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Michael Cameron

University of Portland, cameronm@up.edu

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Essays in Memory of William Harmless, S.J.

Edited by John J. O’Keefe and Michael Cameron

3. Love Actually

Modeling *Amor* in Augustine’s *De catechizandis rudibus*

Michael Cameron, University of Portland

Abstract

A Carthaginian deacon named Deogratias asked Augustine for advice on how to improve his teaching for inquirers. Augustine obliged by writing *De catechizandis rudibus* (*On Instructing Beginners*), a masterful survey of need-to-know essentials on the story of salvation, the unity of Scripture, and their deep center in Christ. But the work did more than teach the basics of faith. Augustine saw that the deacon needed not only more information but also more assiduous practice in giving his learners the humble Christian love that he was teaching about. Beginning with descriptions of God’s accommodating love to humanity in Christ, Augustine demonstrated the crucial role of love in the work of a Christian teacher by displaying it literarily to Deogratias by his kindly approach and way of writing. Not merely giving commands or spouting theories, Augustine’s *De catechizandis rudibus* subtly offered a model of love itself for the beginning teacher Deogratias to imitate.

Keywords: Deogratias, love, teacher, humility, Christology, beginner, model

*The majority of men are subjective towards themselves
and objective towards all others, terribly objective sometimes –
but the real task is in fact to be objective towards oneself
and subjective towards others* (Kierkegaard, quoted by the translators: 13).

Introduction

Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus* (*On Instructing Beginners*) is a foothill among the mountains of Augustine's major *oeuvre* like *Confessions*, *The Trinity*, and *The City of God*. While not exactly overlooked by scholarship,¹ studies of *De catechizandis rudibus* often take soundings that explore some embedded element such its pedagogical strategy (Chin; Immerwahr),² profile of early Christian preaching (Harrison 2014), exegetical approach,³ or philosophical or theological framework (Finn). This paper seeks to examine its central theme of love as the key to understanding the text as a whole and on its own terms as advice to a journeyman teacher.⁴ It attempts to take the measure of Carol Harrison's perceptive observation that this work "might aptly be described as a treatise on the nature of love" (2000: 67).

Love, of course, is a primary category in Augustine's thought (Burnaby; Dideberg 1986-94a, 1986-94b, 1996-2002; van Bavel). It grounds many important discussions across a range of subjects from theology to ethics to epistemology. It is also the subject of several of Augustine's best-known one-liners: "My love is my weight" (*Conf.* 13.9.10); "Love and do as you please" (*Ep. Io. tr.* 7.8); "Two loves have created two cities" (*Civ.* 14.28). It also prompted equally memorable but lesser known epigrams: "You see the Trinity if you see love" (*Trin.* 8.8.12); "A brief and true definition of virtue is 'rightly ordered love'" (*Civ.* 15.22); "No one enters into truth except through love" (*C. Faust.* 32.18). *De catechizandis rudibus* sets this central category of Augustine's thought in the concrete, practical context of pastoral work. For him love is the main takeaway of the salvation story, Scripture's best interpretive lens, the central subject of Christian instruction, the essential attitude of one who teaches, and the ultimate aim of Christian formation. Love-in-action thus forms a subtext of the entire work. Love is not the subject of a special section in this work; references to it recur unobtrusively yet pervasively alongside many other themes and perspectives. Thus, love appears in *De catechizandis rudibus* the same way that Augustine tells Deogratias that love should appear in his teaching: "like the golden thread that holds together the precious stones in an ornament but does not spoil the

¹ See the overviews and bibliographies in Madec 1991b; Mayer (though the *Augustinus-Lexikon* consistently misspells the title as *Cathechizandis rudibus*, *De*, thus putting it out of alphabetical order by several pages); Ramsey; Canning 2006a. Though nearly a century old, Christopher remains unsurpassed in any language as an *explication de texte*.

² Canning helpfully reviews the work's influence in the history of pedagogy (2006b: 32-38, esp. 36 n. 33). As Canning notes (2006b: 37 n. 34), surprisingly not a single reference to *De catechizandis rudibus* appears in the otherwise useful essay collection of Paffenroth and Hughes.

³ I compare *De catechizandis rudibus* to *De doctrina christiana* from this angle in Cameron 2012: 240-50.

⁴ This complements the comprehensive approach of Canning (2006b; 2006c; 2004; 2001).

ornament's lines by making itself too obvious" (6.10).⁵ Augustine models his counsel to Deogratias, making love central to the work not merely by prescribing love but by showing love to him.

Nevertheless, love's centrality in *De catechizandis rudibus* is somewhat surprising. Should not the main lesson for beginners concern faith? Augustine emphasized faith in early works like *The Advantage of Believing*, and sloganized his epistemology of faith with the Latinized Septuagint version of Isaiah 7:9, "Unless you believe, you will not understand" (e.g., *Mag.* 11.37; *F. et symb.* 1.1; *C. Faust.* 12.46; *S.* 126.1). The arc of Augustine's development in the 390s, moreover, shows a growing preoccupation with understanding the workings of initial faith.⁶ But when that investigation moved him to consider the conditions of initial faith, he was particularly struck by the way that divine love precedes, supports, and engenders faith, which then in turn forms love in the responding heart. The text of 1 John 4:19 became important: "We love because God first loved us" (*Cat. rud.* 4.7). Augustine's doctrine of operative grace explained the effectual calling and gift of faith to Jacob, whom God "loved" over Esau (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13; *Simpl.* 1.2.7). In fact, the work pays more attention to love than to faith.⁷

Augustine examined the teaching-learning process from a meta-perspective that studied how faith in God ripens into love for God. The master teacher Augustine thought that his apprentice Deogratias understood certain aspects of the teaching process well enough, but he also thought Deogratias had neglected one huge qualifying factor, namely, that love is the root of all good teaching. Deogratias already had more than enough knowledge to teach, Augustine thought; so he turns the deacon gently, and not a little ironically, to consider more deeply himself as a teacher. Uppermost in Augustine's mind was not *what* teachers know and speak (though he attends to this too), but *how* teachers know and speak. In a word, Augustine wants to show Deogratias how love is the major component and catalyst in spiritual knowledge.

What follows proceeds by examining how *De catechizandis rudibus* considers the theme of love from five angles: 1) "love itself," i.e., what one learns about the character of love by observing persons who act in love in Scripture and real situations; 2) Augustine's own artfully and subtly expressed love for Deogratias, which modelled actual and not merely ideal love for Deogratias to imitate; 3) the imperative that Deogratias should redirect his teacherly focus from conveying knowledge *to* his hearers to developing love *for* his hearers; 4) love as Scripture's core content, the primary perspective from which one reads, and the central

⁵ Translations mostly come from Canning (2006a), with occasional adjustments, except where noted.

⁶ This period led to his controversial analysis of Romans 9, where Augustine perceived the predestining and electing grace of God as stirring faith in Jacob but not in Esau (see Ring).

⁷ *De catechizandis rudibus*, literally *On Instructing Beginners*, does not specify in its title what the instruction is exactly about, despite Canning's expanded translation of the title as *Instructing Beginners in Faith* (2006a). This modification fits Augustine's instruction and Deogratias's position as one teaching beginners. But in fact *De catechizandis rudibus* mentions faith relatively infrequently in comparison with love. In the sense that this work, as I will argue, subtly instructs Deogratias as if he were the beginner, the novice teacher in the first stages of learning how to love his learners, it would be more precise (if less practical) to expand the title as *Instructing Beginners in Love*.

reference point for everything that a Christian teacher says and does; and 5) the ultimate hoped-for birth of love within the heart of the learner.

“Love Itself” Revealed in Action

For *De catechizandis rudibus*, love is not an abstraction, but a living thing, and indeed a vivid personification speaking and instructing with the aim of reproducing itself as lived experience within the beloved. “Love itself” (*amor ipse*, 2.4; *ipsa dilectio*, 14.22; *ipsa caritas*, 15.23⁸) is known best in actual situations where it operates; there it reveals its special aptitude for accommodating actual persons; its supple, dexterous manner in the moment of encounter; its uncanny ability to read people’s true selves; and its hospitality that fills the need standing before it. “*Caritas* itself,” Augustine writes, “is in pain giving birth to some, makes itself weak with others; devotes itself to edifying some; greatly fears giving offense to others; bends down to some; raises itself up before others. To some it is gentle, to others stern, to no one hostile, to everyone a mother” (15.23).

If faith longs to see and know that in which it believes, love reveals itself as the hidden power that drives faith’s desire to understand. Faith finally cannot fulfill itself; it remains incomplete and incomprehensible without love, as Paul suggested (1 Corinthians 13:1-13). If this is true for a Christian believer, it is doubly true for a Christian teacher, who continually seeks to integrate the love of God and neighbor into the practice of teaching. Augustine counsels that if a teacher delights in study and in attaining new insights, then one can find no better subject to study than the art of love as it plays out in some real-life situation. “If your understanding delights in the innermost secret matters,” Augustine writes, “then let it delight in understanding the ways of *caritas*” (*Cat. rud.* 10.15). This line softly chides Deogratias, who had complained of boring himself and his hearers because he knew too much for others to take in. Augustine declares that this misses the point. Christian teaching by definition cannot merely share knowledge but must participate in that knowledge by love; spiritual knowledge can be grasped through love’s self-investment.⁹ As Augustine points out elsewhere, explaining 1 Corinthians 8:1 (“knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”), one should seek knowledge suffused with love as the fullest form of knowledge (*C. Faust.* 15.8).

De catechizandis rudibus notes that the most distinctive of “love’s ways” to be learned is humility, which trains teachers to serve in “lowly places.” With acute psycho-spiritual perceptiveness, Augustine warns Deogratias to beware the self-seeking that lurks within the soul’s passion for enlightenment, which easily enslaves one to personal advancement and pleasure. Humility frees from servitude to the constrictions of conscience that come with the drive to advance one’s personal project. Paradoxically, Augustine observes, self-abandonment actually wins the very insights that the soul craves, but also frees them from choking self-concern. “The more obligingly,” he writes, “that *caritas* goes down to the lowly places (*quanto officiosus descendit in infima*, i.e., descends to accommodate the unlearned), the more confidently

⁸ Augustine uses all three words for love indiscriminately and more or less synonymously. See *Civ.* 14.14 and *Cat. rud.* 5.9 (discussed below). In order to give a flavor of Augustine’s language, and to circumvent the stultifying effect of repeating the generic English word *love*, in quoting Augustine I use his Latin word.

⁹ As John Burnaby insightfully puts it, “perfect knowledge of what is good necessarily implies the love of it, else we should not be knowing it *as* good” (48, emphasis in original).

it finds its way back to the secret places” (*tanto robustius recurrit in intima*; i.e., digs into subtler levels of spiritual understanding; *Cat. rud.* 10.15, author’s translation). Augustine here perhaps sacrifices some clarity to cleverness in order to use his *infima-intima* rhyme scheme; but his main point is clear. The whole person involved in the process of learning and teaching welcomes a relational self-awareness that fosters both spiritual advancement and sound communication. “Secret places” open themselves to teacherly humility that “seeks nothing from those it goes down to (*descendit*) except their eternal salvation” (10.15). By contrast, self-seeking that disguises itself as spiritual searching disturbs the heart and chokes good teaching. Love is the beginning, middle, and end of good teaching, which like any good work emerges “when the will (*intentio*) of the one who acts is pierced by *caritas* and, as though returning home, rests once more in *caritas*” (11.16).

For *De catechizandis rudibus*, loving humility thus orders a teacher’s priorities and emotional proclivities. A teacher who loves becomes distressed if learners for some reason miss the feast of wisdom that had been theirs for the taking.

But if we have made some progress in contemplative matters, we do not wish learners whom we love (*diligimus*) simply to enjoy and be amazed when they gaze upon human handiwork, but we want them to enjoy and be amazed by the deeper design and underlying purpose of the Artist himself and, from there, to soar up in admiration and in praise of the All-creating God, where the richest fruitfulness of *amor* finds its endpoint (12.17; translated in Harmless 2010a: 145-46, slightly altered).

To vivify his discourse, Augustine presents himself as impersonating divinely given love itself as it speaks within true Christian hearts. “It is not so much I who say these words to you as it is *dilectio* itself that says them to us all, the same *dilectio* that has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (*Cat. rud.* 14.22, alluding to Romans 5:5).¹⁰ But he worries about any “who have not experienced this same *caritas* whereof I speak” (15.23), not only because they miss something crucial, but also because they distort or mistake the teaching. He longs to teach the light of truth to one who understands, for as he writes elsewhere, “the one who knows it, knows eternity: *Caritas* knows it!” (*Conf.* 7.10.16).

Showing How Augustine Loves Deogratias

Augustine knows Deogratias personally, perhaps through the city’s bishop, Aurelius, with whom he corresponded as early as his priesthood (*Ep.* 22). But *De catechizandis rudibus* neither namedrops Aurelius nor sends greetings to anyone; its plain-spokenness evokes frank affection and the informality of friendship. Augustine writes, “The demands of the situation have compelled you to urge me, in the name of the *caritas* that I owe to you, not to refuse to write something for you on this subject, despite my other responsibilities” (1.1). Deogratias used an actual or implied pledge of love from Augustine to ask the bishop’s help. Augustine responded warmly, but also projected his personal affection for Deogratias onto a much wider screen by alluding to words of Paul (“the love of Christ compels us,” 2 Corinthians 5:14). That

¹⁰ Augustine always understands the phrasing of Romans 5:5, “love of God poured out” to use an objective genitive, that is, to refer to redeemed human love directed to God in the human heart (though infused by the divine gift of the Spirit), rather than divine love directed to humanity.

set their love in a Christological context. “For my part,” Augustine writes, “I am compelled by the *caritas* and service that I owe not only to you personally (*familiariter*; lit., “part of the family”) but also to mother Church as a whole” (1.2). The image of personal relationship enlarged by the love of Christ, and underscored by the image of the maternal Church, suggests Augustine’s sense of obligation to Deogratias within the context of communal Christian love. It also anticipates the family images that crop up later in the work (10.15).

The social asymmetry between Deogratias the deacon and Augustine the bishop vivifies this exchange. In *De catechizandis rudibus* 4.7, Augustine makes an unusual and lengthy analogy between relationships that cross class borders and the redemptive relationship of God and humanity.

Even people of higher standing, it is true, have a wish to be loved (*dilig*) by people of lower standing and take pleasure in the eager deference that is shown to them, and the more they become aware of this deference, the more their love for those of lower standing grows . . .

When a person of lower standing becomes aware that he is loved by a person of higher standing, with what great *amor* is he now inflamed! That is to say, *amor* is received with greater appreciation when it does not chafe with dryness of need but flows freely from the abundant stream of beneficence. The former is born of wretchedness (*miseria*), the latter of compassion (*misericordia*). Now, if the person of lower standing has given up hope that he could ever be loved by a person of higher standing, he will be shaken by an inexpressible feeling of *amor* if that person of higher standing spontaneously thinks fit to reveal how much he loves someone who would no longer have dared to promise himself such a great boon.

Augustine portrays God’s love for humanity and the hoped for response from humanity as the essential meaning of salvation history. The image possibly echoes Augustine’s own relationship to the deacon. Augustine in the superior position offers his counsel as a gift while framing his obligation of love to Deogratias within his episcopal responsibility to the whole Christian community. The bishop’s love for his people imitates God’s love for humanity.

This passage conducts a teacher’s clinic in how to synthesize the Bible’s message of God’s love in a brief compass that also implicitly doubles as an image of Augustine’s own love for Deogratias. Interestingly, an epistolary exchange some ten years before *De catechizandis rudibus* shows Augustine playing the junior role to his superior, Bishop Valerius. Just after his surprised forced ordination, Augustine petitioned for time to retrench and prepare for the coming struggles of pastoral ministry. In a piece of rhetorical theater, the young presbyter imagined himself as an unprepared seaman, a new recruit whose commanding officer had ordered into battle. Oddly, Augustine poses his plight as an issue of love:

If I have learned what is necessary . . . [but] am not allowed to pursue what I have learned that I do not have – then you are ordering my death, Father Valerius! Where is your *caritas*? Do you really love me? Do you really love this church that you so wanted me to minister to? (*Ep.* 21.3).

Young Augustine's histrionics make more sense against the backdrop of ancient hierarchical military practices wherein superiors honor and maintain the loyalty of their subordinates by giving symbolic gifts of love that included a personal and affective dimension. Augustine hopes that Valerius will grant this preparation time as such a gift.¹¹

Beyond describing his feelings of affection, how does Augustine concretely show his love for Deogratias? That he undertook a work like *De catechizandis rudibus* at all is a sign of it. But the work itself reveals strategies that not only signal love but also model it. Above all, Augustine "descends" to identify with Deogratias's frustrations as a teacher. Probably echoing the deacon's own words, Augustine acknowledges his fear of giving a "dull and distasteful lecture" (*abiectus sermo fastidiosusque*; 2.3). He knows the feeling of being enervated by a poor performance: perhaps it was the result of having heard some other teacher phrase things better; maybe the subject matter had been familiar for so long that it no longer held vital interest; or perhaps that day the obligation to teach had derailed work on another project. Whether caused by disgust, inadequacy, impatience, or boredom, Augustine too had experienced that dreaded "feeling of inner aversion" (10.14). But then the man who eventually preached perhaps 8000 sermons, a small but significant percentage of which survives to our day, makes a surprising confession: "My address nearly always displeases me too . . . It grieves me that my tongue lacks the capacity to answer what is in my heart" (10.14). He reassures Deogratias that he too has enjoyed flashes of enlightenment that electrify, enthrall, and inspire only to fade quickly into near irretrievability. But the teacher's real frustration, he continues, is that to become communicable and usable, the impressions left on the memory by those ecstatic experiences unfortunately depend on meager resources of signs and syllables to be communicated. The indirectness of language makes it a blunt instrument that suffers by comparison with the immediate and intuitive power of, say, facial expressions. So although the achievement of insight provides a grand moment for the soul, the expression of insight is "a slow-moving and drawn-out affair of a very different nature" (10.14). The linguistic ordeal can send even an accomplished speaker into such a despondency that, perhaps even while still speaking, a discourse becomes "even more sluggish and colorless" (10.14). However, Augustine insists, he has often been amazed and pleased to discover that people profit even from his worst performances. "The enthusiasm of those who want to hear me is often an indication that my speech is not as cold (*frigidum*) as I think" (2.4). Experience had taught him a precious take-away lesson: no matter how one *thinks* his teaching is going, hope must press on. Augustine counsels crisply: "The same for you!" (*Sic et tu*, 2.4).

Augustine's bond with Deogratias over similar teacher's experiences and concerns gives *De catechizandis rudibus* its warmth. For Augustine, this paradox of frustration and fruitfulness teaches a lesson about love for the hearer as for one's neighbor: we must not prejudge our speech, or our hearers, because the human heart is deep and unpredictable. "Not even *amor* itself," writes Augustine, "is able to break through the murkiness of the flesh and penetrate

¹¹ See discussion of this passage in Cameron 2009: 16-18. The practice known as "euergetism," used gifts as tools of persuasion and loyalty formation. Paul Veyne aptly describes the effect: "Political power consists in reigning over men's hearts, in being loved. The colonel who knows how to make himself loved by his regiment is kind because his role as colonel involves this: he is not kind in order that he may be promoted to general by his men" (261, quoted in Drake: 38).

into the eternally clear sky from which even the things that pass away receive whatever brightness they have” (2.4). But Augustine gives this otherwise dark observation a positive spin. True, matters are foggy, and powers of discernment are weak, even in a heart full of love. However, consider that fogginess ensures that our seeming failure is inconclusive, and allows hope for connection to press on.

Augustine relieves Deogratias’s feeling of anxiety and isolation by letting him know that his frustrations were not unknown, and by inviting him to see his experience through the eyes of the teacher he admired. Later in the work Augustine offers an even bolder gift of love in the form of two model addresses for Deogratias to imitate. Augustine apparently decided to add them while writing *De catechizandis rudibus*; his introductory overview had made no mention of them. His first hint appears well past the halfway point when Augustine seems to sense that his apprentice needs more help. “At this point you perhaps want me to give a model address so as to demonstrate for you concretely how my recommendations can be put into practice. This I will certainly do as well as I can, with God’s help” (10.14). His impulse toward practical help eventually segues into the model discourses: “Therefore, if anything in us has commended itself to you and led you to want to receive instructions from us for your own address, you would learn more by watching and listening to us when we put our own instructions into practice than by reading what we now dictate” (15.23). Augustine intimately identifies with the deacon by, in a sense, taking up his own voice and speaking words for him to imitate; Augustine shows love by temporarily *becoming* Deogratias, offering a model of instruction “as if I were catechizing someone” (15.23). This bonus section helped the struggling teacher with an extra dose of generosity that underscores Augustine’s paternal love.

Leading Deogratias to Love his Hearers

Augustine relates to Deogratias in a way analogous to Deogratias’s relationship to his own hearers. This impersonation cut two ways. On the one hand, Augustine *comforted* Deogratias by identifying with his feelings and need. On the other hand, Augustine *challenged* the deacon by recasting him as a hearer; thus, Deogratias sat before Augustine as the deacon’s hearers sat before him. Turning Deogratias into a hearer, Augustine cleverly taught the teacher to love his neighbor-hearers as he loves himself. In an effort to get the deacon to reflect, Augustine pressed him to become differently self-aware. In a nutshell: if Deogratias worried about boring people far below him in understanding, then he should be concerned that Augustine faced the same problem teaching him. This explains Augustine’s quite realistic, practical, and cleverly indirect approach to Deogratias’s problems in *De catechizandis rudibus*.

Augustine begins his model address with an intriguing play on his interlocutor’s name. “Thanks be to God, brother (*Deo gratias, frater*). I warmly congratulate you and rejoice on your account” (16.24). This opening has been seen as humorous (Madec 1991a: 134 n. 167) and allusive (Christopher: 219). But it may also be ironic since it confirms Augustine’s ploy of repositioning the deacon as a hearer for the purpose of intensifying love for hearers by identifying as a hearer. In reading Augustine’s work, Deogratias simultaneously learns to imitate his hearers even as he learns to imitate his teacher.

If the pattern of a superior’s love for an inferior, meant to stir the inferior’s love, is valid – the pattern that we see in God’s love for humanity – then the question of the quality of Deogratias’s love for his hearers cannot be avoided. The further irony is that this love is the

very point of the scriptures that Deogratias is teaching. The lesson about Scripture's content now also becomes a poignant lesson about teachers loving their learners and how they respond.

If then the dull heart is aroused when it feels itself loved, and the already passionate heart is stirred up still more when it realizes that its *amor* is reciprocated, there is quite obviously no stronger motive for love, either in its initial stages or in its growth, than for the person who does not yet love to discover that he is loved, and for the person who is first to love to hope that his love can be reciprocated or to have clear signs that it already is so (4.7).

In sum, Augustine seeks to make Deogratias aware of the lesson offered to teachers by God's action: "Nothing invites another's love more than to take the initiative in loving" (4.7).

But Augustine knows that love in the human heart originates not in the mere assertion of the will, but rather in the grace of Christ the Mediator that permeates the Christian soul. Waves of grace move the will to surrender the self to love's divine source. If this is true in living a Christian life, it is also true in teaching Christianity. *De catechizandis rudibus* does not fail to elaborate on this Christological context of grace.

Augustine's Christology is notoriously difficult to summarize, not because it is rare or sketchy but because it is so pervasive. But Christ is less about exact dogma for Augustine (though he can be doctrinally precise when he needs to be) than a Christ-centered sensibility, a way of seeing the world through the incarnation, humility, mediation, intercession, and redemptive exchange of Christ. Augustine reflexively resorts to images and aspects of Christ, continually referring to the Word made flesh to organize expressions of his spirituality along with many aspects of his work. Christ brings Augustine's thought into coherence (Madec 1975). Augustine's sympathy with Deogratias extends to his sense of distance between his higher understanding and his hearers' low capacities, and the "descent" necessary to communicate.

One reason for discouragement then may be that our hearer does not grasp our insight and so we are compelled in a certain way into descending (*quodam modo descendentes*) from the pinnacles of thought and delay over each slow syllable in the plains far below. And it worries us how what is imbibed by the mind in one swift draught takes long and convoluted byways as it comes to expression on our lips of flesh, and, because utterance differs greatly from our insight, we find that speaking palls and we would rather remain silent (10.15).

Augustine often uses the expression *quodam modo* ("in a certain way") to signal metaphors that are important to his argument. Here the image of "descent" opens a Christological door through which a spate of scriptures on the incarnation tumbles out. However, Augustine deftly reframes these passages – probably the very texts that Deogratias used to explain Christ to his hearers – to illumine Deogratias's issues as a teacher. Augustine imagines teachers "descending" into the language of beginning learners, just as the divine Word "descended" into lowly human flesh (John 1:14). His step-argument ("If this, then how much more that?") is evident. He writes, "However far removed our spoken words are from the liveliness of our understanding, much more distant is mortal flesh from equality with God!" (10.15). Without

denying that Deogratias knows great things, Augustine gently chides him for worrying about being too sophisticated; the point, he tells Deogratias, is that the teaching task requires skillful accommodation – a self-lowering for which *Christ himself gives the model*. The Word's equality with God did not prevent self-emptying, taking the form of a slave, even dying the death of the cross (Philippians 2:6-8). Christ both redeemed us and gave us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21). The incarnation is not about charming pictures; it rather compels a costly and painful self-narrowing for the sake others. Such self-giving is ever the teacher's model.

For example, Augustine tells Deogratias, imagine turmoil from some scandal roiling the people to whom you are speaking. Would that undermine your ability to teach calmly and congenially? It need not do that:

If this is the case, then our *caritas* towards those for whom Christ died – those whom he wanted to ransom, at the price of his blood, from the death of the errors of this world – should be so great that the very fact of news being brought to us, who are despondent, that someone is present who wishes to become a Christian, should be sufficient to console us in our despondency and to free us from its bonds, just as the delight taken in making a profit generally alleviates the pain of incurring a loss (14.21).

Moreover, Augustine continues, Scripture aids us with another potent model. Alongside Christ's example of sacrifice, we also have the image of one who followed Christ's example of "being made weak for the weak in order to gain the weak" (1 Corinthians 9:22) – the Apostle Paul. Whether Augustine happily misremembers or cleverly rereads Paul here is unclear, but he sees Paul articulating "the reason" (*causa*) that the Son of God became flesh. Either way it reveals for Augustine the profoundly Christological shape of Paul's ministry. Augustine notes the Apostle's defense of his multi-faceted practice of accommodation on the mission field in 2 Corinthians 5:13-14, a text that Augustine turns into a programmatic template for Christian ministry modeled on the Incarnation. "If our spirits were in ecstasy," Paul wrote, "it was for God" (5:13) – a text that Augustine refers to the Apostle's mystical oneness with Christ's divinity. Paul continued, "if we were sober-minded, it was for you" (5:14) – a text that Augustine refers to Paul's accommodation to hearers based on Christ's humanity. Neither the Savior's redemption nor the Apostle's ministry, Augustine contends, can be understood without both divine and human dimensions. It also gives Christian teachers a model to follow.

Augustine completes the apostolic lesson on the divine and human dimensions of love's accommodation by unfolding Paul's portrayal of pastoral humility using mother-and-child imagery (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8). There Paul likens ministry to a nursing mother who feels a child's need as if it were her own, and so gives her very self as food. Though human mothers know much more than their babies, yet they love to coo and babble strangely to them anyway. Mother birds spew bits of food into the mouths of their little ones, and nesting hens brood warmly over their chicks. How is such behavior possible, Augustine asks, and why do grown-ups take such pleasure in being incoherent, "except at the urging of *amor*?" (10.15).

Augustine invites Deogratias to simplify his language, not merely out of concern to be clear to hearers, but out of love for them. This relates to the boredom that comes from feeling truths are no longer vital, for, Augustine insists, love fuses souls in a way that affects not only the ones who are loved but also the one who loves. Good teaching is not a one-way street.

Love that “descends” in humility finds something wondrous happen: instructors themselves learn again what they thought they knew, for love makes old things new.

Now if we feel disgusted because we are so often repeating things geared to little ones, familiar things, let us equip ourselves with a brother’s or a father’s or a mother’s *amor*, and by linking our hearts to theirs, those things will again seem new to us (12.17).

Teaching is a particular form of love that actualizes itself among real persons and relationships. Augustine imagines love constantly circulating compassion and desire between teachers and learners as blood circulates in a body. Love’s gift of compassion, literally “co-feeling” (*compatiens*), makes teachers into learners and vice versa, as he describes in a memorable passage:

For so great is this feeling of compassion that when people are touched by us as we speak, and we by them as they learn, we each dwell in the other, and so it is as if they speak in us what they hear while we, in some way, learn in them what it is we teach (12.17).¹²

Temporarily exchanging places and impersonating each other, teachers become hearers who re-learn what they know as if listening for the first time, and hearers become teachers who hear in themselves an authoritatively instructive word in their own voice. Hearers gain, but so do teachers. Augustine appeals to a delightful experience that is as prevalent as it is palpable:

Isn’t it quite common that when we show certain beautiful, spacious locales, whether in town or out in the countryside, to those who have never seen them before, we who have been in the habit of passing them by without any enjoyment find our own delight renewed by their delight at the novelty of it all? (12.17).

The critical element is the relational one; the communion of love is what makes all things new.

And how much more enjoyable the closer our friendship, because as we come together more and more through this bond of *amor*, what had gotten old becomes new to us all over again (12.17).

Other ancient teachers had experienced this phenomenon, but no one baptized it in deep Christological waters as Augustine did. It was a part of a much larger picture and pattern of redemption that Augustine called “transfiguration” to characterize the exchange of love between the head and members of Christ’s body, the so-called whole Christ (*totus Christus*). Augustine uses it to explain Christ’s death as “an astounding exchange” (*En. Ps.* 30[2].1.3) whereby the Word not only became flesh but took on the very identity and spoke in the actual voice of his members. By coming among them and being one with them, Christ’s humanity “instructed” his divinity about suffering and death. Commenting on Psalm 15:7 (LXX), “My

¹² “We learn in them what we teach”: Christopher called this expression “proverbial” (199). He pointed to parallels in Seneca (*Epistula* 7.8) and Ambrose (*De officiis* 1.1.4). But the parallels are only approximate. Augustine’s framework of self-transposition through love incomparably drills down to the root of the experience, even apart from the Christological dimension. The translations of *De catechizandis rudibus* 12.17 in this section come from Harmless 2010a: 145-46.

affections corrected me into the night,” Augustine put the words of the psalm into the mouth of the crucified Christ, who then speaks: “Assumption of flesh instructed (*erudit*) me even unto death, that I might experience the darkness of mortality” (*En. Ps.* 15.7).

At the same time the members participated with the head in his passion. Conjoined to him, they hear their own voices in the sound of his voice praying their words of sorrow and fear of death, “Let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). But because they are one with Christ, they also speak his transforming words, “Yet not my will, but your will be done” (Mark 14:36). Christ’s passion thus both revealed his members’ weakness and gave them his strength. This primal act of grace sparked his members’ regeneration as he said to them, “See yourself in me” (*En. Ps.* 32[2].1.2).

The same Christological teaching-learning dynamic reappears in a slightly different form in Augustine’s homily on John’s Gospel that discusses John 5:20, “The Father will show all things to the Son” (*Io. Eu. Tr.* 21.6-9; references to this work appear in the rest of this paragraph). How is it, Augustine asks, that the Father can “show” (i.e., teach) anything to the Son, since the Son is equal to the Father? Can it be that Christ “might still need to learn how to raise the dead, he through whom all things were made? Does the Word who first gave us life now need to learn how to give new life?” (21.6). No, Augustine explains. “He descends¹³ to us; and he, the one who a little before was speaking as God, has begun to speak as a man” (21.7). Since he became one of us, and we have become part of him, the Son therefore “is” his body, and we members “have been made not only Christians, but Christ.” Augustine pauses to give people a moment to let this sink in. “Do you understand, brothers and sisters, the grace of God upon us? Do you grasp that? Be filled with wonder, rejoice and be glad: we have been made Christ! For, if he is the head, and we the members, then he and we are the whole man” (21.8). Thus, he continues, God can “show” or teach his works to the Son, since “the Son” includes his members, and so “in a way (*quodam modo*) he himself learns in his members” (21.7). Thus, we can say, “Christ is shown what Christ knew, and Christ is shown it through Christ” (21.9). How exactly does Christ “learn” in us? Augustine answers, “as he suffers in us” – recalling the risen Jesus in heaven accusing Saul on earth of persecuting “me,” that is, his members (Acts 9:4). The identification of head and members is so strong and real that the same Jesus will say at the judgment, “When you gave [food] to one of the least of my own, you gave it to me” (Matthew 25:31-40). Thus, Augustine continues, we might ask him now, “Lord, when will you be a learner, since you teach all things?” But he immediately answers us in our faith, “When one of the least of my own learns, I learn” (21.7).

Christ thus teaches teachers how to teach. Formed by this same Christ-shaped love announced to inquirers, Augustine counsels Deogratias, we embrace all learners according to

¹³ The tense of the verb *descendit* can be read as either present (Hill 2009) or a perfect (Rettig). Either way it simultaneously invokes rhetorical accommodation and the Incarnation. Both dimensions appear explicitly in an earlier passage of this same homily: “But, as a human being, [Christ] was saying these words to human beings; concealed as God, visible to human so as to make visible human beings into gods. The Son of God became the Son of Man, so as to make the sons of men into sons of God. We can recognize this in the art of his wisdom, the wisdom by which he does this. A little one speaks to little ones; but he is little in such a way that he is also great; we, however, are little, but in him we are great; thus does he speak as though nurturing and nourishing both those who are nursing and those who are growing by loving (*tamquam fovens et nutriens lactentes et amando crescentes*)” (21.1, translated in Hill 2009, adjusted).

“the duty of completely transparent *caritas*” (*Cat. rud.* 14.20). We imitate love’s suppleness and inventiveness, for “although we owe the same *caritas* to all, we should not treat all with the same remedy.” Love offers appropriate care to both the strong and the weak, as mentioned above: “to some it is gentle, to others stern, to no one hostile, to everyone a mother” (15.23). Nevertheless, indifference, or willful misunderstanding, or some true teaching twisted into untruth can make teachers “grow discouraged and, in the very midst of the instruction, we begin to falter and feel ground down because all our efforts seem to be for nothing” (10.14). Nevertheless, it is love that hurts. “Seeing that *caritas* burns within us, our distress is the greater if the statement, though untrue, proves to have been taken up eagerly” (11.16). So we press on, Augustine counsels, to embrace all types of learners, even the slow of mind, “with a compassionate spirit (*miseriquiditer*)” (13.19). That gives the right frame of mind for conveying Christ’s message with an easy delivery, for “fluent and cheerful words will then stream out from an abundance of *caritas* and be drunk in with pleasure.” That abundance comes from an inexhaustible divine source, for it is the same love that has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5) (14.22). Recognizing this divine source underscores “that what we dispense is God’s, and the more that we love (*diligimus*) those to whom we speak, the more we want them to find acceptable what is offered them for their salvation” (10.14).

Love in Scripture

In the context of the deacon’s need to learn how to love, the story of God’s love for the lowly and ignorant became doubly poignant and getting it right doubly important. Having addressed the crucial dynamic of love in the teaching-learning process, Augustine finally turns to Deogratias’s primary concern, teaching content. This often-studied section in *De catechizandis rudibus* 3.6–4.8 can be quickly summarized under four main headings.

1) *Scripture’s narrative unity*. The unity of Scripture’s story stands out as foundational to the teacher’s approach. Its major moments reveal thematic coherence, the teacher’s primary framework. Augustine offers a précis, comparing Scripture’s story to a cache of beautiful scrolls that teachers occasionally choose to “unroll” lovingly for learners to view and admire (3.6). Its major “turning points,” or *articuli*, mark the must-see moments in a rapid survey. The longer model address later unrolls these moments in what many see as a preview of Augustine’s approach in *The City of God*.¹⁴

2) *Christ the center*. It soon becomes clear that Scripture’s unity grows from its convergence upon Christ the Mediator, whose appearance in time not only climaxes the story itself but also orders and explains the many Old Testament events, figures, and texts that anticipate him (*Cat. rud.* 3.6). Indeed, his body, known most clearly after his coming, is seen already emerging in infant Jacob’s hand thrusting from his mother’s womb. Though appearing before the head in time, and beneath the head in dignity, both are part of one body. Thus, Israel itself is part of Christ, and indeed mystically Israel *is* Christ in pre-incarnate form. This too unifies Scripture for the teacher’s story.

¹⁴ Including Augustine’s first concrete reference to humanity as divided into “two cities” (*Cat. rud.* 19.31). For an overview, see Canning 2006a: 31; 128 n. 218.

3) *Reader Inclusion*. Furthermore, by God's design the biblical story crosses over from page to life by making readers part of its movement toward fulfillment. That is, scriptural unity moves not only inwardly and intertextually across the story, but also moves outward toward readers in a way that includes them in its ultimate triumph. Augustine shows how a series of statements from Paul exemplify the ancient texts that were long ago "written to teach us" (Romans 15:4), that contain symbolic "figures of us" (1 Corinthians 10:6), and that portray events "written for our sake" (1 Corinthians 10:11) (*Cat. rud.* 3.6).

4) *Christ-formed love*. The Bible's narrative unity is real but not an end in itself, any more than the scriptural diversity is disjointed sound and fury; Scripture's many story lines converge in the revelation of divine love. Here Augustine introduces the salvation-historical theme of love from one higher up on the social scale wooing the love of those lower down, as discussed above. The Mediator came to reveal God's love; by the nature of this love, to learn of it is the same as to receive it, and vice versa. "The same Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, is at the same time the evidence (*indicium*) of divine *dilectio* toward us" (*Cat. rud.* 4.8). He also shows how the narrative Christological unity is a unity of love, for there was no stronger reason for Christ's coming than to reveal God's love. Love's fullest picture appears in the Lord's death for his enemies (Romans 5:8); by laying down his life (1 John 3:16), he disclosed that God loved us first (1 John 4:19). When we could not love God, then God "took the initiative in loving" and did not spare his only Son (Romans 8:32), in order to secure our love in response (4.7).

The full Christian vision for teachers becomes clear in the dense but potent first paragraph of *De catechizandis rudibus* 4.8 that interweaves Christ, love, and Scripture. It is one of the most finely crafted statements on Scripture in all of Augustine's writings. This passage fuses statements about salvation history with high Christology, Jesus' double love command (Matthew 22:37-40), and imagery from the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), while braiding forms of the word "love" (*dilectio, diligere*) throughout to show its tight interconnection with the salvation story.

Christ came chiefly so that people might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they would flame up with *dilectio* for him who first loved them, and might also love their neighbor by way of him who both commanded them to love and gave his example of love – he who made himself their neighbor (*proximus*; lit., "someone nearby") by loving one who, so far from being a neighbor, was rather wandering far from him (4.8, author's translation).

The takeaway for teachers is that Scripture's Christological unity and fulfillment instructs about, and empowers for, genuine obedience to the double command to love God and neighbor.

All the divine Scripture written before Christ came had the distinct purpose of announcing his coming; and whatever was committed to writing and confirmed by divine authority after he came, tells of Christ and counsels love (*narrat Christum et dilectionem monet*) (4.8).

In effect, Scripture everywhere "tells of Christ and counsels love" (4.8). That Christ and love alternately hide and reveal themselves throughout the Bible is a commonplace in Augustine's works. Though he typically considered them separately, Christ and love imply and mutually

illumine each other in the spiral of the soul's spiritual ascent.¹⁵ Christ redeems, teaches, and guides through the Spirit, who continually empowers love within the human heart, and love ever renews itself at its source in Christ's story. The Lord himself recognized this, Augustine contends, pointing to the statement of Jesus that the commands about love toward God and neighbor are Scripture's linchpin (Matthew 22:37-40). Because Christ and love play a game of hide-and-seek on virtually every page of the Bible, *De catechizandis rudibus* 4.8 paints a panoramic backdrop for one of Augustine's most famous statements. If all Scripture "tells of Christ and counsels love," he writes:

then one thing is crystal clear (*manifestum*): on these two precepts of *dilectio* for God and neighbor hang not only the entire Law and Prophets (which were still the only sacred Scripture that existed at the time our Lord said this), but also whatever other books with divine lettering that were later set apart for our salvation and marked for handing down to us. That's why we say: "In the Old Testament is the secret hiding of the New, and in the New Testament is the showing forth the Old" (*Quapropter in veteri testamento est occultatio novi, in novo testamento est manifestatio veteris*).

You will succeed as a Christian teacher, Augustine tells Deogratias, by "keeping this *dilectio* in front of you as a kind of goal to which you direct everything that you say" (4.8). That is to say, the teacher sees salvation's story resolving and culminating in love as a kind of "peak," or *summa*, as Augustine had written earlier (*Doct. chr.* 1.35.39). Only this makes sense of the Bible's wild diversity of stories, times, images, events, characters, laws, proverbs, and what-have-you, and orders it for coherent instruction. To range over this diverse collection of texts while retaining a sense of its coherence requires skill in figurative reading. But such reading is not merely a matter of literary technique, though not alien to it; it is a spiritual skill bred by the divine love of which the texts speak. Grasping the Bible's pattern of concealing and revealing from the perspective of love secures safe passage to its spiritual depths. Augustine writes, "Those with spiritual understanding have been made free by the gift of *caritas*" (*Cat. rud.* 4.8). When teachers exercise this spiritual freedom, they not only model its use for hearers, but confer the gift of freedom. That is, they begin to train hearers to exercise that same reading (or listening) skill for themselves. Augustine hopes that teachers will rouse the indifferent by reading scriptural stories "mystically" (*mystice*; 13.18). Strikingly, he counsels Deogratias that in dealing with prejudice against Scripture from high-brow types – Augustine surely thought of having been one of those people – one can neutralize skepticism with a taste of allegory (9.13). People then learn the Christian view that "just as the soul is more highly valued than the body, so too are the meanings of words to be valued more highly than the words themselves" (9.13).

¹⁵ Compare the following (from the Boulding translation): "Christ and his Church, that total mystery with which all the scriptures are concerned" (*En. Ps.* 79.1). "Whatever salutary idea anyone may conceive or formulate in words, whatever truth may be dug out from any page of the divine scriptures, it tends toward one end only, and that is *caritas*...Wherever there is any obscure passage in Scripture, *caritas* is concealed in it, and wherever the sense of plain, *caritas* is proclaimed" (*En. Ps.* 140.2). Occasionally Augustine makes explicit the link between love and Christ: "This same *caritas* cries out from a pure heart in the words of the psalm and from hearts like this who prays here. And who this is I can tell you in a word: it is Christ" (*En. Ps.* 140.2).

Such reading is not a free-for-all; its organizing principle is a sharply defined love known by its effects. “Our account,” Augustine writes, “should focus on explaining the deeper meaning of each of the matters and events that we describe: a meaning that is brought out when we relate them to the goal constituted by *dilectio*; and, whatever we are doing or saying, our eyes should never be turned away from that goal” (6.10). Then, just as love brings coherence to the diversity of Scripture, so the reflection of that love in teaching brings a pleasing unity to our many words about it. In this way, “We should let the very truth of the explanation that we provide [i.e., about love in Scripture] be like the golden thread that holds together the precious stones in an ornament but does not spoil the ornament’s lines by making itself too obvious” (6.10).

Love in the Hearer

The teaching process cannot conclude, however, until it reaches its ultimate goal, which is to see love made real in the heart of the hearer. This same love is given by God, lived by Christ, infused by the Spirit, portrayed by Scripture, practiced by the community, commended by the teacher, and now practiced by the hearer. Even the clearest teaching about love’s primacy misses its mark if the hearer is not moved to embrace and live it. *De doctrina christiana* already explained clearly that love, the fulfillment and end of the law (Romans 13:8; 1 Timothy 1:5), is “the end all the divine scriptures,” and that God designed the entire temporal plan of salvation in order to teach and enable the practice of that love (*Doct. chr.* 1.35.39). *De doctrina christiana* thus analyzed love as an organizing hermeneutical principle or axiom for reading. However, working teachers like Deogratias needed more than lectures about love as the Christian ideal. In the words of *De catechizandis rudibus* 3.6, it is “not enough” (*non tantum*) merely to envision love as a standard for a hearer; teachers must also “move and direct that [hearer] to it” (*ad id movendus atque illuc dirigendus*).¹⁶

In all that you teach, certainly, it is not enough to envision “the object of the commandment, which is *caritas* from a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith” (1 Timothy 1:5), that love to which we link everything that we say. We must also move and direct hearers toward that love, getting those we instruct by our speaking to attend to that place (*Cat. rud.* 3.6, author’s translation).

This sets the tone for *De catechizandis rudibus*’s concrete, practical, action-oriented focus; it also distinguishes this work from *De doctrina christiana*.¹⁷ It completes its portrayal of love by

¹⁶ This recalls an observation made by the English Catholic modernist intellectual and spiritual director, Friedrich von Hügel (d. 1925), concerning the power of concrete detail to move the heart more than universal propositions (useful and necessary as those are): “Reasoning, Logic, Abstraction, – all that appears as the necessary instrument and expression of the Universal and Abiding, – does not move or win the will, either in ourselves or in others; and that what does thus move and win it, is Instinct, Intuition, Feeling, the Concrete and Contingent, all that seems to be of its very nature individual and evanescent” (I.1:3).

¹⁷ Augustine’s use of the word *movere*, “to move,” reveals this broad rhetorical awareness. Augustine addresses this rhetorical dimension in his instruction for preachers in *Doct. chr.* 4.24.53 which discusses Cicero’s classical triad for describing the orator’s central tasks: to teach, to delight, and to sway (*docere, delectare, flectere*). Revealingly, Augustine tweaked Cicero by replacing *flectere* with *movere*, that is, by altering “sway” to “move.” That is, he was concerned to “move” people not only to tears but to a better life (*Doct. chr.* 4.24.53). This better fits his pervasive pilgrimage imagery, which highlights advancement along the path to spiritual wisdom that has a moral dimension

attending not only to ideas, but also to the practical need, well known to orators, to move hearers to action. This also imitates God's initiative in loving humanity, and Christ's in loving sinners, so that once indifferent people might "flame up with *dilectio* for him who first loved them, and might also love their neighbor" (*Cat. rud.* 4.8). The Christian teacher plays a similar incendiary role that goes beyond bestowing knowledge to igniting passion; to teach is to inform and enflame. In a passage notable for using all three terms for love in a single sentence, Augustine counsels Deogratias to coach his hearers' movement from fear of God to love for God. "*Caritas* must be built up, so that people rejoicing in the experience of being loved (*amari*) by one they fear might dare to return his *dilectio*" (5.9).

Similarly, the teacher aims to stir the hearer's love for the teacher and for everyone around them. However, it aims at a kind of love than to which most are accustomed. This is not tribal love for the merely beautiful or like-minded; this love imitates Christ who loved and died sacrificially for enemies. "Let each one love (*diligat*) himself and us, and all the others whom he holds dear as friends, in the one and because of the one who has loved (*dilexit*) him as an enemy so as to justify him and make him a friend" (7.11). How to do this? The narrative exposition of salvation history takes hearers from figure to reality, from symbol to truth, and the movement creates a sort of spiritual friction that generates the fire of love. In a letter written about the same time as *De catechizandis rudibus*, Augustine wrote:

Everything hinted to us figuratively [in Scripture] pertains to feeding and somehow fanning that fire of love that like a weight carries us upward or inward. For these figures stir and kindle love more than if the truth were put forth unadorned without any likenesses of the sacraments . . . [In moving from figure to reality] that very passage enlivens the soul, and it flames up, so to say, like a burning torch waving in the wind, and a more ardent love catches the soul up to its rest (*Ep.* 55.11.21).

Augustine hopes that lines of instruction in *De catechizandis rudibus* might converge and enflame Deogratias in just this way, and so also ignite love in his hearers. As the deacon unfolds the story of divine love, the spark of faith in his hearers can become the spreading flame of hope, which in turn can become the blaze of love that rises up to God. Augustine counsels Deogratias to tell the story of Scripture in such a way that the one who hears may, as he says in a classic statement, "by hearing may believe, by believing may hope, and by hoping may love (*amet*)" (4.8).

(see Müller: 305-8). In light of that discussion late in Augustine's life (c. 426 CE), one might qualify Carol Harrison's statements that *De catechizandis rudibus* concentrates on love "rather than on the speaking and hearing of rhetoric" to supply a speaker's message, motivation, and goal; and that rhetorical strategies are "replaced by love, which is shown to have its own power to communicate, to inspire, and to motivate, quite independently of the power of rhetorical speech" (2014: 91-92; my emphasis). Harrison's perspective on rhetoric here may be too influenced by the modern sensibility that narrowly identifies rhetoric with merely formal rules and links it to sophistry and manipulation. Augustine indeed often disparaged the emptiness and perniciousness of human speech, but as this passage implies, he thinks that perverts rhetoric's true goal to move the heart and will to right and good action. For Augustine, it seems, love rehabilitates rather than replaces rhetoric, and helps speech to fulfill its highest goal to improve human life.

Addendum: Bill Harmless and *De catechizandis rudibus*

The last thing we expected to be doing now was to speak of Bill Harmless in the grossly unwelcome past tense. This extraordinary man burst at the seams with life and childlike joy in theology, and ranged deftly over the early Christian landscape, with special zest in studying Augustine. Yet he has indeed gone from us. But just as Bill brought Augustine into conversation with his beloved jazz by riffing on Augustine's "improvisational" theology (2012), we are improvising our response to losing our friend the only way we know how – by "savoring" (one of Bill's favorite words) his work and giving it life in our scholarly conversation.

De catechizandis rudibus was dear to Bill's heart and studying it befits him in several ways. First, it reveals Augustine the teacher. Bill was a devoted teacher; teaching was a passion to which he devoted many late nights of study and long years of practice. We can taste his teacherly spirit in the preface to his book, *Mystics*, where he speaks of the classroom as "sacred ground" (2008: ix). In his masterful anthology, *Augustine in His Own Words* (2010), Bill calls *De catechizandis rudibus* "a gem"; this "brief, brilliant treatise" had consoled him as a teacher and guided him as an author (2010a: xviii-xix).¹⁸ Second, Bill devoted an entire chapter to *De catechizandis rudibus* in his splendid breakout study of 1995, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, which he thoroughly revised almost line by line in 2014 and submitted for publication only weeks before his death.¹⁹ Besides *De catechizandis rudibus*'s link to Christian initiation, there Bill traced the lineaments of Augustine's pastoral approach to simple believers, *parvuli*, "the little ones." Third, *De catechizandis rudibus* fits Bill's love for the beauty of Augustine's language, not least for the pleasure of the bishop's rhetorical effort to delight (*delectare*). See the playful "Augustine's Rap Latin" section of *Augustine in His Own Words* (2010a: 131-32; the section is taken from *S.* 220); or better, listen to Bill himself impersonate Augustine in that section of the book's recorded version (2010b: disc 2: "Augustine the Preacher"). He often made his own translations of Augustine for the anthology; several of these appear above. Fourth, *De catechizandis rudibus* fits Bill because this work incubated the project that was in progress at his death, *The Mystery of the Human Heart in Augustine*. Augustine's work had counseled teachers to accept all inquirers lovingly, even those with questionable or self-serving motivations (5.9). Bill perceptively read that counsel through *Sermon 279*, where Augustine defended a man named Faustinus whose request for baptism had seemed to many to be suspiciously tied to a lucrative job offer (2014: 144-45). People murmured and eyeballs rolled, but Augustine defended the man, boldly urging people to accept him since "we cannot see into the human heart, nor bring it out into the open" (*S.* 279.10). The situation exposed a question faced by all rhetoricians and teachers, whose success depends upon effectively accommodating one's hearers: if hearts are unknowable, then how does one teach? This question carried beyond Deogratias's narrow concern for better content and method. Augustine's clever strategy for sparking sympathy for

¹⁸ See also 2010a: 145-46, where he commends Augustine's approach. "Teaching," Bill wrote, "is about loving" (145).

¹⁹ Entitled "Evangelization: Unrolling the Scroll," it appears as chapter 4 in the first edition of *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (1995: 107-55); it became chapter 3 in the revised edition (2014: 131-80). Catherine Chin called this "the best recent treatment" of *De catechizandis rudibus* (43 n. 1).

Faustinus paralleled his concrete approach to Deogratias. In both cases, the only sound approach to plumbing people's motivations was love.

De catechizandis rudibus fit flush with Bill Harmless's work on Augustine. He chimed with Augustine on the importance of love in teaching, and so became a masterly teacher of many. I feel confident speaking for the many who count being loved and taught by this remarkable man to be among the sweetest of grace's gifts.

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