

## Seraphic Companions: The Friendship between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick

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## 1. Introduction – Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick

Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick, in all likelihood, met at church – at St. Mary's, Battersea or at St. Paul's, Covent Garden in Royal Westminister. Elizabeth Gauden was a London parishioner, who lived with her family in Clapham. Simon Patrick was a London clergyman. He was the vicar of Battersea from 1657 until 1675 and the rector of St. Paul's in the years 1662 to 1689. Elizabeth Gauden and her husband Denis might have invited Patrick as the vicar of a neighbouring parish into their house – as parishioners did. Or else, Elizabeth Gauden might have listened to Patrick's sermons at St. Paul's and approached him as her spiritual advisor. How and wherever they might have first established their contact, the preconditions for their acquaintance and their ensuing friendship were a combination of local and religious aspects: Gauden and Patrick got to know each other as they were part of the same local Christian community. The parish presents the early modern community, locally and religiously defined, whose

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Simon Patrick, *A Brief Account of my Life, with a thankfull Remembrance of God's Mercies to me* in *Works*, ed. by Alexander Taylor, 10 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1858), ix: pp. 425-7; Jon Parkin, "Patrick, Simon (1626–1707)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition Jan. 2008 <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21568">http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21568</a> [accessed 8 October 2008].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Moote and Moote take Patrick's post at his first parish in Battersea to be the place and period during which Patrick and the Gaudens were first acquainted; see A. Lloyd Moote and Dorothy C. Moote. *The Great Plague: The Story of London's Most Deadly Year* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 4. The argument for Battersea seems to rest on the friends' geographic propinquity. As Morrissey and Wright point out, there exist quite a number of examples of early modern women who contacted well-known theologians or their local parish priests as their prospective spiritual directors; see Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, 'Piety and Sociability in Early Modern Women's Letters', *Women's Writing* 13: 1 (2006), 44-59: 45.

male and female members were accessible to one another as potential candidates for more affectionate personal relations. The community of parishioners was one pool from which individual friends and companions – eligible by social status and personal inclination – could be chosen.<sup>3</sup> The personal friendship and spiritual companionship between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick is based on their common religious beliefs, their Christian way of life. The importance that religion plays as a regulating, disciplining, and motivating force in their everyday lives and thus in the practice of their friendship cannot be overestimated. The letters that they exchanged testify to their preoccupation with religious – theological and devotional – issues in the practice of their friendship and their lives.<sup>4</sup> As they conducted their friendship for long stretches of time through their epistolary communication, their spiritual companionship transcended the confines of their local and social community.

Elizabeth Gauden's life centred in Clapham, south of the Thames. Clapham Parish Register records her marriage – as Elizabeth Clerke – to Denis Gauden (d. 1688) in 1653 and her burial on 2 May 1684. Elizabeth Gauden's husband was Navy Victualler from 1660 until 1677. In 1667 he was knighted. He held important offices in the City of London: he was an alderman and a Sheriff. By 1663, Denis Gauden had almost finished building a great mansion in Clapham, then Surrey. The diarist Samuel Pepys, who was connected to Denis Gauden professionally through his post at the Navy Office, offers insights into the Gaudens' social and musical family life in his diary on 25 July 1663, introducing Elizabeth Gauden in the middle of her family: 'When I came to Mr. Gaudens, [...] I saluted his lady, and the young ladies, he having many pretty children, [...] After dinner by Mr. Gaudens motion, we got Mrs. Gauden and her sister to sing to a viall'. However, while Pepys depicts Elizabeth Gauden centre-stage in a merry, sociable scene of private evening entertainment, the correspondence with Simon Patrick focuses more on theological issues and questions of devotional practice. As the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The local parish is one of the central communities in early modern community research, as studies by Hindle and Wrightson show. According to Keith Wrightson, the early modern parish 'was in many ways a community, an association of neighbours, a unit of identity and belonging, a primary group'; see Keith Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish' in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 10-46 (p. 12). This paper does not deal with the dynamics of Clapham parish or Simon Patrick's Battersea and Westminster parishes, but acknowledges the parish as the local community from which more exclusive personal relations developed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For a fuller account of their friendship see Cornelia Wilde, *Friendship, Love, and Letters. Ideals and Practices of Seraphic Friendship in Seventeenth-Century England* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Many thanks go to John Davis for connecting me with the London Metropolitan Archives.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: A New and Complete Transcription*. Ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: Bell and Sons / Bell and Hyman, 1970-1983) IV (1971), pp. 244-5.

eighteenth-century antiquarian William Cole remarked when he glanced at the correspondence in search for anecdotes and historical information in 1779, the letters contained 'nothing but plain Directions for Conduct in Life & Consolations under the Misfortunes incident to it'. Samuel Knight (1677/78-1746), prebend of Ely, and first posthumous commentator on Patrick's papers, characterised Elizabeth Gauden after his reading of her letters as 'a very ingenious as well as a pious person'.

Simon Patrick (1626-1707) was a liberal Anglican divine, parish priest in London and a Royal Chaplain in 1671. He became Bishop of Chichester in 1689 and held the bishopric of Ely from 1691 until his death in 1707. All his professional life, Patrick was a clergyman and head of a local religious community. He had received his university education at Queen's College, Cambridge. His most important personal encounter and greatest intellectual influence was his tutorial friendship with the Cambridge Platonist John Smith. In his autobiography Patrick lists his contact with Smith as one of God's mercies to him: '7. [God's] bringing me into some intimacy with Mr. Smith [...] blessed be God for the good I got by him while he lived' Patrick's theological beliefs and his philosophical worldview, his concept of the amphibious nature of man partaking of a heavenly and an earthly sphere, and of the loving relationship between man and God, as well as his disposition to incorporate and modify ancient philosophy in a Christian context, place him firmly within the theological and philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists provides the metaphysical background to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> William Cole, 'Transcriptions of "BP. Patrick's Letters to Mrs. Gauden" (1779), London, British Library, MS Add. 5810. Fos. 209-21 (fol. 209r).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Samuel Knight, 'Notes on *A Brief Account of my Life* and Simon Patrick's Papers' (*N.d.*) Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 36. 227-284 (283).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Scholarship on Simon Patrick is still sparse. It is only in the past two decades that Patrick has been presented as a prominent latitudinarian Restoration divine by Isabel Rivers in *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment. A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Johannes van den Berg in 'Between Platonism and Enlightenment: Simon Patrick (1625-1707) and his Place in the Latitudinarian Movement' in *Religious Currents and Cross-Currents. Essays on Early Modern Protestantism and the Protestant Enlightenment*, ed. by Johannes van den Berg (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 133-47. Patrick's texts have been studied within the context of Restoration practical divinity by John Spurr in his *The Restoration Church of England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and with special focus on Patrick's contribution to the doctrine of contentment by Anne Thompson in *The Art of Suffering and the Impact of Seventeenth-Century Anti-Providential Thought* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Patrick, *Brief Account* in *Works*, IX, p. 418.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See Jeremy Taylor, *The Measures and Offices of Friendship (1657 and 1662)*. A facsimile reproduction with an introduction by Travis du Priest (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1984), p. xxxi; and Johannes van den Berg, pp. 138-40.

Patrick's theological position. At the same time, it offers the theological basis for Patrick's conceptualisation and practice of his friendship with Elizabeth Gauden.

Patrick did not take the academic route, but focused on practical divinity. In addition to his parochial work, Patrick published a considerable number of theological and devotional texts. His early works like Aqua Genitalis (1658) on baptism, and Mensa Mystica (1660) on the eucharist, were written to prepare the congregation for the reception of the sacraments. 12 In The Heart's Ease (1659), his Advice to a Friend (1673) and in his most popular text The Parable of the Pilgrim he offers advice and consolation to Christians in situations of loss or religious crisis. Patrick recommended the use of a personal guide or 'spiritual physician'. As Patrick writes in his *Advice*, such a person – ideally – was to be a clergyman and a friend: 'There is no small safety in taking a good guide by the hand, [...] as you walk in your way to heaven. [...] And if your physician or director could be your friend also, then you would have a threefold advantage for your relief; by the advice of a good man, a friend, and one of God's officers'. 13 Patrick regarded himself – and was regarded by Elizabeth Gauden – as combining these aspects in his very person in his relationship with her. By profession, Patrick was a pastoral authority within his parish communities and a spiritual guide to the readers of his devotional texts. Patrick held these two roles, too, in his relationship with Elizabeth Gauden, who was a member of his parochial community and a reader of his texts. Most of the time, Patrick's parochial duties were compatible with his obligations towards his friend: from time to time Patrick sent parts of the sermon he had just preached to his absent friend; at other times, he prayed for her at the service he held for his local parish community. Patrick's offices of friendship, in fact, can be regarded as the personalised and intensified offices of a spiritual guide that he held for the whole community. Sometimes, however, his duties towards the community over which he presided would keep him from visiting or writing to Elizabeth Gauden to whom he was connected in a special form of friendship and spiritual companionship. 14

Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick's friendship is documented in their letters. The extant letters date between 1665 and 1678 and their friendship lasted at least for that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson and Rowan Williams (eds.), *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 187.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Patrick, Advice in Works, IV, p. 504.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> The notions of friendship and companionship are compatible, but they are not coterminous. The basic aspect that defines companionship – the keeping and enjoying of one another's company, the association of two – or more people – is essential to the notion of friendship. The affectionate intimacy implied in early modern idealisations of friendship can be, but is not necessarily, implied in the term companionship, cf. *OED* 'companionship', 'companion'.

period.<sup>15</sup> Sixty-nine letters survive, sixty-six addressed from Simon Patrick to Elizabeth Gauden and three letters from Elizabeth Gauden to Simon Patrick. Thus, really only one half of the epistolary dialogue survives, and inferences have to be made from Simon Patrick's letters to the corresponding lost texts by Elizabeth Gauden.

Their correspondence tells of their affectionate and intellectual relationship as early modern Christian friends. As Elizabeth Gauden's priestly friend, Simon Patrick often took up the role of her spiritual adviser. He was concerned about Elizabeth Gauden, who often seemed preoccupied with what she perceived as being her insufficient spirituality and her struggle to trust in the divine goodness in which Patrick firmly believed. As Patrick records in his *Brief Account*, the teachings of his Cambridge tutor John Smith had convinced him that 'God would really have all men to be saved', since, as Smith argued, God is a God of love, and not the arbitrary and wilful God who emerges in much Calvinist discourse. 16 As Patrick assured Elizabeth Gauden in a letter dated 19 December 1665, to him, she was 'a person most amiable in [his] eyes [...] & [...] in the eyes of him who made man'. <sup>17</sup> In his letters and by his visits to her, Patrick was keen to make sure that she 'should enjoy [her] self for this present world in some comfort'. 18 While the focus in their correspondence was often on Elizabeth Gauden's situation of spiritual struggle, Patrick never adopted a position of superiority, but presented himself and Elizabeth Gauden as fellow-travellers, as companions. Gauden and Patrick emerge from these texts as friends who mutually sustained, upheld and inspired each other. In their letters, they discuss their central philosophical and theological concerns: how to prepare themselves for life in the heavenly community and the union with the divine. On the one hand, their epistolary exchange focuses on questions of how to reach meditative states of spiritual tranquillity that they considered necessary for approaching God and attaining knowledge of the divine pleasures to be experienced in heaven. On the other hand, Patrick and Gauden stress the sociable aspect of a life preparatory for the enjoyment of the heavenly community. In their correspondence, Gauden and Patrick emphasise the importance that the practice of their friendship played as a vital means to further their endeavour of approaching the Divine.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Cambridge University Library holds the *Patrick Papers* amongst which MS Add. 19 consists of Simon Patrick's letters to his friend Elizabeth Gauden. Out of the 69 letters, 40 are dated between August 1665 and May 1678, 35 of them from 1665, the year of the plague. I am grateful to Sarah Hutton for directing me towards Cambridge University Library in my search for the original manuscripts. I quote from the manuscript letters throughout.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Patrick, *Brief Account* in *Works*, IX, pp. 418-19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Patrick, 'Letters to Elizabeth Gauden' (1665-1678), Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 19, fol. 90r.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

As friends and seraphic companions, they directed themselves towards heavenly perfection and spiritual transcendence, so as to come up to the virtuous and loving union that was believed to be characteristic of the state of heavenly bliss in their earthly lives.

Their friendship – to speak with Frances Harris – is a seraphic friendship that is a virtuous, chaste, and spiritual, yet impassioned relationship between men and women. <sup>19</sup> It is a form of intellectual companionship, based on learned correspondence and spiritual practice that, as Ruth Perry has put it, 'became quite the rage in the course of the seventeenth century'. <sup>20</sup> It is a religious and a Platonic friendship that centres on spiritual ends. It is an idealised relationship situated between the heavenly and the worldly, the ideal and the ephemeral.

## 2. Ideals of divine love, Christian community, and seraphic friendship

This ideal of a seraphic relationship is based on a combination of ancient and late-ancient Platonic and Christian concepts of the relation between the earthly and the heavenly spheres – of the relation between the human and the divine, between men and God. Seraphic friends love one another with a spiritual love that aspires towards the divine and centres in God. It is the specific seventeenth-century blending of central notions of Platonic metaphysics of love and Christian concepts of divine and human love, and the attempt to put them into the practice of everyday familiar social relations, which gives these friendships their particular profile. These friendships are religious as well as philosophical friendships, inspired by classical as well as Christian ideas of man's capacity to strive for and participate in divine perfection.

The adjective *seraphic* combines these notions. It refers to the qualities of a seraph, an angel of the highest order described most prominently and most influentially by the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> The present study, in fact, took its starting point from Frances Harris' seminal work on the friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Blagge Godolphin; see *Transformations of Love: The Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). The friendship between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick has never been dealt with to a considerable extent. Harris, as well as Perry, merely mentions their correspondence as an example of early modern intellectual and religious friendship between men and women conducted by letters. Moote and Moote use the correspondence in their historical study of the 1665 London plague, but their sketch of the friendship has two drawbacks: it only makes use of the mutilated version of the correspondence as published in Patrick's *Works* of 1858 and it does not define 'the precise nature of this bond between a married woman and a bachelor minister' (p. 199).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ruth Perry, 'Radical Doubt and the Liberation of Women'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18: 4 (1985), 472-93 (p. 476).

Neo-Platonic Christian author Dionysius the Areopagite in his treatise, *The Celestial Hierarchies*. Dionysius is one of the key texts for early modern knowledge about angels and it was one of the most widely disseminated theological texts on heavenly organisation.<sup>21</sup> In Dionysius' heavenly hierarchies, the seraphim's main characteristic is their ardently burning love of God and their capacity to infuse angels of the lower orders and humans with their devotional heat: 'For the designation of seraphim really teaches this – a perennial circling around the divine things, penetrating warmth, the overflowing heat of a movement which never falters and never fails, a capacity to stamp their image on subordinates by arousing and uplifting in them too a like flame, the same warmth'.<sup>22</sup> Thus, a seraphic friend resembles such an angel in his or her fervour of exalted devotion and in the capacity to refine and uplift himself and others – and thus to connect the earthly and the heavenly worlds.

The concept of seraphic love as an uplifting form of love of the divine offers an early modern Christian version of the Platonic notion of the lover's and the philosopher's anagogé, that is, the ascent from the appreciation of the beauties of the earthly sphere towards the vision of beauty and the divine in the world of ideas. Central to Platonic philosophy is the idea of two corresponding worlds: the lower, material world of physical phenomena and the ideal world of the forms or ideas behind the material appearance. The Christian soteriological concept of a mutable earthly world and an eternal heaven can be aligned with it and constitutes an important element in the philosophical and theological world-view of the seventeenth-century theologians and intellectuals such as Simon Patrick and the Cambridge Platonists. The anagogé and its metaphysical and practical implications are set out most prominently in Plato's dialogues Republic, Symposium, and Phaedrus. In Plato's Republic, the ascending

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> The Celestial Hierarchy was part of the theological canon in the Middle Ages and pervaded the Italian and English Renaissance through commentaries and poetical renderings. Thomas Aquinas systematised knowledge about angels and quoted Dionysius more often than any other author. Ficino translated Dionysius' works in 1492; See Andrew Louth, 'Platonism in the Middle English Mystics' in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 52-64 (pp. 59-60). Patrides and Mohamed give an overview of the reception of *The Celestial Hierarchy* in Renaissance Italy and England; see Constantinos Apostolos Patrides, 'Renaissance Thought on the Celestial Hierarchy: The Decline of a Tradition', *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 20: 2 (1959), pp. 155-66, and Feisal G. Mohamed, 'Renaissance Thought on the Celestial Hierarchy: The Decline of a Tradition?', *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 65.4 (2004), pp. 559-52. Joad Raymond, in *Milton's Angels: The Early Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), offers a comprehensive study on seventeenth-century knowledge and representation of angels, focussing especially on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Dionysius (Pseudo-Dionysius), *The Celestial Hierarchies* (VII 1, 205B-205C) in *The Complete Works*. Trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 143-192. On the relationship of the angel Raphael and Adam in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* see Rosie Paice's contribution in this volume.

human is led out of a dark cave into the light (514a-517d); in the *Symposium*, the priestess Diotima describes the ascent as the process of 'mounting the heavenly ladder' or the 'ladder of love' (210a-211c); in the *Phaedrus* it is presented as the winged soul's ascent in flight (246a-249d).<sup>23</sup>

The Platonic idea of the human's loving ascent towards the divine was reformulated, transformed, and popularised throughout the intellectual circles and courts of Europe by Italian Renaissance Neo-Platonists such as Marsilio Ficino and Baldasare Castiglione. Plato's *Symposium* was made available to Renaissance, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English audiences by Marsilio Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* known as *De Amore* (1469). As Hutton points out, Ficino's development of the doctrine of Platonic love was the most influential aspect of his Neo-Platonism. <sup>24</sup> Baldasar Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528), especially Pietro Bembo's final speech, popularised the concept of Platonic love at English and European courts. <sup>25</sup> Thomas Hoby translated the book into English in 1561. This text that stressed the link between earthly and heavenly desires and regarded worldly love and beauty as providing access to the divine was immensely popular in sixteenth-century Europe. <sup>26</sup>

It was Robert Boyle, natural philosopher and chemist, who naturalised the concept and popularised the term seraphic love in the mid-seventeenth-century English religious context. Boyle used the adjective *seraphic* to name and describe human love for God that was of an angelical quality.<sup>27</sup> He transformed the idea of philosophical ascent into a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: Bollingen Foundation / Pantheon Books, 1961).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Sarah Hutton, 'Introduction: The Renaissance and the Seventeenth-Century' in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp. 67-75 (pp. 68-70). Ebbersmeyer offers a recent and comprehensive treatment of Renaissance concepts of love and especially of Ficino's *Commentary*; see Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, *Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft: Studien zur Rezeption und Transformation der Liebestheorie Platons in der Renaissance* (München: Fink, 2002).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Jill Kraye, 'The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance' in *Platonism and the English Imagination* in Baldwin and Hutton (eds.), pp. 76-85 (p. 76); Christine Raffini, *Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Bembo, Baldassare Castiglione: Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Political Approaches in Renaissance Platonism*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), p. 136; and James Hankins, 'Renaissance Philosophy and Book IV of Il Cortegiano' in Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. by Daniel Javitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2002), pp. 377-88 (p. 388).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Peter Burke, 'The Courtier Abroad: Or, the Uses of Italy' in Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, pp. 388-400.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Robert Boyle, 'Some Motives and Incentives of the Love of God (Seraphick Love) (1659)' in *Collected Works 1*, ed. by Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), pp. 51-139 (p. 66).

principle of Christian devotion in his treatise Some Motives and Incentives of the Love of God, better known by its running title Seraphick Love, published in 1659. It turned out to be his most popular book, as it appeared in nine editions during his lifetime and another six after his death. <sup>28</sup> Seraphick Love is presented as a letter to a luckless suitor called Lindamor by his friend and amatory and spiritual advisor. The letter is designed to set up Lindamor's disaffection with earthly loves, and to prepare him for the more elevated and exclusive seraphic love of God. The love – even the Platonic love – of a woman is to be discarded and transcended. Other affectionate relationships, with spouses, kin, and friends, are of minor importance compared with the love of God.<sup>29</sup> Through the agency of divine love, Lindamor – and every seraphic lover – was to rise from the appreciation of worldly relations and delights to the adoration of the divine only. Boyle presented the practice of seraphic love and the concomitant notion of Christianised Platonic ascent as the practice of religious devotion. The description of the seraphic progress as a dynamic ascent towards the divine culminates in the evocation of what Boyle calls – with reference to the scholastic theologians and philosophers in the Aristotelian-Aquinas-tradition, the 'Beatifick Vision' – the eternal and direct perception of God imparting supreme happiness to those in heaven, which is the ultimate end of Christian human existence.<sup>30</sup>

While Boyle described and prescribed Lindamor's seraphic reorientation and ascent towards the divine as a devotional solo-performance that demands total commitment to God alone, Simon Patrick included aspects of companionate devotional practices and affectionate community in his notion of spiritual progress. Compared with the Platonic-Boylean concept, Patrick's view of spiritual life has a markedly social dimension to it. Furthermore, while Boyle stressed the troublesome aspects of human social life as

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There were two Latin translations prepared, and *Seraphick Love* appeared in a French translation in 1671 and in a German edition printed in Göttingen in 1682. Hunter has put emphasis on Boyle as a writer of 'non-scientific', primarily theological texts, such as his 'Scripture-Reflections', 'Of the Study & Exposition of the Scriptures' or 'Essay Of the holy Scriptures'. Sampson, Principe, and Harris have stressed the importance of Boyle's *Seraphick Love* for late seventeenth-century concepts of spiritual love in the English context. See Harriet Sampson, 'Introduction' to John Evelyn, *The Life of Mrs. Godolphin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. xxviii-xxix; Lawrence M. Principe, 'Virtuous Romance and Romantic Virtuoso: The Shaping of Robert Boyle's Literary Style'. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56.3 (1995), pp. 377-97 (p. 388); and Harris, *Transformations of Love*, p. 80.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See Rosie Paice's contribution to this volume for potential conflicts of divine and human love in the relationship between Adam and Eve and Adam and God respectively in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Boyle, *Seraphick Love*, p. 128. Bernard Lang and Colleen McDonnell offer a concise description of the Scholastic soteriological notion of the beatific vision; see Lang and McDonnell (eds.), *Heaven. A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 88-94.

compared with the ideal interaction with God,<sup>31</sup> Patrick highlighted the positive aspects of spiritual companionship and Christian communal relations. Patrick regarded these forms of affectionate sociability as an essential part of Christian contentment. In his concept of practical divinity, he considered affectionate personal relations as an important means to further the individual's spiritual progress. Patrick stressed the importance of an affectionate Christian community on earth, for example, in his second sermon 'On Contentment and Resignation' where he states that 'Christian religion [...] intended to make all that believe in Christ our friends, and incline them to embrace us with the love of brethren and sisters, or as the members of the same body do one another'.<sup>32</sup>

Boyle's and Patrick's concepts of Christian love correspond with the two Christian commandments to love God above everything else and to love one's neighbour as oneself: 'Thou shalt loue the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soule, and with all thy minde. This is the first and great Commandement. And the second is like vnto it, Thou shalt loue thy neighbour as thy selfe.'33 While Boyle's concept of seraphic love accords with the commandment to love God exclusively, it downplays the notion of charitable love for one's fellow humans. Patrick, however, stressed the aspect of charity, not only as a Christian duty, but also in its important social function in everyday affectionate human relations. Boyle depicts the heavenly community as something the single lover of God reaches at the end of the enlightening and uplifting process, yet without elaborating on the function of the preceding worldly affectionate social relations. Patrick, with a different theological focus, emphasises the importance that the love between Christians plays in their earthly lives as social and spiritual lives. In his second sermon 'On Contentment and Resignation', Patrick highlights the benefits of an affectionate earthly Christian community in the religious pursuit of salvation and in the community's quest for heaven-like harmony: 'look how many good and truly virtuous souls there are, so many well-willers you have to pray for you, to pity you, to relieve you, to assist you with their counsel, and all other ways that are in their power'. 34 With reference to the church father, Gregory of Nazianzen, Patrick explains, 'For [...] they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Boyle, *Seraphick Love*, p. 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Patrick, 'On Contentment and Resignation' in Works, IX, p. 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> King James Bible, Matthew, 22: 37-39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Patrick, 'On Contentment and Resignation' in *Works*, IX, p. 29. Hyatte offers an interesting discussion of the question of how medieval and early modern concepts of friendship and community play into notions of ideal heavenly communities. See Reginald Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (Leiden, New York and Cologne: Brill, 1994), p. 44.

are all friends and kindred to each other, who live according to God'.<sup>35</sup> In accordance with a notable trend in seventeenth-century Protestant theology to regard heaven not only as a place, but also as a state, 'the beginnings of which could already be experienced in the here and now of this world',<sup>36</sup> Patrick explains in his devotional best-seller, *The Parable of the Pilgrim*, that heavenly love is begun on earth and perfected in heaven, which is 'a place of [...] endless love and kindness'.<sup>37</sup>

In his praise of universal charity, Patrick puts special emphasis on close and particular friendships between Christians as a means to further one another's spiritual progress in the approach to heavenly perfection: 'And the nearer and stricter friendship we contract with any of these [Christians], still the more happy we are; because they will be the more concerned for us, and have the dearer and tenderer affection to us in all our needs'. <sup>38</sup> Patrick here mingles two discourses, or rather concepts of affectionate relations, that were not unquestionably compatible by early modern Christian standards. He connects the Christian ideal of universal charity and the concept of an idealistic and exclusive friendship derived from such classical sources as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's dialogue 'On Friendship', *Laelius de Amicitia*. <sup>39</sup> Classical doctrine and early modern treatises on friendship constructed and celebrated friendship's ideal version as an exclusive bond that could exist only between a few people, ideally two according to Aristotle. <sup>40</sup> This exclusivity was deemed by Christian authorities – such as St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas – as potentially incompatible with the ideal of Christian charity. <sup>41</sup> Charity's structure was conceived to refer to the whole of God's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Patrick, 'On Contentment and Resignation' in *Works*, IX, p. 29. As Hyatte points out, St. Augustine argues in the same vain and formulates the ideal of a universal *societas amicalis* where all humans are united by Christian charity in his text *City of God* (452).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Susanne Rupp, 'Performing Heaven: The State of Grace in Seventeenth-Century Protestant Theology' in *Performances of the Sacred in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by Susanne Rupp and Tobias Döring (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 119-34 (p. 120).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Patrick, *The Parable of the Pilgrim* in Works, IV, p. 80.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Patrick, 'On Contentment and Resignation' in Works, IX, p. 29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> David Konstan offers a comprehensive introduction to classical friendship and an extensive list of ancient texts on friendship in *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Anthony W. Price presents a comprehensive treatment of the variations of ancient friendship from Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero to ancient Christian ideals of friendship in *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Hyatte follows the development of the concepts up into the Renaissance.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 1170b20-1171a21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> In his *Confessiones*, St. Augustine conceived of love for one's friends – and enemies – as motivated by the love of God: "Happy is the person who loves you [God]" (Tobit. 13.18) and his friend in you, and his enemy because of you (Matt. 5.44)' (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. with an introduction and notes by

creation and the whole human community. As God had created the world and all the human beings representing the creation as an act accomplished out of his superabundance of love, so humans were to love universally, too. As all humans are God's creatures, they all deserve the loving care of their fellow humans. <sup>42</sup> This ideal of an all-encompassing love hardly seemed to harmonise with the ideal of exclusive friendship, which could be interpreted as the rejection or unjust exclusion of others from the community.

Patrick addresses this potential conflict between a special friendship and the wider community of Christians. He, too, poses the question as to whether there were any impediments to a 'nearer and stricter friendship' between Christians, yet he immediately negates any hindrances: 'And what is there that hinders us from so doing; it being no injustice to the rest to have a more than ordinary kindness for some?' His argument for such personal friendship and companionship in his second sermon 'On Contentment' is the great benefit a Christian derives from the extraordinarily close association and affectionate intimacy with an exemplary Christian:

Nay, sometimes in one person Christians find a great treasure, who will help to illuminate their mind with his knowledge, and warm their spirit by the ardency of his love to God, and comfort them, (as St. Paul speaks,) when they are in trouble, *by the comforts wherewith he himself was comforted of God* (2 Cor. i.4.), and quicken them by his pious example and holy conversation, and be a helper forward of their joy in the Lord [...] For we never receive any thing more readily than from the mouth of those whom we love; we are apt [...] to imitate their actions, [...] to be concerned in all their designs; and, in short, to become like them.<sup>43</sup>

Patrick describes this special person as a seraphic friend who has the ability to pass on knowledge and devotional heat and thus to uplift the friend towards the divine. Love between friends is defined as a unifying force. Patrick resolves the potential conflict

Henry Chadwick, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, IV. 9, 14). Thomas Aquinas formulated the difficulty of combining the Christian notion of universal charity and a preferential form of friendship. To him, it appeared that for God's sake man should not limit his love to his friends, but charitably love one's neighbours, too; see Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Klaus Oschema, 'Sacred or Profane? Reflections on Love and Friendship in the Middle Ages' in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe. 1300-1800*, ed. by Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter and Miri Rubin (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 43-65 (p. 47).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Patrick, 'On Contentment and Resignation' in Works, IX, p. 29.

between the two forms of affectionate relations – charity and friendship – by defining the love between friends as charity, too: 'Nothing, nothing is more sweet than this charity. For what will not a genuine friend do for you?' Patrick does not present friendship as a counter-model to universal charity, but he cherishes it as an intensified form of it. <sup>44</sup> Friendship is the active expression of the ideal. In other words, companionship as friendship does not preclude affective community, but it is an essential part of it. Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick's correspondence does not give any evidence that there was an actual conflict between their friendship and the wider community. The friends did not discuss any criticism other members of the community might have voiced at the exclusivity and intensity of their friendship. It rather seems that the close friendship catered for the two friends' need of personal spiritual and affectionate support and care that the community of the Church, the parochial congregation, could not offer.

Early modern discourse on friendship emphasised the importance of friendship's practical aspects, while at the same time pointing out true friendship's idealistic, elevated nature. In a religious friendship, as Patrick described it in his sermon, the practical aspects of an exemplary Christian friendship are advantages in the progress of the friends' spirituality and practical Christian way of life. In one of his letters to his friend Elizabeth Gauden, Patrick describes this 'one person' as a seraphic friend, as guide and spiritual director. Patrick defines 'the main & principal end of our friendship or delight in any mans company' as the 'serious study & indeavour to prepare others, & to be prepared by them, to live & die in the Lord'. Friends thus act mutually as spiritual guides. They reciprocally influence one another – intellectually and spiritually. Patrick assigns friendship an exceptionally important role in the individual's spiritual

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Jeremy Taylor, the Anglican divine and author of treatises of practical divinity such as *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* had answered the same question in his treatise on *The Measures and Offices of Friendship*, written for the poet Katherine Philips. Taylor echoes her initial question about friendship at the beginning of his text: 'You first inquire how far a Dear and a perfect friendship is authoriz'd by the principles of Christianity' (p. 7). In this text, Taylor characterises cases of particular friendship as actualisations of the universal principle: '[W]here there is a special affection and a great readiness to do good, and to delight in certain persons towards each other, there is that special Charity and Indearment which Philosophy calls *Friendships*; but our Religion calls *Love* or *Charity*' (pp. 21-22). The two seemingly irreconcilable concepts of Christian religion and philosophy, as Taylor summarises the discussion, are simply using different names for the same kind of relationship. The Christian commandment to love everybody still holds as an ideal to be perfected in heaven: '[A]ll our graces here are but imperfect, [...] so our Friendships are imperfect too, and but beginnings of a cœlestial Friendship, by which we shall love every one as much as they can be loved' (pp. 13-14). Taylor stresses the connection between earthly and heavenly love: heavenly love already begins on earth and is to be perfected in heaven. The ideal of loving everyone equally, however, can only be fulfilled in heaven.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fol. 106r.

life. In *The Parable of the Pilgrim*, Patrick's Christian guidebook, the young pilgrim's companion explicates the function of friendship and its divine aspects: 'sincere friendship, contracting the souls of two in one, is the most excellent endeavour of human nature after union and conjunction with God. The union of souls, who are near of kin here, is the preparation for the heavenly union'. <sup>46</sup> Patrick conceives of friendship as an idealised form of social and spiritual interaction, envisaged to be the pre-figuration of the heavenly union and community. Through the practice of their human friendship, seraphic friends inspire and further each other in their endeavour to unite with the divine. Human friendship in God is the means by which the earthly and heavenly worlds can be connected. It is Boyle's seraphic love socialised. It is seraphic friendship.

What emerges in Patrick's texts is a concept of friendship as the highest form of human love, unbounded in its intensity and scope, but conceived within a Christian framework of charity and community. The ideals and practices of seraphic friendship are bracketed by the two divine commandments to love God and to love one's neighbour as oneself. Religion functions as a regulating discipline and a motivating force, while at the same time enabling the open expression of the deepest affection. The friends' shared love of God sanctions and sanctifies the relationship – also and especially between members of the opposite sex.

## 3. Seraphic discourse and companionship

The friendship between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick is thus situated within a framework of norms of Christian love that allows for and furthers close personal friendships as part of a pious Christian life. Living in the same town, for times even in neighbouring parishes, Simon Patrick and Elizabeth Gauden could practise their friendship intensively, frequently meeting one another and spending time together. Their letters tell of their personal encounters, their mutual visits, and they also take note of those failed attempts to meet, when the one was not at home when the other called. At those times, when Patrick and Gauden were prevented from keeping one another company, they communicated by letter, thus maintaining their friendship over a distance.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Patrick, *The Parable of the Pilgrim* in *Works*, IV, p. 487. The topic of friendship is, in fact, part of the chapter on charity. Friendship conceived as a union of souls is one of the most prominent *topoi* of idealised friendship. Laurie Shannon gives manifold examples of the *topos* in sixteenth-century European and English texts in *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 3-4.

The majority of extant letters exchanged between Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick are dated from 1665, the year of the plague. When the epidemic raged in London, Elizabeth Gauden had fled the city. She stayed with her family in Burntwood, Essex. This is the one instance when Patrick acknowledges a conflict between his obligations to comply with his friend's wishes and his duties towards the community of his parish. Elizabeth Gauden entreated Patrick to leave London to escape the plague. While Patrick stressed his wish to be with his friend, yet he remained in London, looking after his parishioners, attending to his pastoral and communal duties.<sup>47</sup>

During the months that the friends were not located near to one another they could, through their correspondence, uphold their connection and keep one another company. Letters are an inherently sociable genre and as a medium of communication they guarantee an almost continual connection between corresponding friends in situations of physical separation. Especially in times of imminent physical danger, such as the plague, the letters function as signs of the existence and vitality of each friend. Furthermore, they have value as material testimony of love and affection. Simon Patrick and Elizabeth Gauden are concerned to keep up a constant exchange, to textualise their affection, and to evoke their communicative and spiritual companionship and union on the letter's page.

Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick's correspondence is the means by which they perform their offices of friendship. The intimate communication of two individuals lies at the heart of the practice of friendship, whose central activity is dialogue. The letter's dialogic and reciprocal structure corresponds with the symmetrical structure of the relation between friends. It is through their correspondence that friends communicate their personal concerns, share their joy and grief, advise and reproach each other, and discuss their religious and philosophical concerns. In a letter to Elizabeth Gauden, Patrick praises letter-writing as a means of communication and union with his friend:

And truly I must needs look upon it as an happinesse that I am so neare you, & that God hath learnt us this way of communicating our minds by writing, whereby two friends may speak together at a greater distance than this, & in part supply the defects which absence causes. But yet it is a far greater comfort to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fols. 38-9, 41r. Patrick's behaviour during the plague months played an important role in creating Patrick's reputation as an exemplary parish priest (Parkin). The eighteenth-century antiquarian William Cole remarked in his comments on his transcriptions of the correspondence between Patrick and Gauden that Patrick's letters 'show BP. Patrick's Worth & Merrit in staying in London during that Time of Danger' (fol. 209r).

think that God is nearer to you, so neare that you may always speake to him, & talk with him & have what you will of him. 48

Patrick rejoices in the divinely-given ability to practise the cultural technique of letter-writing as a means to convey his thoughts to his friend. He employs the epistolary trope of correspondence as conversation between absent friends, one of the most prominent tropes of the familiar letter – ancient and early modern. This figure of speech evokes the notions of orality, immediacy, and authenticity connected with face-to-face conversation, its use highlighting the correspondent's wish to overcome the dichotomy of presence and absence imbedded in the epistolary situation.

What pleases Patrick even more, however, is the fact that human communication is held and surpassed by communication with God. While friends are absent, God is omnipresent. Through prayer, humans can always address God directly. The human-divine relationship exceeds human relationships in its communicative means and effectiveness. Yet, Patrick believes communication between humans and communication with God to be closely connected. Human communication can have similar positive, supportive effects. Presence with a friend, keeping a friend company, is an essential aspect of the support work that is part of the practice of friendship. In order to compensate for situations of separation from his friend, Patrick practises two communicative strategies, as he points out in a meta-epistolary epistolary comment: 'I had no sooner cooled my self in my chamber, but I thought how to supply the defect of my absence from you, not only by my prayers for you, but by my discourse with you'. <sup>51</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fol. 117r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> On the letter's materiality and the context for the writing, delivery, and receipt of early modern letters see Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe (eds), *Letter-Writing in Renaissance England* (Washington D.C., The Folger Shakespeare Library: University of Washington Press, 2004) as well as James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practice of Letter-Writing*, 1512-1635 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

The Greek rhetorical treatise *On Style* by Demetrius presents the *locus classicus* for the trope; see Demetrius, *On Style*, The Loeb Classical Library, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, revised edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann, 1932), §223. Cicero directly links the trope of epistolary conversation to the discourse of friendship when he defines letters as 'conversations of absent friends' in his *Philippics* (see Cicero, *Orations. Philippics 1-6*, trans. and ed. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, revised by John T. Ramsey and Gesine Manuwald, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, II, 7-8 and 63). It is echoed by the humanist epistolographers. Clare Brant, in *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), offers an enlightening discussion of the common-place comparison of letter-writing as conversation between absent friends – highlighting the function of the common place as a means to compensate rhetorically for the absence of the partner (pp. 21-3).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fol. 107r.

Patrick aims at establishing an uninterrupted connection by praying for Elizabeth Gauden and by writing to her: he connects her and himself with the divine by evoking God's help. As part of the practice of friendship, Patrick and Gauden's letters are turned into prayers, and prayers are sent along with the letters. This form of communication corresponds with the vertical orientation of seraphic friendship towards God as the divine source of their love and the destination of their endeavours of mutual spiritualization. Patrick believes his prayers and his letters to be capable of making up for the deficient situation of the friends' separation. Through their epistolary exchange they create a situation of co-presence and spiritual union as the preparatory practice and prefiguration of the heavenly union on earth.

Accordingly, in their correspondence, Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick are concerned with the question of how best to prepare themselves for heavenly life and union with the divine. The state of heavenly felicity – as Boyle presents it in *Seraphick* Love – has an intellectual as well as an affective component. In his correspondence with Elizabeth Gauden, Simon Patrick frequently expresses his longing for divine knowledge. He regards the attainment of it as a necessary step towards and a part of the vision of the 'heavenly injoyments' which constitutes a component of man's future perfection.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, Patrick acknowledges the fact that human understanding is limited. There is a rare instance in which two consecutive letters of Patrick and Gauden exist and allow for a reading of their friendly epistolary communicative techniques at work. They discuss the inaccessibility of divine knowledge with their human intellectual capacities, and Patrick writes on 23 December 1665:

My friend, [...] I seeme to my self to be so swallowed up in the infinitenesse of God that I wonder wee should go about to measure him with our nutshell capacities. I fancy (for I will call it no more) that my mind is pent up in a very narrow place & indeavouring to inlarge it self is not able till the wall be broken downe. But then mee thinks it may spread & dilate itself, & perhaps comprehend so much as to know for wt good reason it was so confined before. In the meantime it seemes not very fit that such a poore contracted thing should determine so many hard & difficult questions as are proposed to it about the government of the Universe.<sup>53</sup>

In his letter, Patrick describes a spiritual experience as an immersion in the boundlessness of the divine. The result of this divine experience is his astonishment at

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Ibid, fol. 135r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Ibid, fol. 13r.

man's hubris even to try to comprehend God. The image of the nutshell that Patrick uses to describe man's capacities as compared with God's infinite size and power vividly shows the discrepancy between human and divine scale. Patrick projects the expansion of human intellectual capacities to a time when 'the wall be broken down' at the moment of death. He does not conceive of the mind's enlargement and enlightenment as a process of growth, but as a process of liberation, expansion and dissolution. While the human mind is folded up and 'contracted', as if in a nutshell, the freed mind dilates, disperses, and comprehends. Reflecting on his own aspirations as being too high, Patrick nevertheless hopes to transcend the boundaries of his human knowledge and rather reluctantly, it seems, postpones any conclusions about the 'government of the Universe'.

In her answer to this letter on 27 December, Elizabeth Gauden defines Patrick's epistolary musings on his difficulties in gaining longed-for knowledge and his inspired descriptions of the infrequent 'glances' that are available to him, as 'seraphick discourse': 'I see there was some reason why I should feare the losse of your company, for I perceive by the seraphick discourse of yours of the 23d that you are got upon the confines of another country'. <sup>54</sup> To Elizabeth Gauden, the contents of Patrick's letter testify to the fact that Patrick has reached a state of intellectual insight which verges on the heavenly, angelical state of knowledge. When Elizabeth Gauden assigns to Simon Patrick's discourse angelical qualities, she highlights this aspect of knowledge as an angelical attribute. According to Dionysian-based angelology, the angels' heavenly proximity to and vision of God makes for their refined knowledge of God and God's creation. <sup>55</sup>

Elizabeth Gauden uses the metaphor of travel to describe Patrick's spiritual progress and implicitly her own pious and intellectual advancement, too. The idea of travel – in a religious context conceived of as a pilgrimage, as in Patrick's bestseller *The Parable of the Pilgrim* and even more prominently in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* of 1678 – is one of the most prominent metaphors for human life and more specifically for human intellectual and spiritual development. <sup>56</sup> As travellers and pilgrims Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick conceive of themselves as being in a dynamic process, approaching perfection. Elizabeth Gauden imagines her friend to have travelled towards the regions of angelical habitation, since he is able to discourse like one of the seraphim, like a member of the highest order of angels, who are elevated beyond the human sphere into

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ibid, fol. 7r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Dionysius, Celestial Hierarchies, VII 1, 205B

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Rupp, p. 123.

close proximity to God. Like the seraphim, Patrick seems to Elizabeth Gauden to have been invested with further and more intimate knowledge of divine truth than other humans.

At the same time, Elizabeth Gauden limits her friend's progress, saying that he is only at the 'confines', at the borders, of the heavenly country. She thus keeps his connection to the human sphere and to herself: 'yet me thinkes sometimes againe, you talke so much like one of our world, that though you are got so farre before me, I doe understand and ecco strongly to what you say of the disproportions of oure understandings, to those great and difficult poynts'. Elizabeth Gauden conceives of her friend as being in a liminal position between earth and heaven. His discourse is human as well as angelical. While she concedes that Patrick is far ahead of her in his intellectual progress towards heavenly truths, yet he is not so much in the lead as if she could not reach or comprehend him. She connects herself to the human aspects of his discourse, and emphatically asserts her comprehension of and agreement with Patrick's insights into man's 'nutshell capacities'.

In the notion of spiritual progress as a journey, Elizabeth Gauden includes the idea of companionate travel – as a couple of friends, Elizabeth Gauden and Simon Patrick perform this journey together. While Elizabeth Gauden accords Patrick the leading position, Patrick - in a number of letters - denies the role of a guide that seems to be assigned to him due to his male professional authoritative role as a clergyman. Patrick is a spiritual guide by profession, but in an earlier letter, dated 16 December 1665, Patrick himself plays down his expertise in spiritual matters and asks Elizabeth Gauden not to place him in a superior position: 'For I feele every day so meane an opinion of my self prevailing that I shall do but little of the office of a Guide hereafter, but you must look upon mee as a fellow traveller'. Patrick thus balances early modern gender hierarchies that assigned men a superior role to women in matters legal, political, and spiritual.

Patrick takes up the idea of companionate travel towards heavenly existence in his reading of a text by the late-ancient Christian philosopher and theologian Origen. In a Sunday night letter to Elizabeth Gauden, Patrick offers a paraphrase of Origen's concept of the soul's gradual ascent through stages 'in every one of which [the soul] is more inlightend, and receiveing an increase of brightnesse & growing in wisdome, at last arrives att the Father of lights himself'. <sup>59</sup> The idea of spiritual progress and the practices

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fol. 7r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Ibid, fol. 21r.

<sup>1010, 101.</sup> Z1r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Ibid, fol. 93r. Patrick refers to a passage in Origen's *On First Principles* 2.11.6.

conducive to it are the most prominent topics in Patrick and Gauden's spiritual and intellectual exchange. Origen's text, in short, summarises what their seraphic friendship is all about: it is concerned with and aims to practice the best possible preparation for their joint ascent towards and union with the divine. At the end of his paraphrase of Origen's text, Patrick imaginatively anticipates one of the advanced stages of the progress. In his thoughts he leaves the earthly scenario and revels in the vision of himself and his friend discoursing together in the heavens:

When I had writ this I thought with my self, O how gladly could I walk with my Friend into these spacious plaines! How happy should we be to philosophize together in those quiet & undisturbed places! How much also ought we to study purity, that we may not hover about this earth, but ascend aloft and mount into the clearer & brighter regions!<sup>60</sup>

This vision is expressed in three rapturous exclamations, linked through the anaphora, 'How'. While the first two sentences describe the friends immersed in a philosophical conversation, the third sentence formulates the precondition for attaining the envisaged heavenly state: to 'study purity' is the way to change from horizontally lingering close about the earth, to soaring aloft into the purer and more enlightened spheres. Patrick's description of the philosophical couple resonates with a passage from Socrates' inspired second speech about the right kind of love in Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*. At the end of this speech, Socrates presents the future progress of the souls who have formed one of the best kinds of chaste, philosophical relationships: 'It is ordained that all such as have taken the first steps on the celestial highway shall no more return to the dark pathways beneath the earth, but shall walk together in a life of shining bliss, and be furnished in due time with like plumage the one to the other, because of their love'. 61 While the Platonic Symposium presents the single philosopher's advancement towards knowledge of the ideas, it is the Platonic dialogue *Phaedrus* that elaborates on the possibility of a shared philosophical life of two humans connected through their love as a means of self-knowledge, purification, and ascent to their divine origin.<sup>62</sup>

Patrick uses the example of the ancient Church father's Neo-Platonic concept of the soul's ascent with its educational stage in a heavenly realm to present his friend with a delightful, edifying, vision of their souls' pleasant and philosophical – almost pastoral –

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fol. 93r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* (256d-e). The metaphor of the plumage refers to the idea of the soul growing wings in order to lift itself up towards the heavenly spheres.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Mary P. Nichols, Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedruss, and Lysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 116.

future in Christian heaven. In his paraphrase of Origen's concept, Patrick is careful to align Christian and pagan terminology, showing their easy compatibility: 'Now the purer any man's heart is, [...] the sooner he ascends to the place of the aire, & comes to the kingdomes of Heaven, through the severall mansions, which the Heathens call Spheres, but the Divine Scriptures name Heavens'. 63

Patrick adapts the relationships and processes depicted in the ancient texts to the situation of his friendship with Elizabeth Gauden: he does speak of abstracted, depersonalised souls, but in his philosophical vision, he pictures Elizabeth Gauden and himself as fellow travellers, as companion philosophers immersed in spiritual dialogue. Patrick then rhetorically returns from the enraptured vision and finishes his letter with a comment on the act of writing:

I did not think to have been carried thus far when I began, but partly ye pleasure of the thing while I was writing, & partly the pleasure I thought it would give you in reading, made me not willing to stop. There is but one pleasure more that I would have & that is to see you, which I shal not do to morrow but the next day.<sup>64</sup>

Writing the letter on the inspiring vision of himself and his friend itself was a rapturous experience that engaged Patrick longer than expected and pleased him in two ways: first, he enjoyed writing about *their* topic and second, he enjoyed the idea that his friend's reading of his text would be a pleasurable activity for her, too. Patrick presents the act of writing about their future happiness explicitly as an activity connecting them both in thought and text. At the same time, his reluctance to stop writing to Gauden, conveyed explicitly in the text and visually in the presentation of the text, which overflows into the left margin of the page, indicates his great affection for her. Patrick's rhetoric of unlimited and unconfined affection is mirrored by the writing, which can hardly be contained by the paper itself. Elegantly weaving in the details of their next meeting, he rephrases this eagerness to be with her in his final statement about the even greater pleasure that only an actual meeting could give him. Thus he projects their friendship not only into the future heavenly community, but also into the very thisworldly future of their companionate, every-day earthly lives in their London communities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Patrick, *Letters*, fol. 93r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Ibid.