

CISTERCIAN FATHERS SERIES: NUMBER FIVE

Aelred of Rievaulx

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

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Aelred of Rievaulx Spiritual Friendship

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In memory of and thanksgiving for the life of
Father Chrysogonus Waddell, OCSO
1930–2008

*Teque deprecor, bone Iesu,
ut cui propicius donasti uerba tue scientie diligenter haurire;
dones etiam benignus aliquando ad te fontem omnis scientie peruenire
et parere semper ante faciem tuam.*

—The Venerable Bede

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Abbreviations

General Abbreviations

c.	<i>circa</i> , about
ca./cc.	chapter / chapters
cf.	compare
Comm	Commentary on
Ed(s).	Editor(s) / Edited by
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
Ep(p)	<i>Epistol(ae)</i> , Letter(s)
Intro.	Introduction / Introduction by
Lat	Latin
LXX	Septuagint
MS.	manuscript
n(n)	note(s)
ocso	Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance
p(p).	page(s)
Prol	Prologus, Prologue
Rpt.	Reprint
S(s)	Sermo(nes), sermon(s)
sj	Society of Jesus
Trans.	Translator / Translated by
UK	United Kingdom
vol(s)	volume(s)
Vulg	Vulgate

Scriptural Abbreviations

1 Chr	1 Chronicles
Col	Colossians
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Eph	Ephesians

Est	Esther
Ex	Exodus
Ez	Ezekiel
Gal	Galatians
Gn	Genesis
Is	Isaiah
Jb	Job
Jgs	Judges
Jn	John
1 Jn	1 John
Jr	Jeremiah
Js	James
1 K	1 Kings
Lk	Luke
Lv	Leviticus
Mt	Matthew
Nm	Numbers
Prv	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
Qo	Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes)
Rom	Romans
Ru	Ruth
Sg	Song of Songs
Si	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
1 Sm	1 Samuel
2 Sm	2 Samuel
Tb	Tobit
1 Thes	1 Thessalonians
Ti	Titus
1 Tm	1 Timothy
2 Tm	2 Timothy
Ws	Wisdom

Works, Series, and Journals

ABR	<i>American Benedictine Review</i>
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers

CF	Cistercian Fathers series. Spencer; Washington, DC; Kalamazoo; Collegeville, 1970–
Cîteaux	<i>Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses</i> ; <i>Cîteaux in de Nederlanden</i> . Westmalle, Belgium; Nuits-Saints-Georges, France, 1950–
Coll	<i>Collectanea cisterciensis</i> ; <i>Collectanea o.c.r.</i>
CS	Cistercian Studies series. Spencer; Washington, DC; Kalamazoo; Collegeville, 1970–
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSQ	<i>Cistercian Studies</i> / <i>Cistercian Studies Quarterly</i>
PL	J.-P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , series Latina. 221 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
RB	<i>Regula monachorum Sancti Benedicti</i> ; <i>Rule of Saint Benedict</i>
RTAM	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale</i> . Louvain, 1929–
SBOp	<i>Sancti Bernardi Opera</i> . 8 vol. Ed. J. Leclercq, H. M. Rochais, C. H. Talbot. Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–1977
SCh	Sources chrétiennes series. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1941–
SM	<i>Studia monastica</i> . Monserrat (Barcelona), Spain, 1959–

Works of Aelred of Rievaulx

Anima	<i>De anima</i>
Bello stand	<i>De bello standardii</i>
Iesu	<i>De Iesu puero duodenni</i>
Inst incl	<i>De institutione inclusarum</i>
Lam D	<i>Lamentatio David Regis Scotie</i>
Oner	<i>Sermones de oneribus</i>
Orat past	<i>Oratio pastoralis</i>
Sp am	<i>De spiritali amicitia</i>
Spec car	<i>Speculum caritatis</i>
Vita E	<i>Vita Sancti Edwardi, Regis et Confessoris</i>

Works of Augustine

Civ Dei	<i>Civitate Dei</i>
Conf	<i>Confessiones</i>
Gen ad litt imp	<i>De Genesi ad litteram opus imperfectum</i>
Lib arb	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>
Sol	<i>Soliloquiae</i>

Works of Bernard of Clairvaux

Dil	<i>De diligendo Dei</i>
Div	Sermo de diversis
QH	Sermo super psalmum “Qui habitat”
SC	Sermo super Cantica canticorum

Works of Gilbert of Hoyland

SC	Sermo super Cantica canticorum
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Works of Walter Daniel

Ep M	<i>Epistola ad Mauricium</i>
Lam A	<i>Lamentatio Aelredi</i>
Sent	<i>Centum Sententiae</i>
Vita A	<i>Vita Aelredi</i>

Works of William of Saint Thierry

Cant	<i>Expositio super Cantica canticorum</i>
Contem	<i>De contemplando Deo</i>
Ep frat	<i>Epistola [aurea] ad fratres de Monte Dei</i>
Med	<i>Meditativae orationes</i>

Works of Classical and Patristic Authors

Amic	Cicero, <i>De amicitia</i>
Coll	Cassian, <i>Collationes</i>
Off	Ambrose, <i>De officiis</i>

Introduction

The first decade of the twelfth century promised peace to the people of England after nearly a half century of turmoil. In 1100 the third Norman king and only English-born son of the Conqueror, Henry I, married Edith of Scotland, popularly known as Good Queen Maud,¹ a direct descendant of the hereditary royalty of both England and Scotland. A child of this marriage could be expected to put to rest any lingering English resistance to Norman rule; the births of Matilda in 1102 and William in 1103 seemed to assure Henry's succession and the merging of the Norman and Anglo-Saxon lines. Far in the distance were the death of William in the disaster of the White Ship in 1120, Henry's death in 1135, and the nineteen-year war over the throne between Matilda and her cousin Stephen.

While the royal marriage seemed made in heaven, ecclesiastical politics troubled the marriages of the clergy. English priests had long resisted papal pressure for clerical celibacy. But by the late eleventh century new sanctions had been imposed on married clergy, the most definitive at the Council of Clermont in 1095, when Pope Urban II forbade the ordination of priests' sons except as canons regular or monks.² The church's relentless movement

¹ Maud is short for Matilda, the name taken by Edith on her marriage to honor Queen Matilda, William's wife and Henry's mother.

² Mansi 20:724; Melfi, canon 14; Clermont, canon 11. See Barstow, *Married Priests*, and Brooke, "Gregorian Reform." Full references to all works cited in the Introduction may be found in the bibliography below (pp. 127–38). (Abbreviated titles are listed in "Abbreviations," pp. 9–12.)

toward clerical celibacy shaped the life of a son born in 1110 to Eilaf, priest of the church of Saint Andrew in Hexham, Wilfrid's seventh-century seat near the border of Northumbria and Scotland. This child—son, grandson, and great-grandson of Northumbrian priests—grew up to follow in the vocation of his fathers as Aelred of Rievaulx, Cistercian monk and abbot.

With the secular priesthood barred to the sons of priests, Eilaf and his wife must have worried about the future of their sons. While Aelred's brothers Samuel and Æthelwold apparently lived out their lives as laymen,³ Aelred benefited from unusual opportunities that allowed him to choose between a prestigious position as a courtier and life in religion. At the age of fourteen or fifteen, after a few years of education (probably in the cathedral school at Durham, where his family had long-standing connections), he entered the court of King David I of Scotland to be brought up with Simon and Waldef, the sons of David's wife, Matilda of St. Liz, and with Prince Henry, son of David and Matilda.

As Aelred approached adulthood, he took on increasingly important responsibilities at court. Walter Daniel, the author of the *Vita Aelredi*, says that Aelred was David's *echonomus*, or steward,⁴ and both Laurence of Durham and Reginald of Durham address him as "dispenser to the king."⁵ In his own works Aelred occasionally alludes to himself in similar terms. In *Pastoral Prayer*, for example, he asks that God make him "the dependable dispenser, the discerning distributor, the prudent provider of all that you have given."⁶

In 1134 Aelred left Scotland to become a monk at Rievaulx, the new Cistercian monastery in Yorkshire. Walter Daniel portrays his entry into monastic life as a sudden conversion, literally an over-

³ Richard of Hexham names the three sons of Eilaf in "Prior Richard's History" §9 (p. 55). No daughters appear in historical records, but Aelred explains his writing of *The Formation of Anchoresses* as the fulfillment of a request from a sister.

⁴ Vita A ca. 2; CF 57:91. (Citations of works published in the Cistercian Fathers series appear, as here, by series number and page numbers.) The standard modern biography of Aelred is Squire, *Aelred*.

⁵ Hoste, "Survey," 263; Reginald, *Libellus S. Godrici* §1.

⁶ Orat past §9; CF 73:54–56.

night decision.⁷ But Walter also says that Aelred had been longing for the cloister during his time at court,⁸ and Aelred seems to indicate in his lamentation for David's death in 1153 that when he left the court David bade him a formal and public farewell:

I remember the grace with which you now for the last time received me, I remember the good will with which you granted all my requests, I remember the generosity that you showed me, I remember the embraces and kisses with which you released me, not without tears, while all those present marveled.⁹

Even details of the conversion narrative in the *Vita* suggest that Aelred's entry into Rievaulx was facilitated by his planning and influential friends. As an early patron of Rievaulx known to Bernard of Clairvaux, David may have guided Aelred there.¹⁰

Monastic life made it possible for Aelred to serve God and his brothers as a priest, like his father and father's fathers. But service at court, it turned out, had been a good preparation for life at Rievaulx. Years of obedience and instruction there had readied him for accepting monastic discipline and obeying his abbot, while his exercise of authority on David's behalf and travel on David's business had anticipated the responsibilities that he would bear as novice master at Rievaulx from 1142 to 1143, as abbot at Rievaulx's daughter house of Revesby from 1143 to 1147, and then as abbot at Rievaulx until his death in 1167. The young monastery of Rievaulx certainly needed Aelred's experience in diplomacy and royal etiquette, his ability in English, Latin, and the Norman French of the Scottish court, and his natural gifts of intellect and person. Thomas Merton explains the value of such a person to both his community and the increasingly powerful Cistercian Order:

⁷ Vita A cc. 5–7; CF 57:96–100.

⁸ Vita A ca. 4; CF 57:95–96.

⁹ Lam D §13; PL 195:716; CF 56:70.

¹⁰ For the historical context of Aelred's conversion, see Dutton, "Conversion."

The Cistercians of Saint Bernard's generation had become one of the most important influences in the active life of the Church and even in European politics of their time. . . . Anyone who had any talent or, worse still, any powerful connections, was likely to find himself in danger of leading an increasingly active life.¹¹

Aelred, as it happened, had both talent and powerful connections. Although Bernard later wrote of Aelred's claim to have come from the kitchen to the desert,¹² that kitchen was as much a metaphor as was the desert of the Rye Valley. In whatever capacity Aelred had served David, he had received a fine worldly training in return, and whatever he may have given up to become a monk, he never forgot what he had learned at court. The reputation his diplomatic abilities gained for Rievaulx as he acted in affairs of church and kingdom over the next thirty years contributed to the growing renown and prosperity of the Order in England.

Aelred began his public career early in his monastic life. In 1138, when Rievaulx's patron, Walter Espec, was to surrender his castle at Wark to King David, Aelred accompanied Abbot William of Rievaulx to the Scottish border to negotiate the transfer. In 1142 Aelred represented William in a party of northern prelates protesting before Innocent II the election of King Stephen's nephew William as archbishop of York.¹³

When Abbot William died in 1145, he was succeeded by Maurice, whom Walter describes as "a man of great sanctity and of outstanding judgement," but after two years Maurice resigned, and the community elected Aelred as their third abbot.¹⁴ He apparently welcomed the move, perhaps in part because it allowed him greater scope for his diplomatic interests and talents than his four-year abbacy at Revesby, a backwater to one who had lived both at David's court and at Rievaulx. His later reference to Waverley

¹¹ Merton, "St Aelred," 62.

¹² Spec car Ep Bernard 1; CCCM 1:3; SBOP 8:486–89; CF 17:69.

¹³ Vita A ca. 14; CF 57:106–7; Squire, *Aelred*, 23–24; Knowles, "The Case," 82.

¹⁴ Vita A cc. 25–26; CF 57:114–15.

Abbey in Surrey as “concealed in a corner”¹⁵ suggests his preference for a community like Rievaulx, bustling with monks and lay brothers.

The abbatial election was a close one, however, complicated by the rumor that Aelred had campaigned for the position. That rumor, though angrily denied by Walter Daniel, along with anecdotes in the *Vita Aelredi* and Walter’s “Letter to Maurice” about antagonists to whom Aelred responded with patience and affection, indicates that he was not universally loved and admired.¹⁶ Such evidence of regular opposition throughout his life is too clear to overlook. For all Walter’s efforts to argue that it emanated from envy, enough instances of hostility arose to trouble the hagiographer.

Rievaulx prospered under Aelred’s abbacy, though. According to Walter, between 1143 and 1167 it grew from some 300 inhabitants to about 650: “The father left behind him at Rievaulx, when he returned to Christ, one hundred and forty monks and five hundred *conversi* and laymen.”¹⁷ The greatest legacy of those years, Walter reports, was the shelter Rievaulx offered to all in need. Aelred himself, Walter says, insisted that “it is the singular and supreme glory of the house of Rievaulx that above all else it teaches tolerance of the infirm and compassion for others in their necessities.”¹⁸

During these years Aelred’s diplomatic skills contributed to a supportive relationship between the Order and the crown. According to the fourteenth-century continuation of the *Peterborough Chronicle*, Aelred’s efforts during the twelfth-century papal schism brought about Henry II’s decisive support for the Cistercian candidate, resulting in 1161 in the formal recognition of Alexander III.¹⁹ Additional confirmation of Aelred’s influence with Henry appears

¹⁵ Bello stand 2; PL 195:704; CF 56:251.

¹⁶ Vita A cc. 3, 26, 27, 37; CF 57:92–95, 115–16, 123–24; Ep M [4]; CF 57:157–58.

¹⁷ Vita A ca. 30; CF 57:118–19. See also Spec car 2.17.43; CCCM 1:87; CF 17:195.

¹⁸ Vita A ca. 29; CF 57:118.

¹⁹ *Chronicon Angliae*, a. 1162, p. 96.

in his being invited to write a new life of the eleventh-century King Edward the Confessor after Alexander canonized Edward in gratitude to Henry. Aelred also reportedly preached at the 1163 translation of the new saint's relics.²⁰

Aelred suffered from debilitating illness during the second half of his abbacy. Because of his poor health, Walter reports, in about 1157 the Cistercian General Chapter allowed him to sleep and eat in Rievaulx's infirmary; later he lived in a nearby hut.²¹ In the winter of 1166–1167, in the twentieth year of his abbacy, he died and was buried in the chapter house next to Abbot William, in a shrine that survived until the Reformation.²² So his earthly life ended in the monastery that had been his home for thirty-three years and in the presence of his friends and spiritual sons. He had lived and died as a child of the North, a son of the church, a priest and successor of priests, a father, a friend, a historian, and a spiritual teacher.

Aelred's Works

In his time Aelred was best known as a public figure, the most powerful Cistercian in England, a tireless and affectionate abbot and administrator, an effective mediator, and a familiar of kings, barons, bishops, abbots, and hermits. Of that public figure only fragmentary evidence remains: a name in cartularies, an occasional signature on scattered documents, a memory in works of now little-known contemporaries such as Gilbert of Hoyland, Jocelyn of Furness, Richard of Hexham, and Reginald of Durham. Aelred is therefore known today primarily as the historian, abbot, spiritual

²⁰ Vita A ca. 32; CF 57:121; *Chronicon Angliae* 98; Squire, *Aelred*, 94; Dutton, "Sancto Dunstano," 193–95. Peter Jackson has identified a sermon in the Reading (UK) University Library as probably Aelred's sermon for the translation ("*In translacione*").

²¹ Vita A ca. 31; CF 57:119–20. See also Gilbert of Hoyland, SC 40.4; PL 184:216 (S 41.4); CF 26:495.

²² The traditional date for Aelred's death is 12 Jan. 1167, celebrated as his feast within the Cistercian Order, on the authority of Vita A ca. 57; CF 57:138; Squire, *Aelred*, 2.

director, and speculative and contemplative theologian who survives in his own writing. Throughout the years of public prominence, as he administered two monasteries, taught and nurtured his monks, and traveled from Rievaulx to Whithorn to Rome to Westminster to Clairvaux to Cîteaux and back again to England, Aelred also wrote prolifically, with such simplicity, originality, and power that one would think him to have been always at home. As truly as he was a man of the church and a man of affairs, he was also a man of letters, and throughout his monastic life he wrote for both church and world.

Aelred's works have traditionally been roughly categorized as historical and ascetical or spiritual. As the two kinds of writing differ greatly in subject matter and audience, it is easy to forget Aelred the spiritual director when reading Aelred the historian, while the spiritual treatises, exploring the way to God through love of friends and intimacy with Jesus of Nazareth, seem timeless, as though written by a man lacking both awareness of and interest in the events of his day.

Evidence suggests that in his time Aelred was best known as a writer of narrative works of English history and that he understood himself as a historian, a successor to the Venerable Bede.²³ His seven historical treatises, mostly written in the mid-1150s, primarily concern people of the English past and their impact on their twelfth-century descendants. Four of these focus sharply on contemporary conflicts and rulers. *Lament for David, King of Scotland* (1153) expresses Aelred's grief at the recent death of the king who had been his patron and friend; it praises David for his virtuous kingship and life of faith while acknowledging his sinful behavior during the English Civil War.

The *Battle of the Standard*, about an 1138 battle in that war, probably dates to 1153–1154, shortly before the death of King Stephen and the succession of Matilda's son Henry of Anjou, whom Stephen named his heir in the treaty concluding the war. King David and his son Prince Henry led the Scottish forces against the Norman

²³ See Dutton, "Historian's Historian," 407–10.

army led by Walter Espec, the patron of Rievaulx. With a lengthy passage on the founding of Rievaulx at the center of the work, *Battle* sharply contrasts the active and contemplative lives while tacitly urging Stephen and Henry toward ruling with reason, justice, and peace.

Two other historical works address King Henry II and urge him to imitate his English royal ancestors in virtue and faith. The first of these, written a few months before Henry became king, is *Genealogy of the Kings of the English* (1153–1154), which incorporates the *Lament for David* as a first chapter. It celebrates Henry's descent from the Anglo-Saxon kings of England and urges him to emulate those ancestors to bring about peace and prosperity in England. *Genealogy* is a mirror for princes, intended as a guide for the man who will soon unite two peoples. *The Life of Saint Edward, King and Confessor*, written between 1161 and 1163 for the translation of the relics of King Edward the Confessor, offers Edward as a portrait of royal sanctity and declares Henry not only the cornerstone in which the two walls of the English and Norman nations unite but also the fulfillment of Edward's deathbed vision as the one who will at last bring peace to England.

Aelred also wrote two works apparently in response to requests to preach at ecclesiastical events. *The Life of Saint Ninian* (?1154–1160) seems to have been commissioned by a bishop of Whithorn, Ninian's see in Galloway, and *The Saints of Hexham* probably originated as a sermon to be preached at the 1155 translation of the relics of five early bishops of Hexham in the church that Aelred's father and grandfather had restored after the Viking depredations.

A final short narrative work, *A Certain Wonderful Miracle* (1158–1165) (since the seventeenth century wrongly known as *The Nun of Watton*), records the rape of a young Gilbertine nun by a lay brother in her community, her subsequent pregnancy and brutal punishment by her community, the miracles that removed first her child and then the fetters by which she was held, and Aelred's own appearance as advisor to the community and absolver of the girl.

Aelred also wrote at least six influential works of Incarnational theology and spiritual direction, all revealing his interest and growing sophistication in rhetorical technique. His first work, *The Mirror*

of *Charity*, has traditionally been dated to 1142–1143, during his months as the novice master at Rievaulx, though Charles Dumont has persuasively argued for a date after Aelred became abbot at Revesby, in 1143 or later.²⁴ This work focuses on the close relationship between divine and human love, a theme to which Aelred repeatedly returned in his later works. His insertion of a dialogue between a novice and a novice master named Aelred anticipates *Spiritual Friendship*.

Aelred most fully developed his Incarnational understanding of the route to God through the love of Jesus in his sacred humanity in two small treatises of contemplative theology, *Jesus as a Boy of Twelve* and *The Formation of Anchoresses*, both probably written between 1157 and 1165. The first of these explores the gospel narrative of the boy Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem (Lk 2:41–51), developed according to three traditional senses of medieval allegory: the literal or historical, the allegorical, and the tropological or moral. The third portion of the work concerns the contemplative journey to God; here Aelred presents his teaching of meditation on Jesus' life as a way to journey to the love and experience of God, a theme he develops in more detail in *Formation's* meditation on the past.

The most moving of Aelred's spiritual works is his *Pastoral Prayer* (?1165–1166), probably written as illness restricted his activity, focusing his attention on the community at Rievaulx. In part a meditation on the role of the abbot as defined by the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, this work expresses an abbot's love for his monks and his desire to spend himself for them as Jesus did for humankind. It ends with what seems to be a farewell to the community as the abbot returns its members to Jesus, their true shepherd.

Aelred left many sermons, mostly for the fifteen liturgical days on which Cistercian abbots were required to preach to their community. Several nonliturgical sermons survive as well, including one that he apparently preached to the clerical synod at Troyes, presumably in connection with a journey to the General Chapter

²⁴ Dumont, "Introduction," 55–59; see also Stiegman, "Woods and Stones," 338–45.

at Cîteaux, and one devoted to Saint Katherine of Alexandria. Between spring 1163 and the summer of 1164 he also wrote a thirty-one-sermon commentary on Isaiah 13–16, *On the Prophetic Burdens of Isaiah*, dedicating the work to Gilbert Foliot, who became bishop of London in 1163.

The final works move in a new direction, away from the pastoral guidance of the earlier contemplative works. In these Aelred develops topics more speculative than those in the earlier works, concerned with moral or theological inquiry rather than with spiritual direction, though still ultimately exploring the soul's movement toward God in this life and the next. He composed both *Spiritual Friendship* and *On the Soul* (1163–1166) as dialogues; by dividing the works' arguments into discrete blocks of thought, he engages his audience at each step of his argument. *On the Soul*, a study of the implications of Augustinian psychology, seeks to explain the nature of God through an exploration of the nature of the human soul, promising "Perhaps, when you have found the image, you will more easily find him of whom it is the image."²⁵

Spiritual Friendship

Spiritual Friendship can be dated between April 1164 and Aelred's death in January 1167 by the reference to Octavian of Monticello, the antipope Victor IV from 1159 until his death on 20 April 1164 (Sp am 2.41).²⁶ It is fitting that Aelred includes this contemporary instance of an example of false friendship alongside the numerous examples of true friendships from history, classical literature, and Scripture. This rare revelation in a spiritual treatise of Aelred's attention to events outside the monastery not only assists in dating the work but also helps to integrate the historical and spiritual, the worldly and cenobitic concerns of his life and work. It is especially important in this late work as he writes of the sacramental essence of friendship—the way in which men and women may by loving one another embrace Christ in this life and enjoy eternal friendship

²⁵ Anima §5; CCCM 1:686; CF 22:37.

²⁶ See Dubois, *L'amitié*, xciii; Canivez, *Statuta*, 1:73.

with God in time to come. That path is both the form and the argument of *Spiritual Friendship*, which through a series of conversations among friends in a monastery establishes the value of human friendship, from its origin in creation to its final enduring realization in beatitude.²⁷

The Textual Tradition

Spiritual Friendship was apparently the most popular of Aelred's spiritual treatises in the Middle Ages. Anselm Hoste has described it as "the most transcribed of Aelred's works . . . the best known of the *corpus alreidianum*."²⁸ It survives today in thirteen manuscripts, and three others contain excerpts.²⁹ Further, the thirteenth-century Franciscan *Registrum Librorum Anglie* records apparently lost manuscripts of the work at the Cistercian abbeys of Woburn, Jervaulx, and perhaps Margam.³⁰ The *Registrum* also lists at seven locations—the greatest number for any single listed work of Aelred's—an otherwise unknown work, *De quattuor hominibus*, which David N. Bell has tentatively identified with *De spiritali amicitia*.³¹ At least five compendia of *Spiritual Friendship* survive in fifteen manuscripts from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. Before the end of the twelfth century, Peter of Blois had liberally adapted *Spiritual Friendship* in his *De amicitia christiana*.³²

²⁷ For a discussion of medieval attitudes toward friendship see McEvoy, *Philia*, and McGuire, *Friendship*.

²⁸ CCCM 1:281. Aelred's *Life of Saint Edward* was apparently even more popular, surviving today in at least thirty-one manuscripts (Hoste, *Bibliotheca*, 123–25).

²⁹ For a discussion of the manuscripts and textual tradition, see Hoste, "Preface," CCCM 1:281–83. For a complete listing of texts, compendia, translations, and studies of the work, see Hoste, *Bibliotheca*, 63–73.

³⁰ Bell, "Cistercian Authors," 295. Bell identifies the Margam work, which the *Registrum* titles *Dialogus*, as probably either *Spiritual Friendship* or one of its numerous medieval compendia.

³¹ Bell, "Aelred of Warden."

³² Delhay, "Deux adaptations," 304–31; Davy, *Un traité*.

The work was first edited from Saint-Omer Bibliothèque Municipale MS. 86 by Richard Gibbons and published in *Opera Divi Aelredi Rievallensis*, printed at Douai in 1616.³³ Bertrand Tissier reprinted Gibbons' edition in the *Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium* in 1662, and J.-P. Migne printed Tissier's edition in volume 195 of the *Patrologia Latina*. In 1948 J. Dubois reedited it from MS. Brussels 1384 and printed it with a parallel French translation, providing labels for both narrative and argumentative elements; his labeled divisions appear in the Appendix to this volume. In 1971 Anselm Hoste's critical edition, apparently based on British Library MS. Royal 8 F I, a twelfth-century manuscript from Revesby, the Cistercian monastery of which Aelred was the first abbot, appeared in the volume of Aelred's spiritual works in *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*.³⁴ The translation below is based on that edition.

The work has undergone numerous adaptations and translations through the years. Jean de Meun, famous as the continuator of the thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*, probably the best-known poem of medieval Europe, translated it into French in the late thirteenth century. Though no copy of his version is known to survive, Lionel J. Friedman and John V. Fleming have shown that Jean relied closely on *Spiritual Friendship* in his continuation of the *Roman*, in Reason's lengthy speech to the Lover.³⁵

The work has been translated repeatedly into French, German, and Italian as well as English. Karl Otten translated it into German in 1927, and Richard Egenter published a partial German translation in 1928. Following Dubois's 1948 French translation, Charles Dumont translated it in 1961 and Gaëtane de Briey again in 1994. The most recent of a series of Italian translations, by Domenico Pezzini, appeared in 1996. In the twentieth century it was translated

³³ Hoste, "Preface," CCCM 1:281.

³⁴ Hoste, "Preface," CCCM 1:283.

³⁵ Friedman, "Jean de Meun"; Fleming, *Reason*, 68–83; see Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman*, ll. 4629–5563.

into English by M. E. Laker, C. H. Talbot, M. Francis Jerome, B. Delfendehl, and Mark F. Williams.

Aelred's work is widely known both as *De spiritali amicitia*, the title in Hoste and Talbot's 1971 CCCM volume, and *De spirituali amicitia*, the title in the Patrologia Latina and in two closely related manuscripts of the work. In the work itself Aelred consistently refers to *amicitia* as *spiritalis*.³⁶ The difference may be significant, however. Gaetano Raciti, in the introduction to the first volume of his edition of Aelred's sermons, says of "the apparent doublet *spiritalis/spiritualis*" that "in the Cistercian authors of the twelfth century and notably in Aelred, it marks the emergence of a semantic specialization," with *spiritalis* indicating a philosophic, hermeneutic, and speculative context, and *spiritualis* referring to the action of the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Aelred's consistent use of *spiritalis* may thus reflect the work's Ciceronian origins.

Sources

The Prologue of *Spiritual Friendship* indicates the three types of sources from which Aelred drew: classical works, especially Cicero's *On Friendship*; patristic works, especially Ambrose's *On the Duties of the Clergy* and Augustine's *Confessions*;³⁸ and Scripture.³⁹ Finally, however, Aelred went beyond his sources to shape an innovative

³⁶ E.g., Sp am 1.38, 1.45, 2.59, 3.87; CCCM 1:295, 296, 313, 336.

³⁷ CCCM 2A:xiii.

³⁸ The copy of the *Confessions* listed in the Rievaulx catalogue may have belonged to Aelred; Walter Daniel says that he had a copy with him in his last days (Vita A ca. 42; CF 57:128). Cistercian houses possessed at least sixty-eight of Augustine's works; manuscripts containing all or portions of the *Confessions* are known to have been at Rievaulx, Flaxley, Holme Cultram, and Meaux. Similarly English Cistercian monasteries possessed twenty-one of Ambrose's works; copies of *De officiis* were at Rievaulx, Louth Park, Meaux, Roche, and perhaps Swine. Of the five works of Cicero known to have been in Cistercian libraries, none was at Rievaulx (Bell, *Index*, 31, 24–26, 54).

³⁹ On Aelred's sources see Dubois, *L'amitié*, xlvi–lxxii; on his use of Cicero and Augustine, see McEvoy, "Notes."

theological exposition of human friendship leading to union with Christ in this life and culminating in beatitude.

Cicero: On Friendship

Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote *Laelius*, better known as *De amicitia* or *On Friendship*, in 44 BC. The primary Greek source of the work is probably a lost treatise on friendship by Theophrastus, although Cicero also indicates a knowledge of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. In the fictional frame of the dialogue, Gaius Laelius, Roman praetor and consul, recalls the teaching of his friend Scipio Africanus the Younger, whose recent death has prompted him to remember a conversation between them from many years before. This conversation, Cicero says in the preface to the work, was later repeated to him by one of the participants.

The setting of *On Friendship* is the house of Laelius, just after the death of Scipio in 129 BC. One of Laelius's two sons-in-law asks him how he bears the loss of his friend. In response, Laelius speaks at length of the nature and benefits of friendship. Except for this beginning, which establishes the occasion for and the context of what follows, and a few parting words to the sons-in-law at the end of the work, Cicero uses the dialogue as a formal device: Laelius instructs his listeners without interruption, and the time and place of the conversation are unconnected to the larger questions it explores.

Aelred explicitly imitates Cicero in the three-book dialogue form of *Spiritual Friendship*. Both works begin with an authorial persona recalling his youth and explaining his reasons for writing about friendship as an adult. Both the Prologue and the first of the three books of *Spiritual Friendship* mention a youthful affection for and desire to imitate *On Friendship*, and Aelred's Prologue declares a desire to add Christian meaning to Cicero's ideas. In each of the three-part dialogues an older man instructs young men about the origins, nature, and end of friendship. *Spiritual Friendship* throughout develops Cicero's view that true friendship requires human virtue, though Aelred presents this view in a Christian and monastic context.

Cicero's definition of friendship is a core element of *Spiritual Friendship*, where it appears with slight variation four times: *Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium diuinarum humanarumque rerum cum beneuolentia et caritate consensio* (Amic 6.20).⁴⁰ The definition appears three times in book one (1.1, 1.29, 1.46) and once in book three (3.8), always omitting *omnium*, "all." In its second use it appears with *consensio*, 'agreement', modified by *summa*, 'highest', and is explicitly linked to the community of the apostles as described in Acts 4:32. In the third instance, *summa* is absent, and *diuinarum humanarumque rerum* has become *in rebus humanis atque diuinis*. In book three, with this agreement declared to be the culmination of the four steps leading to the perfection of friendship, *summa* is again present, the phrasing returns to *diuinarum humanarumque rerum*, and *caritate* is modified by *quadam*, 'a certain'.

In each recurrence Aelred also alternates the order of the phrases. In the first citation, he pairs *rerum humanarum et diuinarum* with *beneuolentia et caritate*, and similarly in the third, when discussing the way friendship arises within human experience by likeness of life, habits, and interests, he pairs *rebus humanis atque diuinis* with *beneuolentia et caritate*. The second and fourth citations, however, link *rerum diuinarum et humanarum* to *caritate et beneuolentia*. The sequence thus always connects human things with *beneuolentia*, here translated as *good will*, and things divine with *caritate*. Thus Aelred integrally incorporates Cicero's definition of friendship while adapting it to fit the steps of his own argument.

Ambrose: On the Duties of the Clergy

On the Duties of the Clergy (337/340) by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, also contributed significantly to the form and the theological substance of *Spiritual Friendship*. Ambrose's insistence on the importance of equality in friendship and his thrice-repeated explanation that friends may open their hearts to one another and share their deepest thoughts helped Aelred turn Cicero's flat characters

⁴⁰ "For friendship is nothing other than agreement in all things divine and human with benevolence and charity."

into living and individually characterized monks, friends of their teacher and of one another. By creating characters with recognizable personalities and a readiness to say what is on their minds and to treat one another as equals, Aelred imbued his treatise with the vitality of conversation among real friends.

Ambrose's explanation of the joys and obligations of friendship informs all three books of *Spiritual Friendship*, beginning with the words of the abbot-teacher, Father Aelred: "open your heart now and pour whatever you please into the ears of a friend" (1.1). With Ambrose's help, Aelred adjusts the Ciceronian model to portray friends' sharing with one another not only their questions but also their fears and hopes. All three of the young monks being instructed thus demonstrate the ease with which friends interact as they talk candidly with one another and with their abbot and teacher.

Ambrose's *Duties*—especially book three—also contributed significantly to Aelred's teaching. Four Ambrosian themes run through *Spiritual Friendship*: friends' ability to speak openly to one another, equality between friends, God's gift of *benevolentia* or good will to the first humans, and the obligation of friends to correct one another. Adele Fiske, who has written briefly but usefully about Ambrose's contributions to Aelred, calls attention to Ambrose's treatment of friendship as a mutual bond, with individuals loving those who love them. Most important, she notes that for Ambrose and so for Aelred, "the source and nature of friendship is not in the intellect . . . but in the will, *benevolentia*. Friendship is implicitly identified with *caritas* and, for all its human qualities, finds its model, *forma*, in Christ."⁴¹

Although Aelred relies on Ambrose throughout the work, he does so silently in the first two books, using *Duties* there as what John V. Fleming calls a supertext: "a secondary literary presence of a specially, and often uniquely, powerful authority. . . . it appears only by inference or implication."⁴² Ambrose's statement that God placed good will in Adam and Eve surely guided Aelred's explanation of God's placing his own love of society in his creatures, so

⁴¹ Fiske, "Survival," 114.

⁴² Fleming, *Reason*, 69.

making friendship part of the order of creation. Similarly his repeated emphasis that friends should speak openly to one another echoes Ambrose's words on that point. Only in book three, however, does Aelred at last explicitly cite Ambrose and so acknowledge Ambrose's importance to his own thought. Here he insists on Ambrose's authority and influence, quoting long passages from *Duties* and referring to Ambrose by name six times, calling him once *beatus Ambrosius* (3.30) and once *sanctus Ambrosius* (3.83).

Perhaps Aelred becomes explicit about his debt to Ambrose in order to make sure that his audience—both the young monks of the dialogue and subsequent readers—share his reverence for this great saint. It is also possible, however, that by the time he wrote book three Aelred was so exhausted by a combination of abbatial responsibilities and poor health that instead of paraphrasing Ambrose he resorted to copying directly from the Rievaulx manuscript of *Duties*.⁴³

Augustine: The Confessions

The other patristic work on which Aelred relied heavily is Augustine's *Confessions* (397–398), which provided the personal confessional voice that controls so much of *Spiritual Friendship*. As Augustine proclaims God's action in bringing his chosen people from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity, dramatizing the action in his own experience, Aelred uses what he presents as personal experience in the Prologue and then in the words of Fr. Aelred in the dialogue to dramatize friendship as a route to the knowledge and unbroken love of God. This approach allows his protagonist teacher to teach through recollection, authoritatively but humbly, as an old man speaking from long personal experience of close

⁴³ Oddly, few scholars have explored Aelred's use of Ambrose; see, however, Fiske, "Survival," 94–115; McGuire, *Friendship*, 42–47; and Squire, *Aelred*, 48–49 and *passim*. Ambrose's familiarity with Cicero's *On Friendship* is apparent throughout *Duties*, with the effect that it is frequently unclear which of the two is the immediate source for an Aelredian passage. See Fleming, *Reason*, 73–76.

friendships. Rather than like Laelius didactically lecturing, condescending to his listeners from an intellectual height, the teacher of this work is a friend among friends, conversing in the garden of his own life, inviting readers to participate in the apparently impromptu series of conversations. Further, Augustine's voice resonates throughout the work as several speakers use phrases from the *Confessions* to recount their own experience.

Augustine's reliance on Cicero's *On Friendship* also contributes to Aelred's treatise, as Aelred cites friends such as Orestes and Pylades, mentioned by both Cicero and Augustine. The recollection in the Prologue of *Spiritual Friendship* of the writer's youthful delight in Cicero recalls Augustine's "first conversion" to philosophy upon his discovery of Cicero's *Hortensius*, and the regret twice expressed in *Spiritual Friendship* at the absence of the name of Christ from *On Friendship* recalls Augustine's words about the lack of Christ's name from *Hortensius*: "Nothing could entirely captivate me, however learned, however neatly expressed, however true it might be, unless his name was in it" (Conf 3.4.7–8; Sp am Prol.5, 1.7).

Augustine also reinforced Ambrose's Christian explanation of friendship, insisting on the presence of God in true friendship. He defined the friendship that will not end as established in God: "No friends are true friends unless you, my God, bind them fast to one another through that love which is sown in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Conf 4.4.7). But Augustine offered a more pessimistic view than had Ambrose about the place of friendship in human life, portraying the friend as a rival to God and friendship as a seductive impediment on one's journey toward God (cf. Conf 4.4–7). In showing friendship to be sacramental, carrying within it God's own unity and leading to friendship with Christ in this life and in eternity, Aelred rejects Augustine's view that one must choose between human friendship and loving God. Further, though in the *Confessions* Augustine, like Cicero, begins his treatment of friendship with the death of a friend, so overshadowing his discussion with the reminder that death ends all friendships, Aelred begins with the lived experience of friendship and insists, citing both Scripture and Jerome, that friendship is eternal (e.g., 1.24). To exemplify this idea,

he first mentions the death of a friend only at the beginning of book two, and when the teacher in the dialogue twice recalls the death of friends, he both times declares that they continue to be present to him in the spirit (2.5, 3.119).

In his use of Augustine in *Spiritual Friendship*, Aelred tacitly establishes the writer of the Prologue and two of the participants in the dialogue as similar to Augustine in their youthful understanding of friendship. But whereas Aelred always cites Ambrose as a trusted authority on friendship, his allusions to Augustine suggest that Augustine misunderstood the nature of friendship, as one who by focusing on immature friendships failed to understand the divine origins and end of friendship. When Walter, one of the young monks, speaks at length about the kind of friendship he and his friend Gratian enjoy, calling it “the friendship Augustine describes,” Fr. Aelred responds with both warning and invitation:

This is a carnal friendship, especially belonging to adolescents, as were Augustine and the friend of whom we spoke. However, if you avoid childishness and dishonesty, and if nothing shameful spoils such friendship, then in hope of some richer grace this love can be tolerated as a kind of first step toward a holier friendship. (3.87)

Other Sources

Aelred also reveals his familiarity with other authors both classical and patristic, quoting, for example, Euripides, Terence, Sallust, Seneca, Xenophon, Cassian, and Jerome. Although he cannot have known Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, his two discussions of the various kinds of friendships and their origins and ends (1.45, 2.60) suggest a familiarity with the early portions of book eight of the *Ethics*, probably through Cicero or one of the many other authors on friendship whom he had read. From this wide range of learning he produces a synthesis, a new understanding of the value and power of the best of human friendships—and the possibilities present even in those that are not the best.

Scripture

Aelred also relies heavily on Scripture in *Spiritual Friendship*, as in all his works. Quotations from and allusions to thirty-seven biblical books appear,⁴⁴ and he supplements classical examples of friendship from Cicero with scriptural instances, including not only David and Jonathan (3.92–96) but also obscure pairs such as Amon and Jonadab (2.40). He also identifies two married couples—Adam and Eve, and Ruth and Boaz—as friends. Indeed much of Aelred’s contemplative and eschatological understanding of friendship comes from the Bible, with numerous examples from the narratives of First and Second Samuel and the gospels. The abbot-teacher’s statement that “the one who remains in friendship remains in God, and God in him” (1.70) insists on the sacramental nature of friendship in its echo of 1 John 4:16, and words from the Song of Songs and from Psalm 34:8 [33:9] are used to define the union with Christ that one reaches through loving one’s friend (2.27; 3.133). Finally, following Ambrose, the abbot quotes John 15:14–15 to present Jesus as a friend to all who love him and as a model for human friendship: *I will no longer call you servants, but friends . . . because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father* (3.83; cf. Ambrose, Off 3.135).

Of particular resonance in the work, underpinning the dialogue though never quoted, is Jesus’ promise that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you” (Mt 18:20). The echo of these words recurs throughout, from the abbot-teacher’s affirmation of Christ’s presence with him and the young monk Ivo to his final assurance of that reality for all the blessed in time to come, “when the friendship to which on earth we admit but few will pour out over all and flow back to God from all, for God will be all in all” (3.134; 1 Cor 15:28). Christ’s promise is at the heart of Aelred’s argument: human friendships begin with one or two friends, Christ making a third, then expand to include the many, as in the early church. Finally, continuing in Christ, friendship comes at last to perfection, including all in God’s eternity.

⁴⁴ See Index A, page 143.

Structure

Spiritual Friendship has a complex structure. Aelred articulates his theological thesis—that human friendship is fragile and frequently interrupted both by life’s demands and by death but begins and ends in God—in a Ciceronian framework of three books. Fictionally, each of the three books begins within the daily reality of monastic experience, with the abbot moving from public responsibility into private conversation. The first two books end with the necessity of returning to daily life—a meal, the arrival of visitors. Although the approach of the monastery cellarer threatens to interrupt the third book, the conversation in fact continues unbroken, concluding only when the abbot-teacher speaks of the fulfillment of human friendship in beatitude.

Within this fictional structure Aelred explores different aspects of friendship, its origins and nature, its development, and practical concerns. Interwoven within and cutting across this three-part structure is a double movement from human friendship to eternity. The first movement, which explains the origin of friendship in God’s creation, concludes with a promise that human friendship may make one a friend of God (1.1–2.14). It is a conversation between two people (though Ivo is replaced by Walter in book two), which ends as a third arrives. The second movement concentrates on the experience of human friendship, considering such practical aspects as ways to establish and maintain friendship, then rises to anticipation of the time when great company of friends will be one with one another and with God.

The Prologue

The work begins with a Prologue, probably the last portion written, which takes place outside the three-part dramatic fiction of the dialogue, describing a completed work. It concludes with a request for intercession for the writer’s sins and forgiveness for the work’s inadequacies. Providing a narrative frame for the dialogue, the Prologue accomplishes four tasks: it establishes the persona of its writer, along with his history and qualifications for writing; it explains the purpose of the work itself as grounded in the writer’s

experience; it acknowledges the writer's sources, so rooting itself in both the classical and the Christian views of friendship; and it provides an overview of the work's argument.

The writer of the Prologue is a monk whose character and personal history have led him to write the work that follows. He describes himself as one long experienced in human love and friendship, a former student and admirer of Cicero's *On Friendship*, one like the young Augustine portrayed in the *Confessions* and so familiar with Augustine's portrait that when he recalls his own youth he does so in Augustine's words. Further, although he recalls his pleasure in friendship during his youth and his memory that "nothing seemed sweeter to me . . . than to be loved and to love" (Prol.1), he confesses that as an adult he has found himself "wishing to love spiritually but not able to" (Prol.6).

Out of a familiarity with Christian works and a wish to find Christian meaning in Cicero's work, this monk has recently written a book of his own on the subject: "I decided to write on spiritual friendship and to set down for myself rules for a pure and holy love" (Prol.6). He indicates no interest in doing speculative or contemplative theology or in teaching anyone about friendship but proposes merely to attempt a personal synthesis of classical and Christian thought, one signaled by his naming Cicero within a web of Augustinian phrases. He is a scholarly figure, inherently solitary. Although he is distinct from Aelred, he may represent Aelred as Aelred saw himself, longing for more time to read and write and wishing for fewer distractions from reading and meditation (Prol.8). Having outlined the nature, origins, and contents of the work to follow, he drops from view, the Prologue closes, and a new fiction begins.

The Participants

In rewriting Cicero's famous treatise on friendship, Aelred not only made the definition of friendship from that work the cornerstone of his explanation of the topic but constructed his own argument within the work's form and fictional context. Cicero had been explicit about the artifice involved in his shaping of *On Old Age*

and *On Friendship*: “as there I wrote as an old man to an old man about old age, so in this book I have written as a most dear friend to a friend about friendship.”⁴⁵ Aelred borrowed and enhanced this approach for his own dialogue as one aspect of his tribute to Cicero. In *Spiritual Friendship* he thus wrote not merely as a friend speaking to friends but as an abbot with monks who are friends with him and with one another, all of them discussing the nature of friendship inside and outside monastic life.

Aelred further modified Cicero’s model by characterizing each of the participants in the dialogue individually, with different roles in his explanation of the Christian understanding of friendship. Ivo, the questioner of book one, is young and timid, sure of the place of Christ in friendship and familiar with but unwilling to rely on Cicero. He is so eager to learn that he sometimes leaps ahead of his teacher and must be pulled back from hasty conclusions, as when he seeks to identify friendship and charity. But he is always deferential, sometimes agreeing with what the teacher says not because he actually understands but because the teacher says it (e.g., 1.12). He, like the writer of the Prologue, shares characteristics with the young Augustine recalled in *Confessions*. Although the abbot-teacher mentions the value of Cicero’s work for understanding friendship, he seems to have no personal devotion to it. Ivo, however, recalls his own earlier attachment to the work but says that now such pagan works no longer nourish or enlighten him: “whatever I read or hear, however subtly argued, has neither flavor nor light without the salt of heavenly letters and the seasoning of that most sweet name” (1.7).⁴⁶

Walter, the young monk who appears at the beginning of book two, is outspoken and insistent on having his own way. Having visibly shown his impatience at having to wait to be heard, he prods the abbot to return to his conversation with Ivo about friendship and to share his notes from that time. He repeatedly asks the abbot to repeat or summarize points he has not understood and is quick

⁴⁵ Cicero, *Amic* 1.5; ed. Falconer 1.112–13.

⁴⁶ Walter Daniel identifies Ivo as the monk of Wardon whom Aelred addressed in *Jesus as a Boy of Twelve* (Vita A ca. 32; CF 57:121).

to turn sarcasm on his friend Gratian when he joins the conversation. Walter is the most realized character in the dialogue, bringing to the discussion a combination of energy and irascibility. Perhaps not noticing the satirical humor of the portrait, or just pleased with Aelred's including him, Walter Daniel identifies Walter as himself in the *Vita Aelredi*.⁴⁷ Maurice Powicke commented on the mutual affection between Aelred of Rievaulx and this somewhat difficult monk as he reveals himself in the *Vita*, an affection visible in *Spiritual Friendship*:

Walter was devoted to Ailred, but his devotion was not quite generous. He was too full of himself, quick to resent criticism, an irritable, perhaps a jealous man. One feels that Ailred felt a peculiar tenderness towards the "clerici scolares"; they were so quick, bright, sincere, loyal, and yet so touchy, so impulsive, so self-centred.⁴⁸

The late arrival in book two, the appropriately named Gratian, is gentle and eager to please, grateful to the abbot for allowing him to join the discussion, eager to be on time on the second day of conversation, apparently untroubled by Walter's mockery, and indeed proud of and ready to praise Walter's quick wit and understanding. Like Ivo, Gratian recalls the young Augustine, as Walter indicates when he describes Gratian in the Augustinian echo of the Prologue: "his one ambition is to be loved and to love" (2.16).

The different characteristics of Ivo, Walter, and Gratian not only contribute to the appeal of the work as a whole but repeatedly return the conversation from abstract ideas about friendship to the concrete human experience of intertwined affection and conflict. Their repeated questions, comments, and requests for clarification also help to frame and organize the work, providing transitions to mark logical steps in the argument and introduce summaries of what has gone before.

⁴⁷ *Vita A* ca. 31; CF 57:121.

⁴⁸ Powicke, *Ailred*, 8.

Aelred creates a fourth character, the abbot-teacher, to whom he gives his own name and who appears to be a mild self-caricature, an abbot who seldom gets any time alone and who can rarely talk privately even with members of the community because of his responsibilities. Both the first and the second books begin as Fr. Aelred acknowledges the frustration felt by monks wishing to speak to him alone while he is occupied with business. He also alludes to the way his responsibilities interfere with his writing, noting the disappearance years ago of his unedited notes from the earlier conversation and implying that in the three days since they have been recovered he has not had time to read them.

Fr. Aelred differs in several ways from the writer of the Prologue. Unlike that yearning scholarly author, long ago acquainted with false friendships but still inexperienced with the true and with some time available for writing a book, this abbot is a practical, authoritative figure, busy with what he calls “the cares of office” and “vain honors and burdens” (3.116, 3.118) and constantly in demand by both visitors to his monastery and his own monks. He appears only moderately familiar with Cicero’s *On Friendship*, quoting the work without credit (e.g., 1.19) referring to some Ciceroian sentences as “the pagan proverb” or coming from “foreign hands” (e.g., 2.13, 3.97). He has had a number of friendships since he became a monk, and while some of his friends have died, he feels the best of them still present in spirit. He identifies himself in conversation with Ivo as Ivo’s friend, and he relies on his memories of two of his closest friends as models for the kind of friendship he extols in this dialogue.

Fr. Aelred’s role in the work is to articulate Aelred’s own views on friendship. He is much less sharply characterized than are the three young monks with whom he talks, because his task is not to increase the narrative verisimilitude but to teach. He brings to the conversation unquestioned authority, however, showing a combination of wide learning and insight that allows him firmly to reject some of the tentative ideas proposed by the young monks, ideas placed on their lips by Aelred the author in order that their teacher may respond to them appropriately. Aelred thus dramatizes his teaching through the interaction of the participants.

All three young monks at different times express anxiety about the kind of friendship Fr. Aelred presents to them. Ivo says he is terrified “by its astonishing height” (1.25), and Walter objects that “Such friendship is so sublime and perfect that I would not dare aspire to it” (3.85). Both Gratian and Walter say that they had had a different view of friendship from what Fr. Aelred has explained, and Walter hints that Fr. Aelred had presented it differently to Ivo. Walter, who describes his current friendship with Gratian in a lyrical passage echoing Augustine, makes it clear that he prefers that easier experience to spiritual friendship (2.28–29).

Both Walter and Gratian are speaking of what are commonly known in monastic culture as particular friendships, but as Pierre-André Burton has rightly said, Aelred’s subject is not particular friendship, or at least only insofar as he can explain it as distinct from spiritual friendship, which may also begin with two friends, as in Eden, but then expands to include many, as in the early church, all united by the love of God.⁴⁹ Walter and Gratian’s hesitation at the idea of spiritual friendship invites Fr. Aelred’s repeated explanations of the difference between the two kinds of friendship, the carnal or adolescent and the spiritual, defined as the only true friendship, God’s great blessing to humankind.

The Narrative Frame

The dialogue opens as Fr. Aelred and Ivo begin a conversation apart from the community but, as Fr. Aelred declares, with Christ also present with them. Ivo asks Fr. Aelred, who is visiting from the monastery’s motherhouse, to teach him about spiritual friendship. When Fr. Aelred demurs, arguing that Cicero has already adequately discussed the subject in *On Friendship*, Ivo asks for scriptural proof of Cicero’s propositions. Fr. Aelred identifies himself and Ivo as friends and invites Ivo to speak freely: “Share with a friend all your thoughts and cares” (1.4). Although neither character mentions Ambrose here, this early insistence on friendship as a

⁴⁹ Burton, “Le traité,” 202.

relationship in which friends may safely share their every thought indicates his importance to this conversation. The book ends with Ivo's return to the community for supper and the agreement to return to the conversation at a later time. Book one thus establishes its characters, its theme, and its principal sources, Cicero and, tacitly, Ambrose.

Book two undertakes a fresh exploration of the subject, now in the home monastery of Fr. Aelred, years after the conclusion of book one. Ivo has died since the earlier conversation; his replacement in this book is the irritable Walter, who complains about having been kept from speaking with the abbot by the press of visitors (2.2) and then requests that the abbot resume the former discussion, having learned that his long-lost record of that conversation has recently been found.⁵⁰ Fr. Aelred's willingness to allow Walter to read his earlier notes obviates the necessity of beginning the subject again with the new pupil; they can continue from where Fr. Aelred and Ivo left off.

As soon as Aelred has explained the value of friendship for joy in this life and enunciated the more important truth that a friend "becomes the friend of God" (2.14), another young monk, Gratian, enters, interrupting the conversation.

At this point the first stage of the double movement from friend to God culminates; the conversation accommodates the new participant by beginning anew. Walter now turns his attention from Fr. Aelred's teaching to welcome his friend, mockingly explaining

⁵⁰ Scholars have often taken this passage to mean that Aelred wrote *Spiritual Friendship* over many years, beginning before Ivo's death and resuming many years afterward, often dating the work according to this presumption. Dubois's Introduction says that Aelred began the work as a young man, put it aside, and returned to it only much later, after Ivo's death: "This indication [of interruption] is not a simple literary artifice, designed to drive the narrative; in fact the composition of the first conversation must have significantly preceded that of the two following" (*L'amitié*, xciii; cf. xxxii–xxxiii). Such an equation of literary fiction with historical reality is unpersuasive; James McEvoy rightly cites "the literary device of separating the first book from the second and third by a period of many years" (McEvoy, "Notes," 402).

Gratian's need for instruction in friendship: "Too eager for friendship, he risks being deceived by its likeness, accepting false for true, feigned for real, and carnal for spiritual friendship" (2.16).

This description anticipates Fr. Aelred's later distinction between carnal and spiritual friendship. Although Fr. Aelred at one point agrees to use the word *friendship* for other kinds of human attachment, whenever he speaks of the origin, nature, or benefits of friendship the reference is always to spiritual friendship. That fact explains the difficulty the young monks have with Fr. Aelred's explanation. As they have always understood friendship to be what they experience together, they find it almost impossible to replace that experience and all it has meant to them with this new higher insight.

After a bantering exchange with Walter, Gratian indicates his eagerness to join the conversation. Fr. Aelred now promises, for the second time in the dialogue, that "friendship is a step toward the love and knowledge of God" (2.18; cf. 1.14). For the rest of the book the three of them discuss practical concerns of forming and maintaining friendships. Interrupted by a summons to Fr. Aelred as new visitors arrive, they agree to resume on the following day.

While each of the first two books begins and ends in a specified time and place, the third begins in a much less clearly defined setting. The casual words at the beginning of the book and Gratian's allusion to the promise of resuming the conversation make it clear that the setting is the same monastery on the next day, but nothing indicates the circumstance surrounding this day's meeting. It ends even more clearly outside of time and place. Although Fr. Aelred says shortly before the end that the sun is about to set (3.128), no community needs call him away, and the work ends with a description of beatitude, with no return to the narrative frame.

The Argument

Burton has explained *Mirror of Charity* and *Spiritual Friendship* as two halves of a diptych on human and divine love, with "each of the three books of the second treatise responding to each of the three books of the first." The first book of each, he says, considers

the order of creation, the second concerns the order of redemption, and the third deals with the concrete, placed within temporality.⁵¹ Aelred certainly shapes *Spiritual Friendship* in this way, beginning with the origin of friendship, then moving to the fruit of friendship in this life, and concluding with practical concerns of making, testing, and interacting with friends, always closely linking the realities of human life to the divine.

Friendship and Creation

In the first book of *Spiritual Friendship* Aelred argues that God instituted human friendship in creation and grounded it in Christ's presence. It therefore leads in this life directly to the experience of Christ and in the next to eternal friendship with God. Fr. Aelred goes beyond Cicero's definition to declare friendship eternal, explaining that if it ceases to exist it was never friendship, exemplifying such friendships by the Christian martyrs, "a thousand pairs of friends ready to die for each other" (1.28). He distinguishes among three kinds of human relationship commonly called friendship: the carnal, the worldly, and the spiritual, of which the last is its own reward: "Now the spiritual, which we call true friendship, is desired . . . for its own natural worth and for the affections of the human heart, so that its fruit and reward is nothing but itself" (1.45).

Fr. Aelred agrees with Cicero that friendship originated in nature, but he says that God is the author of nature and that all creatures participate in God's unity because God created them to do so. His explanation has three parts: God is the architect, the builder of the universe; God has placed within creation a principle of order according to which all creatures are joined and united by peace and fellowship; all creatures, shaped by God and ordered by God's agents, participate in divine order and so in God himself:

Therefore, as the highest nature he fashioned all natures, set everything in its place, and with discernment allotted each its own time. Moreover, since he so planned it

⁵¹ Burton, "Le traité," 198.

eternally, he determined that peace should guide all his creatures and society unite them. Thus from him who is supremely and uniquely one, all should be allotted some trace of his unity. (1.53)

So Aelred declares friendship to be part of the order of creation, ranging from “a kind of love of companionship” in insentient creatures (1.54) through “a like will and affection” among the angels (1.56). Friendship is God’s image in humankind; God’s unity dwells in all creatures, but it exists only in rational creatures—humans and angels—as friendship.

As friendship begins with creation itself, the first human friends, Aelred concludes, were the first human beings. Like Ambrose, Aelred looks to creation for the origin of friendship and to equality as one of its essential elements:

But as a more specific motivation for charity and friendship, this power created a woman from the very substance of the man . . . so that nature might teach that all are equal or, as it were, collateral, and that among human beings—and this is a property of friendship—there exists neither superior nor inferior. (1.57)

Thus in defining friendship as God’s intention for humankind he insists on the nature of the relationship not only between friends, male or female, but between men and women independent of friendship.

In this absence of hierarchy and restriction, Aelred reaches beyond Cicero’s understanding of friendship as a virtue limited, in life as in etymology, to men. Instead, Aelred is clear that women as well as men may be friends. In his first example of Christian friends, the martyrs, he identifies only one pair: “that maiden of Antioch” and “a soldier, who became her companion in martyrdom” (1.29). Although he shows friendship as open to men and women and therefore places no barrier to sexual relationship between friends who are married to each other, he bans what is shameful—*inhonestas*—from true friendship (e.g., 3.87). His inclusion of married couples

in his understanding of friendship anticipates his statement in *On the Soul* on the sanctifying value of eucharist, baptism, and marriage: “by this triple sacrament not only is the soul sanctified, but also the body, and by these mysteries it is prepared for future glory.”⁵² So Aelred links his teaching on friendship to the common Cistercian theme of the postlapsarian retention of God’s image.⁵³

Is God Friendship?

In book one Aelred twice explicitly rejects a potential misunderstanding about the relationship between charity and friendship. His care to distinguish the two, however, has regularly misled the incautious. When Ivo wonders whether friendship and charity are the same, Fr. Aelred quickly rejects that correspondence, explaining the difference in terms of human experience:

IVO. Are we to conclude, then, that there is no distinction between friendship and charity?

AELED. On the contrary, the greatest distinction! . . . By the law of charity we are ordered to welcome into the bosom of love not only our friends but also our enemies. But we call friends only those to whom we have no qualm about entrusting our heart and all its contents. (1.31–32)

At the end of the book Ivo, on behalf of the larger audience of the work, raises the question again, now in theological and cosmological terms. For a second time Fr. Aelred rejects the identification. As wisdom is one of the names of God, Ivo suggests, wisdom is equivalent to God. Hence if friendship is the same as wisdom, as Fr. Aelred has tentatively proposed, friendship must also be equivalent to God: “To what does this lead? Should I say of friendship what John, the friend of Jesus, said of charity, ‘God is friendship’?” (1.69).

⁵² *Anima* 1.60; CCCM 1:704; CF 22:66.

⁵³ On this Cistercian theme, see Bell, *Image*.

The syllogism is logical, but Fr. Aelred has already rejected it once. In doing so again, he now appeals to both reason and Scripture: "This is novel indeed and lacks the authority of the scriptures." As an acceptable and less troubling inference, however, he substitutes the rest of the verse that Ivo has in mind: "The rest of that verse about charity, however, I surely do not hesitate to attribute to friendship, because *the one who remains in friendship remains in God, and God in him*" (1.70; 1 Jn 4:16). So while Aelred continues to insist that through friendship men and women participate in God and partake of God's unity, he rejects the temptation to equate God with friendship, an equation that would make God identical with and thereby limited to friendship.

Frustratingly, the misunderstanding that Aelred attempted to avoid by twice explicitly rejecting the identity of friendship and charity is today the treatise's best-remembered and most frequently quoted idea; among others, Jean Leclercq, Amédée Hallier, Jean Dubois, Aelred Squire, Brian Patrick McGuire, and E. D. H. Carmichael all credit it to Aelred, though Carmichael recognizes it as Ivo's faulty coinage, not his teacher's: "Aelred responds positively but with circumspection. Having elicited this exclamation from Ivo he reserves a degree of independence in his own persona."⁵⁴

But Fr. Aelred does not merely reserve a degree of independence from Ivo's phrasing; Ivo is the pupil, the questioner, the one seeking to learn from the abbot. Fr. Aelred corrects Ivo's misunderstanding, gently but surely, and it is he, not Ivo, who speaks for Aelred in denying Ivo's error. Burton has suggested that while Aelred is himself drawn to the equivalence, he denies it because to accept it would limit God: "That is an intellectual audacity that Aelred would love to be able to permit himself. Voluntarily, however, he forbids himself to take that step, certainly first for the reason of the authority of Scripture, but also because that would unduly restrain God in his power of love." For Aelred, he goes on, friendship is not charity and so is not God; rather, it is "a stage or a degree that gives access to the large horizons of universal brotherhood and to the infinite, to union with God."⁵⁵ The answer to Ivo's repeated inquiry,

⁵⁴ Carmichael, *Friendship*, 85.

⁵⁵ Burton, "Le traité," 202.

then, is a simple no, a recognition that while God created friendship as part of human experience and allows himself to be met and loved forever through friendship, he remains always other.

The Fruit and Excellence of Friendship

While the first book of *Spiritual Friendship* explores the nature and origin of friendship, the second concerns its fruit and excellence, now considering friendship in lived experience. In book one Aelred follows Cicero in declaring of true friendship that “its fruit and reward is nothing but itself” (1.45). In the second book, however, he slightly modifies that position: “Friendship bears fruit in our present life and in the next” (2.9).

The human benefits of friendship that Fr. Aelred describes are similar to those offered by Cicero. Indeed he quotes Cicero to describe the practical benefits of friendship: “Friendship so cushions adversity and chastens prosperity that among mortals almost nothing can be enjoyed without a friend” (2.10). At once, however, he translates Cicero’s abstraction into affective lyricism:

But how happy, how carefree, how joyful you are if you have a friend with whom you may talk as freely as with yourself,⁵⁶ to whom you neither fear to confess any fault nor blush at revealing any spiritual progress, to whom you may entrust all the secrets of your heart and confide all your plans. And what is more delightful than so to unite spirit to spirit and so to make one out of two? (2.11)⁵⁷

Somewhat later he mentions some of the other benefits one receives from a friend: “the advantages of counsel in uncertainty, consolation in adversity, and other help of this kind” (2.61).

As in *Mirror of Charity*, Aelred defines human friendship as prompted jointly by reason and affection, grounded in love. He

⁵⁶ Cicero, *Amic* 6.22.

⁵⁷ Cf. Augustine, *Conf* 4.6.11; CCSL 27:45; Pine-Coffin, *Confessions*, 78; Ambrose, *Off* 3.131.

insists that “friendship can last only among the good” (2.41), but he is restrained in his definition of the good: “I call those good who within the limits of our mortal life live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world” (2.43). Anxious lest even such a moderate restriction on friendship should cause his audience to give up on seeking spiritual friendship, he declares that it is vital to human happiness, distinguishes humans from animals, and is God’s greatest blessing to humankind. Those who reject friendship, Fr. Aelred says (again quoting Cicero), harm themselves, rejecting their humanity: “those who banish friendship from life seem to pluck the sun from the universe” (2.49). They may be called “not human beings but beasts” (2.52).

Choosing Friends

In the third book Aelred considers the origins of specific friendships, not now in the bright light of creation but in the individual case, the practical situation, where friendship is experienced as arising out of human relationship. Fr. Aelred recommends four steps for building friendship: choosing, testing, and accepting the friend, and then perfecting the friendship. These steps, he says, are necessary for one’s own happiness, not for the well-being of the other. Unlike charity, which obeys the commandment to love one’s neighbor, one desires a friend in order to satisfy one’s own longing. Love of oneself makes one love one’s friend; friendship is ultimately the love of self. But God, who placed his own unity in the first humans as a desire for friendship, ensures that the expression of love for the self results in love for the friend as well.

Whereas previously Fr. Aelred has taught through a combination of logic and authority, now he relies on experience, with concrete instances from his own life. He portrays his monastic community as a foretaste of beatitude (3.82) and recalls two unnamed and now-departed friends of his early monastic life as exemplifying all he has said about friendship. He then returns from the specific to the general and from the human to the divine, showing their interconnectedness, the way spiritual friendship leads directly to friendship with God. So he leaves behind arguments based in logic and

experience to teach from the perspective of faith alone, explaining beatitude as that future when limits, interruptions, and anxiety will no longer trouble humans in relationship with one another, for friendship will be universal and eternal as all find union with one another and with God.

As Fr. Aelred's memories end, the work concludes, still in his voice, with an exhortation to the audience summarizing all that has gone before. After an encomium on the benefits of the love of the friend in this world, Fr. Aelred again points to the contemplative union to which such love leads:

Thus rising from that holy love with which a friend embraces a friend to that with which a friend embraces Christ, one may take the spiritual fruit of friendship fully and joyfully into the mouth, while looking forward to all abundance in the life to come. (3.134)

Taste and See

As a resonant motif of the sacramental nature of friendship and of the promise that spiritual friendship begins and ends in Christ, Aelred threads throughout the work a compelling imagery of food and drink, tacitly insisting that friendship involves the whole person: body and mind, senses and spirit. Friendship is not, he implies, limited to reason or emotion; it is somatic, experiential, sensuous, uniting all of a person to friends and to God. Ten times in the work variants of the word *sapor*, 'taste', appear, with reference to tasting Scripture, conversation with friends, and friendship itself. The first book refers to "the honeycombs of holy Scripture" and "the mellifluous name of Christ" (1.7), and the second book compares the imminent conversation on friendship to a spiritual meal: "Perhaps the greater keenness of your previous desire will make this collation of ours, like food or drink for the spirit, all the more rewarding" (2.3). A little later, in the brief dialogic interval just at the center of the work, the monk Gratian enlarges on the theme: "But continue what you began, Father, and for my sake put something on the table for me so that I may be at least a little refreshed,

if not satisfied like my brother here, who after sharing countless courses now fastidiously welcomes me, as if to the leftovers" (2.17).

While through most of the work the language of tasting, eating, and drinking remains metaphorical, its insistent use recalls that favorite Cistercian verse from Psalm 34:8 [33:9]: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." This is eucharistic language, which reinforces the great theme of the work, the promise that God is present within human friendship and that human friendship leads in this life and the next to friendship with Christ. By the end of book three the sweetness of human friendship has become the sweetness of friendship with Christ and the sweetness of Christ himself: "Then sometimes suddenly, imperceptibly, affection melts into affection, and somehow touching the sweetness of Christ nearby, one begins to taste how dear he is and experience how sweet he is" (3.133).⁵⁸

Notes on the Translation

This new translation of Aelred's *Spiritual Friendship* by the well-known translator of Cistercian Fathers, Fr. Lawrence C. Braceland, sj, replaces M. E. Laker's 1977 Cistercian Publications translation. Its notes and bibliography incorporate recent scholarship on Aelred's great work. Fr. Braceland brought to this as to all his translations not only a solid Latinity but a *joie d'esprit* that brings twelfth-century writers to life for contemporary readers, and his profound familiarity with classical authors reveals itself in the notes of this volume. One of his particular achievements here is the tightening and reshaping of Aelred's frequently sprawling Latin syntax, sharpening and enhancing Aelred's meaning.

Three particular problems face any translator of *Spiritual Friendship*. One is the difficulty of rendering it in inclusive language, grammatically representing Aelred's teaching that women as well as men enjoy friendship. Readers have sometimes wrongly assumed that Aelred must have accepted the views of his classical and patristic predecessors, who considered that only men could be friends,

⁵⁸ On eucharistic language in Cistercian spirituality see Dutton, "Eat" and "Intimacy."

overlooking Aelred's identification of Eve, Ruth, "the young woman of Antioch," and the thousands of unnamed women among the martyrs and the members of the early church. As Aelred's dialogue is set within a monastery, has only male participants, and usually focuses on the experiences of individuals—especially of David and Jonathan—the translator's usual solution of turning singular nouns and pronouns to plurals is here rarely possible. No reader of Fr. Braceland's translation should be misled by masculine pronouns into concluding that Aelred limited friendship to men.

A second crux in this work is the well-known difficulty of translating *affectus*, that word of such importance to Cistercian spirituality. Although the obvious and frequently accurate translation is *affection*, with its emphasis on personal emotion, in many cases such a rendering represents a modern rather than a twelfth-century sensibility; for that reason, Fr. Braceland often translates *affectus* as *attachment*. But especially in book three, Aelred tends to insist on the development of a tender emotion between friends, specifically distinct from but able to be governed by *ratio*, 'reason'. In those cases the translation reads *affection* to acknowledge the word's emotional weight. In the first instance of both translations a marginal note signals that the Latin reads *affectus*; subsequently both *attachment* and *affection* always represent Aelred's *affectus*.

Cicero's definition of friendship poses another translation problem. The familiarity of *caritas* with its well-known range of meanings means that Cicero's *caritate* is easily translated as *charity*. But what about *benevolentia*? In twenty-first-century English, *benevolence* does not convey the meaning intended by either Cicero or Aelred, having lost its etymological emphasis on willing good. Fr. Braceland has thus captured the literal meaning of the Latin noun in both Cicero's definition and later discussions of that definition, rendering *benevolentia* as *good will*, as is indicated by a marginal gloss beside the first occurrence of the definition.

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Marsha L. Dutton

The Feast of Saint Benedict, 2009

Spiritual Friendship



Here Begins the Prologue



Of the Venerable Abbot Aelred to the Book on Spiritual Friendship

1. *While I was still a boy at school,*¹ the charm of my companions gave me the greatest pleasure. Among the usual faults that often endanger youth, my mind surrendered wholly to affection² and became devoted to love. Nothing seemed sweeter to me, nothing more pleasant, nothing more valuable than to be loved and to love.³

2. Wavering among various loves and friendships,⁴ my spirit began to be tossed this way and that⁵ and, ignorant of the law of true friendship, was often beguiled by its mirage. At last a volume of Cicero's *On Friendship* fell into my hands. Immediately it seemed to me both invaluable for the soundness of its views and attractive for the charm of its eloquence.

3. Though I considered myself unworthy of such friendship, I was grateful to find a model to which I could recall my quest for many loves and affections. When my good Lord was pleased to

¹ Augustine, Conf 1.11.17.

² Lat *affectus*.

³ Cf. Augustine, Conf 2.2.2, 3.1.1; cf. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 8.5; cf. Aelred, Spec car 1.25.71; cf. Aelred, Sp am 2.161, 3.81, 3.127.

⁴ Cf. Augustine, Conf 10.33.50.

⁵ Cf. Jerome, Ep 133.4; cf. Aelred, Iesu 30; cf. Aelred, S 75.48.

restore the wanderer,⁶ to lift the fallen,⁷ and to heal the leprous with his saving touch,⁸ I abandoned the promise of the world⁹ and entered a monastery.

4. I immediately devoted myself to the study of the sacred writings, though previously, with eyes bleary and accustomed to the carnal gloom, I had not been able to see even their literal meaning. I began to acquire a taste for the sacred Scriptures and found that the slight knowledge the world had transmitted to me was insipid by comparison. Then I remembered what I had read in Cicero about friendship, but to my surprise it did not taste the same to me.¹⁰

5. Even at that time, nothing not honeyed with the honey of the sweet name of Jesus, nothing not seasoned with the salt of the sacred Scriptures, wholly won my affection.¹¹ Musing on Cicero's thoughts again and again, I began to wonder whether perhaps they might be supported by the authority of the Scriptures.

6. But when I read the many passages on friendship in the writings of the holy fathers, wishing to love spiritually but not able to, I decided to write on spiritual friendship and to set down for myself rules for a pure and holy love.

7. This small treatise, then, is divided into three little books. In the first I explain the nature of friendship and what was its origin and cause. In the second I note its fruit and excellence. In the third I disclose, as far as possible, how and among whom friendship can be kept unbroken to the end.

8. May anyone who makes progress by reading this treatise thank God and plead with Christ for mercy for my sins. But may anyone who considers what I have written superfluous or useless pardon my misfortune, for my responsibilities compelled me to restrain the flow of my thoughts in these meditations.

Here ends the Prologue

⁶ Cf. Augustine, Conf 2.10.18.

⁷ Cf. Ps 145 [144]:14; cf. Ps 146 [145]:8; cf. Augustine, Conf 11.31.41.

⁸ Cf. Mt 8:2; cf. Lk 7:22.

⁹ Cf. Augustine, Conf 6.11.19.

¹⁰ Cf. Augustine, Conf 3.5.9; cf. Aelred, Sp am 1.7.

¹¹ Augustine, Conf 3.4.8; cf. Bernard, SC 15.3.6.

Book One



Here Begins the First Book on Spiritual Friendship

1. AELRED. You and I are here, and I hope that Christ is between us as a third.¹ Now no one else is present to disturb the peace or to interrupt our friendly conversation. No voice, no noise invades our pleasant retreat. Yes, most beloved, *open your heart* now and pour whatever you please into the ears of a friend.² Gratefully let us welcome the place, the time, and the leisure.

2. Not long ago while I was relaxing among a crowd of brothers, on every side everyone was adding to the din. One was questioning and another debating. One was raising questions about Scripture, another about ethics, a third about the vices, and a fourth about the virtues. You alone were silent. Suddenly raising your head in the group, as you were about to add some remark, your voice seemed to stick in your throat. Then lowering your head, you fell silent. Withdrawing a short distance from us but again returning, you looked crestfallen. From all this I was led to conclude that, hating crowds and preferring privacy, you hesitated to express what was on your mind.

¹ Cf. Mt 18:20.

² Cf. Ambrose, Off 3.129, 3.132, 3.136; cf. Aelred, Inst incl 28.

3. IVO. You are right. I am most grateful to realize that you are concerned about your son. Nothing but the spirit of charity has opened my mind and its thoughts to you. Would that your kindness might grant me this favor, that whenever you visit your sons who are here I might have recourse to you alone just once, with no others present, and lay bare without interruption the ardor of my heart.³

4. AELRED. I shall gladly comply. I am delighted to see that you are not prone to empty and idle talk, that you always introduce something useful and necessary for your progress. Speak then without anxiety. Share with a friend all your thoughts and cares, that you may have something either to learn or to teach, to give and to receive, to pour out and to drink in.

5. IVO. I am ready not to teach but to learn, not to give but to receive, not to pour out but to drink in, as my youth prescribes, my inexperience demands, and my monastic profession counsels. But lest on these distinctions I should unwisely waste the time needed for other matters, would you teach me something about spiritual friendship? What is it? What values does it offer? What is its beginning and its end? Can friendship exist among all persons? If not among all, then among whom? How can it remain unbroken and so without any troubling disagreement reach a blessed end?

6. AELRED. I wonder why you think I should be asked these questions. Obviously all of them were treated more than adequately by the greatest teachers of old. I wonder why especially, when you have spent your boyhood on studies of this kind and have read Tullius Cicero's volume *On Friendship*, where in an engaging style he fully treated everything that seems to relate to friendship and gave a sort of outline of some of its laws and precepts.

7. IVO. His volume is not too unknown to me, since at one time I took the greatest delight in it. But since the day that some drops of sweetness began to flow my way from the honeycombs of holy Scripture, and when the mellifluous name of Christ claimed my affection for itself, whatever I read or hear, however subtly

³ Cf. Ambrose, Off 3.129, 3.132, 3.136.

argued, has neither flavor nor light without the salt of heavenly letters and the seasoning of that most sweet name.⁴

8. Therefore I would like such propositions as are in harmony with reason, or others whose usefulness your explanations reveals, to be proved to me by the authority of Scripture. Similarly I want to be more fully taught about the right kind of friendship between us, which should begin in Christ, be maintained according to Christ, and have its end and value referred to Christ. It is obvious indeed that Cicero was ignorant of the virtue of true friendship, since he was completely ignorant of Christ, who is the beginning and end of friendship.

9. AELRED. I admit that you have convinced me up to this point, that as if not valuing my own ability on those questions, I will not so much teach you as confer with you. You yourself have disclosed the way for both of us, when at the very entrance to our inquiry you lit that brightest of lamps, which prevents us from straying and leads us to the fixed end of the question proposed.

10. What statement about friendship can be more sublime, more true, more valuable than this: it has been proved that friendship must begin in Christ, continue with Christ, and be perfected by Christ. Come, now: propose what in your opinion should be the first question about friendship.

IVO. I think we should first discuss what friendship is, lest we appear to be painting on a void, not knowing what should guide and organize our talk.

11. AELRED. Is Cicero's definition not an adequate beginning for you? "*Friendship is agreement in things human and divine, with good will and charity.*"⁵

12. IVO. If his definition suffices for you, it's good enough for me.

13. AELRED. Shall we grant, then, that those who share the same view on everything human and divine and have the same intentions, with good will and charity, have reached the perfection of friendship?

⁴ Cf. Aelred, Sp am Prol.4–5; cf. Augustine, Conf 3.4.8.

⁵ Lat *benevolentia et caritas*; Cicero, Amic 6.20.

14. IVO. Why not? But I don't see what that pagan wished to indicate by the words *charity* and *good will*.

15. AELRED. Perhaps by charity he meant attachment⁶ of the spirit but by good will the translation of that attachment into good works. For in everything human and divine, charity between two persons is dear to their spirits. That is, it ought to be a sweet and precious agreement. The practice of good works in exterior things also expresses pleasure and good will.⁷

16. IVO. I admit that for me this definition would be satisfying enough, if I did not suspect that it suited not only pagans and Jews but also unjust Christians. I also admit my conviction that true friendship cannot exist between those who live without Christ.

17. AELRED. Later on it will become clear enough to us whether the definition fails to some extent either by defect or by excess and whether it should be rejected or accepted as the mean between extremes. From the definition itself, however, though you may find it less than perfect, grasp as well as you can the meaning of friendship.

18. IVO. I hope I'm not being a nuisance if I tell you that this definition is insufficient unless you explain the meaning of the word itself.

19. AELRED. I'll humor you, but you must pardon my ignorance and not force me to teach what I do not know. In my opinion, from *amor* comes *amicus* and from *amicus* *amicitia*. That is, from the word for *love* comes that for *friend*, and from *friend*, *friendship*.⁸ Now love is an attachment of the rational soul. Through love, the soul seeks and yearns with longing to enjoy an object. Through love, the soul also enjoys that object with interior sweetness and embraces and cherishes it once it is acquired. I have explained the soul's attachments and emotions as clearly and carefully as I could in a work you know well enough, *The Mirror of Charity*.⁹

⁶ Lat *affectus*.

⁷ Cf. Aelred, *Inst* incl 27.

⁸ Cicero, *Amic* 8.26.

⁹ Aelred, *Spec car*, esp. 3.6.39–109.

20. Furthermore, a friend is called the guardian of love, or, as some prefer, the *guardian of the soul* itself.¹⁰ Why? Because it is proper for my friend to be the guardian of mutual love or of my very soul, that he may in loyal silence protect all the secrets of my spirit and may bear and endure according to his ability anything wicked he sees in my soul. For the friend will rejoice with my soul rejoicing, grieve with it grieving,¹¹ and feel that everything that belongs to a friend belongs to himself.¹²

21. Friendship is that virtue, therefore, through which by a covenant of sweetest love our very spirits are united, and *from many are made one*.¹³ Hence even the philosophers of this world placed friendship not among the accidents of mortal life but among the virtues that are eternal.¹⁴ Solomon seems to agree with them in this verse from Proverbs: “*a friend loves always*.”¹⁵ So he obviously declares that friendship is eternal if it is true, but if it ceases to exist, then although it seemed to exist, it was not true friendship.

22. IVO. In our reading, then, why do we find that grave enmities have risen between the greatest friends?¹⁶

23. AELRED. In its own place, God willing, we will discuss that more fully. Meanwhile, I want you to believe two truths: that no friend ever existed who could harm anyone he had once welcomed into friendship, and that a person who even if injured ceases to cherish someone he has once loved had not tasted the delights of true friendship, because *a friend loves always*.¹⁷

24. Though challenged, though injured, though tossed into the flames, though nailed to a cross, *a friend loves always*.¹⁸ And as our Jerome says, “*a friendship that can end was never true*.”¹⁹

¹⁰ Isidore, *Etymologiae* 10.4.

¹¹ Rom 12:15.

¹² Cf. Acts 4:32.

¹³ Cicero, *Amic* 25.92; cf. Cicero, *Amic* 21.81; cf. Ambrose, *Off* 3.134; cf. Aelred, *Spec car* 3.6.39; cf. Bernard, *Ep* 53.

¹⁴ Cf. Cicero, *Amic* 9.32.

¹⁵ *Prv* 17:17.

¹⁶ Cicero, *Amic* 10.34.

¹⁷ *Prv* 17:17.

¹⁸ *Prv* 17:17.

¹⁹ Jerome, *Ep* 3.6.

25. IVO. Since there is so much perfection in true friendship, no wonder those whom the ancients praised as true friends were so few. From so many centuries past, as Cicero says, legend extols *only three or four pairs of friends!*²⁰ But if in our own Christian times friends are so few, I seem to be slaving in vain to acquire this virtue, for I am terrified now by its astonishing height, and I almost despair of reaching it.

26. AELRED. As a wise man once said, “*for great achievements, the effort is great in itself.*”²¹ Hence it is the mark of a virtuous mind always to think steep and lofty thoughts, either to reach the desired objectives or to understand and grasp more clearly what should be desired. Indeed we should believe that one who by understanding virtue has discovered how far he is beneath it has made no little progress.

27. Yet no Christian should despair of acquiring any virtue whatsoever, because in the Gospel the divine voice daily rings in our ears: “*seek and you shall find*” and so forth.²² No wonder the followers of true virtue were rare among the heathen, for they were ignorant of *the Lord and giver of the virtues*,²³ of whom it was written, *the Lord of virtues, he is the king of glory.*²⁴

28. In proof of this statement I shall readily present you not with three or four but with a thousand pairs of friends ready to *die for each other*, thanks to their mutual trust, which people long ago celebrated or invented in Orestes or Pylades as a great miracle.²⁵ According to Cicero’s definition, you would agree that those people excelled in the virtue of true friendship of whom it was said that “*the multitude of believers was of one heart and one soul. No one claimed any belonging as his or her own, but all was held in common.*”²⁶

²⁰ Cicero, *Amic* 4.15.

²¹ Cf. Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa* 1.Prol.2; cf. Pseudo-Seneca, *Monita* 97.

²² Mt 7:7; Jn 16:24.

²³ Cf. *Leonine Sacramentary* 38.1229.

²⁴ Ps 24 [23]:10.

²⁵ Cf. Cicero, *Amic* 7.24; cf. Augustine, *Conf* 4.6.11.

²⁶ Acts 4:32.

29. How could the highest *agreement in things divine and human, with charity and good will*,²⁷ fail to exist among those who were of *one heart and one soul*? How many martyrs laid down their lives for the brethren? How many spared neither cost nor toil nor their bodies' torture? I suppose that often, not without tears, you have read of that maiden of Antioch who was delivered from among prostitutes by the glorious deceit of a soldier, who became her companion in martyrdom after having found himself the guardian of her virginity in the brothel.²⁸

30. I could cite for you many examples of such heroism, if sheer numbers did not prohibit it and the mass of material impose silence on me. For Christ Jesus preached and spoke, *and they were multiplied beyond counting*.²⁹ He also said, "*no one has greater love than to lay down his life for his friends*."³⁰

31. IVO. Are we to conclude, then, that there is no distinction between friendship and charity?

32. AELRED. On the contrary, the greatest distinction! Divine authority commands that many more be received to the clasp of charity than to the embrace of friendship. By the law of charity we are ordered to welcome into the bosom of love not only our friends but also our enemies.³¹ But we call friends only those to whom we have no qualm about entrusting our heart and all its contents,³² while these friends are bound to us in turn by the same inviolable law of loyalty and trustworthiness.

33. IVO. How many living agreeably together in the world in uninhibited vice are linked by a similar pact! They find the bond of such a friendship pleasant and sweet beyond the delights of this passing world! **34.** I trust you will not mind distinguishing spiritual friendship from other friendships. In my view, only one among so many kinds of friendship should be called spiritual, to distinguish

²⁷ Cf. Cicero, *Amic* 6.20.

²⁸ Cf. Ambrose, *De virginibus* 2.4.22–32; cf. Aelred, *Inst* incl 16.

²⁹ Ps 40:5 [39:6].

³⁰ Jn 15:13.

³¹ Cf. Mt 5:44; cf. Lk 6:27–35.

³² Cf. Ambrose, *Off* 3.129, 3.132, 3.136.

it from the others. Somehow the spiritual is obscured by association with other friendships, which rush in and noisily greet those who seek and desire a spiritual friendship. If by comparison you clarify the meaning of spiritual friendship and hence make it more desirable for us, you may more firmly awaken and enkindle our desire to achieve it.

35. AELRED. Those who share a vested interest in vice falsely claim the fair name of friendship, because one who fails to love is not a friend. One who does not love a comrade loves iniquity, for *one who loves iniquity* does not love but *hates his own soul*,³³ and one who does not love his own soul will certainly be unable to love the soul of a comrade.³⁴

36. I conclude, then, that those who delight in the name of friendship alone are cheated by its likeness, not sustained by the truth. But when so much sweetness is experienced in such empty friendship, which lust pollutes, avarice corrupts, or wantonness defiles, just imagine the sweetness to be experienced in this other friendship: the more righteous, chaste, and open it is, the more it is carefree, enjoyable, and happy.

37. Because of a similarity of feelings in our attachments, however, let us allow even those other friendships that are not genuine to be called friendships, provided that they are distinguished by unmistakable signs from a friendship that is spiritual and therefore genuine.

38. Let us call one friendship carnal, another worldly, and the third spiritual. The carnal is created by a conspiracy in vice, the worldly is enkindled by hope of gain, and the spiritual is cemented among the righteous by a likeness of lifestyles and interests.³⁵

39. The real origin of carnal friendship comes from an affection that, exposing *its body to every wayfarer* like a harlot,³⁶ is led now here, now there, by the lust of its own ears and eyes.³⁷ Through

³³ [Ps 10:6].

³⁴ Cf. Aelred, *Spec car* 3.2.3–4.

³⁵ Cf. Cassian, *Coll* 16.2.

³⁶ Cf. Ez 16:25; Jerome, *Comm Ez* 4.16.15.

³⁷ Cf. Nm 15:39.

these windows, images of beautiful bodies or of voluptuous objects spring to a mind that thinks it bliss to enjoy them at will, though they are less enjoyable without a companion.

40. Then by a gesture, a nod, a word, or an act of deference, spirit is captivated by spirit, one is set afire by another, and they are fused into one, so that once this degrading pact is struck, each will perform or endure for the other any possible crime or sacrilege. They consider nothing sweeter, they judge nothing more equitable than this friendship, for they think that *to wish and not wish the same things*³⁸ is imposed on them by the laws of friendship.

41. Therefore this friendship is neither undertaken with thoughtfulness nor sanctioned by judgment nor guided by reason but is blown in all directions by gusts of affection. Not observing moderation, not concerned with honesty, disregarding profit and loss, it rushes into everything without forethought or discretion but with frivolous excess. Hence, as if hounded by the Furies, it either exhausts itself or disappears into the mist from which it was formed.³⁹

42. Worldly friendship, begotten of greed for temporal goods or for wealth, is always marked by fraud and deception. Here nothing is reliable, constant, or fixed, for worldly friendship fluctuates with fortune and chases coin.⁴⁰

43. Hence it is written, "*there is a friend who is one when the time suits but will not stand by in your day of trouble.*"⁴¹ Remove his hope of reward, and at once he ceases to be your friend. Someone has satirized such friendship in a neat verse:

*One who comes in good fortune and goes in misfortune
Loves not the person but the person's purse.*⁴²

44. The beginning of this perverted friendship, however, often entices people to share true friendship. Those who first make a pact in the hope of common gain reach a summit of pleasurable

³⁸ Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 20.4.

³⁹ Cf. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* 5.28–142.

⁴⁰ Cf. Qo 9:11–12; cf. "The Wanderer" ll. 106–10.

⁴¹ Si 6:8.

⁴² Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 2.3.23–24.

agreement, if only in human affairs, as long as they remain true to themselves with this *mammon of iniquity*.⁴³ In no way, however, should this be called a genuine friendship, for it begins and continues in hope of temporal gain.

45. Now the spiritual, which we call true friendship, is desired not with an eye to any worldly profit or for any extraneous reason, but for its own natural worth and for the emotion of the human heart, so that its fruit and reward is nothing but itself.⁴⁴

46. Hence our Lord says in the Gospel, “*I appointed you to go and to bear fruit*,” that is, to “*love one another*.”⁴⁵ For one goes by making progress in this true friendship, and one bears fruit by savoring the sweetness of its perfection. So spiritual friendship is begotten among the righteous by likeness of life, habits, and interests,⁴⁶ that is, by *agreement in things human and divine, with good will and charity*.⁴⁷

47. Now I think this definition adequately expresses friendship, provided that by our mention of charity, as is our habit, we mean to exclude every vice from friendship and provided that by good will we mean the delightful awakening within us of the emotion of love.

48. Where such friendship exists, *wishing and not wishing the same things*,⁴⁸ a wish that is the more pleasant as it is more sincere and the sweeter as it is more holy, lovers can wish for nothing that is unbecoming and fail to wish for nothing that is becoming.

49. Of course prudence guides, justice rules, strength protects, and temperance moderates this friendship.⁴⁹ We will discuss these four virtues in their proper place. But decide now whether in your opinion we have given sufficient attention to what you thought the first question should be, namely, what friendship is.

⁴³ Cf. Lk 16:9; cf. Aelred, Lam D 12; cf. Ambrose, Off 3.136; cf. Cicero, *De inventione* 2.55; cf. Aelred, Vita E 28.

⁴⁴ Cicero, Amic 9.31; cf. Bernard, SC 83.2.4; cf. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 8.3.1–6.

⁴⁵ Jn 15:16–17.

⁴⁶ Cf. Cassian, Coll 16.3.

⁴⁷ Cicero, Amic 6.20.

⁴⁸ Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 20.4.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ws 8:7; cf. Aelred, Iesu 20; cf. Aelred, Spec car 1.31.88–33.92.

50. IVO. Our discussion has been quite sufficient, and I can think of nothing further to ask. But before passing to other topics, I would like to know the origin of friendship among mortals. Did it originate from nature or from chance, or from some other need? Or did it really come into use after being imposed on humankind through some precept or law? Did habit then make it deserving of praise?

51. AELRED. In my opinion, nature itself first impressed on human minds the feeling of friendship, which experience then developed and the authority of law finally sanctioned.⁵⁰ For God, who is supreme in power and goodness, is a good sufficient unto himself; he is himself his own good, his own joy, his own glory, and his own happiness.⁵¹

52. Nothing exists outside him that he could need, whether person or angel or sky or earth or anything they contain, for every creature cries out to him, “*You are my God, for you have no need of my goods.*”⁵² Not only is he sufficient unto himself, but he is the sufficiency of all other things, giving to some existence, to others sensation, and to still others intelligence. He is the cause of all that exists, the life of everything with sensation, and the wisdom of everyone endowed with intelligence.

53. Therefore, as the highest nature he fashioned all natures, set everything in its place, and with discernment allotted each its own time. Moreover, since he so planned it eternally, he determined that peace should guide all his creatures and society unite them. Thus from him who is supremely and uniquely one, all should be allotted some trace of his unity. For this reason, he left no class of creatures isolated, but from the many he linked each one in a kind of society.⁵³

54. Let us begin with creatures that lack sensation. What plot of land or what stream turns up only one stone of a single kind? Or what forest produces only one tree of a single species? Thus among non-sentient beings, a kind of love of companionship comes

⁵⁰ Cicero, *Amic* 8.27.

⁵¹ Aelred, *Spec car* 1.2.4.

⁵² [Ps 15:2].

⁵³ Cf. Aelred, *Spec car* 1.21.61.

to light, since not one of them is left alone, but each is created and conserved in a kind of society of its own class. But among sentient creatures, who could easily express how great a mirror of friendship and how great an image of a loving society they reflect?⁵⁴

55. Although in all other respects animals are proven to be irrational, surely in this respect alone they so imitate the human spirit that they are almost thought to be moved by reason. They so follow the leader, so frolic together, so express and display their attachment in actions and sounds together, and so enjoy one another's company with eagerness and pleasure that they seem to relish nothing more than what resembles friendship.⁵⁵

56. Among angels, too, divine wisdom so provided that not one but several classes should be created. Among these classes, pleasant companionship and the most tender love created a like will and attachment, so as to allow no entry to envy, for one might seem greater and another less had not charity countered this danger with friendship. Thus there was a host of angels to banish loneliness and a communion of charity in the various classes to multiply their joy.

57. Finally, when God fashioned the man, to recommend society as a higher blessing, he said, "*it is not good that the man should be alone; let us make him a helper like himself.*"⁵⁶ Indeed divine power fashioned this helper not from similar or even from the same material. But as a more specific motivation for charity and friendship, this power created a woman from the very substance of the man. In a beautiful way, then, from the side of the first human a second was produced,⁵⁷ so that nature might teach that all are equal or, as it were, collateral, and that among human beings—and this is a property of friendship—there exists neither superior nor inferior.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Cicero, *Amic* 21.81.

⁵⁵ Cicero, *Amic* 21.81; cf. Cassian, *Coll* 16.2.

⁵⁶ Gn 2:18; cf. Ambrose, *Off* 1.133–36.

⁵⁷ Gn 2:21–22; cf. Peter Lombard, *Sententia* 2.18.2; cf. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* X (1).925–27.

⁵⁸ Cicero, *Amic* 19.69; cf. Ambrose, *Off* 3.129; cf. Bernard, *SC* 59.2.

58. So from the very beginning nature impressed on human minds this attachment of charity and friendship, which an inner experience of love soon increased with a delightful sweetness. But after the fall of the first human, with charity growing lukewarm, when cupidity crept in and let private gain supplant the common good, avarice and envy corrupted the splendor of friendship and charity by introducing into the debased morals of mankind contentions, rivalries, hatreds, and suspicions.

59. Then groups of the righteous distinguished between charity and friendship, noting that perfect love should be extended even to foes and to perverts, while no communion of will and counsel could exist between the good and the worst. Therefore friendship, which like charity was at first observed among all and by all people, by natural law lingered among the few righteous. Observing that many were violating the sacred rights of loyalty and society, the righteous bound themselves by a stricter bond of love⁵⁹ and friendship. And among the evils they saw and experienced, they kept their peace in the grace of mutual charity.

60. But for those in whom impiety had effaced all sense of virtue, reason, which could not be extinguished in them, retained the attachment of friendship and companionship, so that without companions wealth could not satisfy the avaricious, or fame the ambitious, or dalliance the lustful. Even among the worst, some loathsome social contracts were struck, disguised by the fairest name of friendship. These, though, had to be distinguished from friendship by law and precept, lest when real friendship was sought, an incautious person might be trapped into it by the similar name.

61. Thus the authority of the law sanctioned the friendship that nature had established and use confirmed. Hence it is evident that friendship is natural, like virtue and wisdom and those other things that are, like natural goods, to be sought and treasured for themselves, for all who possess these things make good use of them, and no one entirely abuses them.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Lat *dilectionis*.

⁶⁰ Cf. Augustine, Lib arb 2.19.

62. IVO. Do not many people abuse wisdom? I ask, because many desire to please through wisdom or brag of themselves because of their endowment of wisdom, or at least those do who consider that wisdom is marketable and that making a profit from wisdom is a religious duty.⁶¹

63. AELRED. Here you will relish our Augustine, whom I quote verbatim: “*The one who pleases himself pleases a fool, because one who pleases himself is certainly a fool.*”⁶² Now the fool is unwise, and the unwise is unwise because he lacks wisdom. How then does he abuse wisdom when he has none? Likewise, if chastity is proud, it is not virtue, because pride is a vice, making what is considered a virtue into an image of itself and so therefore no longer a virtue but a vice.⁶³

64. IVO. But by your leave, I object. To me it seems incongruous for you to link wisdom with friendship, for there is no basis of comparison between them.

65. AELRED. Especially among the virtues, the less—though they are not equal in rank—are frequently linked with the greater, the good with the better, and the weaker with the stronger. Although virtues vary among themselves by a difference of degree, still by some similarity they approximate each other. Widowhood lives next door to vulgarity, and conjugal chastity lives next door to widowhood. Great is the difference among these virtues, but some relationship remains from the fact that they are virtues.

66. Indeed conjugal chastity does not cease to be a virtue just because it is surpassed by a widow’s continence. Nor is the grace of both withdrawn just because each is surpassed by virginity. However, if you weigh these teachings carefully, you will discover that friendship is so close to or so steeped in wisdom that I would almost claim that friendship is nothing other than wisdom.

67. IVO. I confess my surprise and do not think I can easily convince myself of that statement.

⁶¹ Cf. Bernard, SC 36.3.3–4.

⁶² Augustine, S 47.9.13.

⁶³ Cf. Aelred, Inst incl 23–24.

68. AELRED. Have you forgotten that Scripture says “*a friend loves always*”?⁶⁴ As you recall, our Jerome also said, “*friendship that can end was never true.*”⁶⁵ Sufficient and more than sufficient proof has also been given that friendship cannot subsist without charity. Since in friendship, then, eternity may flourish, truth light the way, and charity delight, see for yourself whether you should withhold the name of wisdom where these three co-exist.

69. IVO. To what does this lead? Should I say of friendship what John, the friend of Jesus, said of charity, “God is friendship”?⁶⁶

70. AELRED. This is novel indeed and lacks the authority of the Scriptures. The rest of that verse about charity, however, I surely do not hesitate to attribute to friendship, because *the one who remains in friendship remains in God, and God in him.*⁶⁷ This you will perceive more clearly when we begin our dialogue on the fruit or value of friendship.

Now if in our guileless simplicity we have spoken enough about the nature of friendship, let us reserve for another time the remaining questions you suggested for consideration.

71. IVO. When I am so keen to learn, this interruption is disappointing but unavoidable, as I am summoned to supper, which I am not allowed to miss, and you must meet your obligations to the many who wait in line for your attention.

Here Ends the First Book on Spiritual Friendship

⁶⁴ Prv 17:17.

⁶⁵ Jerome, Ep 3.6.

⁶⁶ Cf. 1 Jn 4:16; cf. Aelred, Sp am 1.31–32.

⁶⁷ 1 Jn 4:16.