Godes luue ane” (VII.38).<sup>224</sup>

The heart, like the contemplative conscience, belongs to the realm of thought and the operation of the mind. Imaginative meditation is therefore a powerful force for shaping it and orienting it in the right direction. The author of the *AW* follows the writers of contemplative conscience texts in crafting a text filled with widely varying imagery, so that reading it works to cultivate the conscience. He also follows the monastic writers by depicting the thoughts of the heart as weapons to defend it against sin. The weapons derive their power from the presence of God. Resistance to temptation thus becomes a positive means of invoking and apprehending the presence of God.

Reading the *AW* as a conscience text resolves longstanding debates and questions about the nature of the text’s spirituality. If the text is intended to be an instruction on contemplative prayer, then why does it say so little about contemplative prayer? Why is there so little reference to the traditional triad of purgation, illumination and ascent? Why is there so little language of ascent at all? On the other hand, if the *AW* is not intended as an instruction on contemplative prayer, then why is it so rife with allusions to what would now be described as ‘mysticism’? What sort of spiritual life does the author intend for his anchoritic readers?

This chapter has shown the heart of the *AW* operates similarly to, and possesses the attributes of, the conscience as described in the contemplative conscience texts. It has shown that the spirituality of the *AW* is the spirituality of the contemplative conscience texts. Contemplation is modelled on moral reasoning rather than ascent. The cultivated conscience becomes the dwelling place of God, rather than the location of God’s law. Contemplation

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<sup>223</sup> “... awareness of sin that has not been amended through confession.”

<sup>224</sup> “... clearness of heart is the love of God alone.”

involves the application of God's presence to one's life in the way that moral reasoning involves the application of God's law to one's life. The cultivation of conscience therefore involves a living and dynamic engagement with the outer world in such a way that the outer does not violate or intrude upon the inner sanctuary of the heart. The author alludes so often to contemplative prayer because he intends his readers to find and recognise the presence of God within their life of solitude and devotion, surrounded by imagery and symbolism. The conscience is the means by which this recognition takes place. The author thus follows the conscience texts in holding that recognition of the presence of God by means of the conscience is attained by the cultivation of discipline and love which cannot be separated from one another. Sequences like the ascending triad of purgation, illumination, and union are therefore inherently artificial and at odds with his conceptualisation of the contemplative life. He gives a much more appropriate image of contemplation, one that encapsulates the spirituality of the contemplative conscience texts: "þe niht-fuhel flið bi niht ant biȝet i þeosternesse his fode. Alswa schal ancre fleon wið contemplatiun (þet is, wið heh þoht) ant wið hali bonen bi niht toward heouene, ant biȝeote bi niht hire sawle fode" (III.339-42).<sup>225</sup> The passage that introduced the word *contemplation* into the English language does not describe a graduated ascent, but an ongoing flight. It is the contemplation of the conscience texts.

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<sup>225</sup> "... the night-fowl flies by night and obtains its food in darkness. Likewise shall the anchoress fly toward heaven by night with contemplation (that is, with high thought), and with holy prayers, and obtain by night her soul's food."

## Conclusion

The spirituality of the *AW* has generated scholarly debate for over half a century. What role, if any, does spiritual experience play in the *AW*? The *AW* author states that the virtue of all religious life is its capacity to produce a clean conscience. He accordingly makes good conscience the object of his inner rule, the rule that is common to all religious. The centrality of conscience has often been taken to indicate that the *AW* is an ethical guide, and nothing more. The author precludes such a reading, however, when he intersperses allusions to spiritual experiences throughout his moral prescriptions. The *AW*, however, never works its references to spiritual experience into the conventional tripartite scheme of purgation, illumination, and union. The conflict between the ethical and contemplative components of the *AW* thus gives rise to the question: does the author intend his readers to have ‘mystical’ experiences?

This thesis resolves the problem by returning to the *AW* author’s statement that religious life aims for the attainment of a good conscience: “Rihten hire ant smeðin hire is of euch religiun ant of euch ordre þe god ant al þe strengðe” (P.44-45).<sup>1</sup> Answers to questions about the text’s spirituality will necessarily hinge on what the author means by conscience. Past scholarship on the *AW* has mostly overlooked this point. The only attempts to define the *AW*’s conscience have not considered the treatises on conscience that were written close to its time.

This thesis argues that twelfth-century monastic writers developed a new kind of conscience, synthesised from disparate patristic approaches to *conscientia*. I have labelled this newer form of conscience the ‘contemplative conscience.’ The patristic anterior conscience was the space where God’s law inhabited the soul and provided moral direction.

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<sup>1</sup> “To straighten and smooth it is the good and all the strength of each religion and of every order.”



The contemplative conscience became the space where God himself inhabits the soul. The older subsequent conscience was the conscience that evaluated past conduct. The contemplative conscience became the person as shaped by past conduct. The patristic conscience applied divine law to individual situations in order to determine the morally sound decision. The contemplative conscience applies the divine presence to individual situations in order to perceive their spiritual significance and the way that God works within them.

The twelfth-century monastic writers coupled the contemplative conscience with their keen focus on the use of meditative images. The conscience exists within the mind and characterises how life is perceived and experienced. It influences ordinary processes of thought. The active use of meditation shapes the conscience and attunes it, so that it can correctly perceive and experience the world. Reading and meditation became just as important to the cultivation of a good conscience as moral living. The result was the production of highly imaginative and literary texts, designed to facilitate the acquisition of a good conscience. The contemplative conscience thus led to the birth of a different form of contemplation, one that was not predicated upon metaphors of graduated spiritual ascent towards union with God, but nevertheless reappropriated tropes from the dominant tradition of contemplative literature. The good conscience was the goal of religious life because God inhabits the good conscience.

This thesis shows that the *AW* participates within the tradition of the contemplative conscience. Reading the *AW* as a contemplative conscience text solves the contradiction between its ethical and contemplative components, and explains the absence of metaphors of ascent or spiritual trajectory. The anchoritic life was an ideal place to exercise the teaching of the contemplative conscience texts, since it literalises the metaphor of the conscience as a house that is closed and sealed off from the world. The material circumstances of anchoritism all lend themselves to the cultivation of the contemplative

conscience, and the contemplative conscience enables the anchoress to read the spiritual significance of her physical situation. Every thought and action becomes unitive with God, not because the anchoress ascends to him through stages, but because God is already present to her thoughts and actions.

The answer to the initial question, then, is that the author did intend for his anchoritic readers to live contemplative lives. Their lives were to be understood as an ongoing spiritual experience, as they continually negotiate between the spiritual and material, applying the presence of God as they might apply moral reasoning to make ethical decisions. The paradigm of the contemplative life is thus moral reason rather than ascent.

The prevailing approaches to medieval mystical literature in contemporary scholarship, particularly Bernard McGinn's 'mystical consciousness,' provide fitting descriptions of contemplative conscience texts but also account for more traditionally recognised mystical literature. They therefore offer a paradigmatic shift that removes anachronistically imposed requirements on texts, and allows a more nuanced investigation of the relationships between different kinds of medieval religious writing. Varying forms of contemplative texts can be read in conversation with one another. This thesis presents the contemplative conscience as an area for further study by scholars of medieval mysticism.

There is, then, considerable room for further work on the contemplative conscience. The writings of William of St Thierry would, in particular, be a fruitful field for further investigation. I have not dealt with William in this thesis because he did not write a treatise on conscience. Conscience nevertheless plays a large role in William's contemplative *Expositio Super Canticum Canticorum*, and should therefore be considered in relation to the conscience texts explored here.

The role of conscience in more apophatic contemplative texts also calls for further examination. William Pollard, for instance, notes that Thomas Gallus describes

mystical union with God as occurring within the *scintilla synderesis*.<sup>2</sup> Pollard translates the phrase as ‘spark of discernment,’ yet this is traditionally an expression for the conscience. Pollard traces Gallus’ influence on the fourteenth-century English mystic Richard Rolle. Rolle’s conscience is thus a potential field of further inquiry, since the contemplative conscience gained a firm foothold in the English devotional tradition via the popularity of the *AW*.<sup>3</sup>

The conscience also appears in the richly apophatic *Cloud of Unknowing*, where it is “[p]i visage goostly” in need of a mirror.<sup>4</sup> Phyllis Hodgson notes that many of the *Cloud* author’s “words are traceable back to Old English homilies; many more occur in the west Midland writings of the early thirteenth century,” suggesting the influence of the *AW*.<sup>5</sup> Apophatic texts disrupt the ordinary processes of knowledge and self-knowledge. The *Cloud*, in particular, stresses the need for self-forgetting rather than self-knowledge in the contemplative life. The relation between conscience and self-forgetting thus creates a contradiction worth further examination.

The contradiction between ethical prescriptions and spiritual experience in the *AW* are solved by understanding the *AW*’s conscience as the contemplative conscience that emerged in monastic writing during the twelfth century. This conscience lies outside the main line of development of the idea of conscience and is thus usually overlooked today. This thesis contends that the *AW* cannot be read without reference to the contemplative conscience, and thus also lays the groundwork for further research on conscience in medieval contemplative writing.

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<sup>2</sup> William F. Pollard, “Richard Rolle and the “Eye of the Heart”” in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. Robert Boenig and William F. Pollard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 99.

<sup>3</sup> A. S. G. Edwards speculates that the *AW* “circulated for a longer period than any other Middle English prose work,” and notes that “[i]t was copied, in whole or in part, from the mid-thirteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.” A. S. G. Edwards, “The Middle English Manuscripts and Early Readers of *Ancrene Wisse*,” in *A Companion to “Ancrene Wisse*,” ed. Yoko Wada (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Phyllis Hodgson, ed., *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 72.

<sup>5</sup> Phyllis Hodgson, ed., *Deonise Hid Diuinite and Other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer Related to the Cloud of Unknowing* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), xxxi.

## **Appendices**

Two of the texts discussed in this thesis, the *Tractatus de Conscientia* and *De Interiori Domo* have not previously been translated into English. I have therefore included my translations as appendices. A complete critical edition of the texts and complete translation of *De Interiori Domo* are beyond the scope of this thesis. The translations included here are only intended to supplement the thesis. I have therefore only translated the first twenty-two chapters of *De Interiori Domo*, since these are the primary focus of the discussion in the thesis.

I have used the texts included in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. Migne occasionally notes Scriptural citations. I have included these notes, supplementing them with some of my own.

**Appendix A**  
**Tractatus de Conscientia**  
**(A Treatise on Conscience)**

PL 184:551D-560C

*To a certain religious of the Cistercian Order.*

**Prologue**

You seek from me, Beloved, what is above me and indeed contrary to me: namely, the light of knowledge and purity of conscience. You are mistaken to seek either from me, though because of your love for or opinion of me, you do not believe yourself to be in error. What am I, and of what am I capable? I am, indeed, a sinner, and sinner who sins beyond the normal measure. The vivacity of knowledge has no place in me. A multiplicity of troubles attend these matters. They conceal or repel the seeds of all doctrine in the knowledgeable man, according to Wisdom: “Wisdom must be written in the time of leisure and he who is reduced in act shall perceive it” (Sir. 38:25).

Nevertheless, I shall rise to the task – as in the teaching of Our Lord – not because you are my friend, but because you are importunate (Lk. 11:8). I shall not give what is necessary for you, but only what I have at hand. Rather let the Lord share with you according to your heart. He it is indeed who gives the voice of strength to his voice (cf. Ps. 67:34). He provides for the poor in his sweetness and fills your desire with good things (Ps. 102:5).

**Chapter 1**

**How Obscure and Impenetrable a Thing is Conscience**

1. The conscience of man is a great abyss. As even the depth of the abyss cannot

be drained, so the heart of man cannot be emptied of its thoughts. The conscience of man is as a “great and spacious sea” where “there are reptiles beyond number” (Ps. 103:25). How well it says “reptiles”! As a reptile creeps secretly and goes about hither and thither with sinuous coils, so poisonous thoughts sweetly enter and exit the conscience of man. The man knows neither whence they come nor where they go. He knew this well who said, “The heart of man is crooked and inscrutable, and who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). He does not ask “who?” to express difficulty but rather impossibility, because the heart is not receptive to scrutiny or thought. See that great apostle, Paul I say, the only scrutiniser of his conscience: “For me,” he says, “it is the smallest thing that I be judged by you, or by human judgement.” Behold how he escaped human judgement, not hesitating at all on account of external things. “But neither,” he says, “do I judge myself” (1 Cor. 4:3). And where, O Apostle, is the holy word you yourself said: “If we judge ourselves, shall we not certainly be judged?” (1 Cor. 11:31). Why is it that you pretend not to judge yourself, or to be judged by us? Hear why: he says, “I am conscious of nothing against myself.” The blessed conscience is not aware of anything against itself. It fears neither its own judgement, nor another’s. Do you see how heavenly the way of life that does not fear its own judgement or another’s? A snare and a great pit has hitherto gone unnoticed, O Chosen Instrument, but it cannot escape your most vigilant eye (cf. Acts 9:15). Indeed, he adjoins the sentence, “But I am not justified in this,” and he furthermore adds, “the one who judges me is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:4). Even the most purified conscience cannot comprehend this third judgement, the judgement of God. The conscience is ignorant – according to Scripture – whether it is worthy of love or hatred, because all future things are kept hidden from it (Ecc. 9:1-2). The apostle is beaten and shaken with terror of this judgement. He laments and says, “I do not understand what I do” (Rom. 7:15). And so the judgement of God remains, even if I leave behind both the judgement of the world and my own judgement. God’s judgement does not permit me to

understand what I do, for I do not know if he will accept what I do. Indeed, he knows me better than I know myself. The knower of secrets scrutinises hearts and inmost depths, reaching as far as the division of soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12). He alone knows all things and the thoughts of everyone.

2. O singular instrument of the Holy Spirit, if you do not understand what you do, why do you say in another place, “our glory is this: the witness of our conscience,” calling your glory your conscience (2 Cor. 1:12)? He understands in one instance, and he does not understand in the other. Clearly, he understands because he has passed beyond both his own and others’ judgement. Yet he is held back from the judgement of God, where he doubtlessly does not know what he does. Indeed, he is neither justified by his own judgement, nor the judgement of others. He shall be justified by God's judgement which is incomprehensible inasmuch as it is not knowable. However, rejection of the two judgements (which are our justification now, in this present life) is, in some way, a sure sign of the eternal predestination in which God foresaw us conformed to the image of his Son. It is a sign of future glorification, when we shall be in him and he in us, when he shall be all in all. Because of this – as certain as it is true – he says in another place, “I am certain that neither death nor life, nor many other things (which are enumerated at length there), have been able to separate me from the love of Christ” (Rom. 8:38-39). But when he has said so many and such great things, he leaves one thing unsaid: our own will, which is the cause of salvation and damnation. See how the man filled with God says that his conscience is his glory as if understanding it and himself in it. However, he also says that he does not understand what he does, that his conscience is not now in glory, but a fellow captive in ignorance. Therefore the searching apostle fails the scrutiny of his conscience. While he believed he had reached the bottom of it, getting rid of others’ judgement as well as his own, he ran into the depths, clearly not strong enough to penetrate the judgement of God. Now, either agreeing or being

overcome, he cries out, “your judgements, O Lord,” are not an ordinary abyss but “are a great abyss” (Ps. 35:7). What, therefore, shall we wretched and pitiable ones do if he who laboured more than everyone, to whom even the key-bearer of the kingdom with John and James appeared to be nothing, who was even snatched up to the third heaven, felt and spoke about himself like this? But in order to explain for your purity what I think about conscience with straightforward and clear words, I have decided to assign four modes of distinction. What has been thus distinguished may then be read sweetly and kept even better.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Four Kinds of Consciences**

3. Therefore one conscience is good and tranquil, the second good and troubled. The third is bad and tranquil, the fourth bad and troubled. But to begin with, let us see to the first. The conscience is good which both punishes past sins and flees from committing things worthy of punishment. It does not consent to sin, even if it senses sin. “Blessed is the man, to whom the Lord has not imputed sin,” says the saint (Ps. 31:2). He did not say, “Who has not done sin.” There is no one who has never committed sin except one, and he is the Son of God. He did no sin, nor was any guile found in his mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). Therefore every sin which God has not decreed to impute to me is as though it had never been. “Blessed,” therefore, not the one found without sin, but rather the one “whose sins have been remitted, and covered” (Ps. 31:1). It does not say “whose sins are none” but “whose sins have been covered,” as though hidden from the eyes of God by a certain covering and in a certain way. Fortunate is the soul who, sensing sin, does not consent to sin. Although thought stains it, reason washes it. It fights and fights back against the law of sin. It has been grieved by the burden, but it is fruitful because, although it undergoes punishment, it produces a crown. What wearies the one who experiences it crowns the conqueror. In this conflict, where there



is sense but not consent, “there is no condemnation,” according to the Apostle, “for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). He who does not have a will for sin, but has instead a will for guarding his feet from a fall, he who has committed sins in time past and grieves and does penance, he who rejects wicked thoughts advancing upon his heart by dashing them against Christ, he has conscience and it has been purified and is pure insofar as he has been tied and tightened with this triple thread (cf. Ecc. 4:12). But I have called it a tranquil conscience because now the Spirit himself gives testimony to its spirit that it is a son of God. It is sweet to everyone, harsh to none, using a friend for grace and an enemy for patience, all for kindness, whomever it is able for generosity. Conscience of this kind is a rare bird in the lands. It is as much dearer to God as it is rarer.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **On the Good and Troubled Conscience**

4. The conscience is good but troubled which experiences nothing soft and nothing fluid. It scrubs itself more firmly with the bitterness of the world when it is able – not in sweetness, but in great bitterness. The more righteous way and more austere life seem hard to it. It sees everywhere that such a life displeases the flesh but it restrains itself with the bridle of the fear of God. It fixes itself to this anchor in every storm of its heart. For, according to the prophet, it is stirred up and did not speak (Ps. 76:5). But I have heard what the Lord says about this situation: “I am with him,” he says, “in tribulation.” To what end? “I shall take him, and I shall glorify him” (Ps. 90:15). I shall snatch him from bitterness; I shall glorify him in delight. The conscience that first acted because of fear shall act because of love. This conscience speaks to God in the Psalm, and says: “You have shaken the earth, O Lord, and you have stirred it up. Heal its sorrows, because it has been stirred up.” The earth is shaken up when a sinner confesses and repents, when he endures bitterness in his way of life.

But it is for him alone to heal those sorrows who heals all our infirmities. However, hear what follows: “You have shown hardships to your people.” Which hardships? “You have given us to drink the wine of compunction,” not the milk of unction (Ps. 59:4-5).

5. But it must be noted that milk is set before certain religious to drink, wine before certain others. Both are from God. Those who drink milk are those for whom vigils seem short, meals sweet, work desirable, and the religious habit pleasant. Even that which demands great exercise for holy living is too little for them. Milk is drunk pleasantly. It flows sweetly and without harm, without bitterness. So it is that those who drink it advance in holy life pleasantly. They run sweetly without injury from their own conscience, without bitterness from another's. He has this quality who drinks milk in such a way that his sin displeases him and he does not consent to the sin of another. Yet he does not therefore abandon the sinner. He does not disguise another's vice inasmuch as it is present, but he does not insult when he rebukes. Behold this drink of milk. Now hear about the drink of wine. Wine, of course, is harsh and unpleasant. They drink wine who have undertaken and advanced in the ways of life. They are tormented with hardships of body and soul together but they do not fall, nor do they retreat from hardship. They are those to whom the Lord prophesies and will prophesy with his own mouth: “You are they,” he says, “who have remained with me in my trials” (Lk. 17:28). But who of these seems more fortunate to you? He who runs the way of God's commands in pleasantness, or he who does so in difficulty? The first seems more fortunate, the second stronger. Nevertheless, both are right. Both are faithful, having their own gift from God. One has this, but another that (1 Cor. 7:7). You wish to know that God is well pleased in both: “Drink,” he says, “my wine with my milk” (Cant. 5:1). Indeed, he who releases the first kind of conscience from its trial comforts the second kind in its. Thus one experiences that the Lord is sweet but the other that the Lord is strong. He is clearly strong and able in battle. In the greatness of his mercy, he suffers his servant to be hard-pressed in battle but never

overcome. “Come,” says the prophet, “buy wine and milk without silver” (Is. 55:1). Every devout conscience which comes to God buys either milk or wine from him, as we have said and discussed. Know that he has set out wine in both cases, because he who perseveringly endures more hardship for God shall also have greater reward. These things have been said for the distinction between the good, tranquil conscience, and the good, troubled conscience.

## **Chapter 4**

### **On the Bad and Tranquil Conscience**

6. The bad and tranquil conscience follows here. As nothing is worse, so nothing is more unfortunate. You ask what it is? It is the conscience that neither fears God nor reveres man. When it has come into the depth of evil, it only shows scorn (Prov. 18:3). See the slip – nay, the fall – of the bad conscience. Bit by bit, step by step, it departs from God and descends into the deep so that the well closes its mouth over it (cf. Ps. 69:15). First, when a man has become accustomed to good things and sins gravely, it appears truly unbearable to him. It seems he descends into hell while still living. But as time goes on, the sin seems not to be unbearable, however grave. It is no small descent from unbearable to grave sin. A little later he judges the sin venial. He is beaten with many blows but he does not feel the wounds, he does not attend the blows. Scripture expresses the truth of it like this: “They have beaten me, and I have not been hurt; they have drawn me and I did not feel it” (Prov. 23:35). But in a short space of time, not only does he not feel it, but it also pleases him. What was bitter becomes sweet; what was harsh is turned into pleasantness. Then it is turned into custom, so that now it does not just give pleasure sometimes, but it gives pleasure all the time. He is unable to contain himself. He cannot be torn away from the extreme because habit turns into nature. What before was impossible to do is now impossible to refrain from. Thus he descends – nay, he falls – from Jerusalem to Jericho. He is brought into abhorrence and

hardness of heart. This sinner stinks, this one has been four days; the stone of the cave has been placed over it (Jn. 11:39-38) and does not admit the merciful rays of divine light. According to Scripture, “confession from the dead has perished, as if from one who is not” (Sir. 17:26) unless God, pitying, at some time turns the sinner’s stone heart into a heart of flesh.

7. This is the wicked conscience which falls head-first because of crises like this. It collapses and rushes in upon itself. How is it tranquil? It is tranquil when the prosperity of this world toys about with it and dupes it. The sinner is praised in the desires of his soul and the unjust is blessed (Ps. 9:24). The favour of sinners and the fear of those unwilling to sin – both unwilling and grieving – smiles at him. There are none who accuse him, nor who dare to accuse a sinner among all who are in his circle. And so is fulfilled in him what was written: “The prosperity of fools destroys them” (Prov. 1:32). Nothing affronts the majesty of the terrible Judge as much as sinning and sinning securely, being glorified for vices as though for virtues. The just man says, “O Lord, may you not pity all who work iniquity” (Ps. 58:6). This is the iniquity of the man God does not pity: he defends what God hates and asserts sin as righteousness. He resists the Almighty and the Almighty resists him. This is the pride of which is written, “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Jas. 4:6). Understand what it says, “He resists.” For to resist is the action of an equal. The man who proposes to resist God as an equal destroys what God builds insofar as he is able. He calls bad good and good bad, bitter sweet and sweet bitter, light darkness and darkness light (Is. 5:20). Impunity nourishes this tranquillity. Impunity is the mother of security and negligence, the stepmother of virtues, the poison of religion and the moth of sanctity.

## **Chapter 5**

### **On the Bad and Troubled Conscience**

8. The conscience is bad but troubled which is discovered and understood in the action of its sinners. It yields to human anxieties and shames as long as it believes itself to be fed with pleasures. It has been beaten with confusion, as is written: “In the works of his hands, the sinner has been found out” (Ps. 9:17). He is, for example, the man who desires adultery for pleasure, but is seized with anxiety therein. Anxiety is much greater than pleasure because of all the shame and anguish of a man who lives and knows himself to be a man. Some turn to the Lord when they make that discovery, but the number of those who remain in the disorder of sin is greater than the number of those who leave sin because of its disorder. Concerning those who leave, it is written: “Fill their faces with ignominy, and let them seek your name, O Lord” (Ps. 82:17). The prophet Jeremiah says of those who don't leave: “You have beaten them, O Lord, and they have not grieved. You have worn them down, and they have refused to take discipline.” (Jer. 5:3). These are the four streams of conscience flowing from the fount of the will. The just are cleansed in these streams and the unjust are polluted, so that what is written may come about: “He who is in filth, let him become filthy until now, and let the righteous be made righteous until now.” (Rev. 22:11). A man's thoughts, whether good or bad, turn about with constant motion. Therefore I, for my part, have set out to demonstrate to you many modes of thought that twist and turn about on all sides, so that you may be better able to understand how far we are from the one who always remains the same – namely, Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Various Kinds of Thought**

9. Some thoughts are burdensome, others lovely. Some are obscene, others peaceful. Some are meddlesome, others suspicious, still others busy. Hear what are the burdensome thoughts in the mind of the just, those he wishes to resist and yet cannot.

Whether he wishes it or not, the pestilence of the mice of Egypt rushes into the eyes of his mind, and frogs echo in the inner chambers of his heart. A man generally thinks terrible things about faith and horrible things about divinity. He is whirled about by phantasms of corporeal images. He feels things which even the burdened sinner dreads to cough up in confession. He is shaken and beaten in spirit with a severity proportionate to the ease with which has refrained from presenting the members of his body to sin as weapons of iniquity (cf. Rom. 6:13). That insatiable murderer with his assembled forces attacks within, once he sees himself shut off from external sensuality. But the spiritual man who judges all things is not ignorant of his schemes (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 9:11). He drives back what he can, but he endures what he cannot drive back. He puts up with the barking dog, but he does not fear its bite. The dog barks when he tempts. He bites when he drags the man to consent to sin. He does not wound the man when he fails to drive in the sin he suggested. He crowns the man instead. He torments the man's thought but he does not bind him to consent. Such thoughts are no less burdensome when a man has taken up Martha's office. He is worried and troubled about many things and many people, concerned that they should have what they need for the spiritual life.

10. A man's thoughts are kindly when he is moved to care for the flesh, as in matters of food and clothing. A man is often touched with kindness for his neighbours according to the flesh. A man's thoughts are obscene when carnal delight pricks and stimulates him. These thoughts must be repelled and kept far off from the very beginning, just like the most unclean filth. Thoughts are idle when the man is neither delighted nor stirred up by them. They are, for example, thoughts of a horse running or a bird flying, where the man often sits between vice and virtue. He neither descends to the one, nor ascends to the other. Thoughts are curious when they prompt a man to explore the secrets of his neighbours. The soul ought to carefully examine itself, but it forgets itself and worries about others instead. It

is now within, now out wandering abroad. It is talkative and impatient of quietness. A man's thoughts are suspicious when he suspects evil of his neighbour without certain proof. Some things could go either way but he interprets them to mean the worst. Thoughts are busy when a man arranges and manages distant matters, kingdoms, and places. Such a man is busy with questions and thoughts of this world. According to Solomon, "God gave this worst occupation to the sons of men, so that they should be busy with it" (Ecc. 1:13).

11. It is rightly acknowledged that there are a great variety of thoughts. Some inflate the heart, others elevate it. Some perturb it, others dissipate it. Some confound it, others busy it. Some bind it, others stain it. Some contract it, others corrupt it. Proud thoughts inflate the heart, and vain thoughts elevate it. Envious thoughts perturb it, angry thoughts dissipate it, slothful thoughts confound it, and ambitious thoughts busy it. Gluttonous thoughts bind it, lustful thoughts stain it, fearful thoughts contract it, and malicious thoughts corrupt it. After these thoughts have been shut out, the mind is cleansed if it is continually trained with holy thoughts, as it is written: "Holy thought shall protect you" (Prov. 2:11). There are, therefore, good and holy thoughts. We ought to think about God, so that we should delight in him. We ought to think about the Passion of our Redeemer, which he endured for us on the gibbet of the cross, so that we should be prepared to freely endure tribulations and anguish for him. We ought to think of the hour of our passing so that we should always be ready for it. We ought to think about the Day of Judgement, because there we shall give account for our works. We ought to think about hell, so that we fear punishment, because in it there is no redemption. We ought to think about Paradise, so that we desire crowns, which we shall have in the future. We ought to think about the Lord's commandments and the sacraments of our redemption, so that we persevere in the way of righteousness through the grace of God.

Amen.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Four Spirits Speaking in the Heart of Man**

12. Four spirits continually speak by these thoughts of the human heart: the spirit of the world, the spirit of the flesh, the spirit of the devil, and the spirit of God. The spirit of the world speaks empty things. He speaks to our heart when we love vanity, when we are glad of vanity, and when we delight in vanity. The spirit of the flesh speaks when we desire soft things for the flesh and for the fleshly senses. He speaks when we fulfil care of the flesh with desires and pleasure. The spirit of the devil speaks both when we think bitter things and when we bring forward harsh things. He speaks when we are grieved in ourselves and raging at others, when we are ungrateful and envious, without love, and without faith (cf. 2 Tim. 3:2-3). The spirit of God speaks when we meditate on and speak sweet things. He speaks to us when we speak joyful things to ourselves and our neighbours, in every sweetness and goodness, seeking to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). These are the consciences, these are the thoughts of consciences, these are the spirits speaking in our thoughts which your conscience, sweetest brother, distinguishes and discerns better than my page. I have been made foolish, you have compelled me. Still, I have wished to show my inexperience rather than to confound your face (cf. Ps. 43:16). If anything has been said well, account it to yourself, for whose faith the Son of God has given both the word and the meaning. If anything has been said otherwise than well, account it to yourself, because you have commanded me to write it. But forbear from haste, because nothing is so contrary, nothing so utterly jarring in writing than haste and speed. When you write, you seek to find what is fitting and to clothe what you find with fitting words. It requires a suitable place, comfortable time, lively invention and skilled style. But hide this epistle or book, if you choose to call it thus. If you decide to make it public, at least hide the name of the author. The



author of salvation – to whom alone is honour and glory – knows how much I love the salvation of your soul and the honour of your person. That is Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who gives himself for you, and crowns you in love and mercies.

Farewell, and pray for me.

**Appendix B**  
**De Interiori Domo**  
**(On the Inner House)**  
**Prologue to Chapter 22**

*(PL 184:507C-532D)*

**Prologue**

The house in which we dwell threatens us with ruin from every side. It is necessary for us to build up another, because this one shall fall in a short time. Let us therefore return to ourselves and let us examine our conscience. For, as our body is called the tent in which we serve as a soldier, so our conscience is called the house in which we rest after our soldiery. He fights well who builds the house of conscience through the fight which he exercises in the body. “Diligently cultivate your field,” says Wisdom, “so that afterwards you may build your house” (Prov. 29:27). That field is our body, whose senses and movements we use rightly. We turn them to the use of virtue, subjecting them by the command of the mind as long as the body is constantly subject to the mind, and the mind is wholly made subject to God. Interior conscience is undoubtedly built up in these ways: the good which the senses and movements of the body do, the appropriate satisfaction for past evils, and the wary, thoughtful avoidance of present evils. Fitting satisfaction is to correct bad deeds and, once they have been corrected, not to repeat them. Conscience is eternal. It never ends, just like the soul. Because it is immortal, just like the soul, it is impossible for it to not exist. Thus, it is never possible to exist without conscience. For conscience is inseparable from the glory or shame of each man, like a kind of deposit.

**Chapter 1**

**That conscience must first be cleansed and subdued, then built up**

1. This conscience in which the soul shall eternally remain must be built up, but

first it must be cleansed. And who shall wash it? Surely, God and man – man through thoughts and affections, but God through mercy and grace. Thoughts and affections are necessary in the cleansing of conscience: thoughts in the investigation of truth, affections in the training of virtue. Mercy erases sin and gives strength for the resistance of sin. First it takes away the death that is sin, and then it sends in bitterness. It heals the affection. Grace aids us to goodness, defends us against evil, and teaches us discernment. Therefore a man, incited by the truth, confesses his sins. God, prevailed upon by compassion, has mercy upon the one confessing. There is therefore every hope of favour and mercy in confession, and no one can be justified from his sin unless he has first confessed his sin. Indeed, from confession everyone begins to be justified insofar as the accuser of himself has come forward for confession.

2. The conscience is blessed in which mercy and truth have met one another, in which justice and peace have kissed (Ps. 84:2). The truthfulness of the one confessing and the compassion of the merciful have met together, because there can be no lack of mercy for one who knows himself in truth. The kiss of justice is to love one's enemies, to give up one's own parents for God, to patiently bear injuries inflicted, and to always decline the bestowal of glory upon oneself. The kiss of peace is to bring the hateful to peace, to call back the discordant to unity, to peacefully hold back adversaries, to faithfully and kindly teach those who err, to gently comfort those who grieve, and to have peace with all people. The soul is blessed which has been established in the peace of Christ and made strong in the love of God. Its inner peace is not disturbed when it suffers external conflicts. Whatever troubles may resound outside, they never break in upon the silence of inner peace in the soul. It is gathered within through desire, because it has been touched with the taste of internal sweetness. It is not immoderately dissolved externally in the pleasures of the flesh, because it possesses internally everything in which it delights. Thus it is at peace in itself when there is nothing

outside that it desires. It rests all within, through love. When it is all gathered to inner joy, it is reformed to the image of God which it venerates in itself. The angels and archangels often visit such a soul, and they honour it as the temple of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. May it be, therefore, the temple of God, and the Most High God shall dwell in you. For the soul that has God in itself is the temple of God, in which the divine mysteries are celebrated.

3. But the soul which does not desire to cease in itself nor fix its desire in the love of God goes out through the eyes and the ears and the other corporeal senses. It delights in these external things. But when it finds those doors closed, then returning to itself and seeing itself naked and desolate, it is struck with inestimable confusion and horror. And because it sought the consolation of the world, it shall not have the consolation which is given by God within, in its conscience. And not only shall God disdain to visit it, but neither shall that soul be able to bear itself, knowing itself so wickedly. It shall not have rest in itself, because it abandoned him with whom it ought to have dwelt and had rest. Therefore consider now, while you are situated in the society of others, because you shall not always be able to remain with them. Meanwhile, choose for yourself that companion who – when all these things have been taken away from you – shall keep faith with you, who keeps faith with his lovers, and does not retreat in the time of trouble. He is your God, whom you ought to choose.

4. Therefore, gather all the distractions of the heart and fluctuations of the mind into one, and fix your whole desire in God alone. Your heart is where your desirable and greatly beloved treasure is. Indeed, he frequently visits and gladly dwells within tranquillity of heart and the restfulness of a quiet mind, because that is peace and his place has been made in peace (Ps. 75:3). Therefore prepare yourself in such a way that God will come to be with you, so that he shall be in your prayer, so that he shall be in your heart, so that he shall always go with you, always return with you, and shall not retreat from you. He shall never send you

away, unless you first send him away. Wherever you go, you shall never be able to be alone if God is with you. Therefore, wash your conscience and make it always ready so that, at whatever hour the Lord shall come and wish to dwell with you, he shall find in you a mansion, ready for himself. For this reason he said: “Make a sanctuary for me, and I shall dwell in your midst” (Ex. 25:8).

5. Let us strive, therefore, to build the temple of God within us: first, so that he may simultaneously dwell within each of us, then so that he shall dwell in all of us, because he shall disdain neither individuals nor all together. First, therefore, let each one desire, so that he should not be separated from himself, because every kingdom divided within itself shall become desolate, and the house shall fall upon the household (Lk. 11:17). Christ shall not enter in where the walls have decayed and the bricks have been dislodged. The soul wishes to have the house of its body intact, and it is necessary for the soul to leave it if its members have each been separated from it. Let that soul look, therefore, if it desires Christ to dwell in its heart through faith (that is, in itself). Let it look and take care anxiously, lest its members (that is, reason, will, and memory) are each separated from it. The one whose reason is not deceived, nor his will perverse, nor his memory polluted, prepares a fit dwelling for God. The soul is blessed which strives to thoroughly purify the house of its heart from the filth of sins, and to fill it up with holy and just works, so that not only angels shall delight to dwell in it but even the Lord of angels. After the house has been washed and all evils shut out from it, let it be filled up with all good things, so that it should not be necessary for us to seek anything outside, we who have abandoned every external thing.

## **Chapter 2**

### **On the raising of the seven columns for building the house of conscience, and on the good will which is the first column**

6. Let Wisdom, then, build a house for herself. Let her raise seven columns, by which the whole construction is supported. The house is conscience. The columns are the good will, memory (that is, to be mindful of the gifts of God), a cleansed heart, a free soul, a right spirit, a devout mind, and illuminated reason. Let the first column be raised before the others. For among all the gifts of God which seem to look toward the salvation of man, the first and principal good is found to be the good will through which the image of the likeness of God is restored in us. It is the first, because every good thing is begun by a good will. It is the principal, because nothing more useful than a good will is given to human beings. Whatever a person does cannot be good unless it proceeds from a good will. Without a good will, nobody can be saved at all. With a good will, nobody can perish. A good will cannot be given to the unwilling, nor snatched away from the willing. The will of man is the power of God. It is the will of man because to will is in the will of man, and therefore all merit is in the will. As much as you will, so much you merit. As much as your good will grows, so much your merit grows. Therefore, make your good will great if you wish to have great merit. And so God, as a most faithful and most merciful father, has placed our redemption in the good will, in which nobody can be lacking unless he wishes to be. For all people are able to love equally – both the rich and the poor, even if they are not able to give money equally. The will is not good, however, if it does not do what it can.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **On the second column which is memory of the gifts of God**

7. Let us therefore remember the mercy of God, so that we shall be set afire with love for him. Let us recall to memory the good things which he has shared with us, how often he mercifully snatched us away intact from dangers. Our sins have never been able to keep him from having mercy. Those who forget him, he has reminded of himself. He has called

back those turned away from him. He has kindly taken up those coming to him, shown kindness to the penitent, watched over the perseverant, held those who stand firm, and raised up the fallen. He has turned wicked delights into bitterness, and in turn he has shared his consolations for the healing of the embittered. At last, he restores rest and perfect peace to those purged by tribulation. He has never failed to correct sinners nor to watch over the just. Let us reflect upon how much good God has done for us when we neither asked nor desired, but rather rejected him. Let us consider how many sins he has forgiven us, from what great perils God our liberator has delivered us, and how great the repute of his righteousness has been. Let us consider that the grace of God has protected the ungrateful and adverse in many things, from so many sins into which we could have fallen, as we have fallen into so many others. Therefore, just as there is no moment in which we do not either use or enjoy the faithfulness and mercy of God, so there ought to be no moment in which we do not have him present in our memory.

#### **Chapter 4**

##### **On the third column which is the cleansed heart**

8. It follows that we should love with a whole heart him from whom we have received such great gifts – that is, with a whole thought, with a whole affection, without defect. Let the heart be right, so that God may be pleasing to it through all things. Let it be right with the uprightness of intention, by the shutting out of perverse thought, by the constant presence of contemplation. Let it be prepared to follow the will of God in whichever direction it knows itself to be led. Let it be on high, for the contemplation and desire of celestial and divine things alone. Let it be pure, so that it suffers nothing evil to remain within itself, and let it not consider even the smallest stumbling-block bearable – either in its own conscience or in another's. Let it be sweet, with a sweet reply, with a smooth admonition,

with a gentle reprimand, with restrained correction. Let it be cleansed so that it deplors the sins of thought as of action, rejecting the filth of all uncleanness. Let it weep bitterly for its own wretchedness and that of others. Let it not only mourn its own faults, but also those of others. Let it repent for the evils which it has committed, and for the goods which it has neglected.

## **Chapter 5**

### **On the free soul, the fourth column**

9. The soul should be free from the anxieties of the world, from the pleasures of the flesh, from crooked thoughts, so that the man should be able to exert himself to serve either the advantage of his brothers or himself when he wishes, or to rest in the contemplation of heavenly things. Let it be firm, so that it should not be shaken by any sudden perturbation, so that it should not be seized by any enticements, not broken by any troubles. Let no anger, no impatience, be able to disturb the peace and rest of the soul. For Christ is peace, and the lover of peace rests in peace. He cannot dwell in the perturbed soul. Let it be complete in the love of God. This, indeed, is to love God: to seize the soul for him, to take up love of enjoying the vision of God, to have a hatred for sin and contempt for the world. It is to love one's neighbour, whom God has decreed must be loved.

## **Chapter 6**

### **On the right spirit, the fifth column**

10. Let the spirit be right, wholly turned away from all earthly and present things, inseparably joined and united with God. Let it ascend by faithful devotion, and let it visit the high seats and the many mansions which are in the house of the Father, humbly prostrating itself before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Let it run through the streets of the heavenly



Zion. Let it hear the melody of angels and let it entreat with reverence all the orders of blessed spirits – each order for itself, and likewise commending itself to all of them. But the soul that has not been long trained nor well-learned in the investigation of itself does not merit to receive such great grace. Indeed, one who is not yet able to see himself raises the eye of the heart to see God to no avail. First it is necessary that you should know the invisible things of your spirit before you can be fit to know the invisible things of God. And if you are not able to know yourself, you ought not presume to apprehend the things which are above you.

11. The particular and foremost mirror for seeing God is the rational mind discovering itself. If, indeed, the invisible things of God are observed, having been known through the things which have been made, then where, I ask, are traces of knowledge of God found more expressly imprinted, than his image (Rom. 1:20)? Let anyone who thirsts to see his God wipe his mirror clean, let him cleanse his spirit. Blessed are the pure in heart, because they shall see God (Matt. 5:8). The true penitent does not cease daily to examine, scrub, maintain, and guard this mirror. He does not cease to look if he might find in it anything that would be displeasing to God. He does not cease to scrub, not just sins of action, but also of thought, so that nothing remains in it that would offend God. He does not cease to maintain it, lest, falling down from on high through love of the earth, he becomes stuck to the earth, and lest he become filthy with the dust of empty thoughts. He does not cease to guard it, so that he whose tabernacle is with men – whose delights are with the sons of men, who stands at the door and knocks – may find a clean shelter at whichever hour he wishes to enter (cf. Rev. 21:3; Prov. 8:31; Rev. 3:20). Indeed, God who is a lover of cleanness cannot dwell in a polluted heart.

12. After this mirror has been wiped clean and diligently inspected for a long time, a certain clarity of divine light begins to shine through it, and the measureless ray of

unaccustomed vision appears to the eyes of the heart. The mind, set aflame by the vision of this light, begins to witness high and inner things by the cleansed sight of the heart. It begins to love God, to fasten itself to God. It considers as nothing all the things that press upon it. It renounces all affections. It wholly presses on only into love, knowing that only the one who loves God is blessed. Finally, the mind never reaches such grace through its own industry. This is the gift of God, not the merit of man. But without doubt, he who abandons care for the world and takes care of himself receives so great a grace – he who desires to reflect upon himself frequently and to diligently recognise what he is. Go back to your heart, therefore, and diligently examine yourself. Consider whence you came, whither you are heading, how you live, what you do, what you lose, how much you accomplish, or how much you fail each day. Consider by which thoughts you are assailed more, by which affections you are more frequently struck, or with which stains of temptation you are more bitterly attacked by the wicked spirit. When you fully know the whole state and condition of the inner and outer man as much as possible – and not only of what sort you are but also what you ought to be – you can be raised up to the contemplation of God. For as much as you achieve in knowledge every day, the higher you always reach. But perhaps you have already ascended, already returned to your heart, and you have learned to remain there. Let this not be sufficient for you. Learn to dwell there and to build a mansion. Regardless of whatever wandering of mind draws you away from it, always hasten to return there. Without doubt – through much use – whenever you are there, it shall be turned into a delight for you in such a way that you will be able to remain there constantly, without any difficulty of labour. Indeed, it shall be more punishing for you to be anywhere else than to make some time there.

## **Chapter 7**

### **On the devout mind, the sixth column**

13. If you have plainly seen that your desires are moved by external delights and that your thoughts are continually seized by them, round them up with great care and do not permit them to enter into your heart. Instead, return to your heart and strive in every way to enter and to dwell in it. Indeed, the mind which does not raise itself to the consideration of itself, but is still scattered through various desires and various thoughts, is stretched here and there. It is not able to gather itself into unity, because it does not yet know to enter into itself. It still remains in thought and conduct. And, therefore, it is unable to fly up by the wing of contemplation to the things which are above itself. Let it learn, therefore, to gather together all the dispersions of its heart. Let it become accustomed to being undelayed in its inner matters. Let it strive to draw together the out-goings of mind, and to forget all exterior things. Let the mind that gasps for celestial contemplation, that sighs for familiarity with divine things learn to love only good interior things and to think about them more frequently. Whenever it has attended diligently to itself and has sought for a very long time, when at last it has discovered what sort of thing it is, it stands firm so that it may know by divine revelation what it ought to be. It may know what sort of house of the mind to prepare for God, and by which services it needs to please him.

14. The one who gathers the wanderings of the mind and fixes all the motions of the heart into one desire for eternity has certainly already returned to his heart. He already waits there gladly and is wondrously delighted. And because he is not able to seize himself for joy, he is led above himself, and is raised up to the heights through ecstasy. Through himself, above himself, through knowledge of himself, he ascends to knowledge of God so that he learns to love God alone and to think upon him unceasingly. He learns to rest delightfully in God. When the love of Christ has so absorbed the whole affect of man that, disregarding and forgetting himself, he perceives nothing but Jesus Christ and the things which are of Jesus Christ, then finally, as I judge, charity is perfected in him. To one thus

affected, poverty is not burdensome. He does not feel injuries. He laughs at his shame, scorns his loss, and considers his death as profit. Indeed, he does not think that he dies because he knows that he passes from death to life (cf. Jn. 5:24). The one whom the love of God thus holds fastened within, who is not in the least strong enough to pass outside, burns within with desire for God as amply as intimately and as vehemently as constantly. He who is thus continually delighted in the love of God frequently experiences ecstasy. He is snatched from all present, earthly things and is presented before God. While he gazes upon the beauty of God, he is astonished at the magnitude of God's beauty. He is wholly suspended in admiration of God. He marvels at the glory of the King, at the magnificence of the kingdom, at the nobility of the heavenly city, and at the happiness of its citizens. Furthermore, he contemplates the splendour of glory, the goodness of God, the sweetness of inner comeliness, and the tranquillity of eternal peace. He meditates upon the power of the Father, upon the wisdom of the Son, the benevolence of the Holy Spirit, and the beatitude of the angelic nature. He is delighted by God, in God, while he admires God's faithfulness and contemplates his splendour. O how sweet it would be if he were not snatched away for so short a time! He is snatched up while he contemplates celestial things alone and is delighted by contemplation. But when he tries to stay there longer, suddenly he slips back and, returning to himself, is unable to recount to himself anything which he saw above himself. But, enticed by the perception of sweetness, he wonders at the attraction of the sweetness tasted, and the heavenly infusion of spiritual joy within himself. With a silent mind he turns over in his heart the clarity of incorporeal light, the taste of innermost satiety, the secret of inner peace, and the mystery of highest tranquillity. In the contemplation of this, and in the sweetness of contemplation, the mind is delightfully stirred and wondrously delighted. Let it fly, therefore, and not grow faint. Let it fly until it arrives before the King and there let it weep and let it sigh and sacrifice itself in tears. Let it entreat kindness, let it pray for grace

and let it not retreat from there until it perceives that God, whom it has greatly offended, is pleased, and it receives consolation from him.

## **Chapter 8**

### **On the illuminated reason, the seventh column**

15. Then the reason – raised up through ecstasy in contemplation of high things, snatched away into the hidden place of divine contemplation, there illuminated with the knowledge of truth and of the true light, inflamed with desire for goodness – gathers together into one all illicit pleasures, affections and wandering meditations of the memory, dispersions of the heart, roamings of the spirit, and uncertainties of the soul. It fixes all its desire in that fount of joy. Let reason always maintain a higher place and let there be no rebellious movement against it, but let everything obey it as it also obeys God. But if it perceive any motion stirred against it – either that ought not to be stirred up, or in a way that it ought not be stirred – let reason not consent, but let it resist there. For consent alone makes us guilty, even if something impedes works from following. Then, indeed, the soul is said to die, as it is written, when the reason itself is bent towards sin through consent. “The soul which has sinned shall die” (Ez. 18:20). Let it resist, therefore, so that it may not die. Let it fight, so that it may be crowned. Burdened, it is grieved, but it is fruitful. For if it has punishment, it shall also have a crown. The temptation does no harm where there is no consent. Indeed, that which wearies the resistant crowns the conqueror.

## **Chapter 9**

### **On the indications and signs of a well-edified conscience**

16. In this way, without doubt, the good conscience is built up. The conscience is good which punishes past sins and flees back from things worthy of punishment. If it senses

sin, it does not consent to sin. If thought stains it, reason washes it. The conscience is right which is displeased with its own sin and does not consent to another's sin. But this does not mean that it either deserts the sinner or hides his sin. When it reproaches, it does not insult. It is tranquil because it is sweet towards all and severe towards none. It uses a friend for grace, an enemy for patience, all for kindness, whomever it is able for generosity. Indeed, the house of the soul is built with such excellent things. If, perchance, the thief who does not come except to steal, kill and destroy approaches it (as is accustomed to happen), if, I say, the thief – that is, glorification of the heart rising up within, or the desire for human praise advancing from outside, or any other pestilence whatsoever which schemes to break into that house – then let reason's anger keep vigil like a dog guarding treasure (Jn. 10:10). Let it bark, bite and attack the throat, rushing upon its enemies. Let it spare none. Let it permit none to enter, but let it cry out and let it stir those dwelling inside to take up arms. From wherever vice attempts to do harm, whether secretly or openly, let reason's anger drive it far off so that the conscience might be secure. Conscience is secure when it does not suffer any accusation, either for a time of goodness, or for presumption of evil. It is cleansed and knows itself well when it is neither accused justly for the past nor unjustly delighted about the present. The conscience is pure to which God does not impute its own sins (because it has not committed any), nor those of another (because it has not approved of them), nor negligence (because it has not kept silent), nor pride (because it has remained in humility).

## **Chapter 10**

### **That the care of conscience should be preferred to knowledge**

17. Many people seek knowledge but few seek conscience. But if conscience were sought with as much zeal and concern as worldly and empty knowledge is sought, it would be more swiftly apprehended and more usefully preserved. For to meditate on

conscience is perfect sense, and whoever guards conscience shall always be secure. With a healthy reverence for wisdom, it is more useful to run to conscience than to wisdom, unless it is the wisdom which builds conscience. Indeed, the soul understands itself when conscience is illuminated. The heart is filled with good conscience when the created image has received God in itself and itself in God by a mutual exchange. The creator image in the created image is nothing other than wisdom in the soul, glory in the conscience, sanctification in the ark. O how indescribable is the faithfulness of God that inclines such great majesty to such humility! He who created us is created in us. And, as if it were not enough for us to have God as our Father, he even wishes for us to become his brother and mother. “Whoever,” he says, “does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and mother” (Mt. 12:50). Brother, by obeying; mother, by producing. Brother, through participation in heredity; mother, through the instruction of others. O faithful soul, open wide your bosom, spread your affection. Do not be distressed to conceive within your innermost parts the one whom all the world was not able to embrace until the Blessed Virgin conceived him by faith. For Christ is conceived by faith, born by the proclamation of the Word, nourished by devotion, and held by love. Therefore let conscience be pure, so that it may be a fitting guest room for God. Let it be concerned about faithful service, lest such great majesty decline the bosom of our heart. Let it be devout, so that it be pleasing to God alone, so that it stretch out to God alone and not retreat from him. Such a great conscience makes the soul joyful and presents itself as pleasing to God, as worthy of reverence to men and to angels, and becomes calm and restful in itself.

## **Chapter 11**

### **On the benefits and fruits of good conscience**

18. Conscience is knowledge of the heart, which is understood in two ways. It may be seen either as that which knows itself through itself, or that which knows other things

besides itself, outside of itself. The heart, indeed, knows itself and many other things by its conscience. When it knows itself, it is called conscience. When it knows other things besides itself, it is named knowledge. Good conscience is the title of religion, the temple of Solomon, the field of blessing, the garden of delights, the golden chariot, the joy of the angels, the Ark of the Covenant, the treasure of the King, the palace of God, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the book signed and closed that shall be opened on the Day of Judgement. Nothing is sweeter, nothing safer, nothing longer-lasting than good conscience. Though the body press, the world draw, the devil terrify, it shall be secure. Good conscience shall be secure when the body dies, secure when the soul shall be presented in the presence of God, secure also when it is placed before the terrifying judgement seat of the just Judge on the Day of Judgement. There is no remedy more useful for future blessedness, no testimony more certain than good conscience. Good conscience never grows weak when the world is spun about with every whirl, when it weeps, laughs, dies, passes through. Though the body be subjected to punishment, though it be worn down in fasts, though it be torn by blows, though it be stretched on the rack, though it be butchered by the sword, though it be afflicted with the suffering of the cross, conscience shall be secure.

19. In the mirror of conscience, the state of the exterior and interior man is known. Indeed, the soul which is without a mirror [does not know] itself. The good conscience is the clean, bright and pure mirror of all religion. As a woman who desires to please her husband or lover arranges the beauty and elegance her face in gazing at the mirror that returns a facing image, so the soul rereads and understands in its conscience the ways in which it has departed from the image of truth, or in which things it may recover the traces of the creative image. Not without cause have we compared the conscience to a mirror because in it, just as in a mirror, the eye of the reason is able to apprehend by a clear sight what is decent and what is indecent in itself.



## **Chapter 12**

### **On the protection and restraint of the heart necessary for good conscience**

20. No one's life is known, except in conscience, and no one arrives at a good conscience except through protection of the heart. The heart brings itself either to life or to death by its own choice. For to wish to sin is evil. To sin is worse. To persevere in sin is worst. To not wish to repent is deadly. Therefore, whatever the heart reflects upon that does not pertain in any way whatsoever to its own advantage or that of its neighbours must be spat out. Therefore, let the wandering and insatiable heart return to itself from the diverse parts of the world in which it is held or pointlessly occupied, and let it examine itself. When it has found a fault, let it fear punishment. But in seeking the fault, let it never discover a fault except in itself. When the fault and the cause of punishment have been discovered, let it set itself before itself for punishment, and let it judge itself as though it were another: the culpable self before the troubled self, the guilty self before the severe judge self, the wicked self before the self turned back to piety. Let it place itself before itself. Let it determine what must be done by itself about itself. Let it justly inflict just scourges upon its unjust self. Let it speak to itself, thus: "You suffer division because you have deserted the peace of your Lord God and have rushed into battle with yourself, so that you are condemned by yourself. Because you have broken the agreement of peace, you wish what you do not wish and you do not wish what you wish. You shall be condemned by your very self. You wish what must not be wished. You do not wish what must be wished. Lo, by your mouth I judge you, O wicked servant (Lk. 19:22). Humble yourself, therefore, and place yourself before your face so that you see your disgrace and reflect upon your foolishness." Thus, indeed, the heart returns to itself in its wretchedness, and the heart is set before the heart. Strength is a certain thing which works about the heart thus: it restrains the fluid and empty heart so that it does not

flow forth into the abyss of utter destruction. That very strength – or violence – seizes the Kingdom of Heaven. “The Kingdom of Heaven,” says the Lord, “suffers force, and the violent seize it” (Mt. 11:12). He shall possess the noble kingdom who possesses his own heart. He does not reign who has been given in heart to the slavery of vices, who watches over cities and crowds of people. He alone reigns who, with the empire of his heart kept safe, orders the whole household of interior and exterior motions according to the laws of reason. If a lion-like madness rises up within, it is pressed down through patience, the wantonness of the he-goat through abstinence, the aggressiveness of the wild boar through gentleness, the pride of the unicorn through humility.

### **Chapter 13**

#### **That the mobility of the heart must be restrained through consideration of divine majesty and power**

21. Amongst the other liberal arts, no liberal art is found excelling the others by which the heart can be held. For the heart is quicker than every quick thing, more slippery than every slippery thing. Because of its mobility, its natural instability, it refuses to stay fixed in one place. Its life is in motion and motion is life to it. So tiny a vital motion in the heart moves the great structure of the whole human body. By what art is it contained such that, moving other things, it is not moved itself? Perhaps it would not be moved if the ass-drawn millstone were tied to its neck. On the contrary, it would be much more stirred up with the millstone. It is necessary for it to go around and walk throughout the land if, perchance, it is able to find something swifter and more mobile than itself. If it has not found anything like itself on the land, then let it even go about the ring of heaven and move the chariot wheels of God to its own course. What shall it then do to those who walk above the wings of the winds? Perhaps it shall be able to contend with them. Surely it shall not run with that strength, which

“strongly reaches from one end to the other, and ordains all things sweetly” (Sap. 8:1)? And surely it shall not apprehend that thing, concerning which it is said, “Wisdom is quicker than all quick things” (Sap. 7:24)? Even so, when it has seen the power of its Creator leaping over its own power with such wide bounds, let it halt and send away its own wings, restraining itself, and with the reins of god-like preparation, gather and restrain itself to itself. Let it not walk out beyond its own boundaries. Thus, indeed, the holy animals in the vision of Ezekiel “stood and submitted their wings when there was a voice above the firmament, because it was above their heads” (Ez. 1:25). The saints clearly do this after seeing all the works and wonders of God above understandable things and hidden mysteries. They discover that they know nothing, but they weigh out all their works with the movement of scales. Then the heart understands that it is not moved by itself, for it would remain immobile by itself, unless the one who moves all things likewise moved it among all things. Therefore, coming to know its movement borrowed from God, it shall no longer take it as its own but as something loaned. The borrower ought to use the thing lent for the will of the lender, otherwise he commits theft of the thing lent.

## **Chapter 14**

### **On divine admonitions by which the heart of man is constantly moved to careful use of creatures and the right governance of itself**

22. Therefore, O human heart, let yourself be moved when God has moved you or wishes you to be moved. Otherwise, do not let yourself be moved, because you were not moved but upset. But when does God move you? When he admonishes. He admonishes thus: “You are pointlessly occupied in these things which are vanities of vanities, O wise heart that surpasses every privilege. It does not become you to be beneath these things, but to be before them. These things need you in order for them to subsist better and more comfortably. You do

not need these things either for blessedness or immortality. Indeed, they prepare the journey's provisions for your packhorse on the road. They may be taken in measure, but not to superfluity. Whenever packhorses are flooded with an excess of food so that they end up vomiting, it happens that they grow weak from refreshment. Thus your body, O prince and lord of the body, digs for itself a lake of perdition in the hospice of reparation and prepares destruction from the remedy and shipwreck from the vessel, if it goes out beyond the regulations of necessity and opens its mouth to the pit of concupiscence. What then? Superfluity destroys what is necessary. Remove superfluous things, and no one shall lack necessary things. From the superfluous supply of some, the grievous destitution of others is powerfully created.

23. It is your duty to correct deeds performed wickedly. It pertains to your order and office to regulate the household of the body's members and the soul's motions. It is your responsibility to assign tasks to individual parts according to their competence. There should be none in the kingdom of your body who violate with impunity the laws and duties of your Creator – not the eye, not the hand, not the foot, not the ear, not the throat. What shall I even say about the ignoble and commonplace members? If they have presumed to reach for rebellion, let them be crushed with stones. Let them be pierced with javelins of rebukes and let them know that King Solomon sits upon the king's mule – that is, that reason is above the sensuality of the body (cf. 1 Kings 1:38). What if those shamefaced things, which modest and chaste lips ought always to call by a concealed name, harass the kingdom with an unordained motion? Without doubt, let them be cut off – not with the sword but with fasting, not by chopping them off, but by mortification. The Apostle says, “Would that those who cause disquiet would cut themselves off” (Gal. 5:12). The unbridled heart, perilously hurrying along its course, can be held back by these convictions, so that the conscience may be good. The conscience is good if it has purity in its heart, truth in its mouth and rightness in its action.

For these, it shall merit the vision of the Trinity. O blessed vision, in which God shall be known and evident so that he shall be seen by us individually, in us individually. He shall be seen in himself. He shall be seen in the new heaven and in the new earth and in everything which shall be created then.

## **Chapter 15**

### **That the book of conscience must be corrected**

24. The human conscience is the vineyard of the Lord which confession of sins ought to improve, as should satisfaction for sins, display of good works, and preservation of them. Each one has a book, his own conscience. Everything else is learnt for the purpose of examining and correcting this book. The soul can carry no other book with it besides the book of its conscience, when it goes out from the body. In that book, it shall know where it ought to go and what it ought to receive. We shall be judged according to the things which have been written in our books. Our books ought, therefore, to be written following the exemplar of the Book of Life. If they have not been so written, they must at least be corrected. And so, let us bring our books together with the Book of Life. If what they have is different, let our books be corrected lest, in the final arrangement, they be found to have anything different and be thrown away. Blessed is the man who is able to recognise and despise himself, to test and condemn himself. For he who is displeasing to himself is pleasing to God, and he who is worthless to himself is precious to God. The sciences of men are many, but there is none better than that one by which a man knows himself. Wherefore, let me return to my heart and become accustomed to remaining there, so that I should be able to examine my whole life and to know myself. Let me pour out all my miseries in the presence of God if, perchance, his great goodness might move him. I shall confess my sins to him, to whom all things are bare and open, whom I am unable to deceive, because he is wisdom, nor

escape, because he is everywhere (cf. Heb. 4:13).

## **Chapter 16**

### **A man laments his wretchedness, the disturbance of his heart, and his propensity for evil, in the presence of God**

25. Hear my confession, O Most Faithful God, and look to your faithfulness, and do with me according to your mercy. Hear how often the rushing crowd of many thoughts expels you from my memory. Those cogitations are accustomed to rush out in my heart like commoners to some spectacle. When I wish to pray or to sing in the monastery, I do not know what manner of foolish thought snatches my heart and leads it through diverse places. I am not able to hold it whenever I call it back to myself, but it slips away immediately. It is scattered here and there, and poured out through innumerable things. Thus the constant allure of earthly desires and the profusion of vanities so occupy my heart that I think of the thing which I desire to avoid, and I turn it over in my mind. Indeed, my heart and my thoughts are not in my power. My thoughts are suddenly poured out. They confound my mind and soul, and draw them to something other than what I had set before them. My thoughts call me back to worldly things. They bring in worldly things, pleasurable things attack me, and seductive things draw me in. I am often thrown down to earthly things, infected with empty thoughts in the very time I intend to raise up my mind to you. I wish to banish the tumults of such raucous thoughts from my heart every day, but I am not strong enough. They recall to my memory things I have seen and heard, said and done. They make a racket in my memory with great relentlessness. I think about things in the present, and I think back again on the things I have thought, and I do not cease to go over them again and again. After I have thought for a very long time about whatever I was able, I am unable to be without thoughts. They enter and exit. Some introduce others and block still others out. I endure these things unwillingly. I

often consent to them when I wander with a roving mind through the things I have seen or done without utility or discretion. Thus my mind is always mobile and never stable. It is forever wandering and drawn through diverse things as though drunk. I sin gravely when my heart abandons me, for it is a grave loss – a loss brought about through negligence. I suffer force when it deserts me. Strengthen my heart, O God, because it struggles to remain within itself. It is drawn off, away from itself, in some unknown way. Thus I sin out of the habit of sinning, even when I do not know. My heart – my empty heart – is brought down through innumerable things, and is divided in many desires.

26. When I wish to sleep at night, I see with closed eyes the images and phantasms of many things, and I bear them unwillingly. However much I struggle to avert the point of my mind from them, the more fully they force themselves upon me. They pollute my heart with burdens of disgraceful thoughts. Death-bearing delight has often harmed me in this way. It is customarily birthed out of recollection of past sins, but most especially from the recollection of lust. This, indeed, is the pestilence more familiar to me than other vices, inasmuch as it has a greater propensity for harm and is more difficult to repel. For when I wish to repel it, it assails me against my will. It is seductively burdensome, pleasing by displeasing, and displeasing by pleasing. I have never been able to escape the lust of the flesh. It always follows me, and is able to seize me with some thought of delight or desire for some sight. It does not permit me rest, either by night or day. It enters subtly and occupies my mind. It entices and burns, and diffuses itself slowly through the whole body like a poison unless it is repelled at once. It multiplies crooked thoughts, causes evil affections, and stirs up the mind with illicit delight. It bends the soul to consent to depravity, and corrupts all the virtues of the soul. I can scarcely be torn from this pestilence when I am held bound by it, either because I blush to confess its stings or I don't know how. They are so subtle and disgraceful. Truly, the fire of lust is difficult to extinguish. It stimulates the young, inflames

youths, weakens men, and wearies the old and feeble. It does not despise the cottage; it does not revere the palace. O would that it would flee monasteries alone! Help me, O Lord my God, that I might be able to resist this pestilent and death-bearing vice. For I know indeed that what wearies the resistant crowns the conqueror. I know that if I pollute my mind with unclean thought, I shall not be able to please you, the author of cleanness.

### **Chapter 17**

**He proceeds to accuse and lament his wretchedness regarding bitter thoughts, misuse of his members, and the sight of external things for the advantage of life.**

27. Create in me a clean heart, O God, because not only does empty thought occupy it and shameful thought pollute it, but bitter thought scatters it as well. Often, provoked by some injury, I am overwhelmed by constant disturbances of thought in my heart. Here and there, troubled and blind, I search for the opportunity for vengeance for injuries received. I multiply plans, and I complete quarrels in my heart which are not going on outside. I do not see those present. I speak against those absent. I give and receive insults within myself, but I respond more severely to the ones received. I construct vicious disputes within my heart whenever there is nobody present who would come against me. I consider the treachery of my enemies, and I weigh out what they might be able to bring up in response to my attacks. I seek out what I should answer, but I exert myself as an idle litigant because I don't have any cause. And thus the day is spent in ease, but I turn over all night in thought. I am lethargic at the thought of useful work, because I am made weary by illicit thought. Thus the mind fights within when nobody fights back against it. But sometimes, with troublesome thought, I turn over in my mind what I have done in the body. Each time I am more gravely tormented in recollection than I had been before, in the doing of the work. I often think about



things which I have never done nor intended to do, and it grieves me not to have done them. Cleanse me, O Lord, from my hidden faults, for I sin gravely within when I do nothing externally. I keep in my heart images of things which I have seen and done. Therefore I do not cease to turn over the tumults of temporal things, even when I am idle. I eat in thought when I fast. I speak when I am silent. I rage and I am at peace. The body rests; the soul runs off here and there.

28. Thus I have never been able to pass through this life without sin. Even the times I have lived praiseworthily are not without some guilt. They are undermined by my lack of piety. Snatch me away, O Lord, from my necessities (Ps. 24:17). For often when I desire to render my debts to necessity, I devote myself to the sin of pleasure. Under the veil of necessity, I fall into the snare of pleasure. For I have eaten and drunk most often not for necessity, but for pleasure. What was enough for necessity was too little for pleasure. I have even thought about food and drink when I ought not, and where I ought not, and more than I ought to have. By thinking about meats, I would chew meals in thought all day long. When I seek garments for covering my limbs, I desire not only those which cover, but those which extol. I seek not only that which fortifies with comfort against the numbness of cold, but those garments which delight through softness – and not only garments which are delightful to touch because of their softness, but which seduce the eyes with their colour. When I have been given permission to speak to someone for some need, I have not only spoken of necessary things, but also about unnecessary things, and about things that did not pertain to me, and which I did not have permission to discuss. I have immersed myself in the conversations of men. There I have spoken not for building up, but for the purpose of destruction, not what was fitting, but what was pleasing. I have spoken empty words, words good for laughter, and words both lazy and useless. Devoting myself to verbosity and eager for slander, I have stained my mouth with deception and slander. My tongue is full of every

falsehood, and it harms me more than all my members. For I am never able to report the things which I have heard or seen in the way they were said or done. I affirm some things in place of others, and often I say many superfluous things. Thus, either for too much praising or too much reproaching, almost as often as I speak, I lie.

29. My throat burns with insatiable gluttony. Gluttony cannot be satiated with different tastes. I wound my crooked heart, full of malice, and I have never been able to cleanse it through pure confession. My hands have been ready to do corrupt work, and lazy to do good work. My stomach and innards are often filled with too much food, and are therefore filled with grief. For the stomach is inflated within, because of things that delight the appetite. The body becomes infirm, and death often follows. Through delight of the appetite, I have fallen into the gluttony of the stomach. I contracted great destruction by excessive eating, the very thing from which I ought to have obtained health. My feet carried me more swiftly to see some curiosity than to church. My eyes corrupted me with wicked sight, and drew every movement of my body to unclean desires. I have more quickly opened my ears to lazy and empty words than to holy ones. The sense of smell has been delighted with pointless scents, taste with the various tastes of different things, and likewise each of the other senses, delighted by this and that to which its desire would carry it. Thus, O my God, I go out beyond the bounds of nature in all my members. All my members, as if by a conspiracy, have handed over dominion from me to my enemy. They have entered into a treaty with death; they have settled an agreement with Hell.

## **Chapter 18**

**The greater accusation of his own sin, especially concerning the vice of envy, of hatred, of boasting, etc.**

30. Snatch me away, O Lord, from the evil man – that is, from myself, from

whom I am not able to retreat (Ps. 139:2). For my vices follow me wherever I turn myself. Wherever I go, my conscience does not depart from me. It appears present, and it writes whatever I do. I am therefore unable to flee the judgement of my own conscience, whatever human judgements I artfully evade. And if I hide what I have done from men, I am not able to hide it from myself, who knows the evil which I have carried out. Awareness of my own guilt does not permit me to rest, but tortures me vigorously from day to day, and terrifies me more vigorously about the Day of Judgement. For in that day, when the Lord has come to judgement, the conscience of each one shall be brought to witness, and every fault shall be brought back before the eyes by the open book of conscience. And thus everyone's conscience shall force him to become his own accuser and judge. Therefore, I shall set myself before myself, and I shall judge myself so that I shall be able to escape the judgement of that final and terrible day. My conscience condemns me, even though divine judgement does not condemn me yet. It accuses me of homicide, which, if I have not done by work, I have often done by will and desire. It accuses me of adultery, and I answer in the same way. It accuses me of envy, and I confess it, because envy has most often mutilated my heart. For through envy, I have made the merits of those who live well into my sins by envying them. For I do not believe that the good things I hear they said or did are altogether true. I convert the very things which are done well into wickedness by interpreting them wickedly. I believe at once every evil which deceitful rumour puts out, as though I myself had seen it. I would shape every evil from my rivals, and I would make a deficiency of their success. I would conceal these hates within myself, and I would nurture them in my torments. I would begrudge the successful, I would favour sinners, I would rejoice for their ills and lament their successes.

31. I used to burn with gratuitous enmity, and I would fear this malice of my breast being discovered. I was always bitter about it and never settled. I was a friend of the devil and an enemy of myself. I have sown discord amongst friends, I have strengthened the

discordant in their dissent, I have stained their opinions with lies, I have praised carnal things in spiritual people in order to persuade them that they lacked spiritual goods. I have feigned friendships in order to deceive those who carelessly entrust themselves to me by whichever device I could. I have amassed occasion for hatred with perverse suspicion, and thus I have gladdened the demons whose behaviour I followed. I have been as a friend to many in submissiveness, ornate in word, repulsive in soul. I have been a betrayer of secrets, holding on to evil suspicions, perverse in both. And so the enemy has pursued my soul; he has made low my life in the land (Ps. 142:3).

O Most Faithful Lord, how am I able to be good, I who have been so evil in goodness? I would sin, and you would conceal it. I would prolong my iniquity for a long time, and you would prolong your goodness, because you would think upon penitence and pardon. Therefore give mercy to the wretched, you who have spared the guilty for so long. For I believe that whatever you have decreed to forgive to me shall be as though it never was.

32. Not only has envy afflicted my heart, but the futility of various delights has also enveloped my languishing mind. For through the futility of many works of which I was not conscious, I have put myself forth disgracefully. I would be eager to teach things of which I was ignorant. I would wish to have lofty things believed about myself. I would prefer delightful things to weighty ones. I would curse in word what I desired in mind. I would impose the names of virtues upon my vices, and so I would cheat myself and deceive those who favour me. I have been swift in making an honourable promise but false in display. I have been changeable in goodness, persistent in evil, grave in word, disgraceful in mind, false in both. I have been glad at fortunate conditions, weak in adverse ones, inflated at submission, disturbed at rebukes, immoderate in joys, easy in human affairs, but difficult in honourable ones. O Most Merciful Lord, my days have passed away in vanity – the days in which I ought to have wept for iniquity committed, to stir up my remiss will, to sigh for my

lost inheritance, to aspire for promised felicity, to hasten to angelic company, to be made right with your majesty.

## **Chapter 19**

### **He mourns and bewails his wretchedness and vices thus far in the presence of God.**

33. My whole life terrifies me, O my God, because when it is diligently examined it appears to me as either sin or fruitlessness. If anything seems fruitful in it, it is either false or imperfect, or in some way corrupt, so that it can either fail to please or actively displease you. And although it is like this in reality, it feels to me as though it were not so. That is misery above misery. So I eat, I drink, and I sleep secure, as though I have already passed the day of my death and escaped the Day of Judgement and the torments of Hell. Thus I play and I laugh as though already a king with you in your kingdom. Fearing because of the multitude of my iniquities, but confident because of your goodness, I confess to you my Creator and Redeemer who have promised to follow guilt with favour and forgiveness through a pure and lamentable confession. I confess, for I have been conceived in sin, nurtured in sin, and I have dwelt in sin at every stage of my life until this day. I find no sin by which I am not stained in some way. For through pride I have transgressed your teachings and those of my elders. I have not held silence and taciturnity as the Rule teaches. I have done, given, and received what has not been lawful for me. I have not willingly heard the cries of the poor and wretched, nor have I visited them in their infirmities. I have consented to those who urged me to evil. I think about many things that are below more easily than one thing that is on high. I blame the vices of others more easily than my own. I do not blush to do what I reprove in others. I hold out the vices of each person more easily than his virtues. Although I distinguish the faults of others, I do not regard my own. I am lenient towards my faults. I wish to be

severe towards the faults of others. I am strong when it comes to giving insults, weak when it comes to bearing them. I am slack in obedience but incessant in harassing others. I am slow to things which I both ought and am able to do, but ready to do the things which I neither ought nor am able to do. And so my soul is filled with evil things, with my demanding sins.

34. I find myself degenerate in church. I do not pray devoutly before the holy altars. I do not handle the sacred vessels reverently. I am in the choir with my body, but in some other business with my mind. Now I remain within; now I go outside. Such is the lightness of the body, and not only of the mind. I sing one thing and think another. I bring forth the words of psalmody, but I do not attend the meaning. I stray and gaze, wandering in mind, dissolute in character, fascinated with eyes looking out here and there, wheresoever they are carried. Woe to me, for I sin where I ought to make amends for my sins. But sometimes in the very goods which I do, I draw near to something worse. For, as long as my good deeds give birth to happiness for the mind and bear a certain security, my secure mind is handed over, and it becomes relaxed in torpor. Often I have even praised myself and the works which I had done, and I have wished to be praised by others. Often the human praise offered to me, which I was not seeking, pleased me. When I was carelessly extolled because of good works, suddenly many things which I had done came to my memory so that I was lifted up in elation even more. Subtly repeating these things and amassing them all into one, I began to swell up, more and more deceived. And while I was stupefied, occupied in admiration of myself, giving glory to myself and not to God from whom I had received everything, I lost the enjoyment of everything. Thus I learnt that those who praised me conspired against me. Inasmuch as anyone is glorified in himself, he is cut off from the love of God.

35. Thus, O my God, my life approached hell. If you free me, I shall have cause to give you thanks. If you do not, I shall not have cause to reprehend you, because you are

just. Alas for me! How I have lived! What evil things I have done and said! I am ashamed to have lived thus, and to have been born. I would rather not exist than to be such as I am. I was good, and I made myself evil. Surely it is right for me to always be wretched, I who made myself wretched voluntarily. My conscience merits damnation. My penance is not enough satisfaction. But it is certain that your mercy erases every offence. Therefore erase, O Faithful Lord, my iniquity with the greatness of your mercies. For I have lived to this day without a purpose. From now on I do not wish to live without a purpose.

36. But alas, O wretch! I have confessed these things and, rising and falling, I am exhausted from confessing as often as I sin. Many times I have promised to amend myself, and I have never held to it, but I have always returned to sin. I have joined new evils to former wickedness. I have never changed my habits (as I ought to have) into better things, nor retreated from evil deeds. Destroying myself, I have even made many others sin and been a cause of evil to many. Some have been upturned by the examples of my life. Behold, I do not conceal my sins, O most merciful God, but I show them. I accuse myself. I do not excuse myself, for I recognise my iniquity. And I am not righteous for that. If another were to accuse me as I accuse myself, I would not be able to endure it patiently. I had certainly been able to despair because of my many sins, vices, faults and the infinite negligence which I have committed and which I unceasingly commit every day with heart, mouth, work, and every way human weakness can sin except, O God, that your Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Now I do not dare despair, because he, obedient to you even to death – and death on a cross – bore the record of us sinners, and nailed it to the cross. He crucified sin and death. I give thanks to you, O Lord, my God, because you have visited me and shown me my sins. Now I have learnt, by your inspiration, to return to my heart and to know myself. Therefore I shall call upon one of your friends, and I shall set out all my faults before him as you have taught me, so that with his counsel and help I might be set free from all my

iniquities and be reconciled to you.

## **Chapter 20**

### **Confession to his prelate**

37. Hear me, therefore, father, a wretched sinner. Hear the voice of one tearful and penitent. Attend to how I have sinned gravely, and I have offended my Creator. At God's command I have returned to my heart, and with everything shut out except the Lord God and myself, I have examined my whole life as diligently as intimately. To admit the truth, I have found nothing there but a place of horror and of vast loneliness – that is, my conscience neglected all day, entirely overgrown with spines, covered with thorns, and filled with every horror. I find no vice from which I have not drawn some infection. Rage stirred me up, envy lacerated me, and pride inflated me. Then I committed changeableness of mind, scurrility of mouth, insults of neighbours, crimes of slander, impetuosity of the tongue. I did not keep the commands of my elders, but I judged them. Reproached for my negligence, I have been rebellious, or I have muttered back. I have impudently desired to put myself before my betters. I have scornfully attacked the simplicity of my spiritual brothers. I have rudely asserted my opinions. I have disdained the bestowal of obedience. I have not observed reverence in obedience, modesty in conversation, or discipline in morals. I have been persistent in my intentions, hard in heart, and boastful in talk. I have been false in humility, obstinate in hatred, and vicious in jest. I have been impatient with submission, a follower of power, lazy at good work, savage towards unity, hard in servility, eager to say what I did not know, ready to supplant, and discourteous in fraternal company. I have been reckless in judgement, loud in speech, disdainful in listening, presumptuous in teaching, and disgracefully unruly in laughter. I have been burdensome to friends, hostile to the peaceful, ungrateful to the generous, proud toward subservience, and imperious to those subject to me.



Often I have put myself forth as having done something which I did not do, having seen something that I had not seen, or as having said something that I did not say. I have even pretended not to have done what I had done. I have denied that I have said what I said, claimed not to have seen and heard what I had seen and heard. And so I am guilty on every side. I am guilty in the world, guilty in the cloister – but there through ignorance, here through negligence. Both terrify me.

38. Nevertheless, it terrifies me much more that I find myself wicked in the monastery, before the sight of God. God has set me in the place of pleasure, in the house of fruitfulness, in a paradise of delights. But I am wretched and miserable. I perish for hunger amongst tables of banqueters, I thirst next to the fountain, I am chilled before the fire, and I want to extend my hands to none of these things, for I am lazy and indolent. Thus I lose the time which God gave me by his goodness to do penance, to obtain favour, to acquire grace, to merit glory. I stand as a sort of monster amongst the sons of God, having the clothing of a monk but not the way of life. I deem all things good for me, with a great tonsure and a large cowl. I occupy the land like a fruitless tree, and, like a worthless packhorse, I consume more than I accomplish. I hold another's high place, and I do not do his duty. I am like a trunk without leaves or fruit. Others feed me from the work of their hands, like their beneficiary. But I am poor and wretched. I support neither cleric nor layman. I am unable to sing or read, and I do not know how to work. I am a disgrace to men, more worthless than cattle, and worse than a corpse. Even the putrid dog stinks more bearably to men than my sinner soul does to God. I am sick of living. I am ashamed to live, because I accomplish so very little. I am afraid to die, because I am not ready. Yet I would rather die, commit and commend myself to the mercy of God because he is kind and merciful, than to give scandal to someone else by my bad life (Joel 2:13). All day my shame is against me, and the confusion of my face buries me when I see myself sleeping at vigils, late for canonical hours, and lazy at manual labour

(Ps. 43:16). I see others going about divine praises so strenuously and devoutly, and still others attending before God and praising him reverently and eagerly. But I am unable to feel compunction to tears, so hard is my heart. Singing does not please me, nor praying delight me. I do not find meditations holy. My soul is greatly sterile, and I suffer such scarcity of devotion.

39. Alas for me! The Lord visits everyone in my circle, but he does not draw near me. Indeed, I see someone of singular abstinence, someone else of admirable patience, another of highest humility and sweetness, and yet someone else of much mercy and righteousness. That one frequently goes out in contemplation, this one knocks and pierces the heavens in the moment of prayer, and these excel the others in virtue. I examine everyone and look for the fervent, all devout, all one soul in Christ, all flowing with celestial gifts and grace, as though truly spiritual men whom God visits and in whom he dwells. But I find none of these things in myself, because the Lord has departed from his servant in anger. And so it is that, when others keep vigil, I sleep. When others sing in the monastery, I run about here and there. When they steal away from the conversation of men into some secret place in order to speak with the King of Angels, I seek out the conversation of men. When they are away to read, I go away with stories and idle words. When they examine and judge themselves, I judge others. The common life, the common discipline, and the common study please them, but nooks and corners please me. Thus I have been able to sin there. I have never been able to leave off sinning and evil works. I have forever piled up sins upon sins, and I have never been able to make satisfaction for them. I have never ceased to finish wicked intentions and evil desires.

40. Above every evil thing, the delight of the flesh – which has always grown with me, even from the cradle – has always stuck to me, and even now does not leave my failing members for old age. It has polluted, dissolved, and taken captive my wretched soul in

many and various ways. It has rendered me weak, empty, and devoid of every virtue. I confess that I am often excited and inflamed with unclean memories of this wicked work, and I suffer no small shameful desires. And not only the evil memory and foolish recollections of my pleasures do me injury, but also the wicked deeds of others which have been told to me. They have been brought back to my memory through sordid recollections, and they pollute my heart with not a little poison of iniquity. In this I am pitiable and pitiful, for I do not feel as much sorrow as I know that I deserve, but am numb, as though I do not know what I suffer.

41. This is more wretched to me than every misfortune: I approach the altar perverse in action, polluted in mouth, and unclean in heart. I do not fear to touch the body of Christ with my hands. I approach with pride towards the humble, anger towards the meek, and hard-heartedness towards the merciful. The humble endure the proud, the mild endure the enraged, and the merciful endure the heart-hearted. I approach the Lord as a servant – not with love, but fear, not with devotion, but for my advantage. I approach the Lord whose servant I have beaten. I approach the Father whose Son I have killed. I have beaten with my word; I have killed with my example. I neither fear the Lord, nor honour the Father. Whenever I go to make peace, I remain in the tumult of my brothers, stirring up others and stirred up by others. I approach to give the kiss of peace when I ought to have been reconciled before, offering the kiss of a troubled brother. My iniquity makes me guilty and an enemy of God. My sin has often separated me from God. I beseech you, father, teach me how I may be able to stand with my God, or return when I have been moved from him by pressing sins.

## **Chapter 21**

### **The response and instruction of the spiritual father to the penitent**

42. Your confession, my son, brings me to tears – both for myself and for you. I weep for myself because I find in myself almost the same or similar things to those you have spoken about yourself. You recall to my mind many things that I had forgotten. I rejoice for you, for the Rising Star has visited you from on high. You are not far from the kingdom of God. Recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation. Trust in God, for the humility of a pure confession shall supply whatever fervour and good works are lacking in you. At whatever hour a penitent sinner begins to mourn, he shall be saved (Ez. 18:21, 27). For God shall not despise the humble and contrite heart (Ps. 50:19).

Indeed, it seems to God that it is slower to give mercy to the sinner than it is for the sinner to receive it. The merciful God hastens to absolve the guilty from the torment of his conscience, as though compassion for the wretch tortures God more than compassion for himself tortures the wretch. He who truly does penance and sincerely grieves shall receive indulgence without doubt or delay. As frequently and as vehemently as he is sorrowful about his inner suffering, so certain and so sure he becomes about the favour of forgiveness. Thus it is that the Holy Spirit comforts the soul of the penitent afflicted with tears, as frequently as gladly. He visits frequently, comforts gladly, and restores fully in the assurance of his favour the soul which he considers to condemn its evils by grieving, and to grieve by condemning its evils. And from then on, a certain intimacy between God and the soul begins, in which the soul feels that it is visited by him more often. It is no longer consoled by his arrival, but rather filled with ineffable joy at it.

43. But who is fit for this? Truly, the perfectly penitent. For all things are washed in confession. Conscience is cleansed, bitterness is taken away, sin is put to flight, tranquillity returns, hope revives, and the soul rejoices. After baptism, no remedy has been established other than the refuge of confession. Therefore, let compunction of heart be devout, confession of the mouth true, mortification of the flesh wise, the uprooting of vice swift, the display of

good works joyful. You should not be ashamed to confess to God, from whom you cannot hide. He knows the hidden things of hearts – he to whom all things are bare and open, before whose sight all our sins have been written. But what sin writes there, confession deletes here. You ought not to be ashamed to say, therefore, what you were not ashamed to do. For if you are ashamed to expose your sins to me alone, myself a sinner, what shall become of you on the Day of Judgement, when your conscience shall appear exposed to everyone? If you were forced to pass before a multitude with a naked body, you could not be unashamed. Why, therefore, would you not be dismayed, when you are made filthy in your mind by unclean thoughts? Why are you less ashamed about the shameful things of your heart than you are about the shameful things of your flesh? Why do you fear the faces of men more than the faces of angels? Such great shame separates from God. Every hope of favour and mercy is in true confession. If confession is feigned, it is not confession, but duplicitous confession. Indeed, feigning misery shuts out the pity of God. Graciousness has no place where graciousness has been presumed. Humble confession of misery, however, provokes compassion. There is no sin so grave that it may not find forgiveness through pure confession. Therefore reveal the vices and crooked thoughts of your heart in confession. The sin that is brought forward is quickly cured, but crime is enlarged by keeping silent. If vice is endured, it shall go from being large to small. If it hides, it shall grow large from very little. For swift confession swiftly makes medicine. It is better that you should avoid vice than that you should make amends for it, lest you cannot be called back when you run into it.

## **Chapter 22**

**He suggests remedies effective against crooked thoughts: memory of the Passion of Christ, and of Final Things.**

44. As often as you feel yourself beaten with poisonous thoughts and allured to

illicit delight, place before the eyes of your mind how Christ was crucified on the cross for you. See how he is handed over to the Jews by Judas and treated horribly, blasphemed and beaten, judged and condemned, plundered and flogged, and finally afflicted with insults and reproaches, and hung between two robbers. He was affixed to the cross with nails, derided with spit, crowned with thorns, pierced by the lance. Blood flows from every part of his body, and he gave up his spirit with bowed head. Thus your Redeemer dies for you, and you are defiled in your mind by filthy thoughts of what sort I don't know. This thought shall be sufficient to exclude all illicit thoughts. But behold, let us pass to others.

45. Consider how you shall die, when you have been vexed by grave infirmity and dragged down to the edge. There, after you have been cast to the earth amidst long gasps and sobs, you shall breathe your last amidst diverse sorrows and fears. Then your body shall become pale and rigid, pus and stench. It shall be a worm and food for worms. Soon the spectral faces which awaited your end shall seize and snatch your soul. Terrible and horrible demons shall terrify it on every side. Think who shall defend it from the roaring demons prepared to feast on it. Think who shall console it when it sees the foulest monsters amongst the demons rushing together in swarms to destroy it. Or think who shall drag it down through that unknown place. See what comes so suddenly: your final day. It comes suddenly, and perhaps it shall be today. It is here now. Now you shall be presented before the terrible Judge. You shall be charged with many and great offences – not one, not a few, but innumerable crimes. They are not small, but huge. They are not doubtful, but certain. It is not a short accusation, but long – as long as your whole life. There will not be one accuser, but as many as your pleasures. The Judge himself shall be your severe accuser. All the good and wicked spirits shall accuse you before God. The good, because they owe God justice; the wicked, because they serve iniquity. You shall stand before as many judges and people as there are people who surpassed you in good works. You shall be ruined by as many charges as there

were people who set you examples of living well. You shall be convicted by as many witnesses as there were people who warned you with good conversation and righteous actions. Your iniquities shall be naked before all people, and your whole wickedness shall be open to all the crowds – not only wickedness of action, but even of thought and of speech.

46. Many sins shall rush forward suddenly as though from ambushes which you do not see, and perchance they are more numerous and more terrible than the sins which you see now. There shall be anguish for you everywhere. Here your sins shall be accusing, there justice terrifying. The horrible chaos of Hell shall be below; the angry Judge shall be above. Conscience shall burn within; the world shall burn outside. If the just shall scarcely be saved, where will the sinner who has been recognised as a sinner go? It shall be impossible to hide, unbearable to appear. In that great crisis, your conscience shall torture you with the evil things it knows that are against it. The secrets of your heart shall torment you. You yourself shall be your own accuser and judge by the force of your conscience. After you have been convicted by the witness of your own conscience, you shall not be able to flee the witness of the eyes of the Judge himself. You shall stand trembling and anxious, awaiting the weightiest judgement in anguished peril and perilous anguish, since you shall never be able to get rid of the judgement you shall receive there. Then the Judge shall be vehemently enraged, and terribly severe. His unchangeable judgement shall be brought forth once and for all. The horrible torturers who never have mercy shall be ready so that, once the sentence is given and you have been damned, they shall snatch you off to torments. The torments shall be without interval and without moderation. Fear shall confound you when the earth opens before you, and you shall be ruined and fall into the pool of burning, stinking sulphur. Outside, fire shall burn away your flesh. Within, the worm shall gnaw away your conscience. You shall be there without end, without hope of mercy and forgiveness. But worse than all the punishments of Hell, you shall not see God and you will be without the good things which you had in your

power to obtain.

47. Think these things often, if you wish to expel wicked thoughts from your heart. For your thought is the place where your affection is, where your heart is, and where your desire is. We most often turn over in our thought things whose love we have been more affected by. In his thought each man falls or stands. If you think good things, your holy thought shall protect you (cf. Prov. 2:11). If you think evil things, the Holy Spirit of discipline shall flee from your falsehood and withdraw himself from your thoughts which are without understanding, and the temple of God shall be the cave of the devil (Sap. 1:5). For the devil seizes the one God deserts. The Holy Spirit suggests good and sweet things. The wicked spirit suggests wicked, bitter, empty, useless, and unclean things. And therefore you must not consent to wicked thought, at whatever hour it touches your heart. You must not permit it to remain in your heart, but repel it there. Resist impure thought in the beginning, and it shall flee from you. For our wicked thoughts do not fly before the eyes of God. No moments of time in our soul escape without his retribution. Perverse thought gives birth to delight, delight gives birth to consent, consent gives birth to action, action gives birth to custom, custom gives birth to necessity, necessity gives birth to death. As the viper is killed, destroyed by the young in its womb, so the thoughts nourished within us kill us. It is for the demons to suggest evil thoughts. It is for us to expel them immediately. It is the role of our will to allow these things into our soul, and it is considered our own fault. For he who falls, falls by his own will. He who stands, stands by the will of God. However, unclean thought does not stain the mind when it strikes, but only when it subjects the mind through delight in it.



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