The Heart of Peace: Christine de Pizan and Christian Theology

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The Heart of Peace: Christine de Pizan and Christian Theology

A dissertation presented
by
Margaret Marion Gower
to
The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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in the subject of
The Study of Religion

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that, across her corpus, Christine de Pizan (c. 1364-c. 1431) advanced a notion of the common good that is both, and inseparably, political and theological. The project critically analyzes Christine’s theological notions of human personhood, moral formation, prudential self-interest, and destructive preoccupation with personal good. It demonstrates that Christine responded to, retooled, and restructured authoritative texts and traditions in order to compose a constructive notion of the common good. It argues that Christine wrote in the interest of peace in the bodies politic within which she counted herself: France, the Church, and Christendom. It concludes that Christine wrote to form persons for peace.
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Christine de Pizan and Christian Theology: The Introduction

Christine de Pizan (c.1364-c.1431) was born in the Republic of Venice and raised at the French court, where her father worked as an adviser to Charles V of France. The death of Charles V in 1380 meant for Christine the loss of both a good sovereign and a familial benefactor; the death of her father in 1387 sank her lower; and the death of her husband in 1390 brought both grief and financial hardship. In need of an income to support herself and her five dependents, Christine took up professional writing. In all, she composed at least twenty-five texts in verse and at least sixteen texts in prose. Together with the lost Avison du coq, Christine composed at least forty-two texts in a wide range of genres. For Christine, as for all of France, the period was a difficult one. Christine lived through the latter stages of the Hundred Years’ War, the Great Schism, the madness of Charles VI, the internecine violence between the Orléanist and the Burgundian factions, peasant revolts, and the plague. Nevertheless, through her writing, Christine found both the resources to support herself and her household and a voice in some of the most pressing debates of the period.

In this project, I argue against the trends to read the corpus of Christine de Pizan as fragmented, derivative, and non-theological or secular. I argue that, across her corpus, Christine works to advance a notion of the common good that is both, and inseparably, political and theological. I demonstrate that Christine draws on authoritative texts and traditions in order to construct a notion of the common good that includes women and men alike as both contributors and beneficiaries. I argue that Christine’s attention to the moral formation of women and men alike expresses her belief that moral education enables persons to pursue the theological and political common good. Altogether, I demonstrate that Christine retools and restructures
authoritative texts and traditions in order to make a constructive contribution to the Christian theological tradition.

With important exceptions, the modern trend has been to read the works of Christine de Pizan as non-theological or secular. Angus J. Kennedy’s bibliographical guides are illustrative. On the one hand, of course, the bibliographical guides have described the work that has been done on Christine and her corpus. On the other hand, however, the bibliographical guides have created the categories for considering Christine and her corpus. Kennedy’s 1984 *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide* catalogued five hundred and two items from the time of Christine herself until 1984.¹ The guide included a section on “Studies of Specific Topics.” The list of specific topics included: Miniatures and Manuscript Illumination; Christine de Pizan, England and Portugal; Christine de Pizan and Italy; Feminism and Related Topics; Humanism; Political, Social and Educational Themes; The Court of Love 1400/01; Poetic Themes and Form; Language; and Miscellaneous. Ten years later, Kennedy published the first supplement to the 1984 bibliographical guide. *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide Supplement I* (1994) catalogued three hundred and ninety-one items from 1981-1991.² The one change made to the list of “studies of specific topics” was the renaming of the first section of the 1984 guide, from “Miniatures and Manuscript Illumination,” to “Manuscripts, Miniatures, and Manuscript illumination.” Then, in 2004, *Christine de Pizan: A Bibliographical Guide Supplement II* catalogued a staggering one thousand and fifty-five items from 1991-2002. In the 2004 bibliographical guide, Kennedy renamed “Christine de Pizan, England and Portugal” as “Christine de Pizan, England, Spain and Portugal” and added an eleventh section, “Musical

Kennedy’s bibliographical guides are indispensable resources for scholars of Christine de Pizan. They have powerfully contributed to the categories of thought about Christine and her corpus. Bonnie A. Birk, Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Maureen Boulton, Earl Jeffrey Richards, and others have considered Christine and her corpus in relationship to Christian theology. Nevertheless, the trend to read Christine as non-theological or secular continues, evinced in the categories offered in Kennedy’s bibliographical guides.

In the nineteenth century – before Maurice Roy (1856-1932) published the first editions of the texts of Christine de Pizan and before scholars such as Suzanne Solente (1895-1978) in France and Charity Cannon Willard (1914-2005) in the United States began to edit, translate, and interpret the texts of Christine de Pizan – Léopold Delisle (1826 -1910), the Director of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, catalogued the manuscripts of Christine de Pizan as “Théologie française.” In the Inventaire général et méthodique des Manuscrits français de la Bibliothèque Nationale (1876), Delisle listed eighteen manuscripts of Christine de Pizan as “Théologie morale” or “Mélanges de théologie du moyen âge.”

Delisle set out the first volume of the Inventaire général et méthodique des Manuscrits français de la Bibliothèque Nationale in eighteen categories from scriptural compilations (179 volumes) to “hétérodoxes” (36 volumes). In the seventh section of the catalogue, Delisle

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5 In the second volume of Inventaire Général et Méthodique des Manuscrits Français de la Bibliothèque Nationale (1878), Delisle catalogued one manuscript of Christine as “Philosophie du moyen âge” and another as “Art militaire.”

6 Delisle, Inventaire général et méthodique des Manuscrits français de la Bibliothèque Nationale, 197-201.
included ten manuscripts of Christine de Pizan on the list of the one hundred and thirty-eight volumes of medieval texts of moral theology. The texts that Delisle catalogued as medieval works of moral theology included *Le livre de la cité des dames*, *Le livre des trois vertus à l’enseignement des dames*, and *Le Livre du corps de policie*, each of which is considered in this dissertation. In the ninth section of the catalogue, Delisle included eight manuscripts of Christine de Pizan on the list of the ninety-six volumes of medieval theological mélanges in prose and in verse. The works that Delisle listed as medieval theological mélanges included *Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile*, which is considered in this dissertation, and seven manuscripts of *Enseignemens moraux*.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the texts of Christine de Pizan continued to be read in the context of medieval theological movements. In 1913, Maud Elizabeth Temple submitted a thesis on “Christine de Pisan and the Victorine Revival: An Essay on some of the Mediaeval Elements in French Classical Criticism” toward her doctoral degree in Comparative Literature at Radcliffe College. Temple read the works of Christine in the light of Hugh of St-Victor, Jean Gerson, and the early fifteenth century “Revival of Victorine Realism.” In the first chapter of her thesis, Temple set out her view that “orgeuil [pride], with all the judicious of her generation, and certainly with the whole Victorine tradition, Christine recognized as the source of all evil and mischief; it is barbarism, as they regard it, to which they oppose the Augustinian notion which Gerson took as his motto: *Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia* [where there is humility, there is wisdom]. The conscious Victorine Revival, anti-scholastic, and democratic, as well as

humanistic and mystical, had its mainspring in this device.” Temple made the case for the influence of Jean Gerson, Dante, Brunetto Latini, and Boethius (in the translation of Jean de Meun) on Christine. In the end, having argued for Hugh of St-Victor as the first Classicist of France, Temple concluded her thesis with Christine’s representation of Joan of Arc, and Alain of Chartier’s representation of the Maid after it, as the symbol of French Classicism.

In the light of the neo-scholasticism that predominated in Catholic academic contexts after the promulgation by Pope Leo XIII of Aeterni Patris (1879) and the proclamation of Thomas Aquinas as patron of all Catholic universities (1880), Sr. Marie Rosier approached the texts of Christine de Pizan from a different theological perspective. In 1945, Rosier submitted a thesis on “Christine de Pisan as a Moralist” toward her doctoral degree in French Language and Literature at the University of Toronto. Rosier objected to the contention of M-J. Pinet that Christine was a “mere compiler.” Instead, Rosier argued that Christine was a constructive Christian moralist. Rosier concluded that “practicality is the dominant trait of Christine as a moralist.” From there, however, Rosier was less attentive to Christine in the light of her late medieval context and more attentive to her in the neo-Thomist terms of Jacques Maritain and Yves Simon. In the end, Rosier evaluated Christine according to Maritain’s notion of “Practico-Practical Science.”

More recently, Rosalind Brown-Grant offered an independent case for Christine de Pizan as a “moral” writer. In Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading beyond

8 Ibid., 7.
9 Madeleine Fernande Rosier (Sr. Marie), “Christine de Pisan as a Moralist” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1945).
11 Rosier, “Christine de Pisan as a Moralist,” 467.
Gender (1999), Brown-Grant considered Christine in her late medieval historical context and argued for her defense of women as “an ethical doctrine and as a moralising literary practice.” Brown-Grant demonstrated that Christine unites her defense of women to “morality (honnesteté).” (Brown-Grant takes Christine’s word “honneste” to mean “moral.”) Brown-Grant described how Christine, in her contributions to the “querelle de la Rose,” sets out modesty (honte) as the measure of morality for women and for men alike (a toute autre vertueuse personne). In the end, Brown-Grant concluded that Christine’s moral defense of women is not isolated to Le livre de la cité des dames but integrated into texts across her corpus.

Indebted to each of these projects, I argue that the “moral” texts of Christine de Pizan are, in fact, “theological works in French,” as Delisle put it in 1876. I argue for Christine as a constructive contributor to the Christian theological tradition. In at least two books, Le Livre du corps de policie (1406-7) and Les sept psaumes allégorisés (1409), Christine refers to the clerks and theologians at the University of Paris and at other universities. She does not count herself among their number in a technical sense. Nevertheless, she writes about her love of learning. And, in the final chapter of Le Livre de l’advision Christine (1405-1406), she describes theology as the science within which she has pursued knowledge of God, in whom all of the sciences are one. She writes: “For you are all sciences, and to those you love you show yourself as it pleases you, depending on how they wish to search for you [selon la voie qu’ilz te veullent enquerre].

12 Rosalind Brown-Grant, Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading beyond Gender (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50.
13 Ibid., 11. See ibid., 23; 27; 64.
14 See ibid., 23; 27; 64.
15 Ibid., 26-27.
16 See also Bonnie A. Birk, Christine de Pizan and Biblical Wisdom: A Feminist-Theological Point of View (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2005).
me, a simple person [moy simple], by your noble grace [ta digne grace], you reveal yourself in
the form of Holy Theology [en fourme de Sainte Theologie] to nourish my ignorant spirit [mon
ignorant courage] most wholesomely for my salvation [le plus sainement a mon salut].”17

In the same passage, Christine draws on a passage of Augustine from the chapter on
“Scriptura sacra” in the Manipulus florum.18 Augustine had written that all philosophy is here:
physics, ethics, logic, and politics or care for the “salus” of the “rei publice.”19 Christine retools
Augustine’s notion that all of the sciences are one in God. She explains that physics, ethics,
logic, and politics are each of a piece with what she has learned in the form of theology.

The Manipulus florum attributes the passage to the second “epistola ad Volusianum.”
Indeed, Augustine had set out the passage in “Letter 137,” the second of his three extant letters to
Volusianus. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac, the editors of the critical edition of Le Livre de
l’advision Christine, have described Christine’s passage as following Augustine’s lines as set out
in the Manipulus florum almost word-for-word.20 But Christine herself adds at least one
important word: “theology.” The word “theology” is the refrain of Christine in this passage. The
word “theology” is not present in the lines of Augustine set out in the Manipulus florum.
Christine’s addition of the word “theology” suggests her interest in naming her work as
“theology.” Christine writes:

17 Christine de Pizan, The Vision of Christine de Pizan, trans. Glenda McLeod and Charity Cannon Willard
(Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 132; ead., Le livre de l’advision Christine, eds. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac
18 “Scriptura sacra d.” The Electronic Manipulus florum Project, accessed August 12, 2015,
Publishing Co., 1887), Para. 17.
19 “Scriptura sacra d.”
20 Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac, Notes de la Troisième Partie to Le livre de l’advision Christine, by Christine de
Truly you are all sciences. You are true physics, which is to say theology [theologie], inasmuch as you are from God, for all the causes of all of nature are in God the Creator. You are ethics because the good and honorable life [bonne vie et honnestes] that you lecture and teach is loving what should be loved, which is God and one’s neighbor; and that, Theology [Theologie], you reveal in the sciences of physics and ethics. You are logic because you reveal the light and truth of the just soul [la lumiere et la verité de l’ame raisonnable tu monstres]. You are politics because you teach the virtuous life [bien vivre], for no city is better protected than by the foundation and bond of the faith and by the firm agreement [le fondement et lian de foy et de ferme concorde] to love the common good [amer le bien commun], which is very true and supreme [qui est tres vray et tres souverain], it is God of whom you speak in the science in which you have revealed yourself to me, that is theology [c’est Dieu de quoy tu parles en la science en quoy a moy t’est demonstree, c’est assavoir theologie]. Oh Theology [O Theologie], how I long to praise in you, Lady, the sovereign philosophy, I know that when man [homme] learns apart from you, if it is harmful to him he knows the truth of it by you, if it is beneficial [prouffitable] for him, you also show it to him and so elsewhere he will have little to learn. If in you he does not trust, all will be wasted time and ignorance, for you are true wisdom [la sapience vraie]; no other is it than you, in whom is found what cannot be elsewhere – true happiness [vraie félícité].

In this project, I consider Christine’s work on the creation of human persons in nature (a part of physics) and on the creation of human persons with a rational soul (a part of logic) to stand together as a Christian theological notion of the human person. I take Christine at her word and consider her work on the human person (in nature and with reason), ethics, and politics as theology.

In the first chapter, I read Christine’s Le livre de la cité des dames (1405) as a contribution to physics and logic, in the theological sense of those terms that Christine describes in the Augustinian passage in the Advision. I argue that Christine’s so-called defense of women is not a defense against Christian theological arguments but a development of Christian theological ideas. In Le livre de la cité des dames, Christine draws on traditional Christian

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21 Christine de Pizan, The Vision of Christine de Pizan, 132-33.
theological sources in order to demonstrate that God creates women and men alike in God’s own image and likeness. Women and men alike are human persons: from God and for God (physics) and bearers of rational souls (logic). Women and men alike, therefore, are capable of virtue and Christian practice. From there, I demonstrate that the lives of female saints that Christine sets out in Part III of *Le livre de la cité des dames* are a part of her contribution to the long theological debate about how to read the various scriptural narratives of human creation. In particular, I read Part III of *Le livre de la cité des dames* as the response of Christine to 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. I suggest that Christine retells the vitae of women saints in order to correct what she sees as the commonplace misunderstanding of the Pauline notion of the generation of women and to demonstrate the apostolic capacities of women. In the end, I argue that the prudence that Christine recommends is a kind of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, on the model of the Apostle Paul.

In the second chapter, I continue to consider Christine’s theological notion of the human person, including aspects of physics and logic in the theological sense of those terms that Christine describes in the Augustinian passage in the *Advision*. I read Christine’s *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité* (1417), a letter of consolation to Marie de Berry and the noblewomen of France, as a contribution to the theological debates about women, reason, and virtue. Christine advances a notion of God’s gifts of grace, nature, and fortune that contains within it an argument for women and men alike as human persons. Christine teaches her readers how to respond to suffering with patience and, in so doing, make suffering productive. Christine defines patience as “moderation of heart” (*attrempance de courage*). I argue that the notion of “heart” is the key to *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité*. Christine uses
“cuer” to mean heart in the sense of intellect or disposition and “courage” to mean heart in the sense of the “cuer”-directed practice of a person. I suggest that Christine uses the notion of heart in response to the tradition of exegesis of the Book of Job, especially *Moralia in Job* of Gregory the Great.

In the third chapter, I read Christine’s *Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames* (1405-6) as a contribution to ethics, in the theological sense of the term that Christine describes in the Augustinian passage in the *Advision*. Following Augustine, Christine writes that the Christian theological notion of the human person (including aspects of physics and logic) and ethics together teach love of God and love of neighbor. This sets the course for a good and “honnestes” life. *Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames* is a manual for women on the practice of Christian life in the world. First, Christine sets out the tenets of the Christian faith. Then, she introduces prudence as that which translates Christian faith (or reason) into practice. She demonstrates how the same Christian teachings are enacted according to various status. The point of *Trois vertus* is to teach women how to exercise prudence where they have power. The text is a series of lessons and examples in good morals and good manners. Christine translates Christian teaching into good practice, according to the status, power, and possibilité of different groups of women. Christine sets out the notion of taking on the heart of a man (*cuer d’omme*) in order to explain that, for women who are married and whose husbands are dead or absent, to pursue their own self-interest in the world when there is no one else to do it is to practice prudence. Christine offers her lessons in the interest of order and peace in France. In the end, the lessons of prudence are lessons for peace.

In the fourth chapter, I read Christine’s *Le Livre du corps de policie* (1406-7) as a contribution to politics, in the theological sense of the term that Christine describes in the
Augustinian passage in the *Advission*. In that passage, Christine sets out that love of God, concord, and the common good secure the commonweal. As she had for women in *Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames*, so for men in *Le Livre du corps de policie*, Christine teaches on how to live as a Christian in the world, what she refers to in the Augustinian passage in the *Advission* as “bien vivre.” Christine teaches the men of France to love and fear God, to build up the common good, and to defend justice. In *Le Livre du corps de policie*, it is impossible to consider the notion of the common good apart from the notion of royal lordship. Christine unites the notion of the common good and the notion of justice and, then, presents the common good and justice as bound together in royal lordship. Christine looks to the prince to exercise justice in order to secure the body politic. She teaches the prince that, in him, the combination of mildness and sweetness and liberality and justice can bring about order and peace, a kind of *Salus Augustus* or *Concordia Augusta* for France and for Christendom.

In the final chapter, I consider Christine’s *Les sept psaumes allégorisés* (1409), *Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile* (1410), *Le Livre de paix* (1414), and *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc* (1429) as contributions to the work of Christine for peace in France and in Christendom. These texts set out the particular take of the author on the Aristotelian and Augustinian notion that human personhood and peace are inseparable. Christine, herself a native of the Republic of Venice, views the Kingdom of France – especially as it was during the reigns of Louis IX and Charles V, the latter of whom had become king in the year that Christine was born and was on the throne when she had arrived in Paris as a child – as the standard-bearer of justice and good rule. But she writes that the internecine violence is killing the body politic in France. She describes the violent disjoining of the “natural” oneness of the princes and the persons of France. She calls on all of the people of France, explicitly including the women of all
estates, to make peace. Then, in the last known text of Christine, her argument for women as human persons – bearers of rational souls, capable of virtue and Christian practice, entitled to moral teaching, and a vital part of the body politic – finds powerful support in the reason, prudence, and power of Joan of Arc.

In her own terms, and by any measure, Christine de Pizan was a constructive contributor to the Christian theological tradition. She drew on authoritative texts and traditions in order to set out a theological argument for the personhood of all human persons. She claimed moral formation as a right for all human persons. She set out both a notion of prudential self-interest and a notion of destructive preoccupation with personal good. She wrote in the interest of peace in the bodies politic within which she counted herself: France, the Church, and Christendom. She wrote to form persons for peace.
In this chapter, I challenge the tradition of reading the so-called defense of women of Christine de Pizan in *Le livre de la cité des dames* (1405) apart from the theological perspectives that undergird and uphold that defense. I argue that Christine’s defense of women is not a defense against Christian theological arguments but a development of Christian theological ideas. First, I demonstrate that Christine draws on the scriptural notion of the *imago Dei* and on the traditional “privileges of women” in order to support her position that women and men alike bear rational souls and possess the potential for virtue and moral formation. Second, I argue that Part III of the *Cité des dames*, a series of lives of saints, is a riposte to the commonplace reading of 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. Christine takes up the Pauline text in order to support her argument that women and men alike are from God and for God, able to imitate Jesus Christ in life and in death, and capable of prudence, that is, capable of Christian practice in the world. Altogether, in this chapter, I argue that the *Cité des dames* is Christine’s contribution to the Christian theological tradition on the contested questions of the nature of women and the meaning of scripture. Christine sets out a creative and constructive contribution to the Christian theological notion of the human person.

Earl Jeffrey Richards has made the case for Christine’s “extraordinary self-consciousness as a poet-theologian in both the *Epistre Othea* and the prologue to the *Advision*.”¹ Indeed, Christine composed the *Cité des dames* as a dream-vision, like *The Consolation of Philosophy*,

Le Roman de la rose, and The Divine Comedy. Like those earlier texts, each one of which she knew, Christine sets out a theological intervention in a poetic form. 

In the opening chapter of Le livre de la cité des dames, the author describes how she, as the character Christine in her dream-vision, has grown disheartened in the face of the “unanimous” view of philosophers, poets, orators, and clerks that women, more than men, are inclined to vice and sin. Having intended to treat herself to a poetic book in praise of women, Christine is stung to encounter, instead, a volume of “slander” and “immoral language and ideas.” It is not the text of Matheolus, in particular, that troubles Christine. She does not regard it as important or authoritative. But that text inspires her to confront the fact that “so many men, both clerks and others, have said and continue to say and write such awful, damning things about women and their ways.” “It is not just a handful of writers who do this.” They “all seem to speak with one voice and are unanimous in their view that female nature is wholly given up to vice.” She laments that she “could scarcely find a moral work by any author which didn’t devote some chapter or paragraph to attacking the female sex.”

2 Ibid., 45.
4 Ibid., 5.
5 At the end of the fourteenth century (ca. 1380-87), Jean le Fèvre de Ressons translated Les lamentations de Matheolus from Latin into French. (The original text had been composed about a century earlier.) Jean then composed Le Livre de leesce as a kind of refutation of Matheolus. See Anton-Gérard van Hamel, ed., Les Lamentations de Matheolus et le Livre de leesce de Jehan le Fèvre de Resson (Paris: É. Bouillon, 1892-1905).
6 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 5-6.
7 Ibid., 6.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
Christine is confused and pained by the conflict between the philosophical and poetic texts and her own “judgment and experience” (sentoye et savoye) on the question of “female nature and habits” (les naturelz meurs et condicions femenines). Nevertheless, she is resigned to accept that, somehow, the learned authors’ ideas outweigh her knowledge and experience. She falls into a melancholic trance: her mind is “flooded with an endless stream of names as [she] recalled all the authors who had written on this subject.” Grieving her female form, she grows “sick at heart.”

I came to the conclusion that God had surely created a vile thing when He created woman [que ville chose fist Dieux quent il fourma femme]. Indeed, I was astounded that such a fine craftsman could have wished to make such an appalling object which, as these writers would have it, is like a vessel in which all the sin and evil of the world has been collected and preserved [abominable ouvrage qui est vaissel, au dit d’iceulx, si comme le retrait et herberge de tous maulx et de tous vices]. This thought inspired such a great sense of disgust and sadness in me that I began to despise myself and the whole of my sex [moy meismes et tout le sexe feminin] as an aberration in nature [monstre en nature].

Christine then sets out the question that animates the whole text: “Oh Lord, how can this be? [Ha! Dieux, comment puet cecy estre?] Unless I commit an error of faith [erre en la foye], I cannot doubt that you, in your infinite wisdom and perfect goodness [ton inffinnie sapience et tres parfaitte bonté], could make anything that wasn’t good. Didn’t you yourself create woman especially and then endow her with all the qualities that you wished her to have? [Ne fourmas tu

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11 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 6.
12 Ibid., 7.
13 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 6-7; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 620.
toy meismes tres singulierement femme, et des lors luy donnas toutes telles inclinacions qu’il te plaisoit qu’elle eust? How could you possibly have made a mistake in anything? . . . I just cannot understand this contradiction." 14 Thus, from the first chapter of the text, Christine sets out her questions about the “naturelz meurs et condicions” of women as questions about God and creation. 15 For Christine, questions about women are theological questions.

Then a beam of light appears. Christine looks up to see “three ladies, crowned and of majestic appearance.” 16 The figures are radiant: shining and illuminating Christine and everything around her. The first figure speaks. She explains that the ladies are from God. The dames are celestial creatures who have been sent to earth “in order to restore order and justice to those institutions which we ourselves have set up at God’s command.” 17

One by one, each figure introduces herself to Christine. Dame Reason carries a mirror that reveals the nature and essence of all things. Reason explains that her task is to appear to women and men in their consciences and to guide them, as long as they have sense enough to know her when they see her, to do good. The second figure, Dame Rectitude, carries “the yardstick of truth” which measures right from wrong and good and evil. 18 Rectitude tells Christine that she is more present in heaven than on earth. Nevertheless, Rectitude descends, like a beam of light, to persons who are just and, as she tells Christine, calls “them to do good in all things, to strive as far as possible to give each person his or her due, to speak and preserve the truth, to protect the rights of the poor and the innocent, to refrain from stealing from others, and

14 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 7; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 620.
15 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 6; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 619.
16 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 7.
17 Ibid., 10.
18 Ibid., 13.
to uphold the good name of those who are wrongfully accused.”19 The third figure, Dame Justice, carries a gold vessel, a kind of cup, engraved with the fleur de lys of the Holy Trinity, which she uses to allot “to each person exactly what he or she deserves.”20 Justice introduces herself as the culmination of all of the virtues. She is present in heaven, on earth, and in hell. In heaven, she exalts the saints; on earth, she measures the good and the bad that each person does; in hell, she punishes the damned. Justice tells Christine that: “It is I who keep things in order since without me nothing remains stable. I am part of God and God is part of me: in effect, we amount to the same thing.”21 Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, although distinct, are united and interdependent. “What the first lady decides, the second one puts into effect and then I, the third one, bring all to completion.”22

Christine’s Dames Reason, Rectitude, and Justice are more than an allegorical Trinitarian source of Christian revelation. Reason, Rectitude, and Justice model the process of the moral life according to Christine. Christine’s project in moral formation assumes a triune process of learning and coming to knowledge (not mere opinion); applying or translating knowledge into good practices in the world; and constituting order – and peace – out of those good practices. The three-part process of the moral life is represented in the activities of the three celestial figures. What is more, each one of the three activities that, together, constitute the process of the moral life is demonstrated in the lives of women set out in the part of the text that each dame oversees. In Part I, Reason sets out a Christian theological notion of women. In Part II, Rectitude makes

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 14.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 15.
the case for women as moral agents. In Part III, Justice describes female saints who are united with God in heaven.

Reason assures Christine that she has nothing to fear. The celestial figures have come to comfort her. Their comfort takes the form of their correction of opinions, errors, and lies about women. Reason tells Christine that she and Rectitude and Justice have presented themselves to her in order “to help you get rid of those misconceptions which have clouded your mind and made you reject what you know and believe in fact to be the truth just because so many other people have come out with the opposite opinion.”

Dames Reason, Rectitude, and Justice have come from God to teach Christine that the real danger to her comes, not from her female form, but from her acquiescence to the opinions, errors, and lies about women that are in common circulation.

Dame Reason reprimands Christine for abandoning her good sense. Reason compares Christine to the fool in a popular joke. As the fool sleeps, his friends remove his normal clothing and dress him in women’s clothing. When he wakes up, his friends are able to convince him that he is a woman, based on nothing more than the superficial effect of the clothing. Reason suggests that it is just as weak-minded for Christine to believe the substance of the attacks on women, despite her own judgment and experience, based on nothing more than another kind of superficial effect.

Christine sets out to learn from Dame Reason on what account men have filled volumes with attacks on women. Christine’s first question for Reason is whether or not Nature sets men against women. Reason responds that it is just the opposite: Nature does not instill in men antipathy but rather affection for women. Reason explains that “there is no stronger or closer

23 Ibid., 8.
bond in the world than that which Nature, in accordance with God’s wishes, creates between man and woman.”

Reason returns to this point when she explains to Christine that the men who slander women violate reason and nature alike. The dame explains that “even the birds and the beasts naturally love their mate, the female of the species. So man acts in a most unnatural way when he, a rational being, fails to love woman.”

Here, Christine appeals to the notion of the “natural” in order to put down men who slander, or fail to love, women as falling short of the principle of creation that even nonrational beasts meet. The line could be construed as an attack on queer men. The point of Christine’s invocation of the category of the “natural,” however, is not men at all. Christine fills chapters in Part II with narratives about mating and marriage and she does not return to the notion of the “natural” there. Instead, Christine’s point is about women. Christine’s argument is that God creates women and men for cooperation. Women and men are created for partnership. Mating as partnership is one case in point, not the whole point.

In the same passage, Reason explains to Christine that the men who attack women violate reason. Those men fail to see the contributions of women to their well-being and, even, salvation.

Rosalind Brown-Grant has demonstrated that Christine “speaks not as an external authorial voice by which to admonish her contemporaries as Petrarch and Boccaccio do, but rather as a model working from within her text for her female reader who must be brought back from the brink of theological error.” Christine suggests that to hold that women are created less good, less human, than men is to muddle a point of faith. Even as Christine, in fact, objects to

24 Ibid., 17.
25 Ibid., 20.
positions within the Christian theological tradition, she names her opponents as pagan philosophers and poets and sets out her position as the Christian correction of pagan error. Christine reviews ideas about women from the texts of pagan philosophers and poets including Ovid, Cicero, and Cato. She includes the Christian Cecco d’Ascoli (Francesco degli Stabili) in her review of pagan writers on the basis of his trial as a heretic and death at the stake. She responds to each pagan attack on women with a Christian defense of women. For Christine, the fundamental heterodoxy or heresy of those in theological error “was in presenting women as if they were a race of less than human beings, inferior to men in terms of rationality, moral judgment, and intelligence.” Christine’s “response was to emphasize not only the essential sameness of men and women but also their possession of identical moral and intellectual faculties.”

In Part III, Dame Justice contrasts pagan and Christian lessons about women. Justice tells Christine to look to Christian stories. The celestial daughter of God explains that Christian sources, especially the scriptural stories of women and the traditional lives of female saints, demonstrate the great virtue of women. Justice insists that the male authors who dismiss or discount the virtue of Christian women are fools, unnatural or irrational or pedantic exhibitionists. In fact, the practices of women model the Christian moral life. Justice tells Christine that

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29 Ibid., 84.
no matter what you’ve read in the work of pagan authors, I think you’ll find few negative comments on women in holy legends, in stories of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and even in the lives of saints. If you look at such texts, what you will find instead are countless instances of women who were endowed by God with extraordinary constancy and virtue. What great acts of kindness women have unstintingly and diligently performed for the servants of God! What exemplary charity and devotion they have shown them! So much hospitality and so many other kindesses are surely not things to be taken lightly. Even if certain foolish men want to dismiss them as insignificant, it is undeniable that, according to our faith, such acts are the rungs on the ladders that lead to heaven.30

In response to the slanderous Latin proverb that “God made women to weep, talk and spin,” Christine’s Dame Reason sets out the benefits of women’s tears, speech, and spinning in the Christian tradition. The tears of women have benefited all Christians. Jesus Christ responded with compassion to the tears of Martha, Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the widow who was burying her only son.31 The tears of Monica brought Augustine to conversion and salvation: “it was thanks to the tears of a woman that Saint Augustine . . . illuminates the whole of Christendom.”32 The speech of women has advanced God’s providential plan. God created women as human persons, not dumb animals, and so endowed women with speech. The speech of Mary Magdalene enabled her to proclaim the resurrection of Christ. The speech of the Canaanite woman compelled Jesus to heal her daughter.33 The speech of the Samaritan woman

30 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 235.

31 See Luke 7:12-15 (New Revised Standard Version): “As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother’s only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then he came forward and touched the bier, and thebearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, rise!’ The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.”

32 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 26-27.

33 See Matthew 15:22-28 (New Revised Standard Version): “Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.’ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.’ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But she came and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ He answered, ‘It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.’ She said,
witnessed to Jesus as the Messiah.34 Last, the woman who exclaimed in benediction when she heard Jesus teaching is “a good example of that saying that women can’t keep quiet, since she covered herself in glory for jumping and shouting out.”35 Christine’s Reason concludes that “God gave women the power of speech so that they might serve Him. They shouldn’t therefore be criticized for something which has done so much good and so little harm.”36 The work of women serves God. It is “the height of wickedness to reproach women for something for which they should be thanked, honoured and praised.”37

Christine argues that the philosophers and poets, although authoritative, are not infallible.38 Christine demonstrates that, both on principle and according to the practices of the auctores, all ideas, save the articles of faith, are open to debate. She points out that Aristotle corrected Plato and Augustine corrected Aristotle. She reasons that correction means at least the possibility of earlier error. She appeals to the unique status of the “articles of faith.” The articles of faith are irrefutable. The ideas that make up even the greatest moral or natural philosophy, in contrast, are disputable (in theory) and are disputed (in practice). Dame Reason tells Christine,

‘Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered her, ‘Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’ And her daughter was healed instantly.”

34 See John 4:25-29 (New Revised Standard Version): “The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, ‘What do you want?’ or, ‘Why are you speaking with her?’ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’”

35 See Luke 11:27 (New Revised Standard Version): “While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!’”

36 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 28.

37 Ibid.

38 See ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 13 for Christine’s reference to Reason as “an infallible guide.”
if you turn your mind to the very highest realm of all, the realm of abstract ideas, think for a moment whether or not those philosophers whose views against women you’ve been citing have ever been proven wrong. In fact, they are all constantly correcting each other’s opinions, as you yourself should know from reading Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* where he discusses and refutes both their views and those of Plato and other philosophers. Don’t forget the Doctors of the Church, either, and Saint Augustine in particular, who all took issue with Aristotle himself on certain matters, even though he is considered to be the greatest of all authorities on both moral and natural philosophy. You seem to have accepted the philosophers’ views as articles of faith and thus as irrefutable on every point.\(^{39}\)

From there, Christine argues that the image of God is present in the human person in the rational soul and that the rational soul is present in women and men alike. Christine retells the two accounts of human creation in the Book of Genesis as a single narrative in order to emphasize the scriptural support for her idea that the rational soul exists, just the same, in women and men. In her telling, set out to correct some common but muddled, or even heretical, interpretations, the scriptural account describes the creation of man and woman for cooperation and companionship. Christine’s Dame Reason explains that, from the first, God intended the creation of men and women and God enacted the creation of men and women. Christine attends to one of the so-called privileges of women, the privilege of place, as Dame Reason explains that woman was created within paradise, whereas Adam was introduced to paradise only after his creation.\(^{40}\) Indeed, the privilege of *locus* was one of those that Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240) had reviewed in a sermon in which he set out that God “did not want woman to be despised, because he especially gave her three privileges: one, that woman was created inside paradise but man

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

outside it; another, in that man was created just from dirt, woman from his excellent side; and the third, that God wished to have a woman as mother but not a man as a father.” Alcuin Blamires has demonstrated that the privilege that Jacques lists second, the creation of woman from the superior substance of bone rather than the inferior substance of dirt, “particularly caught people’s imagination.” Nevertheless, Christine does not include it in her retelling of the Genesis accounts of human creation. Instead, she focuses on God’s creation of woman from the rib of Adam as a sign of creation for companionship and union and not creation for service or use. For Christine, the creation of woman from the rib of Adam stands for God’s creation of women and men for relationships of partnership and love.

Christine’s interpretation of the accounts of human creation in Genesis has authoritative antecedents. As Blamires has put it, “the suggestion of unity, mutuality, and love interpreted in Eve’s mode of creation from Adam’s side was understood as a strategy whereby God meant to rule out absolute gender hierarchy: for her creation from (say) man’s head or foot could have implied either her tyranny over him or his over her.” Inspired by Augustine’s *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) had set it out in *De sacramentis* and Peter Lombard (d. 1160) had included it in his *Sentences*. Following those texts, the author of the early fifteenth-century prose dialogue in English, *Dives and Pauper*, writes that “God did not make woman out of the foot, as if to be man’s slave, nor out of the head, as if to be his superior,

41 Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, 98.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 101-102.
but out of his side and his rib, so as to be his companion in love and his helper in difficulty.”45

The author of *Dives and Pauper* goes on to add that “when Eve sinned, woman was made subject to man” but that, even still, a wife is for her husband as “companion in love, helper in difficulty, and closest comfort in distress: not as a slave and serf in base subjection, for the husband ought to respect and esteem his wife in that they are one flesh and blood.”46 In *Le Livre de lesce*, Jean le Fèvre de Resson had underscored fellowship in the narrative of the creation of woman.47 Christine continues in this vein. Dame Reason explains that “There [i.e., in the earthly paradise] He put Adam to sleep and created the body of woman from one of his ribs. This was a sign that she was meant to be his companion standing at his side, whom he would love as if they were one flesh, and not his servant lying at his feet.”48

Dame Reason then returns to her lesson that God desired the creation of woman and God enacted the creation of woman. God, Creator of the female form, wills women. As “God’s handmaiden,” Nature – the allegorical form often used in medieval literature to represent the agent of God who creates all living things – wills the female form.49 From there, Dame Reason explains that women and men alike possess rational souls that bear the imprint of God. What is more, the rational souls of women and men are “made equally noble and virtuous in the two sexes.”50 Dame Reason is explicit: woman was created in the image of God (*elle fu fourmee a


46 Ibid.


49 Ibid.

l’image de Dieu).\footnote{Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 22-23; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 651.} And Reason challenges those who would put down the female bearers of the noble imprint of God (\textit{qui porte si noble emprainte}).\footnote{Ibid.} Reason names as fools those persons who maintain that God’s image (\textit{son ymaige}) means God’s body (\textit{corps materiel}).\footnote{Ibid.} Reason demonstrates that “God’s image” cannot mean “God’s body” because the time of God’s creation of human persons precedes the time of God’s Incarnation and so, at the time of God’s creation of human persons, there was not yet a “human form” (\textit{corps humain}) of God to which to refer.\footnote{Ibid.} Therefore, “God’s image” means “the soul” (\textit{l’ame}).\footnote{Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 22-23; ead, “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 652.} And the soul is “immaterial intellect” (\textit{esperit intellectuel}) and “will resemble God until the end of time” (\textit{durera sans fin a la semblance de la deité}).\footnote{Ibid.} Reason concludes that “[God] endowed both male and female with this soul, which [God] made equally noble and virtuous in the two sexes” (\textit{laquelle ame Dieu crea et mist aussi bonne, aussi noble et toute pareille en corps femenin comme ou masculine}).\footnote{Ibid.}

Christine’s next move in the \textit{Cité des dames} is to demonstrate the intellectual potential of women. Christine asks Reason on what account women are not allowed in the courts of law. Christine puts it to Reason: “I’d like you to explain to me why women are allowed neither to present a case at a trial, nor bear witness, nor pass sentence since some men have claimed that it’s all because of some woman or other who behaved badly in a court of law.”\footnote{Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 29; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 664.} Immediately,
Reason refutes and dismisses the notion that some woman misbehaved in a law court and, therefore, women are barred from the law courts as “a malicious fabrication.”

Reason’s first attempt to respond to Christine’s question is a kind of false start. Reason reminds Christine that pursuing first causes is an endless game: “even Aristotle, though he explained many things in his *Problemata* and *Categories*, was not equal to the task.”

Instead, Reason explains why there are such things as “women’s tasks” (les offices des femmes) and “men’s tasks” (ceulx des hommes). Reason’s account affirms the good of the “customary modesty” of women and the good of the customary divisions of work, even as she gestures toward the fragility of custom and the fluidity of limit.

Reason offers that God “endowed each sex with the qualities and attributes which they need to perform the tasks for which they are cut out, even though sometimes humankind fails to respect these distinctions.”

Reason points to the fact that the bodies of men tend to be stronger than the bodies of women. Reason concludes that “even though God has often endowed many women with great intelligence [entendement moulant grant], it would not be right for them to abandon their customary modesty [l’onnesteté ou elles sont enclines] and to go about bringing cases before a court, as there are already enough men to do so.”

Reason’s explanation is more like a march to the subject of the intelligence of women than a real consideration of the prohibition of women from the law courts. Reason’s review of the right causes on account of

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60 Ibid.


63 Ibid. Christine writes that “Dieux a establi homme et femme pour le servir en divers offices et pour aussi aider et conforter l’un l’autre, chascun en ce qui luy est establi a faire, et a chascun sexe a donné tel nature et inclination comme a faire son office luy appartient et compete. Combien que l’espece humaine abuse souvent en ce que elle doit faire.”

which women are excluded from the law courts is insubstantial because it is not the point. Christine is not interested in making the case for “women’s tasks.” Instead, she is interested in demonstrating that the exclusion of women from the law courts is not on account of deficient intelligence.

Christine’s Reason finds her true cause when she puts it to Christine that: “If there are those who maintain that women aren’t intelligent enough to learn the law, I would contradict them by citing numerous examples of women of both the past and the present who were great philosophers and who excelled in many disciplines which are much more difficult than simply learning the laws and the statutes of men.” Women possess intelligence. Women can be knowledgeable and wise. It is not deficient intelligence that keeps women at “women’s tasks” and out of the law courts.

Christine’s Reason takes issue with those persons who hold that women are unable to “govern wisely” and “establish good customs” (elles n’eussent sens naturel en fait de policie et de gouvernement). In response to those persons, she promises to set out “examples from history of several worthy ladies who mastered these arts.” Reason promises to fill the Cité des dames with the stories of women who evince “the fact that an intelligent woman can succeed in any domain.” In the end, then, to prove that custom rather than incompetence tends to keep women from the tasks of men, Christine’s Reason describes women whose competence was clear in the tasks of women and, especially, in the tasks of men.

65 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 29-30.
66 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 30; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 666.
67 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 29-30.
68 Ibid.
Christine’s argument for women as able “to establish good customs” suggests her argument for women as able to be virtuous. Christine makes the case that women, as possessors of reason and founders of good customs, hold the potential for virtue. The Aristotelian theory of ethics is constitutive of Christine’s claim that women are able to be virtuous as women are able “to establish good customs.” Kate Langdon Forhan has suggested that *les meurs* in French renders the Latin *habitus*. In turn, *habitus* is the Latin word used in scholastics texts for *hexis* (ἕξις) in the Greek of Aristotle. The Aristotelian notion that each virtue is a kind of state of being, requiring reason and practice, and that, therefore, the customs form the virtues of character is built into Christine’s notion of women’s good customs and, therefore, potential for virtue. Altogether, then, in the *Cité des dames*, Christine advances the notion of the human person that sees her “form” as female but her soul as human, created “equally noble and virtuous in the two sexes.”

Christine sets out this position in a different way in *Le Livre de l’adversion Christine* (1405-1406), another dream-vision written around the same time as the *Cité des dames*. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac have suggested the Christine was a translator of parts of Thomas’s *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*. They have demonstrated that whole chapters in

69 Ibid.


72 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 7; 22-23.

the second part of the *Advision* follow Thomas’s *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* almost word-for-word. At the opening of the *Advision*, Christine allegorizes creation in general and her own creation as a human person in particular. Christine envisages Nature cooking into being the created world in an oven. She describes Nature mixing together in a mortar the elements of creation – bile, honey, lead, and feathers. Nature pours the compote into molds, and cooks the molds in a special oven so that bodies are formed. Christine describes how “small bodies, variously shaped in accordance with the imprints of the instruments, would then be taken from the molds.” Christine then turns to her own particular creation. She describes her own sex as the result of the fancy of Nature in order to explain sex as accidental. Christine describes how her soul and her form were cooked together and how her sex, as an accidental, was added to the essential nature of her person. Christine explains that Nature made her own person according to Nature’s routine for the creation of human persons: Nature mixed together the compote of bile, honey, lead, and feathers and Christine’s “spirit” (*esperit*). Nature placed the gestational compote into her oven and let it cook until a small human shape was created for Christine. Christine emphasizes that her feminine sex is not the result of the mold that Nature used to cook her into creation. Rather, her feminine sex is the result of the whim of Nature. Christine explains that “because she who had cast it wished it to be so rather than because of the mold, I was given

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76 Ead., *The Vision of Christine de Pizan*, 20. Christine writes that “when she [Nature] had placed all the molded material into the oven, she took my spirit and exactly as she was accustomed to do to give human bodies form, mixed it all together and left me to cook for a certain period of time until a small human shape was made for me.”
the feminine sex.”77 Christine’s sex is not built into the compote that constitutes her created self. Her sex is not built into the mold that created her human. Her sex is not built into her “spirit.”78 Sex is not essential. Sex is accidental.

Altogether, then, from the opening of the Advision, Christine challenges the notion of the perfect active masculine principle aiming to reproduce itself in the generation of a second perfect active masculine principle, a man. Christine insists that her female form is not the result of a misfire in the process of generation. Christine is not misbegotten. God creates women. God wills women. The whims of Nature make some human persons women.

Christine advances the same argument in the Cité des dames. Here, Christine uses the language of generation to argue that women are human persons. Christine insists that the creation of women is as legitimate as the creation of men. Women are not a different species than men. Women and men alike are human persons. Women and men alike are the people of God. Christine writes: “Besides, it’s beyond doubt that women count as God’s creatures and are human beings just as men are [n’est mie doubte que les femmes sont aussi bein ou nombre du pueple de Dieu et de creature humaine que sont les hommes]. They’re not a different race or a strange breed [non mie une autre espece ne de dessemblable generacion].”79

Christine then unyokes the notion of the natural correspondence between body and soul. Christine grants that, in bodily strength, men tend to have the advantage. She acknowledges that men are usually physically stronger than women. For the second time, Christine points out that this difference is one reason for the difference between the work of women and the work of men.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.; ead., Le livre de l’advision Cristine, 14.

But Christine objects to the notion of a natural correspondence between bodily strength and moral strength. Christine contends that weaker bodies are no less able than stronger bodies to do virtuous activities and so women are no less able than men to be virtuous persons. In fact, Christine argues that the weaker bodies of women are an advantage for the potential for virtue of women. Christine describes how Nature tends to compensate for weakness somewhere with strength somewhere else. She explains that “when Nature fails to make a body which is as perfect as others she has created, be it in shape or beauty, or in some strength or power of limb, she very often compensates for it by giving that body some greater quality than the one she has taken away.”

To challenge the notion of a natural correspondence between sex and moral potential, Christine employs the argumentative approach that is her hallmark in the *Cité des dames*. She claims to uphold authoritative exempla that give the lie to notions about women that are too far removed from experience to be true. So here she upholds Aristotle and Alexander the Great as authoritative exemplars. First, she points to Aristotle himself, “the Philosopher,” whose revived texts had framed the debate about women’s nature. Christine reports that Aristotle was unattractive in his physical form but brilliant. She recounts that “it’s often said that the great philosopher Aristotle was very ugly, with one eye lower than the other and a deformed face. Yet,

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80 See *Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector*, trans. Jane Chance (Cambridge: D.S. Brewster, 1997), 40. In *L’Épistre Othéa* (1399-1400), Christine interprets the fable of Hercules. She explains that the virtue of strength does not refer to physical strength alone but also to “constancy and firmness that the good knight [i.e., the human soul] ought to have in all his deeds, resolved through good sense and strength to resist the contrary things that can happen to him.”

81 Ead., *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 33.
if he was physically misshapen, Nature certainly made up for it by endowing him with extraordinary intellectual powers, as is attested by his own writings.”82

Christine then points to Alexander the Great. She claims that Alexander was physically deficient but the model of the virtue of courage.83 She recounts that Alexander was “extremely short, ugly and sickly, and yet, as is well known, he had tremendous courage in his soul.”84 According to Christine, Alexander’s physical deficits made his potential for virtue all the greater. On the strength of the examples of Aristotle and Alexander, Christine concludes that “it doesn’t necessarily follow that a fine, strong body makes for a brave and courageous heart.”85

Having thrown a light on the courage of Alexander, Christine expands on the virtue of courage in general. Christine affirms that courage depends on reason. She writes that reason directs courage (couraige).86 But Christine denies that reason in general or courage in particular depends on the body. She argues that courage, as a force of reason, is a power of the “mind and heart” (l’entendement et ou couraige), not of the body.87 Christine explains that courage is “a gift from God that He allows Nature to implant in some rational beings more than in others. This force resides in the mind and the heart, not in the bodily strength of one’s limbs.”88 Here,

82 Ibid., 33-34. See ead., The Book of the Body Politic, trans. Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 66; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 65. In Le Livre du corps de policie (1406-7), Christine sets out Alexander the Great as an example of a man whose stature was small – indeed, she refers to him as the smallest man ever known (le plus petit homme que on sceust) – but whose boldness and courage were so great that he defeated the great, strong, and handsome (grant, fort et bel) Porus of India in a close combat contest (corps a corps) and built an empire.

83 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 34.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., The Book of the City of Ladies, 34; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 674.

87 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 34.

88 Ibid.
Christine’s notion of the virtue of courage seems more like a gift of Nature than an acquired habit. Nevertheless, she sees courage as following from reason and, therefore, accessible to all bearers of rational souls, women, weak men, and strong men alike (perhaps even more accessible to women and to weak men than to strong men). Christine adds that experience exposes the lie in the notion of a natural correspondence between body and soul. She points out that “you very often see men who are well built and strong yet pathetic and cowardly, but others who are small and physically weak yet brave and tough. This applies equally to other moral qualities.”

Christine concludes that the notion of a natural correspondence between bodily strength and moral strength does not hold even when men alone are taken into account. The supposed correspondence falls apart when women, as possessors of rational souls, are factored into the calculation.

Continuing to untether the equations of activity and masculinity and masculinity and perfection, Christine objects to the notion that sex is the mark of superiority or inferiority and, therefore, that sex is determinative of potential for virtue. Instead, she argues that the practice of virtue is determinative of superiority or inferiority. Christine claims that “human superiority or inferiority” (haulter ou abaissement des gens) is best measured by the degree to which a human person has perfected her/his “nature and morals” (la parfeccion des meurs et des vertus). Christine writes that “it is he or she who is the more virtuous who is the superior being: human superiority or inferiority is not determined by sexual difference but by the degree to which one has perfected one’s nature and morals [celuy ou celle en qui plus a vertus est le plus hault; ne la haulteur ou abaissement des gens ne gist mie es corps selonc le sexe, mais en la parfeccion des

89 Ibid.

In the end, Christine is less interested in potential for virtue than she is in perfection of virtue. She works to explain the absence of a correspondence between sex and potential for virtue. But, in the end, she appeals to women who demonstrate the perfection of virtue. And she argues for evaluation (superiority and inferiority) on the basis of practice.

In Part III of *Le livre de la cité des dames*, Christine develops her argument for women as possessors of rational souls and constructs her case for women as capable of Christian practice in the world. Through hagiographical exempla, Christine demonstrates the capacities of women as Christians. Part III opens with the pronouncement of Dame Justice that the *Cité des dames* has been built: “I can see that the palaces and splendid mansions have now been decorated and made ready and that the streets are all covered with flowers to celebrate the arrival of both the queen and her retinue of most worthy and excellent ladies.”

Justice welcomes the Virgin Mary to the *Cité des dames*. “She will govern and rule over the city and will fill it with the great host of ladies who belong to her court and household.”

Mary replies to Justice: “I will gladly come to live amongst these women, who are my sisters and friends, and I will take my place at their side. This is because Reason, Rectitude, you Justice and even Nature, have all persuaded me to do so.”

Into this section, Christine incorporates some of the so-called privileges of women. She gestures toward each one of the privileges of women that refers to relation to Christ.

As Blamires has put it, “in relation to Christ, woman’s privilege is of *conceptio* as his mother; afterwards to take priority over men in being given first sight of him after the Resurrection (the

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91 Ibid.
92 Ead., *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 201.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., 202.
95 Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*, 97.
apparitio). Finally, in the person of the Virgin Mary she outranks even the angels in the lofty position (exaltatio) she has attained in the celestial hierarchy.”96 So Christine’s Justice heralds the Virgin Mary as the queen of “princesses, ladies and women of every rank” and as the queen of all human persons, reigning “with supreme authority over all earthly powers, second only to her one begotten son whom she conceived of the Holy Spirit, and who is the son of God the Father.”97 From the opening of Part III, Christine appeals to the unique status of the Virgin Mary as the parent of God on earth. Christine emphasizes that the Son of God has no father on earth but the Father in heaven.

In Part I, Christine had appealed to the apparitio in defense of the speech of women. There, Christine’s Reason had explained that: “If women’s speech had been as unreliable and worthless as some maintain, Our Lord Jesus Christ would never have allowed news of such a glorious miracle as his resurrection to be announced first by a woman, as he told the blessed Magdalene to do when he appeared to her first on Easter day and sent her to inform Peter and the other apostles.”98 In Part III, Christine returns to Mary Magdalene and the other female companions of Jesus. Justice praises these women for their steadfast discipleship. “What great devotion and unfailing love these women showed by never once abandoning the Son of God in life or in death, even when all the apostles had rejected and forsaken him!”99 In Part I, Christine had advanced the exaltatio in support of her notion that human greatness is revealed in virtue regardless of sex. Reason appeals to the status of the Virgin Mary above even the angels in

96 Ibid.
97 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 201.
98 Ibid., 27.
99 Ibid., 203.
heaven. Reason puts forward that “happy is he [the one] who serves the Virgin Mary for she is exalted even above the angels.” In Part III, Christine’s Justice appeals to the *exaltatio* to explain that the, even as the humility of the Virgin Mary is greater than that of all other women, the goodness of the Virgin Mary is “is greater than that even of the angels.”

Christine returns to her objection to the notion that the virtues are more possible for men than women to perform. First, she considers fortitude in particular. Christine’s Justice recounts the lives of female saints, “blessed virgins and holy women.” Justice explains that these *vitae* “prove” (*demonstrant*) that God loves women (*Dieu a approuvé le sexe femenin*) and that God endows women, “just as He did men” (*semblablement qu’aux hommes*), with “the strength and fortitude needed” to witness to and to defend the Christian faith, even as martyrs (*constance et force de soustenir pour sa sainte loy horribles martyres*), although these women were young and gentle. In all, Dame Justice tells Christine: “We shall thus prove that God loves the female sex by showing that He endowed women, just as He did men, with the strength and fortitude needed to suffer terrible martyrdoms in defence of His holy faith, despite the fact that these women were only tender, young creatures.” And so, after receiving the Virgin Mary and *Mary Magdalene* and the other female companions of Jesus, Justice recounts the lives of at least thirty-seven more Christian woman.

In this section, first, I review the case for Christine as a constructive and creative hagiographer. Second, I demonstrate that Christine’s lives of female saints advance her overall

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100 Ibid., 23.
101 Ibid., 201.
102 Ibid., 203.
104 Ead., *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 203.
project in the *Cité des dames*. Third, I argue that, altogether, the lives of saints in the *Cité des dames* are a part of the contribution of Christine to the long theological debate about how to read the various scriptural narratives of human creation. From there, I attend to the specter of the Apostle Paul in the *Cité des dames*. I read Part III of the *Cité des dames* as the response of Christine to 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. I suggest that Christine retells the vitae of women saints in order to correct what she sees as the commonly held misunderstanding of the Pauline notion of the generation of women and to demonstrate the apostolic capacities of women. I demonstrate that the prudence that Christine recommends is a kind of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, on the model of Paul.\(^{105}\) I show that the argument at the heart of Part III of the *Cité des dames* is that women have lived up to the Pauline directive to: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”\(^{106}\) I conclude that Christine describes women whose *imitatio Christi* is derived through an *imitatio Pauli*. Altogether, I argue that Christine’s notions of Paul and Pauline prudence advance her basic argument for women as human persons and offer to women a model of Christian practice in the world.

As Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski has demonstrated, Christine was a constructive and creative hagiographer.\(^{107}\) Christine does not just repeat the lives of saints set out in her sources. She retools them and repositions them in the service of her cause. As Blumenfeld-Kosinski has

\(^{105}\) See Karen Green, Introduction to *The Book of Peace*, by Christine de Pizan, ed. Karen Green et al. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 21; ead., “On Translating Christine de Pizan as a Philosopher,” in *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Karen Green et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 117-37; Maud Elizabeth Temple, “Christine de Pisan and the Victorine Revival: An Essay on some of the Mediaeval Elements in French Classical Criticism” (PhD diss., Radcliffe College, 1913), 89-90. Temple suggested that “Gerson’s three prime authorities in moral matters” are “Seneca, St. Paul, and experience, and all these were for him adapted to enhance the value of women.”

\(^{106}\) 1 Corinthians 11:1 (New Revised Standard Version).

put it, Christine “repositions the familiar saints’ lives and gives them a new function: to respond point by point to the accusations leveled against women by the misogynistic tradition.”108

Christine’s principal source for the exempla that comprise Parts I and II of the Cité des dames is Giovanni Boccaccio’s De mulieribus claris. Yet Boccaccio had reviewed the lives of pagan pre-Christian and non-Christian women alone. One of Christine’s unnamed sources, Jean le Fèvre de Ressons’s Livre de leesce, a late fourteenth-century text in praise of women, had included the lives of some female saints. And some of the female saints that Jean describes also appear in the Cité des dames. But all of Jean’s attention to holy women fills only about eighty-five lines of a four-thousand-line text. Jean paints the lives of female saints in broad brush strokes.

Christine herself suggests that she followed Le miroir historial, Jean de Vignay’s French translation, made around 1332, of the Speculum historiale, part of Vincent de Beauvais’s vast encyclopedia, the Speculum maius, composed at the request of Louis IX and finished in 1263. As Christine tells her reader, “you only have to look in the Miroir historial, which contains many of these stories, to find out all about these other saints.”109

In fact, however, Christine was a more active hagiographer. Christine’s lives of female saints do not rehearse the lives in the Miroir historial, or in the Legenda aurea by the Dominican preacher James of Voragine, which Christine also knew. The Miroir historial had been organized according to the reigns of the Roman emperors and the Legenda aurea had been structured according to the liturgical calendar. But Christine’s text presents the lives of saints to advance

108 Ibid., 159.
109 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 217.
her argument for women as human persons, capable of virtue and capable of Christian practice in the world.

In all, Christine’s lives of female saints stand as a contribution to the long theological conversation about how to read the various scriptural narratives of human creation, which tended to pit Genesis 1:27 – “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” – against 1 Corinthians 11:7 – “For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man.” Christine advances her argument for women as full human persons in the face of the account in 1 Corinthians 11 of woman as “from man” and “for the sake of man.” Christine distinguishes the procreation of bodies by parents from the creation of rational souls by God. She describes how, even as the bodies of women are vulnerable to men, the souls of women are from God, for God, and invulnerable before men. And she demonstrates this through the lives of female saints for each one of whom no degree of violence to the body can untether her soul from God.

First, Christine emphasizes the difference between fathers on earth and the Father in heaven. Woven into the lives of female saints in the *Cité des dames* are stories of unbelieving fathers who peach and persecute their daughters. Three in particular stand out: the lives of Saint


111 1 Corinthians 11:9 (New Revised Standard Version) reads: “Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.”

112 See Christine de Pizan, *Les sept psaumes allégorisés of Christine de Pisan*, ed. Ruth Ringland Rains (The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 142. In *Les sept psaumes allégorisés* (1409), Christine underscores the inclusion of women in the body politic. Christine prays to God “for all of the devout sex of women [le devot sexe des femmes], whatever estate they are in [de quelque estat que elles soyent], grant them the grace to achieve their salvation, keep them from believing bad counsel. For those women who are pregnant, grant them a good delivery, and bring their fruit to baptism. Comfort women who are afflicted, succor women who are poor, keep widows in your holy care, and you, Holy Spirit, be their Father” (emphasis added).
Catherine of Alexandria, Saint Barbara, and Saint Christine. After the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene have entered the *Cité des dames*, the text turns to the life of Saint Catherine of Alexandria.\(^{113}\) Christine describes Catherine as well-trained in “theology and the sciences” (*comme grant clergesce et aprise es sciences que elle estoit*).\(^{114}\) When Catherine met the pagan emperor, she spoke to him about the error of his belief and practice. Christine explains how Catherine “used philosophical arguments to prove [*a prouver par raisons philosophiques*] that there was only one God [*un seul Dieu*], the Creator of all things [*createur de toutes chose*], and that He alone should be worshipped [*celluy doit estre aouré et non autre*].”\(^{115}\) In response, the emperor summoned the fifty greatest philosophers of Egypt to dispute with Catherine. She persuaded each one of the truth of Christianity and each one became a Christian. There are many important aspects of Christine’s account of the life of Saint Catherine. For now (i.e., for illuminating the extent to which Christine the hagiographer and, indeed, Christine the theologian, one and the same, sets up God the Father in heaven above and against human fathers on earth), the most revealing fact is that, in Vincent de Beauvais’s description of the life of Saint Catherine in the *Speculum historiale*, on which Christine drew, Vincent had specified that Catherine was trained in the liberal arts by her father. Christine’s source text offered her a model of a good believing Christian father. Yet Christine omitted it from her text. For Christine, Saint Catherine’s one good father is in heaven.

\(^{113}\) See Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies*, trans. Charity Cannon Willard (Tenafly, NJ and New York: Bard Hall Press and Persea Books, 1989), 203. Christine also gives Saint Catherine of Alexandria a special place in *Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames* (1405-6). In the later text, Christine writes that “a maiden also ought to be devout, especially toward Our Lady, St. Catherine, and all the virgin saints.”

\(^{114}\) Ead., *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 204; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 979.

\(^{115}\) Ibid.
Instead, and unbelieving fathers set the mold for Christine’s text, as in her retelling of the life of Saint Barbara. Because of her great beauty, Barbara’s father imprisoned his daughter in a tower in order to protect her. In the tower, Barbara “was divinely inspired to become a Christian.”\textsuperscript{116} With no one present to baptize her, she christened herself in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Barbara’s father would not accept her faith and Barbara would not recant. And so, after a series of events, Barbara was decapitated by her father himself.

Barbara is decapitated by her father on earth and saved by her Father in heaven. Christine’s language emphasizes the contrast. God calls Barbara “daughter” (\textit{tres amee fille}).\textsuperscript{117} God calls Godself “Father” (\textit{ton Pere}).\textsuperscript{118} And Barbara’s father on earth is called “her wicked father” (\textit{son felon pere}).\textsuperscript{119} After Barbara has been decapitated, she joins her Father in heaven, but her father on earth is struck down and dies. In all, Christine tells how Barbara “began to pray, beseeching God to help those who would call on Him for her sake in remembrance of her martyrdom. When she had finished praying, a voice was heard saying, ‘Come, my dearly beloved daughter. Come and rest in your Father’s kingdom and receive your crown. All that you have requested will be granted.’ At the top of the mountain which was chosen as her place of execution, her wicked father himself cut off her head. On his way back down again, a bolt of lightning fell from the heavens and burnt him to a cinder.”\textsuperscript{120}

Christine’s argument that God the Father in heaven is the source and end of women as human persons finds its clearest expression in her telling of the life of Saint Christine. Christine

\textsuperscript{116} Ead., \textit{The Book of the City of Ladies}, 216.

\textsuperscript{117} Ead., \textit{The Book of the City of Ladies}, 217; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 999.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120} Ead., \textit{The Book of the City of Ladies}, 216-17.
places the life of Saint Christine at the very heart of Part III of the *Cité des dames*. Christine explains that Saint Christine who, of course, shares her name with the author of *Le livre de la cité des dames*, was named by Jesus Christ himself after (i.e., so as to resemble) himself. Like Saint Barbara, Saint Christine’s father imprisoned his daughter “because of her great beauty.”

Locked in a tower with twelve other maidens for her companions, Saint Christine grew more and more committed to Christianity, despite the discouragement of her attendants. Eventually, Saint Christine’s conflict with her father because of her Christian faith reached its crisis. Christine the hagiographer explains how Saint Christine was a witness to the Christian faith and a model of strength and courage and fortitude in the face of torture and martyrdom.

Saint Christine saw the truth of Christian teaching. She tried to correct her father, a pagan and an idolater. She tried to teach him that there is one God, the Creator, who is three-in-one. But her father was hardheaded, hardhearted, and cruel. He had her tortured in order to get her to recant. But Saint Christine demonstrated strength and courage and fortitude for her faith.

Christine sets out the life of Saint Christine in terms of the Father in heaven over and against a father on earth when she has the father of Saint Christine echo the text of Genesis 2:23 (“Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken”) and call out: “Daughter, it truly breaks my paternal heart to have to torture my own flesh and blood, but my duty to the gods means that I have no choice, for you have turned your back on them.”

In response, Saint Christine articulates the distinction between the procreation of the body by a human father and the creation of the soul by God. Saint Christine replies: “Tyrant!

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121 Ibid., 218.

122 Ibid., 219. Christine’s language is reminiscent of Genesis 2:23 (New Revised Standard Version): “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.’”
You’re fit only to be called the enemy of my happiness, not my father! Though you may inflict a harsh punishment on this flesh which you have created, you have no power to subject my spirit to any temptation whatsoever, for it has been created by my Father who lives in heaven and it is protected by Jesus Christ, my saviour.” So Christine has Saint Christine respond in language that reflects the theological and political controversies of Christine’s own day, including the question of tyrannicide.

Christine then describes how Saint Christine’s father continued to have his daughter tortured for her Christian faith. Christine the hagiographer emphasizes the mercy of God the Father in heaven over and against the cruelty of Christine’s father on earth. She tells how “God, the merciful Father, took pity on His servant.” Christine’s father on earth asked her who taught her “such black magic” to which Christine has Saint Christine respond, again in the theological and political language of Christine’s own day: “ruthless tyrant, didn’t I make it plain to you that my Father, Jesus Christ, was the one who taught me to have patience and to uphold my faith in Him, the living God? Thanks to Him, I shall overcome every possible torture you can devise and, with the grace of God, I will resist all the assaults that the Devil may make on me.” So Christine’s Saint Christine renounces the paternity of her father on earth for the patrimony of her Father in heaven. What is more, Christine’s Saint Christine attributes her virtue to her faith. Saint Christine’s father then tied a stone around the neck of his daughter and threw her into the sea. But, just as Saint Christine met the waves, angels lifted her and carried her. Saint Christine prayed. She asked Jesus Christ “to baptize her using the sea water as the holy sacrament, for her

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124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., 219-20.
sole desire was to be christened.”126 Then “Jesus Christ himself came down with a whole host of angels and baptized her with his own name.”127 Jesus Christ “crowned her and placed a bright star on her head before leading her back to dry land.”128 That night, Saint Christine’s father was tormented by the Devil and died.129 So Saint Christine was baptized and saved by her Father in heaven and her father on earth was tormented and died.

Christine’s case for the rational souls of women as from God and for God leads her to privilege souls over bodies. Christine even suggests a connection between the body in pain and the power to teach. Christine’s argument for God as the source and the end of women, and her subsequent distinction between the creation of the souls of women from God and for God and the procreation of the bodies of women (based on the idea in Genesis 2:23 that woman was created “out of Man”), is present throughout her lives of saints. For Christine, speech is a faculty of the rational soul. Two passages, in particular, suggest a correspondence between bodies in pain and eloquent and effective speech. In the first, the third judge to persecute Saint Christine (after the death of her father and the death of the second judge) had her tongue cut out because she would not hold off from calling out the name of Jesus Christ. But, with her tongue cut out, Saint Christine spoke even more clearly and even more eloquently than before. So the judge ordered Christine’s torturers to cut out her tongue again and completely in order to stop her from speaking. But, again, the saint only spoke even more effortlessly. As Christine’s retelling of the life of Saint Christine continues, a piece of the saint’s severed tongue blinded the judge. Later,

126 Ibid., 220.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
Christine describes an exchange between Saint Euphemia and her persecutor. Christine writes that “the more Euphemia’s body was racked with pain, the more eloquent she became as words inspired by the Holy Spirit continued to pour out of her mouth [tout fust son corps froissié par moul de paines, le scens d’elle adés croissoit et rendoit parolles plaines du Saint Esperit].”

Because Christine sets creation of the soul apart from and above procreation of the body, and because Christine suggests that the body’s pain somehow enhances the soul’s potential to persuade, Christine’s lives of female saints include the stories of women who lose some of the physical attributes of their sexed bodies. For Christine, these women more clearly represent the unsexed soul, which God has made “equally noble and virtuous in the two sexes,” and the unsexed potential for virtue and Christian practice. This is clearest in the lives in which women have their breasts cut off and women live disguised as men. In Christine’s text, four female saints have their breasts cut off and three female saints live disguised as men.

One of the women who dressed as a man was Nathalia. Nathalia dressed in men’s clothing in order to be able to visit her husband, a persecuted Christian, in prison. Christine’s source text, Vincent de Beauvais’s Speculum historiale, focuses on Adrian, the husband of Nathalia. Sometimes, in her retellings, Christine leaves out the male saints who appear alongside the female saints. Here, however, Christine keeps both figures but recasts each one substantively. Vincent’s Nathalia is controlling and, above all, concerned with her own reputation as a Christian. She doubts Adrian’s faith. She insists that he be killed first so that he cannot recant after her death. In contrast, Christine’s Nathalia is far from suspicious of Adrian’s commitment.

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131 See Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 163-68 for Christine’s description of the life of the wife of Bernabo the Genoese, who lived disguised as a man, Sagurat da Finoli, after her husband, having been tricked into believing that she had been unfaithful to him, ordered for her to be killed.
Christine’s Nathalia is present at Adrian’s death, but she is there to comfort, not control or coerce. Blumenfeld-Kosinski has suggested that Christine’s life of Nathalia contributes to her work in Part II of the *Cité des dames* to demonstrate that wives can be good and to support marriage. Yet Nathalia is the model wife when she dresses as a man to support her husband as his sister in Christ. Here, the paradigm of the good Christian wife is a woman who has lost the sexed attributes of her body. Indeed, as Christine tells it, Nathalia’s life performs the argument, set out in Part I, that “it is he or she who is the more virtuous who is the superior being: human superiority or inferiority is not determined by sexual difference but by the degree to which one has perfected one’s nature and morals.”¹³² Nathalia models the (unsexed) perfection of (unsexed) virtue and (unsexed) Christian practice. Nathalia’s relationship with her husband is the relationship of cooperation and companionship between two rational souls together pursuing virtue and Christian life in the world. Nathalia’s relationship with God is the relationship between a rational soul and its Creator, its source and its end. For Christine, Nathalia’s concealment of the sexed features of her body helps to show that the soul is unsexed, virtue is unsexed, Christian practice is unsexed, relationship with God is unsexed and even, sometimes, relationship with a spouse is unsexed.

In the end, then, Christine writes as a hagiographer in order to participate in ongoing theological conversations about the status of women as human persons based on the scriptural accounts of creation, especially Genesis 1, Genesis 2, and 1 Corinthians 11. As Christine retells and reorders the lives of female saints, she responds to theological interpretations of the biblical texts, contributes to ongoing theological conversations, and advances a notion of the human person that includes women as human persons. She points to the lives of female saints for proof

¹³² Ibid., 23.
of the potential of women for virtue, including strength, courage, and fortitude. Christine sees that the bodies of women are from men and vulnerable to men. She focuses on the souls of women. She argues that the souls of women are from God, for God, and immune to the assaults and attacks of men. Christine’s disavowal of the bodies of women is an ambiguous inheritance. But her argument for inclusion, beginning with the full inclusion of women in the category “human,” helps to demonstrate how she put forth new interpretations of traditional theological doctrines, worked out in relationship to authoritative texts and traditions, in the interest of a corrected Christian theological notion of the human person.

This is further demonstrated in the way that Christine retells the vitae of women saints in order to correct what she sees as the commonplace misunderstanding of the Pauline notion of the generation of women and to demonstrate the apostolic capacities of women. I attend to the specter of the Apostle Paul in Christine’s *Livre de la cité des dames*. First, I suggest that Christine composed Part III of *Cité des dames* in response to 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. The eleventh chapter of the first epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians had framed the theological conversation about women and women and men in relation. Christine makes the case that the text, read rightly, sets out the interdependence of women and men under God. The prudence that Christine recommends is a kind of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, on the model of Paul. I conclude that Christine’s Paul and Pauline prudence affirm her basic argument for women as human persons and offer to women a model of Christian praxis in the world.

Christine names the Apostle Paul twice in Part II and twice at the end of Part III of *Cité des dames*, but her engagement with his text, 1 Corinthians 11, is clearest in her life of Saint

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133 See ibid., 236-7, where Justice tells Christine: “I could tell you endless stories about women of all different social ranks, whether virgins, wives or widows, whose wonderful strength and constancy revealed how God was working through them.”
Martina. Christine describes Martina as a beautiful Christian virgin from a noble Roman family who refused to marry the emperor because she had dedicated herself to God. From the outset of the *vita*, Martina is eloquent. Even more than her refusal of the emperor, her words confessing Christian faith enraged him. Christine describes a long series of conflicts between Martina and the emperor in which the emperor grew crueler and crueler as God guarded Martina and Martina endured, prayed, and won converts. The scenes of torture and impotent violence are punctuated by episodes at pagan temples. The emperor forced Martina into a temple at the opening; in the middle, at the turning-point toward even more brutal violence; and at the conclusion of the life of Martina. The first time, the idols fell and smashed, the temple fell and crumbled, the temple priests died, and a devil that had been concealed within an idol screamed and confessed that Martina was the servant of God. The second time, thunder roared and lightning flashed and struck, the idols fell and shattered, and the temple priests died. In between the victories of Martina and God in the temples, Martina was stripped naked. Her flesh was “cut to ribbons.”¹³⁴ She was beaten and her limbs were smashed. She was imprisoned. Burning oil was poured on her. Her flesh was torn off with iron pincers. Martina was thrown before a lion that had not eaten in three days but the lion curled up beside her and licked her wounds. Martina was set to be burned alive but God sent the wind and the fire killed her persecutors instead.

In the end, the emperor commanded that the throat of Martina be cut, and Martina was released from her suffering. But before Martina came to her end, the emperor made the one threat that provoked a response from Martina. (Until this point in the life, all of Martina’s speech had been for confessing her Christian faith.) In between commanding that Martina be burnt alive and that her throat be cut, the emperor ordered that her beautiful long hair be cut off. This moved

¹³⁴ Ibid., 209.
Martina to retort. “Just as you are taking away the hair that the Apostle calls the glory of a woman, so the Lord will take away your kingdom and will persecute you until you suffer a terrible death in torment.” Christine makes few direct references to scripture in *Cité des dames* so these lines stand out. Christine has Martina speak the words of 1 Corinthians 11:15, “but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory.” Christine is explicit in suggesting that her life of Martina be read in the light of 1 Corinthians 11.

As the life of Martina continues, it becomes clearer that Christine is using the life of Martina, as she writes in this chapter, as God uses the saints to advance human knowledge of divine truth, in order to offer a constructive correction to the commonplace errors about the meaning of the text of Paul.

Even after the admonition of Martina, the emperor imprisoned the blessed virgin in a temple for the third time. The text emphasizes that Martina was sealed inside the temple. The emperor marked the locked doors with his own seal. Three days passed, and the emperor returned to the temple. He saw that the temple idols had fallen onto the floor and had been demolished, and he saw Martina, in the words of the text, “playing with the angels.” The emperor questioned Martina. He asked her what she had done to his gods. Martina responded: “The glory of Jesus Christ has brought them down.” Note that Martina herself was the subject of the emperor’s question. He asked her what she had done to his gods. I do not think that Christine has Martina change the subject when she responded that “the glory of Jesus Christ has

135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid., 210.
138 Ibid.

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Rather, I think that Christine elides Martina herself with “the glory of Jesus Christ.” When Christine has Martina warn the emperor not to do harm to her hair, her glory, Christine positions the book in relationship to the account of the order of human creation set out in 1 Corinthians 11. And, because Martina seems to affirm the Pauline line as she repeats it, Christine seems to gesture toward Paul’s text in order to uphold the literal interpretation of the scriptural text. Here, however, Christine undoes that apparent affirmation. Here, Christine has Martina speak the words of 1 Corinthians 11:7 but speak them to a new purpose. The effect of the slip from Martina herself to “the glory of Jesus Christ” is to undermine the apparent meaning of Paul’s text at the literal level. Paul’s text has it that: “The man indeed ought not to cover his head: because he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man.” But, as Christine is at pains to emphasize in her description of the emperor’s own seal securing the locked doors and guaranteeing perfect closure, Martina is alone in the temple, but for the angels. No man is present. Yet the glory of Jesus Christ felled the emperor’s gods. The text invites the reader to conclude that Martina herself is the glory of Jesus Christ. Martina is not some kind of deficient or derivative human person. Rather, as a human person, Martina is the image and the glory of God.

It is possible that even the angels with which the emperor found Martina playing are meant to point the reader to Paul’s text. In a line that continues to baffle modern Biblical scholars, 1 Corinthians 11:10 sets out that: “Therefore ought the woman to have a power [a symbol of authority] over [on] her head, because of the angels.” Maureen Quilligan has demonstrated that, in the life of Saint Christine that follows the life of Saint Martina, Christine makes episodes that are metaphorical in Vincent de Beauvais’s text into literal events in the life

139 Ibid.
of the saint. Perhaps Christine employs the same strategy here. Whatever the angels meant for Paul and his refractors and interpreters, Christine seems to have decided to make them real and present in the life of Martina.

Later in the text, Christine sets out a narrative similar to the life of Saint Martina in the life of the blessed virgin Theodosina. Theodosina was another beautiful noble woman who stands out in the text for having been articulate even before her passion begins. The judge Urban threatened to do violence to Theodosina, a Christian, unless she renounced Jesus Christ. But Theodosina answered Urban “with the words of God.” In response to the power of her speech, Urban “had her hung by her hair and given a severe beating.” The assault on the hair of Theodosina provoked her to speak a long rebuke. Christine describes how “throughout her suffering, the virgin kept on coming out with other splendid words such as these.” The judge Urban failed to kill Theodosina when he had her thrown into the sea with a stone tied around her neck (angels buoyed her) and he failed to kill her when he had her thrown before two leopards (they danced around her in joy). He only succeeded when he had her beheaded. Even still, after her death, she appeared to her parents to prove her faith and to call them to conversion.

In another similar narrative, during the confrontation of Saint Christine with the second of her three judges, the saint was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil and pierced with iron hooks. But Saint Christine “kept on signing sweet hymns in praise of God” and “she mocked her


141 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 215. Christine emphasizes that “because she answered him with the words of God, he had her hung by her hair and given a severe beating” (emphasis added).

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.
torturers” and promised that their punishment would come in hell. Here, for the third time, the words of a particularly articulate saint provoke an especially cruel response. The judge, desperate to silence Saint Christine, tried to assault her hair. As Christine the hagiographer puts it:

“Realizing that his efforts were all in vain, the cruel judge had her suspended by her long, golden hair [par les cheveux, qu’elle avoit longs et blons comme or] in front of the whole town. Women rushed up to her in tears, full of pity at seeing such a tender young creature being so ill-treated.”

The attempt of the judge to hurt and humiliate Saint Christine had the opposite effect: she endured and won women as converts to the Christian faith.

In Part II of the Cité des dames, Christine names Paul in the chapter on Clotilde, in which she turns to the contributions of women “in the spiritual domain” (l’espiritualité). Christine has Dame Rectitude recount how Clotilde “first brought Christianity to the French monarchy.”

Rectitude continues:

If I were to recount to you all the great gifts that women have brought, it would take up far too many pages. However, whilst we’re still talking about spiritual matters, there were many martyrs who were looked after, sheltered and hidden by lowly women, widows and honest townswomen, and about whom I’Il tell you more later. If you read these martyrs’ legends, you will find that God was happy for them all, or at least the vast majority, to be comforted by women in their torments and sufferings. What am I saying? It’s not just them: the Apostles too, as well as Saint Paul and the others, even Jesus Christ himself, were fed and cared for by women.

145 Ibid., 220.
146 Ibid., 220-21; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 1005. Christine explains that the cruel act wins converts: “realizing that his efforts were all in vain, the cruel judge had her suspended by her long, golden hair in front of the whole town. Women rushed up to her in tears, full of pity at seeing such a tender young creature being so ill treated. The women said to the judge: ‘Brutal tyrant, you’re more ferocious than a wild beast. How can any man have it in his heart to be so violent towards a lovely, innocent girl like this?’”
148 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 138.
Christine ends the chapter on Clotilde with an account of the “honest widow called Catulla” who saved the bodies of Saint Denis and his companions Saint Rusticus and Saint Eleutherius after each man had been decapitated for his faith. She then buried their bodies in her house “leaving an inscription over them so that they could be identified at a future date.” Christine adds that “it was again a woman, my lady Saint Genevieve,” who had a chapel built on that site which stood until “Dagobert, the good king of France, founded the church which still stands there today.” Altogether, in the chapter on Clotilde, Christine makes the case for the potential of women for virtue and Christian practice as she describes the contributions of Clotilde, Catulla, and Genevieve as essential participants in the foundation of the Church in France. Moreover, Christine is clear that this reliance on the faith and works of women is not just true for the Church in France. The apostles, Paul, and Jesus Christ himself all depended on women. The Christian service of women is a sine qua non for the Church.

At the end of Part III, Christine refers to the Apostle Paul twice in her list of female saints who served the male disciples, apostles, and evangelists. Christine seems to be following in the tradition of Abelard who, as Blumenfeld-Kosinski has noted, pointed to “the old histories” to show “that women were not separated from men in those things which pertain to God, or to any excellence in religion.” Christine demonstrates the virtues of charity, hospitality, and kindness in the lives of these female saints. First, Christine names Paul when she describes the life of an unnamed saint, doubtless Thecla, “whose pure love for Saint Paul the Apostle was so great that

149 Ibid., 139.
150 Ibid.
151 Blumenfeld-Kosinski, “‘Femme de corps et Femme par sens,’” 172. The line of Abelard is from Ep. VII (VI).
152 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 235.
she went everywhere with him and served him most diligently.”153 Second, Christine names Paul when she recounts the life of Plautilla, the second to last saint named in the text. Plautilla cared for Paul in his life and cried for him when the emperor Nero ordered his execution. Christine writes that Paul asked Plautilla for her veil. “Saint Paul asked her for the veil that she was wearing on her head.”154 Some people mocked her and called her a fool for parting with such a pretty possession. But, of course, Plautilla removed her veil from her head and gave it to Paul. And, at the end, the veil of Plautilla was a comfort to Paul. “Paul used the veil to blind himself.”155 Paul used the veil of Plautilla to cover his eyes at his execution. After the death of Paul, “the angels gave the blood-stained veil back to her, which she then kept as a precious relic.”156 Later, Paul appeared to Plautilla and told her that “for having done him this service on earth, he would do her a service in heaven by praying for her soul.”157 After his death, Paul appeared to Plautilla. Here, Christine herself seems to gesture to the specter of Paul present in the text. Paul remembered Plautilla’s love for him and, above all, her gift of the veil. On Christine’s telling, then, the life of Plautilla responds to 1 Corinthians 11:4-7. The Pauline text sets out that: “Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head – it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and

153 Ibid., 236.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man.” But Christine’s life of Plautilla belies the literal level of the Pauline text. In the life of Plautilla, Paul himself veils his head. But Paul does not dishonor himself or disgrace his faith. And, in the life of Plautilla, Plautilla removes her veil. But Plautilla does not dishonor herself or disgrace her faith. Far from affirming the conclusion of the text at the literal level, that man “is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man,” Christine’s life of Plautilla reverses it.

In this way, in the scriptural interpretation set out in the life of Plautilla, Christine performs the very interpretive method that she had recommended in Part I of the *Cité des dames*. In Part I, Reason instructs: “As for the poets you mention, you must realize that they sometimes wrote in the manner of fables which you have to take as saying the opposite of what they appear to say. You should therefore read such texts according to the grammatical rule of *antiphrasis*, which consists of interpreting something that is negative in a positive light, or vice versa. My advice to you is to read those passages where they criticize women in this way and to turn them to your advantage, no matter what the author’s original intent was.”¹⁵⁸ Reason recommends this hermeneutic for “the poets” in particular. But the life of Plautilla demonstrates that Christine exercises this hermeneutic on scripture as well.

I offer one more point about Part III of Christine’s text as a response to the account of human creation set out in 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. The Pauline language of headship is present even in the overture of Part III. As described, Part III opens with Mary, the mother of Jesus, accepting the invitation of Dame Justice to live with the women who constitute the *Cité des dames*.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 8-9. See Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 88. In a passage on irony and antiphrasis, Augustine explains that in antiphrasis “we signify the opposite meaning, not by our intonation, but either by the use of particular words whose origin derives from a contrary – for example, *lucus* [grove], which is so called because it has little light, or by using certain customary expressions (though these can also be used without a contrary meaning).”
dames. Mary tells Justice that “women serve, honour and praise me without end, thus I am now and ever shall be the head of the female sex. God Himself always wished this to be so and it was predestined and ordained by the Holy Trinity.”  

Paul’s line at 1 Corinthians 11:3 puts forth that “the head of the woman is the man.” So, even here, in the first chapter of Part III, Christine seems to take up the words of the Pauline text, and to place them at the service of a corrected Christian notion of women and men, alike as human persons, from God and for God, with Mary as the head of women and Jesus Christ as the head of men.

Altogether, Christine’s engagement with Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians in Part III of her text underscores the notion of human interdependence that is present in Paul’s text. 1 Corinthians 11:11 sets out: “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.” Part of Christine’s project in Part III is to confront Paul’s text, and the troubling picture of women and men in relation in the order of creation that it seems to put forth in order to set out a sense of the scripture that sees women as human persons, able to do virtue and able to be Christian actors in the world.

Next, I demonstrate that the prudence that Christine recommends in her next text, Le livre des trois vertus (1405-6), is a kind of phronesis, or practical wisdom, on the model of Paul. Christine’s attention to the theological meaning of the hair of women, which I take to be a suggestion of her engagement with the Pauline notion of women and men in relation in the order of creation, continues in Trois vertus. In a chapter warning women against pride in general and proud dress in particular, Christine offers that she prefers the Italian custom of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{159} Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 202.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{160} 1 Corinthians 11:3 (New Revised Standard Version) reads: “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ.”}\]
decorating dresses with precious stones and metals that can be used from year to year over the French habit of favoring decorative materials that drape and drag and wear out. Christine writes: “Our French excesses in materials and trailing panels too soon wear out, requiring replacement by others. So too with the headdresses.” Then, to our point, Christine adds: “Surely their heads are more attractive. Nothing, after all, is a more beautiful headdress for a woman than fine blond hair [beaulx chevalx blons], as St. Paul bears witness when he says: ‘Hair is a woman’s capital ornament’ [cheveux est le parement des femmes]. The word “capital,” possibly referring to the head, in the translation is not present in Christine’s French. Nevertheless, here again, Christine points to 1 Corinthians 11 and Paul’s words on hair and headship. What is more, in this passage, Christine uses the word parement to describe the hair of women. Parement seems far from “glory,” the scriptural term. (In the Vulgate, Paul’s word is gloria.) The meaning of parement is nearer to adornment, robe, or decorative piece of cloth placed on clothing or on an altar or on armor. On the one hand, Christine seems to be appealing to Paul’s words in order to warn women off of puffed up habits of dress. On the other hand, Christine seems to be remaking the Pauline notion of the hair of women as “glory” into a symbol of women’s beauty, strength, and virtue.

Christine also points to the Apostle Paul earlier in Le livre des trois vertus, in a passage on the life of virtue for Christians in the world. As Blumenfeld-Kosinski has noted, Christine describes the two paths that lead to heaven, the active life and the contemplative life. Christine


162 Ibid.

163 Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 176.

164 Christine de Pizan, Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 25.
describes the contemplative life as a life of withdrawal from the world and attention to God. The contemplative life is the most perfect expression of Christian life on earth. Christine describes it as “the way, above all others, manifestly agreeable to God.” She then describes the second kind of Christian practice, the active life. Christine emphasizes that love of God animates and inspires Christian life in the world. The active life is the life of charity, that is, the love of God that overflows in the world as love of neighbor. Christine draws on Paul’s avowal that there is no benefit for the soul apart from charity. She rewrites 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3 – “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” – as: “Whoever has all the other virtues, prays unceasingly, goes on pilgrimages, fasts at length, and does all good, but has no charity, profits in nothing.”

Christine tells her readers: “You must then decide which of these two ways you will follow.” In the end, Christine commends the counsel of Paul to practice moderation. In the voice of the princess, her reader, Christine writes: “Therefore, since I conclude that I am not strong enough to follow either of these paths, at least I will try the middle way, as Saint Paul advises, and select from each path as much of the best as I am able.” Here, Christine draws on a line from the Apostle Paul’s epistle to the Philippians to introduce her case for how Christian

165 Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 79.
166 Ibid., 84.
167 Ibid., 81.
168 Ibid., 82.
women are to live in the world. Consistent with her case for prudence, Christine recommends “le moyen,” which has been translated into English as “middle way” and “happy medium.” But the Vulgate Latin that I suggest is behind Christine’s French counsels modestia, moderation or gentleness. (The Greek behind the Latin seems to mean “a humble, patient steadfastness, which is able to submit to injustice, disgrace, and maltreatment without hatred and malice, trusting in God in spite of all of it.”)

Christine goes on to recommend prudence, that is, right reason put into action as Christian praxis in the active life in the world. I suggest that she does this in the context of Pauline notions of Christian life in the world. Karen Green has argued that, “as Christine seems to have grasped, what is important to phronesis is not so much that it does not deal with spiritual matters as that it is active and applied.” Green explains that the Aristotelian notion of phronesis, as it was mediated to Christine, “encompasses something like a will or tendency to act on one’s knowledge of the good, as well as sufficient discernment to know how to act in particular circumstances. Aristotle says that phronesis is concerned with action, and Oresme translates him ‘prudence est vertu active’ [prudence is active virtue].” This notion of prudence as the praxis of Christian life in the world is supported in Christine’s exclusion of a consideration of prudence from the guidance that she offers to women religious. To contemplative Christians, Christine reviews the importance of obedience, humility, sobriety, patience, solicitude, chastity,


172 Ibid., 135-36.
and benevolence. But she does not mention prudence. That is because prudence, like the model of Paul, serves Christians in the world.

Christine suggests that saintliness (saintement) looks different in the lives of different women. She writes that “there are so many stories that could be told about virgin-martyrs [martires vierges] as well as other women who took religious orders [vesquirent en religion] or who displayed their saintliness in different ways [maintes guises moult saintement].” Christine focuses on the lives of Christian women in the world, especially virgin-martyrs. Indeed, she sets out just two lives of women religious. Each of these contemplatives, Marina and Euphrosyna, lived disguised as a man in a monastic community of men. Christine argues that their having lived as men proves the fortitude of women. She writes: “I’ll tell you about two such women in particular, because their legends are very inspiring and they also prove what we’ve been saying the constancy of women.”

In her next text, Le livre des trois vertus (1405-6), written for Marguerite of Burgundy, Dauphine of France, and the women of France, Christine continues the project she began in Le livre de la cité des dames. She offers to her women readers instruction in morals and manners. Above all, she shows them how to draw on prudence in order to live a good life in the world. So the instruction in prudence that Christine puts forward in Trois vertus is a kind of theological explanation of the accounts of evangelical and apostolic women, on the model of Paul that she sets out in the Cité des dames. In Trois vertus, Prudence translates the teachings of God into the practices of women. The lessons of Prudence direct Christine’s readers to different practices,

174 Ibid.
175 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 225.
depending on their particular status and duties, and according to the needs of the Church and commonweal. For Christine, prudential translations of the teachings of God into virtuous practices for women in the world are, at their best, expressions of evangelical and apostolic Christian practices on the model of Paul.

Christine’s Paul and Pauline prudence affirm her basic argument for women as human persons and offer to women a model of Christian praxis in the world. Altogether, I suggest that the Apostle Paul is Christine’s first model of the “humanist saint,” to use the term that Lori Walters has coined for the ideal present in texts of Christine that unites the *imitatio Christi* and the *translatio studii et imperii*. Walters has demonstrated that the “humanist saint” helps to name a figure, such as Petrarch and Christine herself, who applies “reflections on theological concerns to matters of state.”¹⁷⁶ I suggest that this process, the application of Christian teaching to life in the world, is part of what Christine means when she recommends prudence, Walters has shown that “Christine models her self-fashioning as ‘humanist saint’ on her perception of Augustine,” who, in the later Middle Ages, “was seen as a precursor of a new type of Christian humanist.”¹⁷⁷ I suggest the Apostle Paul as another figure who modeled prudential Christian life in the world.

Christine names Paul a second time in Part II. In the chapter on Nero, Christine writes: “At his dinner table, he had Saints Peter and Paul beheaded, as well as many other martyrs.”¹⁷⁸ As in the reference to Paul in the chapter on Clotilde, the line represents the status of Paul for Christine. In the chapter on Clotilde, Christine had referred to the apostles in general, Paul in

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¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 877-78.

particular, and Jesus Christ. This reflects Christine’s sense of status: Paul is second only to Jesus Christ. In the chapter on Nero, Christine puts forth that Peter and Paul were both beheaded. Indeed, Christian tradition held that Paul was martyred during the reign of Nero and, as a citizen of Rome, was beheaded. But Christian tradition held that Peter was not beheaded, as he was not a citizen of Rome, but was crucified upside-down. In Part III of the Cité des dames, not one of Christine’s saints is crucified. But at least nine of Christine’s saints are decapitated, in addition to the eleven thousand blessed virgins “all of whom were beheaded for the sake of Jesus Christ” with Saint Ursula. For Christine, the death of Paul has surpassed the death of Peter as the Christian model for the imitation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. In the Cité des dames, the imitation of the Passion of Jesus Christ in Christian martyrdom, however much an imitatio Christi, looks like an imitatio Pauli.

Moreover, for Christine, not just the death of Paul, but the life of Paul is the Christian model for the imitation of the life of Jesus Christ. Christine recounts the lives of Christian women in Part III of the Cité des dames in order to reveal that women have lived up to the directive of Paul: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Overwhelmingly, Christine’s lives of female saints describe conversions, baptisms, public ministries, teaching, captivities, and, of course, decapitations. Above all, Christine’s saints preach and win converts. Saint Catherine spoke “holy words” (grace divine aux saintes parolles de la vierge) with “extraordinary authority” (tant estoit noble, belle et de grant autorité, ainsi parler).

179 Ibid., 223.
Saint Lucy preached (preschier). Saint Marciana preached in the name of Jesus Christ (preschoit le nom de Jhesu Crist). Saint Euphemia outwitted (estre vaincus d’une femme). Saint Theodosina debated (par merveilleux scens disputoit). Saint Christine taught on the Trinity. And, in the last vita in the Cité des Dames, Saint Basilissa achieved the salvation of others through her saintliness (la sainte conversacion) and her instruction in the “holy teachings” (sainte monicion) and achieved her own salvation through her practice of “exemplary charity” (tres grant charité).

Although brief, Christine’s life of Saint Benedicta stands out for resembling the life of Paul insofar as both Paul and Benedicta travel, preaching and converting nations. Christine recounts the life of Benedicta thus:

Likewise, the glorious virgin Saint Benedicta, who was born in Rome, is equally deserving of our veneration. She was accompanied by twelve virgins whom she had converted to Christianity through her preaching [converties a sa predicacion]. In her desire to use her eloquence to increase the number of believers [elle desira pouvoir acroistre par preescher la religion christienne], she and her host of blessed virgins journeyed fearlessly across many lands, for God was with them. If was Our Lord’s wish that they should be separated from each other in order that they might spread the word to as many countries as possible. Having introduced several different nations to Christianity [plusierus paÿs convertis a la foy de Jhesu Crist], Benedicta ended her life holding the palm of martyrdom in her hand, just as did every one of her holy companions in turn.

184 Ibid.
186 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 218-19.
187 Ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 236; ead., “The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames,’” 1030.
Altogether, Christine advances new interpretations of traditional theological doctrines, worked out in relationship to authoritative texts and traditions, in the interest of a corrected Christian theological notion of the human person. In Part I of the *Cité des Dames*, Christine argues that women and men alike are created in the *imago Dei*, bear rational souls, and possess the potential for virtue. In Part III of the *Cité des Dames*, Christine responds to Paul’s notion of women. She argues that women and men alike are created from God and for God; like the Apostle Paul, are able to imitate Jesus Christ in life and in death; and are capable of prudence, that is, Christian practice in the world. So Christine’s so-called defense of women is not a defense against Christian theological arguments but a development of Christian theological ideas.
In this chapter, I read Christine’s *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité* (1417) as a letter of comfort and consolation to Marie de Berry and the noblewomen of France; as a manual on how to endure the suffering of human life on earth in general and on patience in particular; and as a contribution to theological debates about women, reason, and virtue.¹

Christine addressed *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité* (1417) to Marie de Berry and the women of France. She wrote the text after the Battle of Agincourt (1415). At Agincourt, Henry of England and his small army had defeated at least three times the number of French troops. It was a devastating loss for the French and a decisive victory for the English in France. Christine offers her book as consolation to Marie and the women of France who were mourning and suffering the other troubles that are a part of human life on earth. In the epistle, Christine develops her argument that women and men alike are created in the *imago Dei*, bear rational souls, and possess the potential for virtue.

Christine argues that the *ymage* of God in the human person is the rational soul. She writes to Marie that “God, our Creator . . . made you and many creatures to His likeness [son *ymage*].”² In


the first chapter, Christine explains that the reasonable soul (l’âme raisonnable) is the noblest part of the human person. She reaffirms the potential of women to practice the virtues. And she explains that virtue is pursued in patience. Citing Isidore of Seville, her favorite auctor on patience, Christine describes patience as “the fountain of virtues” (fontaine des vertus), which gives a very nourishing and delightful drink to the soul, for it places it near Jesus Christ.”3 Here, Christine brings to the fore patience, rather than the person of a saint, in order to argue for the potential of women to pursue virtue. In the Cité des dames, Christine had described the Virgin Mary as the source of “the fountain of virtues.”4 In the Cité des dames, Christine’s Justice had said to the Virgin Mary: “Let them drink deep from the fountain of virtues which flows from you and may they quench their thirst so fully that they learn to abhor all forms of vice and sin.”5 Together, these lines echo Christine’s argument for the potential of women to do virtue. In the epistle, Christine emphasizes that a good life on earth promises an eternal life with God in heaven.

From the opening, Christine sets out the terms of her text of consolation and convalescence. Christine presents her epistle to Marie as the “first of all among the princesses of this kingdom.”6 In the first line, Christine writes that Marie’s sadness has become a sickness. Her

3 Ibid., 30-31. See John 4:13-14 (New Revised Standard Version): “Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” See Isidorus Hispalensis, Synonyma de Lamentatione Animae Peccatricis, PL 83.


5 Ibid., 202.

6 Ead., The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 44-45.
heart is bitter (amertume de cuer) and her thoughts are sad (tristece de pensee).\(^7\) The flood of her tears imperils both her body and her soul. Like Marie, the women of France are sick from sadness. Their tears run together as the flood of tears in France. Christine writes that the flood of tears “has run and runs still – which is a pity – even among the queens, princesses, baronesses, ladies and young girls of the noble royal blood of France, and in general among most of the ladies-in-waiting.”\(^8\) She writes that women weep “because of so many various deaths and abductions of kin – husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, relatives and friends, some killed in battles, other passing away naturally in their beds – and of so many losses and other various misfortunes . . . which have occurred unexpectedly for some time.”\(^9\) After Agincourt, Christine names the death and capture of noblemen as a particular pestilence (pestillence) in France. Christine condoes with the women of France. She has also been suffering, mourning her father, her husband, her child, and the stability and security of France during the reign of Charles V. She promises to diagnose their suffering and to direct their treatment.

At least since Suzanne Solente’s 1924 article on the text, and affirmed in Josette Wisman’s 1984 edition of the text, the convention has been to abbreviate the title and to refer to it as L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine.\(^10\) In the first chapter, Christine writes that “Saint Bernard said that this mortal life can be, for all of us, compared to a prison.”\(^11\) Solente has

\(^7\) Christine’s emphasis on the bitterness of suffering is reminiscent of Job 3:20 – “Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul” – and Job 10:1 – “I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul” (New Revised Standard Version).

\(^8\) Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 3.

\(^9\) Ibid.


\(^11\) Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 7. See ibid., 6-9 in which Christine writes that “this mortal life can be, for all of us, compared to a prison, for just as the enclosure of a prison detains the prisoner so
suggested that the title of the text is a reference to a line in the sermon of Bernard of Clairvaux, *De virtute oboedientiae, et septem ejus gradibus.*\(^{12}\) The convention of abbreviating the title of the text has called attention to the indebtedness of Christine to Bernard of Clairvaux.\(^{13}\) But, in the text and, indeed, in the full title of the text, Christine is clear that *la prison de vie humaine* is more the context than the content of her consolation. Although Christine reviews the reasons that life on earth is painful and perilous, the project at the heart of the text affirms the goodness of human life on earth. Christine writes to teach her readers about how much life in heaven is to be preferred to life on earth. But she is also concerned to teach her readers about how to live well on earth. So she presents the reasons to be comforted in the face of grief and patient in the face of adversity.

In the first chapter of the text, Christine sets out patience as the first cause of the text. And Christine herself makes the case that praise of patience as well as praise of life with God in heaven belongs in a text of consolation. Demonstrating *humilitas,* Christine sets out that the praise of patience has received as much attention as the praise of life with God in heaven in scripture and in writings of the doctors of the Church. “As to my first subject, Very Noble Lady, since my own words may be of little consequence with respect to your great sorrow, in showing you and calling to mind matters of patience, may it please you to give credence to the Holy

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\(^{12}\) See Bernard of Clairvaux, PL 183:659.  

\(^{13}\) Christine de Pizan, *The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life,* 6-7. Christine writes that “Saint Bernard said that this mortal life can be, for all of us, compared to a prison [*pour tant a propos dit Saint Bernart, que ceste vie mortele puet estre a un chascun figuree a la prison]*.”
Scriptures and to what the glorious doctors and many wise authors have written: as much concerning having patience in the adversities that Fortune doles out by means of various vicissitudes, as concerning the glory and the blessedness of those who die in grace.14

Christine tells Marie and the women of France that she has searched scripture and the writings of the pagan and Christian auctores to enable her, not just to describe the pain of human life, but to offer a balm. Indeed, the text reveals the indebtedness of the author to Boethius’s *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Aristotle’s *Ethics* and, probably, at least one florilegium, perhaps Thomas of Ireland’s *Manipulus florum*, which Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse have demonstrated was known to Christine.15 With the auctores, Christine diagnoses the suffering and directs the treatment of Marie and the women of France. Christine prescribes hope in God and good works, which she names patience. Christine describes patience as a good thing for the heart. Patience reforms the heart (*le cuer*) and regulates the courage (*courage*) of a person. Together with prudence, patience converts both the heart-disposition and the heart-discipline of a person in the interest of a good life on earth. Paired with prudence, patience comforts and secures a person against the inevitable turns of the wheel of Fortune.

14 Ibid.

The two chapters on patience represent the heart of the text. First, Christine responds to the women of France who are grieving and suffering the other troubles, tribulations, pains, and perils that are a part of human life on earth. Second, she explains suffering as a part of human life on earth. Christine opens the first chapter, titled “Here I speak of patience and its usefulness,” lamenting that Marie and the women of France suffer both because of the death of friends (mort d’amis) and because of “other things” (autres choses) which, Christine concedes, are “hard to bear in your loyal and loving heart.” Christine sees that, for some of the women of France, death seems more possible than continued suffering in life on earth. She writes that “because the tribulations of this world in many ways are so difficult to bear – often it is the case, and for not a few persons, that death is easier [to bear].” So, in this chapter, Christine renews the pursuit of a remedy (remedier) for Marie and the women of France. She writes that “it is good to consider if any cure [medicine] could be found to lessen and soften the pain of these tribulations.” She writes that “this is why, without leaving the previous purpose promised to offer you and give you many reasons to find comfort, I have, my Lady, out of love of you, searched so much in the Holy Books [Sains Livres] that I have found the Holy Unction [la benoite huile] which can cure and heal [garir et saner] the pains of adversity [les douleurs d’adversité], according to the doctors who wrote about it for our souls [après les medecins de noz ames].” Christine reports that her search has been successful. In the sacred texts, she has found the blessed oil. She knows how to prepare the prescription to comfort and secure Marie

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17 Ibid., 23.
18 Ibid., 22-23.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
and the women of France. She writes that she “will give you the prescription and its properties: There are two and both are one [cest s’appelle en .ii. manieres qui toutes reviennent a une]. One is called: hope in God and doing good [espoire en Dieu et fay bien], as David the Prophet called it; the other name is: suffering patiently for the love of Our Lord [souffrir paciemment pour l’amor de Nostre Seigneur].”21 The blessed oil that can support Marie and the women of France is hope in God and good works or patience in suffering. For Christine, hope in God and good works is patience in suffering. Later in the text, considering the sad heart of Marie because the English had captured her husband and her oldest son at Agincourt, Christine repeats her argument that hope in God and good works constitute patience in suffering. She writes: “I will answer to you, on that subject, my Revered Lady, by saying what I already said before, that hope in God, doing good for them, and being patient [l’esperer en Dieu, en bien faisant pour eulx et prendre en pacience], can obtain grace for you with Our Lord, so that He may soon bring them back to you, may God give it to you soon!”22

Christine sets out three brief sections, one on hope, one on suffering, and one on patience, each of which seems to be comprised of lines lifted from a florilegium. In the section on hope, Christine explains that hope, that is, the belief that things can change, is the first requirement of resilience in the face of the suffering of life on earth. She writes that hope is “something necessary to have above all others against the pain of suffering in order to think that this pain will not last forever.”23 Inspired by the Psalms, Christine explains that God, who holds in being everything that is, can reverse or reform anything. Christine calls her readers to faith and hope in

21 Ibid. See Psalms 40:1 (New Revised Standard Version): “I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.”

22 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 42-43.

23 Ibid., 23-25.
God who, as witnessed in scripture, proves that life on earth is not static, much less life in heaven. Drawing on the Psalms, Christine recommends scripture to Marie and the women of France: “may you, for your relief, Noble Lady, use them yourself forever in all tribulations as a good a very helpful remedy.” Christine explains that “the Holy Scriptures are full” of witness to faith and hope in God. She reviews the promise of scripture that God is merciful. God receives every humble heart (cuer humilié). Christine calls her readers to faith and hope in God, who creates all things and who can recreate anything, on earth and in heaven.

For Christine, hope in God and doing good (espoire en Dieu et fay bien), together, constitute patience in suffering. Christine’s notion of doing good includes both acts of love of neighbor and acts of propitiation. What is more, Christine’s notion of doing good includes both love of neighbor and service of friend, whether the other is living or dead. First, Christine directs her reader to doing good as love of neighbor according to the commandment of God. Then, Christine directs her reader to doing good as propitiation on behalf of dead friends: “the doctors say that these pains of purgatory, for those who are in it, can be shortened by means of alms, prayers, pilgrimages, and other good deeds [ausmones, oroisons, pelerinages et tous bienfais], which are most charitable things to do and not to be forgotten by the living friends.”

24 Ibid., 24-25.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 22-25.
27 Ibid., 23.
29 Ibid., 46-47. See ibid., 66-67, where, in the last chapter of the epistle, Christine commends her readers to good works for the benefit their friends: “your aforementioned friends – whom I think ended in salvation – but who can profit more from alms, prayers, and good deeds than from your tears, considering the great goods that they expect, God willing, and which is the glory of Heaven.”
In the second section, on suffering, Christine again appeals to the lessons of scripture and the Church doctors. She writes: “Oh, how much all the holy doctors [les sains dotteurs] have written about the medicine of patience [medicine de pacience], and how highly it is recommended in the Holy Scripture [la Sainte Escription]!” Christine puts forth two passages that she attributes to Basil. The first had been paraphrased without attribution in the *Advision.* Christine seems to have returned to this line in particular because it explains the fact of suffering in life on earth for all persons regardless of status. Here again, Christine quotes Basil: “Because tribulations are common to all classes [tous les estas], Our Lord has willed that through them, and by the means of patience, all people go to Heaven, since it is impossible to go from delight to delight, that is, to have all pleasures and comforts in this mortal world and go through them to the joy of Heaven, which is a thing that cannot be.”

Christine encourages Marie and the women of France to regard their own suffering as a kind of *imitatio Christi.* Christ met suffering with patience. So to meet the suffering of human

30 Ibid., 24-25.
31 See ead., *The Vision of Christine de Pizan,* trans. Glenda McLeod and Charity Cannon Willard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 119: “Oh God! And some among you who wish to pass from pleasure to pleasure, that is, from the comforts of this world, which you long for, to celestial joys, which cannot be done, listen to what Saint Gregory says in a homily.”
32 Christine de Pizan, *The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life,* 24-25. See Basil of Caesarea’s “Letter 140:” “‘Expect tribulation after tribulation, hope upon hope; yet a little while; yet a little while. Thus the Holy Ghost knows how to comfort His nurslings by a promise of the future. After tribulations comes hope, and what we are hoping for is not far off, for let a man name the whole of human life, it is but a tiny interval compared with the endless age which is laid up in our hopes.’” Basil of Caesarea, “Letter 140,” trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 8, ed. Philip Schaff et al. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895), Para. 1. See also Basil’s “An Introduction to the Ascetical Life” in which the Church Father compares Christian life to “spiritual warfare.” Basil explicitly includes women in Christian “spiritual warfare.” He writes that “our discourse is not addressed to men only; for members of the female sex are not rejected because of physical weakness, but, chosen for the army of Christ by reason of their virility of spirit, they also battle on the side of Christ and fight no less valiantly than men. Some even win a greater renown. . . . Indeed, women as well as men followed after the Lord during His life on earth and both sexes ministered to our Savior.” Basil, “An Introduction to the Ascetical Life,” in *Ascetical Works,* trans. M. Monica Wagner, C.S.C. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 12.
life on earth with patience is to conform to Christ and set out on a course for heaven. Christine writes: “From this patience, as Our Lord gave us as an example in His very person, He who suffered more than any mortal man ever has, we can, following Him in this, hope to find His path a salvation above all others.”

Christine returns to the notion of hope. Suffering offers salvation. Patience promises salvation. Christine restates this later in the text when she writes that heaven “is your right inheritance, but to where one cannot go, as the Holy Scriptures say [selon que dit l’Escripture], through worldly pleasures, but rather through the merit of patience [par le merite de patience], and one has to go through tribulations [en tribula[cion] y convient passer].”

In the end, Christine draws on another line that she attributes to Basil to make the case for patience as a kind of shield in “the battle of tribulations [la bataille des tribulacions].”

Patience enables the person to conquer the inevitable suffering of human life on earth.

In the third section, on patience in general, Christine brings together lines that she attributes to scripture, Basil, and Priscian. In a line that she attributes to scripture, Christine suggests that, just as those persons who face the torments of death for their faith are martyrs so

33 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 24-25.

34 Ibid., 42-43.

35 Ibid., 24-25. See Isidorus Hispalensis, Synonyma de Lamentatione Animae Peccatricis, PL 83: 0852B-0852C: “Esto patiens, esto mansuetus, esto mitis, esto modestus. Serva patientiam, serva modestiam, serva mansuetudinem. Stude patientiae et mansuetudini, despice probra illatae contumeliae. Irrisionem despiendo exsupera, dissimulando errores detrarehentium calca, contumelias detrarehentium patientia supera. Sagittas contumeliales clypeo patientiae frange. Praepara contra asperum verbum tolerantiae clypeum, contra linguae gladium patientiae scutum praeb.” See also Tertullian’s Of Patience in which Tertullian refers to patience as a shield, in light of Job 2:7-10: “What a bier for the devil did God erect in the person of that hero! What a banner did He rear over the enemy of His glory, when, at every bitter message, that man uttered nothing out of his mouth but thanks to God, while he denounced his wife, now quite wearied with ills, and urging him to resort to crooked remedies! How did God smile, how was the evil one cut asunder, while Job with mighty equanimity kept scraping off the unclean overflow of his own ulcer, while he sportively replaced the vermin that broke out thence, in the same caves and feeding-places of his pitted flesh! And so, when all the darts of temptations had blunted themselves against the corset and shield of his patience, that instrument of God’s victory not only presently recovered from God the soundness of his body, but possessed in redoubled measure what he had lost.” Tertullian, Of Patience, trans. S. Thelwall, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), Chapter 14.
those persons who face the torments of life for their faith are a kind of live-martyrs or confessors. As martyrs receive a special place in heaven, so confessors are assured the “crown for those who have suffered well [la couronne pour les bien souffrans].”  

Christine writes “and if the martyrs are placed high in the Heavens above the other orders of saints, why would those not be placed there also who are tormented by tribulations and suffer them patiently for the love of Our Lord?”

The second chapter on patience is titled “More about patience and how it must be understood when it concerns Justice [encores de pacience et comment elle doit estre entendue en cy qui touche Justice].” In it, Christine describes the two causes of suffering, corrects the erroneous idea that patience threatens justice, and defines patience. Christine explains that there are two causes of suffering: pride and fortune. Referring, again, to suffering as a kind of sickness, afflicting the heart and thoughts, Christine writes that “in two different ways lack of courage and bad thoughts [troublemens de courage et contaminacions de pensee] come and appear frequently.” First, Christine warns against the suffering of pride.

36 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 24-25.

37 Ibid. Christine rewrites Ecclesiastes 7:8 (New Revised Standard Version) – “Better is the end of a thing than its beginning; the patient in spirit are better than the proud in spirit” – and Matthew 5:9 (New Revised Standard Version) – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” – as “Blessed be the patient [beneurez sont les paciens], for they will be called God’s sons [car filz de Dieu seront appellez].” See Tertullian, Of Patience, trans. S. Thelwall, in Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts et al. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), Chapter 11. Tertullian praises patience in terms of the Beatitudes. He describes the patience of “the poor in spirit,” “the weepers and mourners,” “the gentle,” and “the peacemakers.” In particular, he refers to the peacemakers as the patient and as the sons of God: “Again, when He marks the peacemakers with the same title of felicity, and names them sons of God, pray have the impatient any affinity with peace? Even a fool may perceive that.” See also Matthew 5:9-12 (New Revised Standard Version): “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

38 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 26-27.

39 Ibid.
suffering of pride as the suffering of the self. She explains that the suffering of pride is the ugly result of an ugly habit. Second, Christine explains the suffering of fortune. The suffering of fortune occurs when bad things happen and the heart is troubled. The suffering of fortune is more grievous than the suffering of pride. But the suffering of fortune is also more powerful than the suffering of pride because it can be productive.

Christine explains that the suffering of pride is the result of a heart so filled with arrogance that the person feels entitled never to be challenged, much less to suffer. (Here, to explain pride, Christine uses the masculine gender.) When the arrogant person is unable to assert his will over all persons and circumstances around him, he throws fits. The fits are unpleasant and unproductive alike. What is more, the fits imperil the wellbeing of both the body and the soul of the powerful, but not all-powerful, person. Christine writes that suffering of pride “happens when a man’s heart is so inflated in arrogance that it seems to him that no one can match his worth, and therefore he acts like a madman whenever the very unimportant words of someone are unpleasant to him, or an action worth less than nothing is done to him against his will, or when he has the smallest loss; then, he cannot put a stop to his impatience, but is in a furor which is never excusable in any way; rather, it is lethal, damnable and reprehensible.” Christine sets out an idea that she attributes to Josephus. She describes how the person without

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 See ead., Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector, trans. Jane Chance (Cambridge: D.S. Brewster, 1997), 53. In L’Épistre Othéa (1399-1400), the lesson of the fourteenth chapter is that Christian hope does not promise that life on earth is painless but that the pain of life on earth is productive. Christine interprets a classical verse about Pallas and Minerva in the light of lines from Saint Paul and Origen. She compares the soul “in this moral life” that has hope to a laborer whose expectation of payment “softens the labor of tasks” and to a champion whose “hope of the crown of victory tempers the dolor of his wounds.”
43 Ead., The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 26-27.
patience, who is unwilling to suffer any pain, torments everyone around him. What is more, in tormenting others, he causes himself to suffer. Therefore, with Josephus, Christine concludes that the impatient person “begins in this world the Hell which he will have later and forever.”44 Christine ends the paragraph: “And he does not go through tribulations, except those that he causes himself and for which there is no respite.”45 The impatient person himself causes the suffering of pride. The cause of his suffering is his thwarted pride. He is the cause of his own suffering and the cause of the suffering of those around him. He suffers himself, as those around him suffer him. The cycle of suffering could only be stopped by a change within the heart of the proud man.

Next, Christine makes paragraphs out of lines that she attributes to Josephus, Florus, John, Isidore, and “a sage” (ung sage). Christine seems to have selected passages of the auctores that help her to emphasize the physical ugliness of impatience. According to Florus, the impatient person reveals the state of his heart in his face, in his body, and in his words.46 Following Florus, Christine sets out that the impatient person reveals himself to be a fool and,
what is more, a possessor of little virtue since, where there is no patience, there is no virtue. 47
But, just the opposite, the patient person cannot conceal his virtue which shines through both in
his person and in his practices. Christine quotes Florus as having written, first, that “the arrogant
heart . . . is always tormented and in tribulation because of the unhappiness that he feels when he
cannot dominate everyone” and, second, that “such a creature . . . can be recognized because he
shows a constantly furious face; and in all the movements of his body he shows his impatience
and his angry heart also, because his language is full of threats and wicked words.” 48 Christine
then sets out a line from John to support her picture of the impatient person as an ugly person:
“As Saint John says: ‘The very evil language of the proud involves the flushing of blood, eyes
casting horrible glances, looking fixed and fearsome, skin becoming pale, a brow sweating,
hands moving about, and a shaking body.’” 49 From there, the next line of Christine’s text,
attributed to an unnamed sage, advances her case for the ugliness of impatience. Christine writes:
“A sage says of such a person: ‘Oh, man, if you could see yourself when anger overcomes you,
you would feel a deep horror of yourself seeing your awful face so distorted and your body so
completely changed.’” 50

Christine then turns to the suffering of fortune. No human life is spared the arbitrary
sufferings of fortune. Fortune casts suffering into each human life on earth. Each human heart
sometimes suffers fortune and is troubled. Christine writes that “the second reason mentioned
above . . . comes from tribulation of the heart, and . . . is more pitiful, natural, and less

47 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 26-27. See Flori Lugdunensis, Collectio ex Dictis XII
Patrum.

48 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 26-27. See Flori Lugdunensis, Collectio ex Dictis XII
Patrum.

49 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 26-27.

50 Ibid., 28-29.
reprehensible."  

Christine goes on to list examples of some of the bad things that she describes as the suffering of fortune. She writes that the suffering of fortune “occurs when unfortunate things happen to someone in different ways, such as when friends die, when one loses his riches, suffers losses, receives insults and outrage from others, is tempted by the enemies, and from similar things happening in various ways.”  

Christine explains that the suffering of fortune is productive. Christine writes that “these pains are those mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, and patience is of greater value if the misfortunes are deeper and more severe.”  

The undeserved suffering of fortune can foster the growth of patience within the sufferer. Patience can grow in proportion to the suffering caused by fortune. Patience can stand the person in the face of the suffering of fortune. And so, to the extent that a person is felled by fortune, he is given an opportunity to grow in patience. Without patience, however, the suffering of fortune imperils the person, tempting him to despair, anger, and other sins. Patience, however, enables the person to endure pain and to resist temptation and sin. Christine explains that, when suffering of fortune afflicts the heart, “the heart becomes troubled, and though this is not a sin in itself, since man is not able to avoid pains when they come [comme il ne soit en puissance d’omme de non sentir les douleurs quant elles viennent], it is true that when they are too frequent, without the help of patience one can err and sin [on y puet errer et pechier].”

Christine ends the lines on the suffering of fortune with an interpretation of a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Christine sets out the Gospel commandments to “love your enemies and...”
pray for those who persecute you.”55 She infers from those the commandment to pity. She explains that “just as we must love our enemy and pray for him, we must feel sorry for him because he pains his own soul in causing suffering and angers God, more than he pains us, following the example of Jesus Christ who grieved more from Judas’ despair than from the fact that he had betrayed him.”56 So Christine returns to the *imitatio Christi* and to hope. She restates her notion that to meet the suffering of fortune with patience is to conform to the example of Christ. Those who cause suffering on earth do more ultimate harm to themselves than to others. God can reverse any pain and restore any ruin.

Following her review of Jesus’s patience in response to the suffering that Judas had caused, in the second chapter on patience, “More about patience and how it must be understood when it concerns Justice,” Christine attends to the suffering that some persons cause other persons and argues that patience does not pervert justice. The first line sets out the concern that animates the chapter. Christine writes: “On the subject of bearing these tribulations with patience, before I go on to something else, in order to understand them better and to make myself clear since questions could be asked, such as if to have patience one is bound to endure wrongdoings caused by someone, etc.”57 Christine recommends that Marie and the women of France respond to the suffering that persons cause with just patience.

Here, Christine considers some particular causes of suffering. In *Les Épitres sur le Roman de la Rose* and other texts, Christine had written about (against) wife battery. She sees


57 Ibid., 26-27.
that some of the suffering of fortune is better named the suffering of persons and counsels Marie and the women of France to practice just patience, that is, patience that is just.

Christine explains that, in fact, patience is not passive or impotent but active and potent. Patience does not vitiate agency. Patience vitalizes agency. Patience enables a person to suffer human life on earth not because patience desensitizes the person to the pain but because patience makes the person more sensitive to God. Christine draws on a line from Isidore to support her case for patience as the practice of an ultimate relationship with God not fortune or even other persons: “Isidore says that those who have placed their happiness in the affairs of this world and disregard all other things cannot avoid being angry often; nor can they have patience, which is a gift of God, and of which they are not worthy.”58 Later, again with Isidore, Christine writes that “the way to acquire patience for whoever wants it is to look on high, and not down to earth, since it comes from Heaven.”59 Patience redirects the person’s experience of suffering from a relationship with fortune or with persons causing pain to a relationship with God. In terms of relationship with fortune or with persons causing pain, suffering is for nothing. But, in terms of relationship with God, suffering is for God. In its power to redirect the person’s experience of suffering, patience arms the person with power over the suffering. Patience enables the person to suffer for something, to suffer for God, and, in so doing, to exert agency even within the limitations of the suffering of fortune or the suffering of persons.

Later, Christine returns to Isidore to support her notion of patience as powerful on earth and profitable in heaven. Christine compares the effort of a Christian person in life on earth to


the efforts of a knight in battle, an entrepreneur after profit, and a laborer for wages. Like those persons, the Christian suffers in pursuit of reward. Glossing Isidore, she writes that “in other words, we must think of the rewards of the life to come, and in this way all the evils of this life will pass swiftly, just as the knight who in battle forgets his wounds in the hope of victory.”

She continues: “‘Oh,’ he says later, ‘man, why should this thing be hard for you to do, when the life of this world goes by so quickly and the one to come lasts forever? If you are a merchant or from another estate, will you not suffer cold, heat, and many travails to gain profits? Therefore, if you suffer to gain Paradise, should you complain?’”

Having made the case for patience as powerful on earth and profitable in heaven, Christine returns to the question that animates this chapter: Does patience sentence a person to suffer at the hands of other persons without protest? Christine’s answer is no. Patience does not mean suffering injustice without defense. God is just. Neither patience nor the Gospel commandments to love, pray for, and pity the enemy abrogate justice. The person who suffers because of another person should respond “in all right and reason” (droit et raison). Here, as in _Le livre de la cité des dames_, Christine suggests that reason, rectitude, and justice are of a piece. In the _Cité des dames_, the Dames Reason, Rectitude, and Justice had appeared before Christine to demonstrate that women are human persons, bearing rational souls and the potential for virtue.

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60 Christine de Pizan, _The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life_, 30-31. See ead., _Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector_, 52. In _L’Epistre Othéa_ (1399-1400), Christine describes of the journey of the human soul, envisioned as a knight, back to God, its beginning and its end, through the practice of virtue over and against the opposition of its mortal adversary.

61 Christine de Pizan, _The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life_, 30-33. See Isidorus Hispalensis, _Synonyma de Lamentatione Animae Peccatricis_, PL 83: 0833D-0834A: “Oportet nos per multas tribulationes intrare in regnum Dei (Act. XIV, 21). Non sunt condignae passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam, quae revelabitur in nobis (Rom. VIII, 18); quod in praesenti est, momentaneum est, et leves tribulationes in nobis: quod aeternum est, supra modum est, pondus excellens gloriae; utilis est tribulatio, utiles sunt hujus vitae pressurae.”

and Christian practice. Here, Christine returns to the principles that had guided the construction of the *Cité des dames* to argue that justice should be pursued in right and reason, even in the face of the suffering of persons. Christine seems to borrow from the principles of the just war theory to set out a theory of just patience. She argues that just patience includes responding to the suffering of persons with just cause, with right intention, with careful tactics (which she describes as care for one’s good name), and in proportion to the assault. Christine explains that just patience can include defense of self, defense of property, lawsuit, war, or “any other lawful means.” But, consistent with the just war theory on which she seems to draw, Christine explains that just patience conforms to reason, rectitude, and justice and does not sacrifice the one for the sake of the other, as in acting out of anger, vengeance, or impatience. In the end, Christine brings together her notions of patience in response to the suffering of others and just patience in a line that she attributes to Sirach. With Sirach, Christine directs her reader to “fight for justice and God will win for you, but do not let a little pain that He gives trouble you when He must trouble Himself to pacify His enemy.” Christine writes that


65 Ibid., 30-31.

66 Ibid. See Ecclesiastes 7:14 (New Revised Standard Version): “In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; God has made the one as well as the other, so that mortals may not find out anything that will come after them.” The seventh chapter of Ecclesiastes sets out many of the themes that Christine takes up in *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité*. For one, Ecclesiastes 7:1 (New Revised Standard Version) sets out that “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death, than the day of birth.” From there, in the terms of “heart,” “mourning,” and “wisdom,” Ecclesiastes 7 sets out the view sadness engenders gladness and wisdom in the heart. (Ecclesiastes 7:3-4: “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.) What is more, Ecclesiastes 7:28 sets out the view that, in fact, wisdom is present in few men and absent in women: “One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.” Christine’s dependence on the language of “heart” suggests her interest in correcting literal interpretations of scripture that seem to set out that women are disposed by nature to be foolish not wise.
if one must bear all insults, etc. . . ., we have to know that to have this patience and to love our enemy does not mean that God, who is a fair judge, does not want that one who is wrongly assaulted not to defend himself in all right and reason, whether in war which is fitting for him, or in a lawsuit, or in any other lawful means, or not to keep his property with an appropriate defense; and if he is accused, let him apologize and explain to everyone his case or the case of his people, just as Ecclesiastes says: ‘Be mindful of your good name.’ Saint Basil says on that subject that whoever protects himself with patience will find all adversities light to bear. And if he is insulted by someone, his defense will be accomplished not by anger, vengeance, nor by impatience, but by guarding right with justice, as Jesus Sirach says: ‘Fight for justice and God will win for you, but do not let a little pain that He gives trouble you when He must trouble Himself to pacify His enemy.67

Having set out her notion of just patience, Christine returns to patience as that which enables a person to suffer human life on earth in general. Again, Christine refers to suffering as a kind of sickness that risks both the body and the soul. Patience is the antidote; it comforts and secures and benefits both the body and the soul. Citing Isidore, Christine explains that patience “is a great value to the body and even more to the soul: to the body, inasmuch as it gives it the gift of peace and security, and therefore it will not fear a bad experience for it is ready to bear anything and thus lives happily and in good health; it does not suffer from anything since it is safe in all places, and Fortune cannot harm it.”68 Patience protects the body because, as Christine sees it, at least for Marie and the noblewomen of France, the threat of suffering to the body is less the risk of violence than the risk of depression. So, as patience keeps the soul in hope, it keeps the body in health. Patience keeps the soul in hope as it removes it from relationship with fortune with even with other persons and places it in relationship with God.

Following Isidore, Christine ends the chapter with a traditional recommendation of patience. In particular, the call to “break the arrows of outrage and insult by suffering” seems to represent the heart of Christine’s notion of patience as powerful, profitable, and just. Christine closes the chapter:

And if you tell me that you are persecuted by the wicked wrongly and without reason, which is a very hard thing to bear, I say that you are a fool if you pay attention to it, because no enemy can harm you if you yourself do not want it; instead it is of great benefit to suffer well and be wiser by it, and I will say again to you, who are going through the pilgrimage of this life: have patience and you will be the knights of Jesus Christ; fight hard against adversities, and be readier to receive evils than to do them; break the arrows of outrage and insult by suffering and place first the study of patience; do not seek vengeance for the wounds of words, because it is a great virtue not to wound whoever wounded you, and it is a great strength of heart not to return evil for evil, which are the things ordered by Our Lord in His Holy Gospel!69

The most important line of this chapter is Christine’s definition of patience. Christine defines patience as moderation of heart: “Therefore, this patience [cesté patience] is none other than moderation of heart [attrempance de courage] which submits the will to everything which pleases Our Lord, and the will to endure all things peacefully for His love [qui sousmet la voulenté a tout ce qui plaist a Nostre Seigneur et pour s’amour, vouloir endurer toutes choses paisiblement].”70 Patience is moderation of heart. And the heart tempers the will. So the heart

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70 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 30-31. See ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 34 for another description of courage: “it doesn’t necessarily follow that a fine, strong body makes for a brave and courageous heart. Courage comes from a natural, vital force which is a gift from God that He allows Nature to implant in some rational beings more than in others. This force resides in the mind and the heart, not in the bodily strength of one’s limbs.” See also Joël Blanchard and Michel Quereuil, Lexique de Christine de Pizan (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), 97: “I.— ‘Humeur, disposition, intention.’ II.— ‘Coeur (au sens moral).’ III.— ‘Bravoure, vaillance.’” See also István P. Bejczy, The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
reforms the will in submission and endurance. The heart tempers the will to submit to the will of God and “to will” to endure all things peacefully for the love of God. Together with a part of the text still to be considered, Christine explains that the human person bears reason, reason engenders prudence, prudence directs the heart, and the heart tempers the will.71

Christine’s definition of patience is indebted, directly or indirectly, to Aristotle’s notion that a virtue of character is a mean. In the Ethics, Aristotle had written that “virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate.”72 In the Aristotelian tradition, however, patience is the mean with regard to anger. It is mean between irascibility and un-irascibility. Instead, Christine defines patience as a mean with regard to the heart. She uses the word courage to describe that which finds its mean in patience. By contrast, in the Aristotelian tradition, “courage” itself is a virtue. For Aristotle, courage is the mean with regard to fear and confidence. In the Ethics, Aristotle had written: “With regard to feelings of fear and confidence courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name (many of the states have no name), while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward.”73 In L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité, then, Christine sets out her own notion of patience. Christine presents a notion of patience as moderation, not of another virtue (“courage”), but of the heart and habit of a person.

71 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 34-35. Christine writes that “reason comes and is born discretion, which some call prudence, and like the servant of reason, it sends off its orders to be put in the hearts of men, and it distributes and imparts all that it commands [ceste raison, vient et nait discretion queaucuns dient prudence, la quelle est si comme servante de raison, et ses commandemens envoie et met es cuers des creatures, et distribue et depart tout ce qu’elle ordene].”


The notion of “heart” is the key to *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité*.

Christine’s notion of patience depends upon her notion of heart. Christine writes about “heart” often in this text. She uses the term *cuer* at least thirteen times and she uses the term *courage* at least nine times. The sensitive translation of Josette A. Wisman has “heart” for each *cuer* and *courage* but one. Christine seems to use *cuer* to refer to a state (being) and to use *courage* to refer to the translation of that state into a practice (doing). So, first, Christine’s *cuer* seems to mean heart in the sense of intellect or disposition. At one point in the epistle, Christine uses *meilleur disposicion* to express her notion of the heart reformed in patience. Christine counsels Marie in particular: “if you put a perfect trust in God, you will see His marvels and His great power shower upon you and your kin, His great gifts and grace, much more than you ever dared think, and the time [to] return to a better disposition [*meilleur disposicion*].” And, second, Christine’s *courage* seems to mean heart in the sense of the heart-directed habit of a person. Christine’s *courage* is the practice of the heart.

Christine uses *cuer* to mean the intellect or attitude of a person. In her earlier *L’Epistre Othéa* (1399-1400), Christine sets out one hundred chapters each made up of a text; a gloss interpreting the text according to the pagan philosophers; and an allegory interpreting the text according to the Christian clerks. Christine opens her allegorical explanation of the text about Phoebus, Coronis, and the crow: “Coronis, who should not be killed, we shall understand as our

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74 See Madeleine Fernande Rosier (Sr. Marie), “Christine de Pisan as a Moralist” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1945), 88-90 for a description of the notion of heart in Christine’s *Le Livre de Prudence*.


76 Ead., *The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life*, 44-45.
soul [ame], which we should not kill through sin, but instead guard it well.”  
Christine ends each allegorical explanation with a verse from scripture. Here, Christine cites Proverbs 4:23. She writes: “With [all] watchfulness keep thy heart [cor], because life issueth out from it.”  
So, in Othéa, Christine takes “soul” (ame) and “heart” (cor) to refer to the same thing. In the first line of L’Épistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité, Christine writes that the epistle is offered toward a cure for the “bitter heart [amertume de cuer] and sad thoughts” of Marie.  
Next, Christine writes that the deaths of friends is the foremost pain (douleur) grieving the hearts (grevé les cuers) of the noblewomen of France.  
From there, Christine uses cuer to name: the humble heart (cuer humilié); the arrogant heart (cuer arrogant); the sad heart (cuer rest en tristece); the noble and liberal heart (noble et liberal cuer); and the heart so inflated with arrogance (cuer d’omme est tant eslevé en arrogance).  
At one point in the text, Christine even seems to use cuer as a synonym for person. She describes the heart who loves strongly (cuer qui fort aime). She writes that: “I know well that a heart who loves much is not without the fear to lose what it holds so dearly [je sache assez que cuer qui fort aime n’est point sans soussy de paour de perdre ce que il a si chier].”  
At another point in the text, Christine uses cuer in the sense of intellect.  
The idea is that the heart is related

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77 Ead., Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector, 77.
78 Ibid. See Proverbs 4:23 (New Revised Standard Version) “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”
79 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 2-3.
80 Ibid., 4-5.
81 Ibid., 22-23; 26-27; 42-43; 46-47; 26-27.
82 Ibid., 44-45.
to the rational soul. She writes that patience softens both the heart and the movements of the body [le cuer et les mouvemens du corps assouagist]. Later, she seems to explain this idea when she uses cuer to describe the aspect of the human person that follows reason and prudence (ses commandemens envoie et met es cuers des creatures) and tempers will.

Christine uses cuer as she cites auctores. She uses cuer in lines that she tells her reader come from Florus twice. She recounts Xenophon’s description of the words of King Cyrus: “when I die, do not think that I will go to a new land, for I will go to no land except where my heart has always been [cuer a toujours esté].” Christine attributes to Augustin the Pauline notion that “no eyes have seen, no ears have heard, no hearts can understand [ne cuers ne porent comprendre] the good things that God has reserved for His good friends.” Looking ahead to a part of the text still to be considered, Christine cites Gregory and considers “the hearts of the chosen” (cuers des esleus).

84 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 26-27.
85 Ibid., 34-35. Christine writes that “from reason comes and is born discretion, which some call prudence, and like the servant of reason, it sends off its orders to be put in the hearts of men, and it distributes and imparts all that it commands [de ceste raison, vient et nait discretion que aucuns dient prudence, la quelle est si comme servante de raison, et ses commandemens envoie et met es cuers des creatures, et distribue et depart tout ce qu’elle ordene].”
86 Ibid., 26-27.
87 Ibid., 20-21. See Xenophon, Cyropaedia, 8.7 for the author’s description of the death of Cyrus.
88 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 56-57. See 1 Corinthians 2:9 (New Revised Standard Version): “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.’”
89 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 50-51. Attributing the line to Saint Gregory, Christine writes that “the hearts of the chosen [les cuers des esleus] which are expecting the great joys of Paradise, gather strength against the assaults of the enemies, because as the battle becomes harder, they expect a more glorious victory, and they are made so much firmer by tribulations.” See Gregory the Great, Morals on the Book of Job, 90: “But be it observed, that our enemy strikes us with as many darts as he afflicts us with temptations; for it is in a field of battle that we stand every day, every day we receive the weapons of his temptations. But we ourselves too send our javelins against him, if, when pierced with woes, we answer humbly.”
Christine’s *courage* seems to mean heart in the sense of the part of the human person that directs practice. Christine’s *courage* is the heart-directed habit of a person. Christine’s *courage* represents *cuer* in things like comportment and speech. At the opening of the text, Christine writes that the epistle is offered for the “bitter heart [*amertume de cuer*] and sad thoughts [*tristece de pensee*].”90 Christine is describing Marie in her present state: in bitterness of heart and sadness of thought. Later in the text, at the beginning of the chapter on patience and justice, Christine describes the “two different ways lack of courage and bad thoughts [*troublemens de courage et contaminacions de pensee*] come and appear frequently.”91 In this one case, Wisman has translated *courage* as “courage.” But Christine does not refer to the mean with regard to fear and confidence. She means *cuer* translated into habit. She is describing how the first effects of suffering are that heart and thoughts, responsible for governing comportment and speech, become, in a sense, unmoored and vulnerable. So suffering causes troubled heart (not “lack of courage,” as Wisman has it) and low thoughts. Patience comforts and secures. But, without patience, the heart grows bitter and the thoughts grow sad.

Christine uses *courage* in this sense in at least three other places in the text. In one paragraph in the chapter on patience and justice, Christine uses *courage* to refer to the unmoored heart twice. First, she writes that suffering causes tribulation of the heart (*tribulacion de courage*).92 Second, she writes that suffering troubles the heart (*courage se trouble*).93 Later, at the end of the epistle, Christine apologizes to Marie for having written too much and too late.

91 Ibid., 26-27.
92 Ibid., 28-29.
93 Ibid.
She uses *courage* to explain that her own great troubles and troubles of heart (*grans ennuis et troubles de courage*) have kept her from writing as and when she wanted.  

The respective meanings of *cuер* and *courage* in the text are suggested in a line in which Christine uses each term. Christine writes that she has lifted from Florus. She writes: “‘The arrogant heart [*cuеr*],’ he says, ‘is always tormented and in tribulation because of the unhappiness that he feels when he cannot dominate everyone. Such a creature,’ he says, ‘can be recognized because he shows a constantly furious face; and in all the movements of his body he shows his impatience and his angry heart [*fureur de courage*] also, because his language is full of threats and wicked words.’” Here, Christine seems to use *cuеr* in the sense of the part of the human person that experiences the passions. And she seems to use *courage* in the sense of the part of the human person that expresses the passions. So *courage* seems to be used to get at the representation of heart (here furious or fitful) in carriage and speech.

Christine uses *courage* to describe the expression of positive characteristics at least four times in the epistle. First, with Isidore, Christine writes that great strength of heart (*grant force de courage*) is demonstrated when a person can keep doing good in the face of evil. Second, Christine uses *courage* to get at the activity of the heart when she writes to Marie that “your
good heart [ton bon courage] should be aware of this, and remember in thanking God for your consolation for the assaults and wounds of tribulation when they affect you, the very large and noble benefits that you have received from your Creator, who wants you to use them well."97

Third, Christine uses courage to suggest the heart as the part of the person that directs activity when she writes: “it is so completely true that this generosity [liberalité] is so noble when it comes from a good heart [bon courage].”98 Fourth, of course, Christine uses courage to define patience as moderation of heart.99 Patience moves the heart to temper its habits. The term for the aspect of the heart that directs practice is courage. So patience is an attrempance de courage.100

Christine’s frequent use of cuer and courage is important. The notion of heart, as she uses it here, is not present in either Boethius’s The Consolation of Philosophy or Aristotle’s Ethics, the two books that have been considered to be the most influential sources for this text. What is more, Christine’s epistle seems unrelated to Thomas’s consideration of patience in the Second Part of the Second Part of the Summa Theologiae.101 Thomas’s paragraphs on patience are indebted to Augustine’s De Patientia. Christine draws on Augustine at least six times in the epistle, but most of those lines seem to have been drawn from The City of God and one line seems to have been drawn from Confessions.102

97 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 32-33.
98 Ibid., 38-39.
99 Ibid., 30-31.
100 Ibid.
102 See Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 10-11; 52-53; 54-55; 56-57; 66-67 for Christine’s references to Augustine’s De Doctrina Christiana; see 46-47 for her reference to Confessions.
I suggest that Christine uses the notion of heart in response to the tradition of exegesis of the Book of Job.¹⁰³ The Book of Job recounts events in the life of Job, who, as the scriptural text puts it, “was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”¹⁰⁴ Then, God and Satan clash over whether or not there is an extent of suffering that would make Job curse God. And so Satan brings upon good Job extreme suffering. But Job remains faithful to God and, in the end, God rewards Job.

The notion of heart does not have a particularly important place in the Book of Job. Nevertheless, Augustine uses “heart” (cor) in his interpretation of the second chapter of the Book of Job in De Patientia.¹⁰⁵

In the second chapter of the Book of Job, Satan has inflicted sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. The wife of Job berates Job for keeping his faith. Job retorts an insult: he tells her that she speaks as any foolish woman would speak. As the scriptural text puts it: “Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”¹⁰⁶

In De Patientia, Augustine presents Job as a second Adam. Adam surrendered to the temptation of the woman and Job repelled the temptation of the woman. Augustine underscores that Job rebuked his wife for her foolishness. He offers that Job, suffering the torturous sores


¹⁰⁴ Job 1:1 (New Revised Standard Version): “There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”


from Satan, bore his own pain in his body and, suffering the foolishness and faithlessness of his wife and his friends, bore the error of others in his heart. In all, Augustine glosses these verses:

From the head to the feet were burning pains, were crawling worms, were running sores; still in the rotting body the mind remained entire, and horrid as were the tortures of the consuming flesh, with inviolate piety and uncorrupted patience it endured them all. There stood the wife, and instead of giving her husband any help, was suggesting blasphemy against God. For we are not to think that the devil, in leaving her when he took away the sons, went to work as one unskilled in mischief: rather, how necessary she was to the tempter, he had already learned in Eve. But now he had not found a second Adam whom he might take by means of a woman. More cautious was Job in his hours of sadness, than Adam in his bowers of gladness, the one was overcome in the midst of pleasant things, the other overcame in the midst of pains; the one consented to that which seemed delightsome, this other quailed not in torments most affrightsome. . . . But he, bearing in his flesh his own pains, in his heart others’ errors, reproved his wife for her folly, taught his friends wisdom, preserved patience in each and all.  

The notion of heart in the exegesis of Job 2 comes to the fore in Moralia in Job of Gregory the Great. In his own commentary on Job, Thomas Aquinas focuses on the literal sense of the scriptural text. Thomas offers his commentary as an addition to the exposition of Job according to the spiritual senses that Gregory had set out. Indeed, Book III of Gregory’s Moralia in Job opens with the plan to interpret the second chapter of the Book of Job “historically, allegorically, and morally.” Gregory’s Book III uses the word heart (cor) at least

107 Augustine, On Patience, Para. 9.


110 Gregory the Great, Morals on the Book of Job, 130.
thirty-three times and the word courage (*courage*) or a variant at least three times in the book’s seventy chapters. What is more, Gregory’s use of “heart” is concentrated in his exegesis of Job 2:9 and, to a lesser extent, Job 2:10, that is, the verses of the scriptural text that mention the wife of Job and women. Fifteen of Gregory’s thirty-three uses of “heart” in Book III are put forth in his interpretations according to the spiritual senses of Job 2:9-10.

In the epistle, Christine herself reveals that, directly or indirectly, she knew Gregory’s *Moralia in Job*. She writes: “But Saint Gregory says about this holy City of Paradise, in the thirteenth chapter of the *Moralia*, that God has presented the harsh path of this life, so that the travelers do not enjoy themselves so much on it as to forget, through great repose and happy journeying, to stay on the road to their rightful land which is in Heaven.”111 The thirteenth chapter of Book III of Gregory’s *Moralia in Job* is one of the three chapters (12-14) in which the historical gloss of Job 2:9 is set out. The next line in Christine’s text is another line that she attributes to Gregory. The second line lifted from Gregory considers the hearts of the elect, which, indeed, Gregory had written about in both his allegorical and moral interpretations of Job 2:9-10 in Book III of the *Moralia in Job*. According to Christine, “the hearts of the chosen [cuers des esleus] which are expecting the great joys of Paradise, gather strength against the assaults of the enemies, because as the battle becomes harder, they expect a more glorious victory, and they are made so much firmer by tribulations that, just as the flame of a strong fire is abated by the wind which seems to have to put it out, in fact forces it back up and makes it stronger, through their tribulations, their will to please God becomes stronger.”112


112 Ibid. See ibid., 54-55; 56-57; 58-59; 66-67 for Christine’s references to Saint Gregory.
It is possible that Christine had access to Gregory’s *Moralia in Job*. But it is more probable that Christine had access to at least one *florilegium* that included selections from the *auctores* on particular subjects. A review of the manuscript holdings at the Bibliothèque nationale de France reveals that the writings of Gregory were often included in such compilations. In particular, the writings of Gregory were sometimes bound together with the writings of his contemporary and friend Isidore of Seville. The chapters of her epistle on patience, in particular, reveal the indebtedness of Christine to Isidore. So it is plausible that Christine drew on at least one *florilegium* as she composed *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité.*

Gregory’s use of the term *cor* is most concentrated in his commentary on Job 2:9 according to the historical sense. Like Augustine, Gregory reads Job as a second Adam and the wife of Job as a second Eve. Unlike Adam, Job remained faithful to God despite the work of Satan in the words of a woman. Gregory explains the strategy of Satan in terms of heart. He writes: “Now the woman is close to the man and joined to him. Therefore he fixed his hold on the heart of the woman, and as it were found in it a ladder whereby he might be able to mount up to the heart of the man. He seized the mind of the wife, which was the ladder to the husband.”

Gregory takes the text to mean that Satan used the weak heart and weak mind of the wife of Job to try to fell Job. Gregory explains that that hearts and minds of women are “looser,” less chaste and more vulnerable to error, than the hearts and minds of men. But Job was not razed. As Gregory reads the text, Job was not even surprised that his wife should give him bad counsel. Job understood that wisdom is not often found in the words of women. Gregory glosses: “For the

113 Ibid., 54-55.
holy man minded that the woman was set under and not over him, and by speaking aright, he instructed her, whom the serpent set on to speak wrongly. For it was meet that manly reproof should hold in that looser mind; since indeed he knew even by the first fall of man, that the woman was unskilled to teach aright. And hence it is well said by Paul, I permit not a woman to teach. [1 Tim. 2, 12] Doubtless for that, when she once taught, she cast us off from an eternity of wisdom.”115

Later in his interpretation of Job 2:9 according to the historical sense, Gregory develops the notion of the wife of Job, “his evil counsellor,” as a second Eve.116 Gregory suggests that the greatest vulnerability of Job is his wife, to whom he is joined. So Gregory explains that the strategy of Satan was most cunning, not insofar as it stripped Job of everything, but insofar as it kept the wife of Job near to the good man. “But because, by these wounds of the flesh, he could not attain to wound the soul, he sought out the tongue of the woman that was joined to him. For because it sorely grieved him to be overcome in open fight, he flung a javelin from the mouth of the wife, as if from a place of ambush: as she said, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Bless God and die. Mark how in trying him, he took away every thing, and again in trying him, left him his wife, and shewed craftiness in stripping him of every thing, but infinitely greater cunning, in keeping the woman as his abettor, to say, Dost thou still retain thine integrity?”117

It seems possible that the conspicuous use of the language of “heart” in Christine’s text is, at least in part, a response to the use of the language of “heart” in Gregory’s text. Gregory uses the notion of heart to explain the weakness of women and the weakness of women as the

115 Ibid., 137-38.
116 Ibid., 139.
117 Ibid.
vulnerability of men. Christine, in contrast, uses the notion of heart to demonstrate that women as human persons are able to be strong and good.

Next, Gregory sets out his interpretation of Job 2:10 according to the historical sense. Here, Gregory seems to move toward a more positive view of women. It seems possible that, directly or indirectly, the ideas of Gregory set out in these chapters influenced Christine in her composition of the epistle.

In his explanation of Job 2:9, Gregory had seemed to take Eve and the wife of Job to represent women and wives in general. But Gregory opens his gloss of Job 2:10 with the suggestion, usually, the wife of Job had been a consolation to her husband. Here, Gregory names the loss of the consolation of his wife as another thing Job has lost.\(^{118}\)

Gregory then draws on the Pauline notion that the real treasure of human life on earth is wisdom which is present within the earthen vessel of a corruptible body.\(^{119}\) According to Gregory, “you see, the earthen vessel in blessed Job felt those gaping sores without, but this treasure remained entire within. For without he cracked in his wounds, but the treasure of wisdom unfailingly springing up within issued forth in words of holy instruction.”\(^{120}\) Gregory unpacks the lesson of this verse. It is: “For it is a mighty solace of our tribulation, if, when we

\(^{118}\) Ibid. Gregory writes: “See the enemy is every where broken, every where overcome, in all his appliances of temptation he has been brought to the ground, in that he has even lost that accustomed consolation which he derived from the woman.”

\(^{119}\) Ibid. Gregory writes: “Amid these circumstances it is good to contemplate the holy man, without, void of goods, within, filled with God. When Paul viewed in himself the riches of internal wisdom, yet saw himself outwardly a corruptible body, he says, We have this treasure in earthen vessels. [2 Cor. 4, 7].”

\(^{120}\) Ibid. See Christine de Pizan, *The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life*, 8-9 for the same Pauline notion undergirding Christine’s description of the prison of human life and animating her project in *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité*: “Thus each man alive in this moral world – since we are all equal: high, middle, and low – in so far as he is in this condition, can and must consider himself a prisoner; however, it remains to be seen if, in this prison, man of any position whatsoever remains assured of all comfort, and no peril.”
suffer afflictions, we recall to remembrance our Maker’s gifts to us, Nor does that break down
our force, which falls upon us in the smart, if that quickly comes to mind, which lifts us up in the
gift.”

Christine likewise counsels recollection of the gifts of God in the face of suffering. In a
part of the epistle still to be considered, Christine describes the consideration of the gift of grace,
the gift of nature, and the gift of fortune as particular comforts in the face of the suffering of
human life on earth (sensualité et fragilité humaine).

Gregory closes the paragraphs on Job 2:10 with a defense of women. Indeed, Gregory
sets out the argument at the heart of Christine’s theological notion of the human person. Gregory
explains that the wife of Job is in error because of her bad sense and not because of her sex.
Nature has not cast the wife of Job, as a woman, to be foolish or faithless. Her fatuousness does
not follow from her creation as a woman. It is something “superadded.” As Gregory writes, “he
does well in saying first, Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women. For because it is the
sense of a bad woman, and not her sex, that is in fault, he never says, ‘Thou hast spoken like one
of the women,’ but ‘of the foolish women,’ clearly that it might be shewn, that whatsoever is of
ill sense cometh of superadded folly, and not of nature so formed.”

In his allegorical and moral readings of Job 2:9-10, however, Gregory seems to undo
some of that work to set apart the notion of foolish women from the notion of women in general.
In his allegorical gloss of Job 2:9, Gregory takes the wife of Job to stand for “all the carnal that
are settled in the bosom of Holy Church.” From there, in his allegorical gloss of Job 2:10,

121 Gregory the Great, Morals on the Book of Job, 141.
122 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 32-33.
123 Ibid., 155.
124 Ibid., 155.
Gregory sets out that carnal men deserve to be called, not foolish men, and not even foolish women, but “women.” Gregory then writes “thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. For as it is said to the Elect, Act like men, and He shall comfort your heart; [Ps. 31, 24. Vulg.] so the minds of carnal men, which serve God with a yielding purpose, are not undeservedly called ‘women.’”

In his moral reading of Job 2:9, Gregory reads the wife of Job as “the carnal thought goading the mind.” Again, Gregory reads the verse in terms of the hearts of the carnal or the reprobate and the hearts of the elect: “But these trials are carried on in the case of the reprobate in one way, and of the Elect in another. The hearts of the first sort are so tempted that they yield consent, and those of the last undergo temptations indeed, but offer resistance.” In his moral reading of Job 2:10, Gregory reads the verse in terms of the manly hardness of the elect and, in contrast, the base softness of the reprobate: “Therefore let manly censure, reproving the dictates of unlawful imaginations, hold hard the dissolute softness of what is base in us, by saying, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.”

Christine’s epistle takes aim at Gregory’s notion of the consolation of God to the troubled heart suffering in the course of human life on earth. In his allegorical reading, Gregory sets out that carnal men deserve to be called women. Does that mean that all women deserve to be

125 Ibid., 159.
126 Ibid., 172.
127 Ibid., 173. Gregory then explains that, confronting suffering or temptation, the mind of the elect is like a captive to the promise of relief or delight. He writes: “The mind of the one is taken captive with a feeling of delight, and if at the moment that which is prompted amiss is displeasing, yet afterwards by deliberation it gives pleasure. But these so receive the darts of temptation, that they weary themselves in unceasing resistance, and if at any time the mind under temptation is hurried away to entertain a feeling of delight, yet they quickly blush at the very circumstance of their delight stealing upon them, and blame with unsparing censure all that they detect springing up in themselves of a carnal nature.”
128 Ibid.
classed with carnal men? The epistle of Christine demonstrates the opposite to be true. Christine’s argument is that women, as human persons, have heart and the potential for virtue. The point of the epistle is that women can practice patience and, in so doing, soften their hearts, not growing weaker or baser, but growing stronger and more virtuous even in the face of the suffering of human life on earth.

Christine sets out five reasons for Marie and the noblewomen of France to take comfort in their mourning. First, their friends were good and honorable. Second, for all persons, life on earth is full of trouble and pain, but life in heaven is peaceful and joyful; their friends are now released from the prison of human life. Third, every person dies. Fourth, Marie and the noblewomen of France have other friends who are alive on earth. Moreover, these women have received from God the gifts of grace, nature, and fortune. So their lives are not without “the pleasures of this earth” (plaisirs de terre). Last, their friends are at perfect peace with God in heaven.

I am interested in the notion Christine of God’s gifts of grace, nature, and fortune. In particular, I am interested in the gift of grace. Christine sets out that the gift of grace includes understanding (entendement), which, in turn, feeds retention (retentive), memory (memoire), and reason (raison).

129 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 16-17.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 32-33.
132 Ibid., 50-51ff.
133 Ibid., 40-41.
Drawing on the teaching of Philosophy to Boethius, Christine argues that Fortune sets no person so low as to be without some reason for consolation in suffering. There is no person without some cause for comfort. What is more, Christine writes to Marie, for all that the noblewoman aches with sadness, she has received many gifts from God. Just as Philosophy had counseled Boethius to remember the gift of his children, Christine counsels Marie to consider the gifts that she has received from God. Christine warns Marie to guard against “ingratitude, which is a grave sin.”\textsuperscript{135} And so Christine counsels Marie to mind less the difficulties of human life on earth and more the great number of buoys that she has received from God: “Therefore, your good heart [\textit{ton bon courage}] should be aware of this, and remember in thanking God for your consolation [\textit{reconfort}] for [\textit{contre}] the assaults and wounds of tribulation when they affect you, the very large and noble benefits [\textit{grans et nobles benefices}] that you have received from your Creator, who wants you to use them well; and there are especially three from which many other goods come and on which they depend, and these are: the gift of grace, the gift of nature, and the gift of fortune.”\textsuperscript{136}

Christine explains that the gifts of grace and the gifts of nature are “inside us” and the gift of fortune is “outside” us.\textsuperscript{137} God gives the gifts of nature to the body. Christine explains that the gift of nature “concerns the body, that is: strength, beauty, health, \[\textit{habilité}], methodical speech,

\textsuperscript{135} Ead., \textit{The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life}, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid. Christine writes that in order “to understand better these three gifts, we have to know that two, when we have them, are inside us, and the third is outside. The one which is called grace is in the soul of the human creature, and it is the one which gives understanding, as Aristotle says, to imagine and comprehend things that are or can be, to be able to comprehend and conceive things that one has seen, heard, or known, and to distinguish the ones from the others when one selects some as good and rejects others as bad \[\textit{celui qui est dit de grace est en l’ame de creature humaine, et cestui est l’entendement qui donne, si comme dit Aristote, ymaginer et comprendre les choses qui sont ou peuvent estre, et connoissance d’entendre et concevoir celles que on a veues, oyés, et congnueues, et discerner les unes des autres en eslisant les unes pour bonnes et deboutant les autres comme mauvaises}]”
honorable behavior, organized manners, pleasant poise, grace, and all things relevant to the body and its movements.”

God gives fortune in circumstance, status, and position. Christine explains that the gift of fortune “includes control, domination, power, riches, nobility of blood, good outcomes, to have found a beautiful spouse, be it husband or wife; a beautiful lineage of children or high parentage, and all similar things which are outside oneself.”

Christine gives the greatest number of lines to the gift of grace. She writes that God gives grace to the soul. She suggests that God gives understanding to women and men alike (or, at least, without distinction on account of sex). Citing Aristotle, she sets out that understanding enables persons to learn from their senses, to make sense of what is and to envisage what could be, and to determine good from bad, that is, to be moral. She writes: “The one which is called grace is in the soul of the human creature, and it is the one which gives understanding, as Aristotle says, to imagine and comprehend things that are or can be, to be able to comprehend and conceive things that one has seen, heard, or known, and to distinguish the ones from the others when one selects some as good and rejects others as bad.”

Continuing to describe the gift of grace, Christine writes that understanding (entendement) feeds retention (retentive), memory (memoire), and reason (raison). As the operations of the mind, retention accepts and holds the signals from the senses, memory keeps

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138 Ibid., 34-35. Christine lists “force, beauté, santé, habilité, parole ordonnee, honnourable port, maniere arree, avenant maintien, gracieuseté.”

139 Ibid., 34-35. Christine lists “seigneurie, dominacion, puissance, richesces, noblece de sang, bonnes aventures, avoir escheu a bonne et belle partie, soit femme ou mary, belle ligniee d’enfans ou de haulx parens.”

140 Ibid., 32-33.
and recalls those signals as information, and, based on the work of retention and memory, reason effects action. Next, Christine develops the notion that she had set out at the opening of the text, that human life is a kind of prison in which the rational soul (l’ame raisonnable), which is the noblest part of a person, is “kept prisoner and bound inside the body as long as it is in it” (detenue emprisonnee et liee dedens le corps tant comme elle y est). Christine explains that reason is a kind of agent of imprisoned understanding. Reason applies the understanding of the mind to action. Christine explains that

to go back to the particular things for which the gift of comprehension [entendement], which is and has its location in the head [situation ou chief], is used, we must know that three very special and noble virtues [vertus] come from it and stay in it. One is retention [retentive], the second memory [memoire], and the third is reason [raison]. Retention is used to receive in oneself the things that comprehension controls and entrusts to it, and then it retains them. Memory is used in order not to forget things retained; it keeps and reminds you of them. Reason, which is the third, opens the way to put into practice [effect a oeuvre] what comprehension has understood and retention has kept and what memory has recorded. Therefore, reason is the administrator of works [administreresse de faire mettre a exécucion par oeuvre] – like a bailiff [baillif] or a provost marshal [prevost des mandemens] – of good and healthy comprehension [bon et sain entendement], since the latter can be very different in one man or another, and whoever has a great deal of it, is enriched by no small treasure! But he must make good use of it, because there is none like it in this world.

Christine then explains that reason engenders prudence. Reason is the agent of understanding and prudence is the agent of reason. Prudence works in the heart and steers heart. Christine writes: “From reason [raison] comes and is born discretion [discrecion], which some call prudence [prudence], and like [si comme] the servant of reason [servant de raison], it sends

141 Ibid., 6-7.
142 Ibid., 34-35.
off its orders to be put in the hearts of men [cuers des creatures], and it distributes and imparts all that it commands.”

In this text, Christine prefers to use the term “discretion” instead of the term “prudence.” But she explains that discretion is that “which some call prudence.” Her explication of her notion of discretion reveals her direct or indirect indebtedness to Aristotle’s notion of prudence (phronesis). In Ethics, Aristotle had set out that the virtue of character is bound together with the virtue of intellect. Each virtue of character is a mean. And a mean depends on all the particular circumstances of each particular case considered together. So, in each case, reason and prudence, the intellectual virtue of good deliberation, determine the mean. Christine seems to take all of this for granted. She even uses the word menee two times in this section of the text to get at the notion of prudence as that which “means,” that is, that which discerns the mean. Christine gives two examples of the mean. First, she writes that generosity is a virtue but that either too much or too little giving and taking of wealth is a vice. This seems to come from Aristotle’s Ethics (directly or indirectly). Second, she sets out a Christian example. She writes that the practice of Christian devotion is a virtue but that devotional practices that do harm to the body are not virtues. In all, Christine writes: “This discretion is called the mother of all virtues, and the reason why it is called this is because if virtues were not under its command [menee], as I said once in another work, they would become vices; for example, generosity is a virtue, but not when it is excessive and not checked [menee] by discretion, for then it becomes a foolish

143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
146 Ibid., 2.7; 3.5-4.11.
generosity that we call prodigality, which is a vice. Likewise, devotion, prayers, and fasting are
great virtues; nevertheless, if someone weakens and overworks the body so much that is breaks
down and cannot continue, that would not be a virtue [vertu].”

Drawing on a Saint John, Christine continues to consider prudence, with a more explicit
Christian inflection. She describes prudence as a mean between too little and too much. She
seems to refract the Latin prudentia or providentia meaning foreseeing as she explains that
prudence makes a human creature clear-sighted. Here, Christine brings to the fore the notion of
prudence as a kind of vision. She describes the prudent person as able to see past the normal
nearness of the self and self-interest. First, the prudent person sees all things in and for God.
Second, the prudent person looks to secure the soul and salvation. Third, the prudent person
keeps in view the commandments of God. Thus, with an eye trained on God, the prudent person
forms her will and desires. The prudent person forms in herself a good will and reasonable
desires. So formed, the prudent person pursues good ends. The person who is prudent is good.
Christine writes that

Saint John says the same: whoever wants to follow the right path in everything
and do good works has to do it with discretion, which is the mean between too
little and too much [moiennent entre le pou et le trop]; this virtue in a man
[creature] makes him very clear-sighted [cler voient]; that is, he will keep in mind
the things of the past to set an example in front of his eyes, the things to come to
provide for them, and the things of the present to live them well. And inasmuch as
the property of discretion is to make one think [regarder] far and near and around
oneself, the discreet person [la personne discrete] is knowledgeable in everything
[est en toutes choses avisee] and sees to everything as much as he can [pourvoit a
tout selon son povior]; first to the sovereign good [souverain bien], then he

147 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 34-35. See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 4.1 for
Aristotle’s description of the virtue of generosity.

considers his soul [son ame] and his salvation [son salut], and to this goal, he follows the ways ordered by God [les voyes que Dieu commande], and strives not to achieve the opposite; from this come forth and are born good will [bonnes voulentes] and sensible desires [desirs raisonnables], which are followed by good actions [bonnes œuvres], after that, he tries to govern his body with such discretion in order to stay full or honor and health, and puts so much effort into staying healthy that he has neither blemish nor cause for reproach.149

Christine returns to the relationship between knowledge and vision later in the text. There, she describes Christian faith as illuminating the dimness of corporeal eyes.150

Christine counsels her readers to let prudence direct their use of the gifts of nature. She writes: “it is truly proper that they be governed by discretion, however one is capable of it, just as it befits the lord to rule over his subjects so that they be led discreetly [que par discretion ilz soient menez]; otherwise, everything would turn to folly and vice . . . . One author says that in all good things, more is best, except for speech; it is said on that subject that discretion must prevail [convient discretion], which moderates [amodere] between too much and too little [entre le trop et le pou] . . . and the same is true for others.”151

Addressing her readers as women who have received many gifts of fortune, Christine outlines how to let prudence direct their use of the gifts of fortune. Christine returns to the notion of prudence as an activity of the soul. It is a kind of good vision. It illuminates. Prudence enables Marie and the noblewomen of France, each, to effect the manners proper to her status. Prudence

149 Ibid., 34-37.
150 Ibid., 48-49.
151 Ibid., 36-37. Christine explains that “as for the aforementioned goods that nature provides and which concern the body, as was said previously, it is truly proper that they be governed by discretion, however one is capable of it, just as it befits the lord to rule over his subjects so that they be led discreetly [que par discretion ilz soient menez]; otherwise, everything would turn to folly and vice . . . . One author says that in all good things, more is best, except for speech; it is said on that subject that discretion must prevail [convient discretion], which moderates [amodere] between too much and too little [entre le trop et le pou], but if it is handled properly it is perfect and very good; it is also good to show and present any other ability, in time and in place; otherwise, it would not have any value, and the same is true for others.”
enables them to be good. In all, Christine writes: “Concerning the goods of fortune, which is the third gift mentioned above, to govern them and to use them wisely [a les bien gouverner et sagement en user], the soul [ame] needs not a little discretion [discretion], and where the goods are distributed without it, everything turns to folly and harm is done; therefore, the discreet person [la personne discrete], with good sense [par bon avis], according to the state that God called him to [selon l’estat ou Dieu l’a appelle] and according to his own possibilities [sa possibilté], will want to behave in everything as best he can [se pourra].”152

Christine also introduces the lessons of prudence for men of each estate.153 She sets out lessons for a man of the Church, a married man, a father, and a lord or a landowner. Christine closes the chapter with an invitation to Marie and the noblewomen of France to translate the lessons that she has offered to men to their own lives, each according to her own status. For Christine, morals are universal, but manners, that is, good behavior, depends on estate, the particular position (and its duties) that a person has received from God. Manners are different for women and men, different for women of different estates, and different for men of different estates. But all persons need prudence in order to perform their manners, practice the virtues, and be good. So Christine closes the chapter: “These examples [cestes manieres] of behaving according to discretion or prudence [disrecion ou prudence] apply in the same way [semblablement] to all the ladies according to their various positions and estates [qualité et estas] in which each one is; also to men, although I could say much more on that subject and on each

152 Ibid., 36-37.
153 Ibid., 36-39.
particular estate *[chascun estat particulierement]*, but for the sake of brevity, the description of
the above three gifts will suffice.”

The last word of Christine concerning God’s gifts of grace, nature, and fortune is a lesson
about gratitude and duty. Christine writes to Marie, in particular, that God made her and all
human persons in the image and likeness of God. Human persons bear the mark of the Creator
equally. But human persons receive the gifts of grace, nature, and fortune unequally. Christine
calls Marie to see how many gifts she has received and, in particular, to see how many more gifts
she has received than most human persons: “Look at the difference between you and them!” *(Regardes quel difference de toy a eulx!)* Christine counsels Marie to see that she has cause to
feel, not just sorrow, but gratitude. Christine then explains that, because Marie has received so
much, she is all the more obliged to God. Christine compares a person who has received many
gifts from God to a servant “who has received many great goods, graces, and benefits from his
lord.” The favored servant is obliged to serve the lord that much better and is punished that
much more severely for falling short. Christine is clear about her lesson: “a human creature
*[creature humaine]* should be so towards his Creator *[son Createur].”

Christine’s review of the gifts of grace, nature, and fortune is another arena in which she
sets out her case for women as human persons. Women are made in the image and likeness of
God. Women bear the capacity for the virtues of intellect that enable and enact the virtues of
character. Women receive reason as a gift of grace from God. With reason, women can engender

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154 Ibid., 38-39.
155 Ibid., 44-45.
156 Ibid., 40.
157 Ibid., 40-41.
158 Ibid.
prudence. With prudence, women can see the mean and women can do the mean. Women can perform their manners (according to their status) and practice the virtues. Women can achieve their own perfection. Women are human persons; possessors of rational souls; and capable of good action, including Christian service, in the world.

Christine’s *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconsort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité* is a contribution to theological debates about women, reason, and virtue. Christine defines patience as “moderation of heart” (*attrempanse de courage*).“ Christine uses the notion of heart in response to the tradition of exegesis of the Book of Job, which, at least from *Moralia in Job* of Gregory the Great forward, had tended to weigh in on women in terms of *cor*. Christine advances a notion of God’s gifts of grace, nature, and fortune that contains within it an argument for women as human persons, made in the image and likeness of God, bearing reason, and capable of prudence and Christian practice. The notion of prudence is at the fore again in *Le livre de trois vertus* (1405) of Christine. That text is the subject of the next chapter.

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159 Ibid., 30-31.
In Le livre de la cité des dames (1405), Christine had set out that women, as human persons, are entitled to receive moral teaching (enseign[me]ns mouraux).¹ In that text, Christine’s Dame Rectitude responds to the men who argue against the moral education of women that there are absolutely no grounds for assuming that knowledge of moral disciplines, which actually inculcate virtue, would have a morally corrupting effect. Indeed, there’s no doubt whatsoever that such forms of knowledge correct one’s vices and improve one’s morals. How could anyone possibly think that by studying good lessons and advice one will be any the worse for it? This view is completely unthinkable and untenable. . . . It’s just that it’s not true to say that women will be corrupted by knowing what’s right and proper.²

Rectitude explains that “it’s beyond doubt that women count as God’s creatures and are human beings just as men are [n’est mie doubte que les femmes sont aussi bein ou nombre du pueple de Dieu et de creature humaine que sont les hommes]. They’re not a different race or a strange breed, which might justify their being excluded from receiving moral teachings [non mie une autre espece ne de dessemblable generacion par quoy elles doyent estre forcloses des enseign[me]ns mouraux].”³

Based on her argument for women as human persons, therefore, Christine wrote a book on morals and manners for women.

² Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, 140.
Christine wrote *Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames* (1405-6) for Marguerite of Burgundy, Dauphine of France, and all of the women of France. From its opening, *Trois vertus* presents itself as a continuation of the project that Christine had begun in the *Cité des dames*.4

After I built the City of Ladies with the aid and instruction of the three lady Virtues: Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, as I described in my book called *The City of Ladies*, I was worn out by that strenuous labor. My body was exhausted by such long and sustained effort, and I was resting, idly, when suddenly the three radiant creatures appeared to me once more, saying: ‘Studious daughter! Have you spurned and silenced the instrument of your intellect? Have you let your pen and ink dry out? Have you given up the labor of your hand which usually delights you? Are you willing to listen to the seductive song which Idleness sings to you? . . . Do not be distracted in the middle of your long journey! Shame on the knight who leaves the battle before victory! Only those who persist deserve the laurel crown. Now up, up! Lend a hand! Get ready! Stop crouching on this dust heap of fatigue! Obey our words [*entens noz sermons*], and your work will prosper [*feras bonne oeuvre*].5

*Trois vertus* is set out in three parts. The first part is addressed to royal women “and to all women.”6 The second part offers instruction to noblewomen and to all women. The third part sets out teaching for all of the rest of the women of France, including unmarried women, wives,

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4 See Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies*, trans. Charity Cannon Willard (Tenafly, NJ and New York: Bard Hall Press and Persea Books, 1989), 69, where, drawing on Christian theological notions of creation, Christine has the Dames use language that is reminiscent of Genesis 1:28 to encourage the author to continue to write: “We are not fully satisfied with your labors as our handmaiden in the furthering of our grand scheme. . . . At the beginning of the world, God saw that His work was good, blessed it, and then went on to create man, woman, and the animals. So may our preceding work, The City of Ladies, which is fine and useful, not only be blessed and praised throughout the world – but now may it grow further.” See Genesis 1:28 (New Revised Standard Version) “God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”


6 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 70.
and widows; the wives of merchants; the wives of artisans; the wives of laborers; women in service; women who are poor; and women who are prostitutes.\footnote{See Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, “Le Livre des trois vertus et le sermo at status,” in Une femme de lettres au Moyen Age: études autour de Christine de Pizan, ed. Liliane Dulac et al. (Orléans: Paradigm, 1995), 139-49.}

Christine writes that women of every status can learn from each part of the book. The premise of the project is that morals are universal. The lessons in morals set out in the text for women of one status are true for women of any other status. In Part II, Christine writes: “We insist that this doctrine \[une meismes doctrine\] applies to ladies, demoiselles, and indeed all women. On certain matters affecting the soul \[l’ame\], the virtues \[vertus\], and good habits \[meurs\], we will not repeat all we have said before. It would be needless effort and might easily bore our readers. So let what has earlier been said benefit everyone where it fits. May each one take from it what she thinks she may need for the good and profit of her soul \[son ame\] and her behavior \[ses meurs\].”\footnote{Ibid., 149; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 121-22.} In Part III, Christine repeats this basic point of the text. “As we have repeatedly stated, whatever we have said regarding virtues \[vertus\] and the proper manner of life \[gouvernement de vivre\] can pertain to any woman, whatever her estate \[quelque estat que elle soit\]. On these subjects, what is specifically suitable for some many also be suitable for others. Each can take from our teachings whatever she finds useful.”\footnote{Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 185; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 171.}

In contrast, manners are conditional. Manners differ according to status. In Part III, Christine explains that: “each ought to maintain her proper place in society \[propre estat\] and,
along with this, her particular lifestyle [difference es manieres de vivre des gens, doit avoir es estaz]."10

Charity Cannon Willard has suggested that Christine presents the lessons for women with the help of Worldly Prudence (Prudence Mondaine) consistent with the three “distinctly secular” Dames Reason, Rectitude, and Justice in Cité.11 But, in fact, neither the Dames in the Cité nor Prudence in Trois vertus is secular. Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames is a manual for women on the practice of Christian life in the world. First, Christine sets out the tenets of the Christian faith. Then, she introduces prudence as that which translates Christian faith into practice. She demonstrates how the same Christian teachings are enacted according to various status. The text is a series of lessons and examples in good morals and good manners for Christian women.

As in L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité (1417), the notion of “heart” is important in this text. Christine’s first concern is the hearts of the women of France. From there, she is interested in honest representation of both heart and status, which she takes to be essential for order and peace. Here, as Christine demonstrates how prudence guides each woman to good Christian practice in the

10 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 193-94; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 183-84. See ead., Les sept psaumes allégorisés of Christine de Pisan, ed. Ruth Ringland Rains (The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), 129. In Les sept psaumes allégorisés (1409), Christine prays for “nostre royne de France,” Isabeau of Bavaria, “et toutes celles qui apres vendront, ottroyes grace de telement vivre en ce monde que meurs et maniere de vivre soit de tout bon exemple.”

11 Charity Cannon Willard, “Christine de Pizan’s Advice to Women,” in A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, by Christine de Pizan, trans. Charity Cannon Willard (Tenafly, NJ and New York: Bard Hall Press and Persea Books, 1989), 30. Willard restates her view that “these three Virtues are secular in concept, and so quite different from the traditional Theological Virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity) and with only a slight resemblance to the Cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Magnanimity, Fortitude, and Justice)” in Christine de Pizan, The Writings of Christine de Pizan, ed. Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Persea Books, 1994), 208. Willard argues that Reason, Rectitude, and Justice “are primarily secular Virtues come to offer lessons in prudence mondaine (worldly prudence), which they make clear in the course of The Book of the Three Virtues” in Charity Cannon Willard, Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works (New York: Persea Books, 1984), 136.
world, she returns to an idea that she had set out autobiographically and allegorically in *Le livre de la mutacion de fortune* (1403): taking on the heart of a man (*cuer d’omme*).\(^\text{12}\) Christine writes that she herself has taken on the heart of a man. She recommends this practice to widows and to baronesses (whose husbands are often away from home) in particular. To take on the heart of a man is to pursue one’s own self-interest in the world when there is no one else to do it. It is a particular kind of prudential practice for Christian women in the world.

Altogether, Christine sets out *Trois vertus* in order to teach women about the Christian faith and prudence. The practice of good morals and good manners benefits each woman individually. And Christine offers her lessons in the interest of each woman’s heart, salvation, honor, and good name. But the benefits of good morals and good manners are not just individual. Christine offers her lessons in the interest of order and peace in France.

In the first chapter, the Dames Reason, Rectitude, and Justice appear to Christine. From the second chapter, *Trois vertus* sets out Christian teaching. The first lesson is love and fear of God. Christine writes: “First and foremost, our doctrine’s foundation [*le fondement de nostre doctrine*] is the love and fear of Our Lord [*l’amour et craintte de Nostre Seigneur*]. This is the beginning of wisdom and the source of all other excellences [*vertus*].”\(^\text{13}\)

The next eight chapters are a review of Christian teaching in. Indeed, in each part of *Trois vertus*, Christine sets out instruction in the Christian faith. And she emphasizes that all of the lessons are for each of her readers, regardless of where in the text she has placed them.

For all women, the lessons of *Trois vertus* start with love and fear of God. Christine writes: “First and foremost, our doctrine’s foundation [*le fondement de nostre doctrine*] is the


\(^{13}\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 71; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 11.
love and fear of Our Lord [\textit{l’amour et craintie de Nostre Seigneur}]. This is the beginning of wisdom [\textit{sapience}] and the source of all other excellences [\textit{vertus}]."\textsuperscript{14} Christian faith illuminates the dimness of corporeal eyes.\textsuperscript{15} So love and fear of God make possible knowledge, wisdom, and virtue.

Christine explains that God is to be loved as the good and the source of all goodness and God is to be feared as the just and the measure of all justice and injustice. So love and fear of God means a commitment to the good and the just in practice in the world. In other words, love and fear of God means a commitment to the life of virtue. Christine writes: “Why love [\textit{amer}]? Love Him for His infinite goodness [\textit{bonté}] and the very great benefits [\textit{benefices}] you receive from Him. Fear [\textit{craindre}] Him for [H]is divine and holy justice [\textit{divine et saincte justice}], which leaves no evil unpunished. If you keep both this love and this fear before your eyes [\textit{les yeulx}], certainly you will walk the path to the goal where our instruction [\textit{preschons}] will lead you, that is, to the virtues [\textit{vertus}].”\textsuperscript{16}

At the end of the second chapter, Christine uses the notion of “heart” (\textit{cuer}) to describe the disposition and discipline of a Christian person. She explains that the love of God leads the heart to good works in the world. Lit by faith, the human person (Christine uses the unsexed language of “creatures”) pursues virtue and eschews vice; “Every heart [\textit{tout cuer}] which truly loves [God] [\textit{qui bien aime Dieu}] should show this love through good works [\textit{le demonstre par oeuvre}]. . . . Creatures [\textit{les creatures}] who love Him follow His footsteps of perfection [\textit{ses traces, qui sont de vertu}], and He protects them from all peril. Thus, the princess who loves Him

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{16} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 71; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 11.
will demonstrate it by dutiful labor in her exalted occupation. She will not stray from the light of His way [ses yeulx sa lumiere de droit chemin], and that light will protect her from temptations and shadows of sin and vice [les temptacions et tenebres de pechié et de vices], radiantly conquering and expelling them.”

Christine returns to love and fear of God as the foundation of knowledge, wisdom, and virtue at the opening of Part II, addressed to noblewomen. There, she adds that the first good thing that God gives to all human persons is a soul created in the image and likeness of God. With reason, women can know God, know good from evil, and know justice from injustice. Women can do what is good and just, and secure their salvation. Christine writes that equally for ordinary women and great mistresses, it is important always to have the love and fear of Our Lord [l’amour et craintte de Nostre Seigneur] before their eyes [devant leurs yeulx] in all their undertakings and ever in their memories. This will remind them of the blessings [les biens] they receive from Him: the soul created in His image [l’ame qui est cree a son ymage] will possess the Kingdom of Heaven forever [le royaume des cieulx a tousjours], if only they expend a little effort and care. God gives many gifts: the ability to know Him [cognoistre Dieu] and to know what is good and evil; bodily strength to put the good into effect [pour mettre le bien a effect]; health; and many other good graces. . . . As the first Commandment says: ‘You will love God above all things.’ Women must never forget this love, nor the fear of the Lord, nor the grievous punishment from His justice, which imperils any creature [les creatures] who does not follow the straight path.

As Christine begins to move from commitment to love and fear of God to practice of the virtues, she sets out the stakes for her reader. In L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité (1417), a text of consolation, Christine writes

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17 Ibid.
18 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 149-50; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 122.
that a description of hell is outside of the scope of her text. But, in *Trois vertus*, a teaching text, Christine presents descriptions of heaven and hell. Christine writes that damnation “is to live [estre] forever deprived of the vision of God [la vision de Dieu], always in frightful shadows, in the company of terrible devils – enemies of humankind [anemis de nature humaine] – and, with the other damned souls, raising their voices in horrible cries and lamentations, cursing God, their parents, and themselves, in unspeakable torment amidst burning fires. As Job said, it is to live in fearsome stench, perpetual horrors, and, worst of all, despair of ever leaving that despair.”¹⁹ But, Christine assures her readers that God offers grace. The Passion promises paradise. God secures human salvation. Human persons must just “make a little effort to deserve it” and keep the commandments of God.²⁰ This leads Christine to a description of heaven: “Saint Gregory in his *Homilies* speaks of that Holy City of Paradise: ‘Where is the mind that can know, where is the tongue that can tell how great are the joys of Paradise? Paradise is to be ever in the company of angels with the blessed saints in the glory of Our Creator, to see the Blessed Trinity, to know God’s glorious face, to behold and to feel [regarder, veoir et sentir] His unbelievable radiance [sa lumiere incomprehensible], to be free from all desire, to have infinite knowledge in eternal quiet [avior cognoiscence de toute science en repos eternel], to fear no death, and to be ever assured of that company, never separated from that glorious joy [glorieuse beneurté].’”²¹ Willard has pointed out that the passage from a text of Gregory the Great that Christine cites here is also included in *Le Livre de l’advision Christine* (1405-1406) and *L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité* (1417). Willard has

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argued that “Christine probably knew the passage in Book I, Chapter 5 from the *Manipulus Florum*, where it occurs in the section entitled ‘Gloria Eterna.’”

Christine puts these brief descriptions to her own purpose: to teach her readers to see and to do what is good and just, to practice virtues, and to secure their salvation. Christine writes: “Now do you see [vois] the difference between the two ways? Which one will you take? Will you foolishly remain in the swamp to drown and perish, neglecting the holy, lovely, and way sure [la saine, belle et seure voye] which leads to salvation [sauveté]? Certainly not! You must not abandon the good [le bien] to choose the evil [le mal].”

Christine ends the chapter with a prayer to God, the three-in-one, to the Virgin Mary, and to all the communion of saints for help and for clear-sightedness instead of the normal blindness of human understanding. Christine prays: “O Holy Trinity, One God in sovereign unity [un Dieu en unité], perfect power [souveraine poissance], wisdom [perfaicte sapience], and infinite goodness [infinite bonté]: Advise and succor me. Help me escape from the shades of ignorance [tenebres d’ignorance] that have fearfully blinded me. O Virgin – worthy, pure, and sacred – comfort of the hopeless and hope of the faithful [bien creans]; please grasp my hand, by your Holy Mercy, to pull me from the swamp of sin and iniquity.”

Christine moves from commitment to love and fear of God to practice of the virtues in a different way at the beginning of Part II. There, she sets out the traditional and popular seven vices and seven virtues. Christine explains that love and fear of God guard Christians from pride,

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22 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 254.
anger, avarice, envy, idleness, gluttony, and luxury and draw Christians to humility, patience, charity, love of neighbor, diligence, sobriety, and chastity.\textsuperscript{25} She writes that

this love and fear \textit{[amour et craintte \[se a droicte est en leurs courages\]}} will protect them from vice and lead them to virtues, vanquish pride and enthrone humility, destroy anger and stimulate patience, eliminate avarice and substitute charity, root out envy and plant instead true love for neighbors \textit{[vraye amour vers leurs prochains]}. This love and fear will discourage idleness and encourage care and diligence to do good, and will make women despise gluttony and love sobriety, banish luxury and invite chastity. So it will endow these ladies with all virtues helpful to the soul \textit{[toutes les vertus propices a l’ame]} while driving out vices which could harm it.\textsuperscript{26}

Christine explains that nothing is more precious than the virtues. She uses “hearts” \textit{(cuers)} in the sense of “persons” as she describes how the virtues beautify those who want to live well in the world. Even jewels only ornament the body, which is passing. But virtues adorn the soul, which is eternal; “Virtues enhance the body of one desiring to live well \textit{[cuers qui desirent bien vivre]} because they are nobler than worldly riches. Why are they nobler? Because they endure forever and are treasures of the soul, which is everlasting \textit{[les tresors de l’ame qui est perpetuele]}.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} See ead., \textit{Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector}, trans. Jane Chance (Cambridge: D.S. Brewster, 1997), 53. In \textit{L’Epistre Othéa} (1399-1400), Christine recommends the seven deadly sins as a reading device. Christine introduces the seven deadly sins as an hermeneutical approach through which to find meaning in the verse texts. In the sixteenth chapter, Christine writes: “Now let us turn allegory to our purpose \textit{[à nostre propos]}, putting to use the seven deadly sins \textit{[applicant aux vii. pechez morteux]}. Through Narcissus we shall understand the sin of pride, against which the good spirit \textit{[le bon esperit]} ought to guard himself.” From there, Christine goes on to teach the seven deadly sins as an hermeneutic through which to read allegorically classical verse texts. In chapters seventeen through twenty-two, Christine interprets the fables of Athamas, Aglauros, Ulysses and Polyphemus, Latona, Bacchus, and Pygmalion as lessons about ire, envy, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lechery.

\textsuperscript{26} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 149-50; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 122-23. These words were omitted from the translation: “se a droicte est en leurs courages.”

\textsuperscript{27} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 71; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 10-11. See ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 90; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 42, where Christine writes that good morals \textit{(bonnes meurs)} “perfect the noble creature \textit{[elles perfont la creature noble]}, achieving the good repute wherein lies perfect honor \textit{[la font estre bien renommee]}.”
Twice, Christine argues that all of the other virtues are worthless without charity. First, to royal women, Christine retells the lesson of Paul set out in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Christine’s reworks Paul’s verse – “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” – into her own: “Whoever has all the other virtues, prays unceasingly, goes on pilgrimages, fasts at length, and does all good, but has no charity [charité], profits in nothing.” 28 Christine commends the memory of the royal saints to her royal readers. She explains that the royal saints were just (vivoient justement) because they saw that “their honors were for their positions as God’s vicars on earth [l’estat de la seigneurie dont ilz estoient vicaires de Dieu en terre] and not directed to them as individuals [en leurs personnes].” 29 Christine explains that, whereas God crowns poor persons with a diadem of patience for their suffering, royal persons must make good of their status in order to merit their salvation. 30 A royal woman merits the gifts that God has given to her to the extent that she shares with the poor. 31 Christine warns her royal readers: “Do not let the bread of the hungry mildew in your larder! Do not let moths eat the poor man’s cloak. Do not store the shoes of the barefoot. Do not hoard the money of the needy. Things you possess in too great abundance belong to the poor and not to you. You are the thief who steals from God if you are able to help your neighbor

28 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 84; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 31.
29 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 82.
30 Ibid., 87; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 37.
31 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 87.
and refuse to do it.”32 Second, to the wives of prosperous merchants, Christine sets out a line that she attributes to the *Sermon on the Apparition* of Pope Leo, which Willard has found in the section on “Miseracordia” in the *Manipulus Florum*.33 Christine quotes: “So great is the virtue of charitable mercy *charitable misericorde* that without it other virtues cannot flourish *que sans elle les autres vertus ne peuent profiter*. However much a human being *creature* may be abstinent, devout, avoiding sin, and having all other virtues, without this one to enhance the others, all is vain. On Judgement Day, it will carry the banner before *devant toutes vertus* [for] all those who have practiced it and loved it in this world, leading them to the place where the Lord will receive them into Paradise, condemning those who have lacked it with a definitive sentence to Hell.”34 To each group of women, Christine then underscores the verse from the Gospel of Matthew: “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”35

At the opening of Part III, Christine compares *Trois vertus* to a sermon (*sermon*) and herself to a preacher (*prescheur*). She has addressed royal women in Part I and noblewomen in Part II. Here she writes that no woman should smirk if some particular teaching does not suit her particular situation. The lessons of *Trois vertus* are for all women. She warns her readers against being like the churchgoers who listen carefully and thoughtfully to a sermon (*sermon*) up to the

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33 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 246.


point that the lessons of the preacher (prescheur) approach their own particular habits. In Part III, she addresses the rest of the women of France, according to their particular situations.

Later in Part III, Christine sets out another review of Christian faith. She places it toward the end of the text. The fourteenth chapter ends the book. The thirteenth chapter addresses women who are poor. The twelfth chapter addresses the wives of laborers, who live outside of the cities. Christine offers the fullest catechetical overview of the text to these women, who do not have access to Christian teaching, except for a brief sermon each Sunday. The placement of the lesson underscores a basic argument of Trois vertus: all women are human persons and, as human persons, entitled to moral teaching. The lessons of Trois vertus are for all women “because all creatures, no matter what their estate, need instruction in living well, we wish these women to participate in our lessons [Et pour ce que toute creature, de quelque estat que elle soit, a mestier d’introduction a bien vivre, nous plaist que elles soient participans en noz leçons].” Christine emphasizes that the purpose of this education is salvation. “If our lesson should reach your ears, remember it so that the ignorance which could mislead you will not hinder your salvation [ne vous destourne de sauvement].”

Christine sets out the predicates of God, starting with oneness. She writes that all people should love and serve God. She explains to the wives of laborers that God is pleased to receive their hearts and their lives. In God’s goodness, God receives the service of a good heart.

36 Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 185; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 171-72.

37 Ibid. Continuing to suggest that, as author, she is like a preacher, Christine writes that “for this reason, the wise preacher [le sage prescheur] should know what sort of people [quelz estaz de gens] are present at his sermon [a son sermon]. If he speaks directly to some, he should touch the others in such way that they will neither mock one another nor murmur against each other.”

38 Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 219; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 218.

In God’s omniscience, God accepts the good that it is possible for each person to perform. The devotion of these hardworking countrywomen does not look the same as the devotion of royal women, noblewomen, or even city women. They must achieve their own perfection according to their particular status. They must love and serve God with their hearts and with their lives as they are able. Christine teaches women to

know, first of all, that there is a single God: all powerful, completely good, just, wise, from whom nothing is hidden, and who rewards every being for good or evil according to what she deserves [seul Dieu tout puissant, tout bon, tout juste et tout sage, a qui nulls choses sont celles; qui rent guerredon a toute personne ou de bien ou de mal selon qu’il a desservi]. He alone should be perfectly loved and served [perfaictement améz et serviz]. Because He is so good [tant bon], He holds agreeable all the service laid before Him with good heart [tout service que bon cuer lui presente]. Because He is so wise [tant sage], He recognizes everyone’s potentialities [la possibilité des gens]; if the heart is in it, it is enough for each to do for Him with pure devotion whatever she is able [lui souffist que chascun face vers lui selon sa possibilité, mais que le cuer y soit]. Some among you, by whose labor the world [toute creature humaine] gains its sustenance and nourishment, have neither leisure [ne poez] nor ability [ne entendre] to serve Him through fasting, saying prayers, or attending church, as do the women in the larger towns. Yet you have as great a need of salvation as they [toutevoies avez aussi bien besoing de sauvement que autres ont]. You must serve Him in another manner [par autre voye].

First, Christine tells the peasant women to love God with all their hearts and to love their neighbors as themselves and, then, to direct their husbands to do the same. She writes: “wholeheartedly and willingly [en cuer et voulenté], as you love Him [en tant que vous l’amiez de tout vostre cuer], you must be sure that you do not do unto your neighbors or others what you would not have them do unto you. You must admonish your husbands to do likewise.”

She lists

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41 Ibid.
concrete practices for peasant women to do in order to make their lives good, please God, and avoid damnation, and achieve salvation.\footnote{Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 221; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 220.} In the end, she writes:

You women, yourselves, should do what you can to help your husbands, neither breaking down hedges nor allowing the children to; not stealing grapes, fruit, vegetables, or anything else from someone’s garden either by night or day; not putting animals to graze in a neighbor’s seeded fields or meadows; not stealing from anyone else or letting anyone else steal from you. Go to church whenever possible, pay tithes to God faithfully (and not with the worst things), and say Pater Nosters. Live in peace with the neighbors, without perpetual lawsuits over trifles – as has become the habit of many villagers who seem never happy unless they are in court. Believe in God, and pity those in trouble. By following these paths, all good people can ensure their salvation, men as well as women [\textit{Et par ces voyes tenir se pourront les bonnes gens sauver, tant hommes comme femmes}].\footnote{Ibid.}

Christine offers \textit{Trois vertus} for Christian women living the active life in the world. At the opening of the text, in the sixth and seventh chapters of Part I, however, she describes the contemplative life and the active life of Christian women.

Christine directs the royal women to the mean (“le moyen”) that, she writes, the Apostle Paul has recommended.\footnote{Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 82; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 28.} Christine counsels her royal reader to conclude: “I am not strong enough to follow either of these paths, at least I will try the middle way, as Saint Paul advises, and select from each path as much of the best as I am able.”\footnote{Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 82. See Philippians 4:4-5.}

Christine’s representations of the contemplative life and the active life in the \textit{Trois vertus} make clear that her project in the text is to explain the unity of morals and the plurality of
manners. Christine’s review of the contemplative life and the active life reveals her interest to teach women the ways to work for their salvation, according to their particular status, or what Christine calls “la possibilité.”46 Here, Christine is at pains to show her readers that the active life as well as the contemplative life can be conducive to salvation and to assure her royal readers that royal women as well as poor women can live in such a way as to secure salvation.47 So the first line of the sixth chapter reads: “Here is what you must do if you want to be saved.”48

First, Christine describes the contemplative life. She emphasizes that the contemplative life is a withdrawal from the world.

The contemplative life is a manner and a state of serving God [une maniere et un estat de servir Dieu] wherein one loves Our Lord so greatly and so ardently that she totally forgets father, mother, children, everyone, even herself, because of the great, consuming thought she devotes endlessly to her Creator. She never thinks of other things; nothing else is important to her. No poverty, tribulation, nor suffering (which, indeed, might damage another) hinders her heart, the heart of the true contemplative [au cuer droit contemplatif]. Her manner of life [sa maniere de vivre] completely disdains everything in the world and all its fleeting joys. She remains solitary, apart from others, knees to the ground, joined hands pointed heavenward, heart raised up [le cuer eslevé] in such elevated thought that in contemplation she ascends to the presence of God [elle va devant Dieu].49

46 Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 220; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 219. See ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 28, where Christine uses the phrase “ma possibilité.”


48 Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 79; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 22.

49 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 79; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 23. In full, the line reads: “Through divine inspiration [par saincte inspiracion] she sees the Holy Trinity, and the Court of Heaven and all of its joys [la Benoicte Trinité, la court du Ciel et les joyes qui y sont].” See ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 179, where, in the last chapter of Book II, Christine honors contemplative women as the brides of God. She places all women religious within the noble estate notwithstanding the status into which each woman was born. Christine explains that “religious women belong to this noble estate no matter who they may have been at birth, because of reverence to God, to whom they have given themselves in marriage, most surely they walk before all others.”
Having introduced the contemplative life, Christine goes on to describe the mystical experience of the “perfect contemplative” (le perfait contemplatif). Christine herself has not known this experience. She tells her reader that her own descriptions of the mystical experience of God are like a blind person’s descriptions of color. She emphasizes that the joys of the world cannot compare the joys of God. Nevertheless, Christine draws on the language of the spiritual senses to try to describe the mystical experience of the perfect contemplative. The perfect contemplative “sees” and “feels” and “tastes” God and, to the perfect contemplative, God tastes sweet. Christine makes a similar suggestion in Le Livre de l’advision Christine (1405-1406). There, addressing Philosophy, she writes that knowledge is the “sweet, savory, and honeyed thing, which excels all other treasures in value as the sovereign one! How happy are they who taste you fully!” In the Advision, still addressing Philosophy, Christine goes on to set out that: “God, who is properly you, and you, who are properly God!” So, in the Advision, the scholar tastes the sweetness of God in knowledge. In Trois vertus, the perfect contemplative tastes the sweetness of God directly. Christine describes the mystical experience of the perfect contemplative thus:

50 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 79; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 23.
51 See ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 79-80, where Christine regrets that she “cannot speak of that exultation any more than a blind man can describe colors. . . . I am not worthy to speak of this holy, elevated life, nor to describe it adequately as it deserves.”
53 Ibid. The passage continues: “And although I can judge only haphazardly of this, as of something which I do not fully know, nonetheless the most delectable taste and savor that I find only in the minor branches and divisions of learning, this gives me an understanding of it (for higher I cannot reach) and makes me presume to her goodness from those who love and relish her and feel the supreme pleasure.”
54 Ibid., 110.
The perfect contemplative [en cel estat est le perfait contemplatif] often is so ravished that she seems other than herself, and the consolation, sweetness, and pleasure she experiences can scarcely be told, nor can any earthly joy be compared with them [ne nulle aultre joye mondaine ne pourroit estre a celle comparee]. She feels [il sent] and tastes [gouste] the glories and joys of Paradise. She sees [il voir] God in spirit through her contemplation. Her burning love gives perfect sufficiency in this world because she feels no other desire. God delights [H]is servant, offering the sweets [doulz] of His Holy Paradise. . . . No other exultation compares; those who have tried the contemplative way know this.55

Christine then brings to the fore the active life. She describes the active life of a Christian woman as a life devoted to love of neighbor, works of mercy, and charity in the world for the love of God, according to her status and power or “la possibilité.”56 Here, Christine’s description of the practice of patience is in line with the notion of patience that she sets out in L’Epistre de la prison de vie humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité (1417). Just above, Christine had described the contemplative life as “the way, above all others, manifestly agreeable to God [cest vie soit sur toutes autres agreable a Dieu est apparu maintes foiz au monde visiblement].”57 Nevertheless, Christine goes on to contend that the active life serves the world more than the contemplative life. The active life is about the service of the world for the love of God. Christine describes the active life of a Christian woman thus:

The active life is the other way of serving God [la vie active est un autre estat de servir Dieu]. The one following this way is so charitable that if she could, she would serve all for the love of God [a tous servir pour l’amour de Dieu]. So she serves in hospitals, visiting the sick and the poor, aiding with her own wealth and her own efforts, generously, for the love of God [les secourt du sien et de la peine de son corps pour l’amour de Dieu selon son pouoir]. She has such great pity for the creatures she sees in sin, misery, or tribulation that she weeps as if the trouble

57 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 79; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 24.
were her own. She seeks her neighbor’s good as if it were her own [*aime le bien de son prochain comme le sien propre*]; and since she always is striving to do good, she never is idle. Her ardent desire [*son cuer art*] to accomplish charitable works [*les oeuvres de misericorde*] is unceasing; she devotes all her energies to them [*de tout son pouvoir*]. Such a woman bears all trials and tribulations patiently for the love of Our Lord [*telle creature porte toutes injures et tribulaciones paciemiement pour l’amour de Nostre Seigneur*]. This active life, as you can see, serves the world more than the other [*yeaste vie active sert, si comme tu puez veoir, plus au monde que la devant dicte*].

Here, in chapter seven, even before the introduction of Worldly Prudence in chapter eleven, Christine counsels prudence. Christine charges women to consider both their bodies and their duties as they decide between the contemplative life and the active life. In particular, Christine tells the royal women that God has called and commissioned them to a particular status and position in the world. Christine writes: “Why discretion? [*Comment par discreetion?*] Before I undertake anything, I consider first of all the strength or weakness of my own body and my fragility. Then I weigh the demands I must balance in this human state to which God has committed me [*selon l’estat ou Dieu en ce monde m’a appellee et commise*].”

At that point, Christine has “Saincte Informacion” appear and guide the royal women. Saincte Informacion tells the princess: “Here is what you will do. God does not insist that you leave everything [*laisse tout*] to follow Him except for those who wish to devote themselves to a perfect life [*de la tres perfaicte vie*]. Rather, each can save herself according to her own state [*si se puet chascun sauver en son estat*].” Saincte Informacion sets out the lesson that is at the heart of Christine’s project in *Trois vertus*: all Christian women can secure salvation. Both women in the active life and women in the contemplative life and women of any status and

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58 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 80.
60 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 81-82; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 27.
position in the world can secure salvation. “Any who wish it can be saved; for it isn’t the
position which brings damnation but not knowing how to use it wisely [l’estat ne fait mie le
dampnemement, mais n’en savoir user sagement, c’est ce qui dampne la creature].”⁶¹ Here, in
particular, Christine makes the case that royal women as well as poor women can secure
salvation. She asks:

Haven’t there been kings and princes who now are saints in Paradise? Saint Louis
and others like him did not abandon the world but rather reigned and governed
their lands in a manner pleasing to God [qui ne laissoient pas le monde, ains
regnoient et possedoient leurs seigneuries au plaisir de Dieu]? . . . Similarly,
many queens and princesses now are saints in Paradise, such as the queen of King
Clovis of France; Saint Badour; Saint Elizabeth, the Queen of Hungary; and
others. God doubtlessly is willing to be served by people of any estate [si n’est
point de doubte que Dieu veult estre servi de gens de touz estas, et en chascun
estat on se puet sauver qui veult].⁶²

Five chapters later, Christine adds to this representation of the active life of royal women,
telling royal women that the practices of the contemplative life constitute a part of the active life.
So, even in the world, royal women are obliged to keep their devotional practices. Christine
writes that “while that contemplative life can exist without the active, the active cannot endure
without some portion of the contemplative [la contemplative puet bien sans l’active, mais la
droicte bonne active ne puet sans aucune partie de la contemplative].”⁶³

So Trois vertus is, first of all, about God, the soul, and salvation. Christine fills many
lines of the text with lessons about “les meurs,” “vertus et meurs,” “meurs vertueux et bons,” etc.
The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, is noble. And good morals (bonnes

⁶² Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 82; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 28.
⁶³ Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 95; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 48.
meurs) perfect the noble creature (*perfont la creature noble*). Love and fear of God engender morals. Morals are ultimate and universal for all human persons. Altogether, for Christine in *Trois vertus*, morals are reason. In line with the Christian theological tradition, Christine views prudence as the virtue that translates reason into action. With the scholastics, Christine sees prudence as an acquired virtue. Prudence is the result of understanding and experience in addition to reason. Prudence can be taught. So Christine composed *Trois vertus* in order, first, to instruct women in morals and, second, to teach women how to apply morals to their lives in the world.

This comes to the fore in Part III of *Trois vertus* as Christine works to reconcile older women and younger women. Christine observes that both older women and younger women tend to bristle at the habits of the other. Although she goes on to censure and correct older women, first, she upholds older women as models of prudence. On top of their reason, older women have acquired understanding (*entendement*) and experience (*expérience*). They can see the good from the bad. They can anticipate which actions will have good effect and which actions will have bad effect. So older women can be models of wisdom in action (*sage en fait*). And wisdom in action is prudence. This view seems to undergird the lesson of Christine to royal women, set

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64 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 90; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 41-42.

65 See ead., *The Book of the Body Politic*, trans. Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 75-76; ead., *Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 75. In *Le Livre du corps de policie* (1406-7), Christine describes the unity of reason and morals: “Ah, it is so much praised in Holy Scripture [*en la Sainte Escripture*]: God is truth, and so calls himself, and all the foundation of our faith and belief is founded on it [*Dieu est verité et lui-meismes s’i appelle et tout le fondement de nostre foy et creance est sur elle assis*]. All the deeds of the philosophers and their studies are only to attain and search out the truth [*Tout le fait des philosophes et leur estude n’estoit fors pour ataindre et encerchier verité*].”


67 Ibid. Christine teaches her readers that “all older women [*femme d’aage*] should be wise in their actions [*sage en fait*], clothing [*abiti*], appearance [*contenance*], and speech [*parole*]. Wisdom in action [*fait doit estre sage*] should come from the knowledge based on experience and remembrance [*memoire*] of things seen in their time. Therefore,
out in Part I, to be guided by good advisers (*bons sages*) who can help them to see and to do what is good.⁶⁸ Implicitly, Christine offers herself as one such counselor: Christine is an older woman, whose age has rewarded her with understanding and experience, and who writes in order to teach women how to see and to do what is good.

When Christine writes about morals, she makes the case the salvation is as possible for women in the active life as for women in the contemplative life. As she turns to manners, she emphasizes that each particular status and position in the world is an arena in which a woman can pursue her own salvation. Guided by reason (morals) and prudence (manners), each Christian woman can secure her personal honor, good name, and salvation and contribute to order and peace in France. So Christine sets out to teach Christian women living the active life in the world how to be prudent.

Therefore, Christine turns to the “gouvernement de vivre,” “ordre de vivre,” and “riglee.”⁶⁹ She uses these terms to refer to the well-ordered life of the Christian woman in the world, reason put into practice according to status and position, in the interest of her personal honor, good name, salvation, and order and peace in France. Christine suggests that as the individual women of France govern, order, and rule their own lives, they contribute to the common good. As women govern, order, and rule their lives, they advance order and peace in France.

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Christine tells her reader to put Christian teaching into practice in the world by attending to morals and to manners. Morals are to be held and kept. Manners are to be performed and executed. Christine writes: “Her life will pivot around two particular points [elle disposera son vivre principaulment en deux choses]. One is the morals she will observe and abide by [l’une apertendra aux meurs que elle voudra tenir et excercer], and the other is the style of life which will direct her [et l’autre en la maniere et ordre de vivre en quoy elle vouldra estre riglee].”

Indeed, most of Trois vertus contains concrete recommendations for how to be in the world as a Christian woman. Christine translates Christian teaching into good practice, according to the status, power, and la possibilité of different groups of women. For example, Christine opens one chapter, addressed to royal women, thus: “Prudence will suggest that the wise princess order her life according to such a regime as this [comment l’ordre de son vivra sera riglee, et par elle et par son enortement tendra telle maniere].”

For all that Christine offers Christian teaching as universal, the chapters on prudential practice reveal her notion that status, and its good performance, is essential for order and peace. In Trois vertus, Christine argues that each status (estat) has its own manner (maniere). A human life is well-ordered to the extent that it executes its manner. And France is well-ordered to the extent that its women and men execute their status. Indeed, in Part III, addressing affluent non-noblewomen, Christine laments the disorder of France as a disorder of status.

In France, the noblest realm in the world [le plus noble royaume du monde], everything should be most orderly [les plus ordonnees] – as the ancient customs of France have established, no matter what exists elsewhere. As I have said

70 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 91; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 43.
71 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 94; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 47.
several times, the wife of a laborer in the Low Countries has equal status \([tel estat]\) with the wife of an ordinary artisan in Paris; but the ordinary artisan’s wife does not have the importance of a burgher’s wife, nor does that woman, in turn, have the social status of a demoiselle. The demoiselle is unlike a lady, the lady dissimilar to a countess or duchess, and neither of these is comparable to a queen. Each ought to maintain her proper place in society \([son propre estat]\) and, along with this, her particular lifestyle \([difference es manieres de vivre des gens, doit avoir es estaz]\). But these rules \([ces rigles]\) are not at all well observed \([bien gardee]\) today in France, nor, regrettably, are many of the other old, good, once typical customs \([autres bonnes coustumes]\).72

In the section on prudence in the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas had described the different species of prudence corresponding to the different ends.73 “So that one is ‘prudence’ simply so called, which is directed to one’s own good; another, ‘domestic prudence’ which is directed to the common good of the home; and a third, ‘political prudence,’ which is directed to the common good of the state or kingdom.”74 In *Trois vertus*, Christine uses the traditional notion that prudence drives the person, the family, and the kingdom each to its good end. But she does not refer to different species of prudence. Rather, the view of Christine seems nearer to the notion of prudence set out in Thomas’s first objection in his question on whether prudence about one’s own good is specifically the same as that which extends to the common good. There, Thomas reviews the view that “prudence about one’s own good is the same specifically as that which extends to the common good.”75 Christine refers to the one prudence, which sees good from bad and puts Christian teaching to work in the world on all fronts, as *prudence mondaine* and sometimes just *prudence*.


74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.
From her introduction of Worldly Prudence in Part I, Christine is at pains to demonstrate that prudence is not separate from Christian faith. Instead, Christian faith engenders prudence. “Worldly Prudence’s teachings and advice [la leçon et . . . enseignemens que Prudence Mondaine] do not depart . . . from God’s [ne se different ne departent de ceulx de Dieu], but rather arise from them and depend on them [viennent et dependent].” Christine reaffirms that God is not displeased with persons living the active life in the world, as long as they live morally, including prudently. She explains that prudence drives persons to prize honor and good name above all things in the world. So prudence drives each Christian woman to her proper manner or wise self-government (sage gouvernement et maniere de vivre). “She who lives the moral life will love the good renown called honor [et se elle vit moralment elle aimera le bien de renommee, qui est honneur].” And good renown or good name (bonne renommee) “is the greatest treasure [le tres grant tresor] a princess or noble lady can acquire.” Christine focuses on prudence in practice in four arenas in particular: relationship to husband; management of household; clothing and self-presentation; and honor and good name.

The point of Trois vertus is to teach women how to exercise prudence where they have power. Christine focuses on these aspects of the active life because they are the arenas in which women tend to have power. There is another reason that Christine includes management of household here: Karen Green has demonstrated that Christine uses Aristotle’s own notion that

76 Christine de Pizan, A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 90; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 41.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 91; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 42.
80 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 186; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 172.
prudence is exercised in household management to argue against his idea that women lack the capacity for prudence.\textsuperscript{81}

Indeed, Christine tells her reader that these lessons in prudence are for women who have the understanding, authority, and power (*auctorité, sens et puissance de ce faire*) to put their reason into effect in the world.\textsuperscript{82} Christine makes this clear in a chapter advising princesses to know their subjects and to demonstrate *liberalité*.\textsuperscript{83} Christine reviews two obvious objections. First, “some women who are wise and prudent [*elles soient tres sages et prudentes*] nevertheless have husbands with abominable habits [*mariz de tres merveilleuses meurs*] who restrict them so severely that they scarcely dare to speak to their servants or to the staffs of their own houses. They cannot become acquainted with anyone. So this this teaching will be quite useless to them [*si sera nul envers elles cestui enseignement*].”\textsuperscript{84} Second, some other husbands are unwilling to entrust any money to their wives.\textsuperscript{85} Those husbands make it impossible for princesses to demonstrate *liberalité*.\textsuperscript{86} Christine concedes that prudence can only direct where a person is free. To women whose agency is so limited, prudence can only recommend patience and obedience for good works and peace. She writes: “We are not speaking to those who find themselves in such extremities, for Prudence has nothing to advise princesses and other ladies in such servitude [*princepces et dames ou autres tenues en tel servage*], beyond this recommendation, which is not


\textsuperscript{82} Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 118; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 81.

\textsuperscript{83} Ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 80.

\textsuperscript{84} Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 118; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 81.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{86} Ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 80.
without value: ‘They must be patient and do such good as they can manage, being obedient in order to keep the peace [*prendre en pacience et faire tousjours bien a leur pouoir, et obeir pour avoir paix*].’

The point of this section is not to disavow the possibility for women to act prudently in the world. Rather, the point is to explain that most women can exert power in at least four arenas of their lives in the world. Even women whose agency is so limited that Christine refers to their married lives as a kind of servitude have the power to effect good works and peace through patience and obedience. Christine insists that women can gain honor and good name through their good will (*bonne voulenté*). To princesses, she explains that the good will of those who are wise and good and have love of their subjects shines through any external restraint. Even when they cannot put their good will into effect, it is seen, and they are loved for it.

For each group of women, Christine reviews Christian teaching, sets out the lessons of prudence, and gives concrete direction for their conduct in at least four arenas of their lives in the world. In Part I, as Christine sets out the seven lessons of prudence for princesses and for all women, she explains that, having taught about love and fear of God, morals, and manners, the text now turns to lessons in prudence, that is, in how to put reason to work in the world. Christine explains that the wise princess orders everything that she does according to prudence. She writes: “Princesses, and all ladies of great, ordinary, and low degree ought to note well and practice [*bien retenir, noter et mettre a effect*] these seven points [*ces sept enseignemens*]. Good

88 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 119; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 82.
theory is worthless when not followed by good practice *[car pour neant ot doctrine, qui ne la met a oeuvre].*“\(^{90}\)

Christine sets out to teach the princess, and each woman of France, how to form her good heart (*bon cuer*) in the habits of prudence and virtue. These are lessons in moral formation. Christine promises that the efforts of each woman will be rewarded with honor and good name on earth and eternal life with God in heaven at the end.

So, by following these seven teachings of Prudence herein recommended, along with other virtues *[les vii· susdits enseignemens de Prudence tenir avec les autres susdictes vertus]* – none of which is particularly difficult to live by, but all of which enhance the quality of her life *[embelissent et sont plaisans]*, being quite agreeable to anyone attracted and accustomed to them *[mais que bon cuer s’y vueille dysposer et que un pou l’ait acoustumé]* – the wise lady *[la sage dame]* will acquire praise, glory, fine reputation, and considerable honor in this world. In the end, she will gain the Paradise promised to all mortals who live virtuously *[los, gloire, renommee, grant honneur en cest monde et a la parfin paradis, qui est promis aux bien vivans].*“\(^{91}\)

The lessons of prudence for princesses fit within the arenas of the active life in which Christine thinks women tend to have power. Prudence teaches princesses how to be in relationship to her husband, in-laws, children, false friends, subjects, and women at court and how to budget. First, Christine sets out what royal women should do in order to love their husbands and to live in peace with them *[aime son mary et vive en paix avec lui].*“\(^{92}\) “Although

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\(^{90}\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 97-98; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 52.

\(^{91}\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 115; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 76.

\(^{92}\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 98; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 52. See ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 99; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 54. Christine responds to an objection she expects from some of her readers: “Of course, some of you may reply that we are telling only part of the story, insisting that women must always love their husbands and show it, not saying whether men always deserve to be so well treated *[nous disons a toutes fins que les dames doivent tant amer leurs seigneurs et en monstre les signes, mais nous ne parlons mie se tous desservent vers leurs femmes que on leur doyce ainsi faire]*. Certainly some husbands conduct
doubtlessly women of all sorts may love their husbands dearly [nonobstant que elles les aiment chierelement], either they do not know all of these rules or, because of their youth, do not know how to demonstrate their love [ne scevent pas toutes les rigles, ou par joenesce ou autrement, de le bien monstrer]. This lesson will teach them how [cy nostre leçon qui leur apprendra].”93

Second, Christine teaches royal women how to love and honor the relatives of their husbands. Third, Christine tells princesses how to care for their children. Christine counsels royal women to oversee the education and moral instruction of their children, although that tends to fall to the fathers (apertiengne au pere).94 Restating a quality of good motherhood that she had held up in exempla in the Cité des dames, Christine tells mothers that the charge to care for the souls of their children is even greater than the charge to care for their bodies.95 She writes that “development of their habits [tout ce qui lui apertient], especially their moral and intellectual instruction [discipline de meurs et d’enseignemens], is even more critical than the care of their bodies [gouvernement du corps].”96

93 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 98.
94 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 102; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 59.
95 For Christine’s vitae of four women who were good mothers and martyrs, Saints Felicity, Julitta, Blandina, Theodota, see ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 224; 231-32.
96 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 102; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 59.
Next, Christine instructs women in the practice of discreet dissimulation and prudent guile (*discrete dissimulacion et prudent cautele*).\(^97\) Here, Christine tells her reader that the instruction pivots from that which is natural (i.e., the care of a mother for her child) to that which is affected (i.e., the appearance of trust in false friends).\(^98\) Christine explains that the difficult task of appearing to treat as a friend a person whom one knows to be working against oneself is not a vice but a great virtue when it is practiced in the interest of the good and peace (*grant vertu quant faicte est a cause de bien et de paix*).\(^99\) Indeed, the practice of “discrete dissimulacion et prudent cautele” is a practice of the heart and the will that proves great strength and constancy of courage (*c’est signe de tres grant force et constance de courage*).\(^100\) Christine goes so far as to say that nothing less than the example of Jesus Christ teaches that no person is all-popular. Not even the one perfect person was loved by all.\(^101\) So Christine tells the princess to expect the presence of enemies, usually motived by envy, at court. Christine sets out to forewarn and forerm royal women and all women against those who scheme against them.\(^102\) To practice discreet dissimulation and prudent guile is to never trust a false friend, to never reveal one’s distrust, and to set the stage for the failure of the scheming of each false friend.

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\(^97\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 106; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 64.

\(^98\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 104; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 62.

\(^99\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 106-107; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 64.

\(^100\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 104-105; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 62. The passage reads: “It concerns conquering one’s will [*qui est de savoir vaincre et corriger le propre courage et volenté de soy meismes*]. The difficulty is accomplishing this makes its achievement all the greater. The person who practices it is all the more praiseworthy, for it demonstrates singular strength and constancy of courage [*car c’est signe de tres grant force et constance de courage, qui est entre les vertus cardinales de grant excellence*].”


Fifth, Christine advises the princess to pursue a good name among people outside of the noble estate. Christine counsels against resting in the support and friendship of noblepersons alone. Royal women benefit from securing the goodwill of “the clergy, the religious orders, the prelates, the counsellors, the monks, the doctors, the bourgeoisie, and even the people.” These people offer prayers on her behalf and “they will praise her in sermons and other public discourses, so that their voices can be a necessary shield and defense against the murmurs and false reports of her jealous defamers.”

Sixth, Christine teaches the royal woman how to be a “shepherd” and an “abbess” to her companions at court. The princess is charged with the care of the women around her. As a shepherd (le pastour), the princess “will assure that her sheep are kept in good health, and if any one should become afflicted with mange, she will separate it from the flock for fear the others might become infected. Therefore, she will watch over the conduct [gouvernement de ses femmes] of her ladies-in-waiting, whom she will have selected carefully for their dependability and honesty [toutes bonnes et honnestes]. She would not wish to surround herself with any of lesser quality.” As a good and prudent abbess (la prudente et bonne abbeesse), “the wise princess must watch over her attendants in all matters, just as the benevolent, prudent abbess does in her convent [fait son convent].” The idea here is that the company of the princess both affects her and affects how people see her.

104 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 108.
105 Ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 72.
106 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 112; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 72. See ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 15ff for Christine’s description on how good prince ought to resemble a good shepherd.
107 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 113; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 74.
In order to remain in the company of the princess, her companions must have good manners. “A completely honorable [la dame qui toute honneste] lady will want her companions to meet the same standards as she, on pain of exclusion from her company [sera vouldra que ses femmes le soyent, sur peine d’estre mises hors de sa compaignie].”\(^{108}\) Willard’s translation has “honorable” for toute honneste. That seems to miss the point. Christine argues that, on earth, few things matter more than honor (honneur) for women in the world. And she uses the term honneur often in *Trois vertus*. Here, however, Christine uses the term honnesteté. It is not a coincidence that Christine compares the princess to an abbess as she commends her being toute honneste.

Christine devotes most of *Trois vertus* to the interests of women in the world. But she sets out one chapter for women religious. And her guidance for contemplative women centers on her notion of “honnesteté.” In that chapter, Christine explains that “honnesteté” is a part of chastity. Christine calls upon nuns to demonstrate “honnesteté” in “habit [abit], veil [attour], words [paroles], and bearing [maintien].”\(^{109}\) In the chapter addressed to women religious, Christine goes on to warn that it goes against the virtue of chastity to “wish to be pretty in their habits and coifs [vestemens et attours], wearing them tight-fitting and handsomely painted. Such indulgence is very ugly and quite indecent [tres laide et lubre] for a religious person [a dame de religion]. Even more inappropriate [plus deshonnestete chose] is a nun [femmes de religion] with a sloppy habit [abit desordonnees]. Yet worse is the religious who wants to dance, caper, or play improper games. Nothing is more unattractive or distasteful [plus lait ne plus abominable] than words

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\(^{109}\) Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 182; ead., *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, 168. For contemplative women, whose vowed order of life has removed them from the world and placed them nearest to God, Christine advises that “chastity is the sixth virtue, which includes honesty [honnesteté] in habit [abit], veil [attour], words [paroles], and bearing [maintien]. If you observe this virtue properly, it forbids you all vestments and headdresses [attour] with even the slightest degree of worldliness [mondaineté] or vanity [curiosité]. Rather, all should be simple and unadorned, according to the individual Order [ordre].”
[paroles] which transgress the bounds of purity and honesty [la rigle de purté and d’onnesteté].” For Christine, “deshonneste,” “desordonnees,” and “desguiséz,” are all of a piece. In contrast, “honneste” seems to mean a particular combination of chaste, honest, and well-ordered. Usually, Christine uses “honneste” to refer to clothing and self-presentation. Her notion of “honneste” is one expression of her view that that which is “chaste,” honest, and well-ordered personally (e.g., dress proper to status) is the foundation of that which is “chaste,” honest, and well-ordered publically (e.g. the common good). So, when Christine instructs the princess to be “toute honneste” and when she insists that the companions of the princess be “toutes bonnes et honnestes,” she is not just repeating a lesson on honor. Rather, she is setting out indirectly the teaching on manners, especially around men, that she sets out directly in another chapter. Thus, by offering it to women in convents, Christine can set out a pointed critique and correction of women at court.

Last, Christine teaches royal women how to account for their incomes and expenses. Christine recommends a budget in five parts: alms and gifts to the poor; household expenses; salaries of her officers and ladies at court; gifts to subjects and strangers based on their service and merit; and personal treasury (which funds her gowns, joyaulx, etc.). These five represent

112 See ead., Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector, 59. Christine teaches her reader “to recall to the allegory the articles of faith to our purpose, without the which the good spirit may not profit.” She takes up a verse about Diana and reads it for its lesson about the Christian soul (the good knight) on its journey back to God. Christine reads the verse about Diana as a lesson about chastity and bodily integrity. She writes that “the moon gives chaste conditions . . . so this wishes to say that honesty of body belongs well to the good knight.”
113 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 114-15; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 74-75.
114 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 115; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 76.
Christine’s sense of the power and duties of a princess. And the order of the five represents Christine’s sense of the priorities of a royal woman according to prudence. Christine advises that “by following this plan [ceste voye faire regleement] in an orderly fashion she will maintain her financial affairs without confusion, and without enduring shortages of necessary funds which otherwise might require her to juggle accounts or make unsuitable loan arrangements at great cost and financial loss.”

In Part II and Part III, Christine offers the seven lessons of prudence for princesses to different groups of women of France. In the first chapter of Part II, Christine announces her turn to the instruction of noblewomen in the lessons of prudence. “Likewise, Worldly Prudence [prudence mondaine] must order the manner of life of all ladies and demoiselles in a suitable fashion, each according to her estate [affiert . . . pour ordonner en guise deue leur maniere de vivre, chascune selon son estat]. May they love honor, good reputation, and excellent praise as much as the princesses [aiment honneur, le bien de renommee et bon los que aux princepes appartient].”

To the seven lessons of prudence for princesses are added four points “four points” (·iiii· poins) of prudence for noblewomen in the world. “Ladies, demoiselles, and women of the court in the service of princesses and great ladies: Once more, we three sisters – God’s daughters, Reason, Rectitude, and Justice [trois seurs filles de Dieu nommees Raison, Droicture et Justice] – will reiterate that which we already have said for the good of your souls [au bien de vos ames]. To the previously recommended good advice [les bons amonestemens] we add four points: the first two are to be followed, the second two to be avoided. Not merely

115 Ibid.
116 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 150; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 123.
117 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 186; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 172.
useful, the first two are most necessary for the good of your souls and your personal honor [{le bien de voz ames amez et l'honneur de voz personnes}].”118

First, Christine instructs each noblewoman to love the woman she serves as she loves herself, that is, with all of her heart (touic vostre cuer).119 Second, Christine directs noblewomen to be honnestes. She tells them: “in your manner, words, and actions you must not be too approachable or too familiar with certain men [vous devez estre en voz manieres, paroles et fais non trop acointables ne privés a divers hommes].”120 In that line, and at other part of this section of the text, Christine’s emphasis seems to be on limiting the number of men with whom the noblewoman is friendly.121 Third, Christine warns noblewomen against envy. Fourth, Christine gives many lines to teaching against slander.122 Each of the four reasons of Christine not to slander has its roots in the Gospel commandments to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”123 “God expressly commands us to love our enemies and to return good for evil [Dieux veult et commande expressément que on aime son anemi, et que on lui rende bien pour mal].”124 In her instruction against slander, Christine translates Gospel commandments into rules for doing good as a woman in the world and for succeeding as a woman at court.125

118 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 150; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 123.

119 Ibid.

120 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 150; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 123-24.

121 Ibid.

122 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 162-63; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 142.

123 See Matthew 5:44.

124 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 163; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 142.

125 Ibid.
Then, in the first chapter of Part III, Christine announces her turn to the lessons of prudence for the rest of the women of France. Here, again, Christine explains that Christian faith is the source of prudence. Prudence applies reason (i.e., morals) to action in the aspects of life in the world within which women have power. Christine argues that there are four arenas of life in the world in which royal women, noblewomen, and the other women of France all have power: relationship to husband; management of household; clothing and self-presentation; and honor and good name. So the project of Part III is to teach on “what concerns Worldly Prudence [Prudence Mondaine], the first of these pertains to the love and faith you owe your husband and your conduct with him [l’amour et foy que devez avoir a voz mariz et comment vers eulx voz devez porter]. The second concerns the management of your household [gouvernement de vostre mainage]. The third describes your clothing and ornaments [voz vesteures et abillemens]. And the fourth explains how you can protect yourself from blame and from falling into disrepute [vous garderez de blasme et de cheoir en diffamme].”

As Christine continues to set out lessons for each group of the women of France on how to live well in the world according to prudence, she introduces to this text the notion of taking on “the heart of a man.” For Christine, one prudent way to live as a Christian woman in the world, according to status, power, possibility, is to have “the heart of a man.” Indeed, Christine sees herself as having “the heart of a man.”

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126 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 186; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 172.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 169; 199. See ead., The Book of the City of Ladies, 85 for Christine’s description of Elissa, whose name was changed to Dido, which, Christine writes, “means ‘virago’ in Latin: in other words, a woman who has the virtue and valor of a man.”
The first reason that it is prudent for some women to take on the heart of a man is because their husbands are absent. Christine only uses the notion of having the heart of a man to refer to women who have been married. So Christine sees taking on the heart of a man as a prudent practice for widows and baronesses (dames baronnesses). Of course, widows are women who have been married but who are in the world without their husbands. Baronesses are also women who have been married but who are in the world without their husbands, if not always, then frequently. Christine explains that it is the nature of the position of the baron to be away from home for long periods of time. “If barons wish to be honored as they deserve, they spend very little time in their manors and on their own lands. Going to war, attending their prince’s court, and traveling are the three primary duties of such a lord. So the lady, his companion [sa compaigne], must represent him at home during his absences [doit representer son lieu].” Because these women must function in the world without the immediate support and protection of a husband, Christine advises taking on the heart of a man as a prudent practice of both widows and baronesses.

Christine had recounted allegorically her own experience of having been transformed into a true man (vray homme) with a changed heart (cuer) in Livre de la mutacion de fortune (1403). In Mutacion de fortune, Christine describes her marriage. She allegorizes “my household and him and me” as a ship. Her husband was the captain of the ship. He steered well and she trusted him and, together, they were happy and their household was secure. But, after a

130 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 168; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 149.
131 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 169; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 150.
time, Fortune’s wheel turned, and her husband was thrown from their ship. “There was no way to help. The wind struck our ship such a blow that I thought it would sink, but death was not bitter to me when I heard the sailors shout and loudly cry out, when they saw him sink into the sea, he who used to guide the ship night and day through all encumbrances and difficulties.” Christine was widowed and mourning and the ship (now hers alone) was unmanned and unmoored.

Wearied by long crying, I remained, on one particular occasion, completely overcome; as if unconscious, I fell asleep early one evening. Then my mistress [Fortune] came to me, she who gives joy to many, and she touched me all over my body; she palpated and took in her hands each bodily part, I remember it well; then she departed and I remained, and since our ship was following the waves of the sea, it struck with great force against a rock. I awakened and things were such that, immediately and with certainty, I felt myself completely transformed [transmuee me senti toute]. I felt my limbs to be stronger [plus fors] than before, and the great pain and lamentations which had earlier dominated me, I felt to be somewhat lessened. Then I touched myself all over my body, like one completely bewildered. Fortune had thus not hated me, she who had transformed me, for she had instantly changed the great fear and doubt in which I had been completely lost. Then I felt myself much lighter [plus legiere] than usual and I felt that my flesh was changed and strengthened [muee et enforcie], and my voice much lowered [engrossie], and my body harder and faster [plus dur et plus isnel]. However, the ring that Hymen [the Greek god of marriage] had given me had fallen from my finger, which troubled me, as well it should have, for I loved it dearly.

Then I stood up easily; I no longer remained in the lethargy of tears which had been increasing my grief. I found my heart [cuer] strong and bold [fort et hardi], which surprised me, but I felt that I had become a true man [vray homme]; and I was amazed at this strange adventure. . . . To make a long story short, I was able to utilize whatever was necessary to drive a ship; and as soon as I learned how to direct the bailing out, I became a good master, and it was absolutely necessary that I be one in order to help myself and my people, if I did not want to die there. Thus I became a true man [vraies homs] (this is no fable [n’est pas fable]), capable of taking charge of the ship. Fortune taught me this trade and I set myself to work in this context.

133 Ead., “From The Book of Fortune’s Transformation,” 105.
As you have heard, I am still a man [encor suis homme] and I have been for a total of more than thirteen full years, but it would please me much more to be a woman [estre femme], as I used to be when I used to talk with Hymen, but since Fortune has transformed me so that I shall never again be lodged in a woman’s body [jamais plus logiee n’y seray], I shall remain a man [homme remaindray], and with my Lady Fortune I shall stay, although in her service I have found so many hardships that I am undone by them [sui destruis]; but until death I must continue my life, may God deliver me safely from it!  

Christine had not wanted to become a man. Becoming a man was how she could survive. The transformation of Christine into a man saved her and her family. She and her household survived because she assumed a new way of being in the world. She became stronger. She acquired new skills. But her transformation was a sad event. She lost her good companion. She lost her happy union. She would have rather remained a woman and a wife. But Fortune made her a widow. And Fortune recast her as a man. Christine describes her transformed self as changed at the physical level: in her body (i.e., body, limbs, flesh, voice) she became stronger. She does not write that her heart changed. Rather, she writes that she found strength and boldness in her heart.

The transformation of Christine into a man did not affect her unsexed soul. It did not affect her reason. It called her to find new strength and boldness in her heart. It recast her for a new way of being in the world. She learned new skills. It enabled her to care for herself and for others in a new way. She learned how to see her interests and how to act to the advantage of herself and her household.

This is the experience that undergirds the teaching of Christine to widows and baronesses in *Trois vertus*. Christine refers to having “the heart of a man” at least three times in *Trois vertus*.

134 Ead., “From *The Book of Fortune’s Transformation*,” 106-107; ead., *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, 52-53. See ead., *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 16 for Christine’s description of how, “thanks to the three ladies,” her “body felt much stronger and lighter than before” as she set out to construct the City of Ladies.
First, in Part II, Christine describes how the baroness “must have the courage of a man [courage d’omme].”  

Second, in the same chapter, Christine restates that the baroness “should have a man’s heart [cuer d’omme].”  

Third, in Part III, in the chapter set out for “widows young and old,” Christine writes that the widow “must take on the heart of a man [cuer d’omme].”  

Christine does not seem to refer to the notion of the heart of a man in the chapter set out for royal widows in Part I but, nevertheless, it is clear that she sees these three chapters, one in each part, as a group. (Christine also writes a chapter for young and very young royal widows. These girls are too young to take on the heart of man. But the matter of self-protection and self-interest still applies. Christine instructs each girl to see that her advisers, if she is young, or her parents, if she is very young, “recognize her best interests better than she does herself.”) Indeed, at the end of the chapter for baronesses, Christine directs these women to the chapter for royal widows.

The first lesson for the woman whose husband is absent, as set out in the chapter for royal widows, is to follow reason and good counsel (raison et bon conseil) as each she “will devote herself to guarding her own interests” (garde de ses besoignes). As in Mutacion de fortune, in Trois vertus, Christine explains that to have the heart of a man means to see and to act in the interest of self-protection and self-interest. Indeed, in the chapter for widows young and old, Christine commends self-protection to these women at least four times. First, she tells the

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135 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 169; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 150.  
136 Ibid.  
137 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 199; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 191.  
138 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 124; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 90.  
139 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 120; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 83.  
140 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 197; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 188.
widow to be armed with good advice for self-protection.\textsuperscript{141} Second, she tells the widow to depend on good prudence and wise manners for her self-defense.\textsuperscript{142} Third, she tells the widow to guard her self-interest.\textsuperscript{143} Fourth, she tells the widow that her wise self-protection is her right action in the world.\textsuperscript{144}

In that chapter, Christine devotes many lines to counseling widows about how to avoid lawsuits and about how to succeed in lawsuits when “in spite of all this, she is obliged to go to court.”\textsuperscript{145} (In other texts, Christine writes that her own early experience of widowhood included several rounds of suing and being sued.) Christine tells the widow that “if it is necessary for her to do these things, and if she wishes to avoid further trouble and bring her case to a successful conclusion, she must take on the heart of a man \textsuperscript{\textit{cuer d’omme}}. She must be constant, strong, and wise in judging and pursuing her advantage \textsuperscript{\textit{constant, fort et sage, pour avisier et pour poursuivre ce qui lui est bon}}, not crouching in tears, defenseless \textsuperscript{\textit{sans autre deffense}}, like some simple woman or like a poor dog who retreats into a corner while all the other dogs jump on him.”\textsuperscript{146} In this passage, Christine is explicit about what it means to have the heart of a man. To have the heart of a man is to see and to act in the interest of one’s self and one’s own good. A woman enacts the heart of a man by protecting herself and defending herself with her reason, prudence, and strength. A woman with the heart of a man does not depend on her tears, or other demonstrations of her weakness, to protect her. Christine warns the widow that tears and other

\textsuperscript{141} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 197; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 189.
\textsuperscript{142} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 198; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 190.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 199; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 191.
\textsuperscript{145} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 199.
\textsuperscript{146} Ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 199-200; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 191-92.
signs of weakness do not inspire kindness and, in fact, make her more vulnerable. “If you do that, dear woman, you will find most people so lacking in pity that they would take the bread from your hand because they consider you either ignorant or simpleminded [ignorans et simples], nor would you find additional pity elsewhere because they took it.” To survive as a woman in the world without her husband, a woman must both be and appear to be reasonable, prudent, and strong.

In the chapter to baronesses, Christine writes that the nature of the positon of baroness means that these women, even more than other women, must be wise (saige). Christine calls the baroness to develop her reason into broad understanding. And she calls the baroness to develop the heart of a man (courage d’omme). To this end, Christine explains that the baroness must be in the world, not in retreat, in her private chambers, cloistered with her female companions. The baroness must be inured to the world, not inclined any sort of “femmenines mignotises.” The position of a baron means that he is often away from his home and his land for long periods of time. So, at home, the baroness acts in his place (représenter son lieu).

Of course, the estate has a legion of administrators, but the baroness must supervise them all. In her own right, and on the basis of both her knowledge and her power, she must be loved and

147 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 200; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 192.
148 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 169; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 150.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid. The passage reads: “This means that she should not be brought up overmuch among women nor should she be indulged in extensive and feminine pampering [si n’est mie a dire que elle doye estre norrie trop en chambres ne soubz grans et femmenines mignotises].”
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
feared. Her broad understanding should include knowledge of arms. She should know strategies for attacking and for defending. She should be able to speak good and beautiful words in order to inspire good actions from all her people and in order to inspire courage in those who fight for her. Again, Christine writes, the baroness should have the heart of a man (elle doit avoir cuer d’omme). Christine sums up the chapter: these are the proper manners (manieres convenables) of the wise baroness (la sage baronnesse), whose husband is often away from home, and who has been charged and commissioned to act in his place. The last line of the chapter makes it clear that Christine thinks of the lessons for widows and baronesses as a group. Christine writes that the last benefit of the broad understanding of the baroness is that, when the baron dies, she will know the situation and she will not be deceived or duped when people make false claims on what is hers by rights.

Christine allows for remarriage on account of youth or poverty. But she discourages remarriage for women “who have passed their youth and who are sufficiently comfortably financially so that poverty does not oblige them.” She warns that marriage does not usually lead to rest and peace (repos et paix) but, in fact, the very opposite (le contraire). She adds that “though some who want to remarry say there is nothing in life for a woman alone [n’est riens d’une femme seule], they have so little confidence in their own good sense that they will claim that they don’t know how to manage their own lives [si pou se fient en leur sens que elles se

153 Ibid.
154 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 170; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 151.
155 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 169; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 151.
156 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 170; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 151.
158 Ead., A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor, 201; ead., Le Livre de Trois Vertus, 193.
In the end, then, Christine teaches widows to take on the heart of a man because she thinks that it is the prudent option for their well-being (in terms of salvation, honor, and good name) according to their status, power, and possibility.

For some women, then, Christian practice in the world means having the heart of a man. In *Trois vertus*, Christine does not weigh in on how women might feel about this transformation. Indeed, Christine almost never considers what a woman might feel about her position in the world. (Perhaps the one exception to this rule is when, in Part I, Christine imagines the princess calling out “Good Lord, why didn’t You create me poor, so that I could at least serve You more perfectly for love of You?”) Each position has its particular challenges. Princesses confront many temptations. Poor women endure many hardships. For each woman, the point is to be good in whatever estate God has placed her and in whatever circumstances Fortune has set for her. For Christine, the point is not how a woman feels about her God-given estate or the movements of the wheel of Fortune. The point is to be a good human person. For Christine, that means being a good Christian person. In *Trois vertus*, that means being a good Christian woman in the world. In *Trois vertus*, Christine presumes the reason of women. She reviews Christian teaching as the source of morals. She teaches prudence as a part of the practice of Christian life in the world. Prudence tells each Christian woman how to practice Christian teaching according to her status, power, and possibility. For Christian women who are married and whose husbands are dead or absent, prudence tells them to take on the heart of a man. These women must see and act in the interest of themselves and their households.161

159 Ibid.
160 Ead., *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 81.
161 Ibid., 201.
It has sometimes been suggested that *Trois vertus* is either a manual on manipulation and Realpolitik strategy or a life sentence to the status quo. Each of these interpretations misses the point. For Christine, manners are based in morals. With natural reason and learned prudence, all persons can see the good and do the good. Persons are called to practice their particular position in the world in the interest of their salvation, honor, and good name and in the interest of the common good. Enacting the good benefits human persons personally and the commonweal of France equally.

In *Le livre de la cité des dames*, Christine had argued that women are human persons. As bearers of rational souls, women are entitled to receive moral teaching. In *Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames*, Christine sets out moral teaching for women. The foundation of all Christian practice is love and fear of God. Christine instructs women in the lessons of prudence. Prudence is the practical wisdom that translates love and fear of God into concrete practices in the world. Christine teaches women to use prudence to put to work good morals as good manners in the world. She teaches women how to be good according to their particular status, power, and possibility. This is wisdom in action (*sage in fait*). Christine focuses on the lessons of prudence for the aspects of life in the world in which women tend to have power: relationship to husband; management of household; clothing and self-presentation; and honor and good name.

Modern readers have sometimes observed that this is not a democratic vision of political order. That is true. It is, however, a vision of the human person that insists that every person is a person.162 Every person has reason and the capacity to be good and to do good in the world.

162 Christine emphasizes the personhood of women, poor persons, and young women and old women alike. See Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 203; 221-22.
Every person can achieve her own honor and good name and perfection and salvation. And, what is more, the good works of every person contribute to the common good of France. So every person is important in herself and as a part of the commonweal of France. The commonweal matters so much to Christine because it is the source of order and peace on earth. The violent disorder of France can be set to right as the women of France and, with the women, all of the people of France, do the good that they are able, according to their status, power, and possibility. In the end, the lessons of prudence are lessons for peace. The next chapter turns to the common good and peace.
Christine continued the project she had begun in *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405) in *Le Livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames* (1405-6), written for Marguerite of Burgundy, Dauphine of France, and all of the women of France. There, Christine taught women how to live as Christians in the world. Next, Christine composed *Le Livre du corps de policie* (1406-7) for Louis de Guyenne, Dauphin of France, and all of the men of France.\(^1\) Karen Green has described *Corps de policie* as “the counterpart” to *Trois vertus.*\(^2\) Indeed, in *Corps de policie*, Christine set out to teach men how to live as Christian persons in the world.

The common good is a part of the argument of Christine for women as human persons and as entitled to moral teaching. In *Le livre de la cité des dames*, just before Christine writes that “it’s beyond doubt that women count as God’s creatures and are human beings just as men are. They’re not a different race or a strange breed, which might justify their being excluded from receiving moral teachings,” she writes that:

> you can’t define something as being for the common good of a city, country, or any other community of people, if it doesn’t contribute to the universal good of


all. Women as well as men must derive equal benefit from it. Something which is
done with the aim of privileging only one section of the population is called a
private or an individual good, not a common good. Moreover, something which is
done for the good of some but to the detriment of others is not simply a private or
an individual good. In fact, it constitutes a type of injury done to one party in
order to benefit the other: it thus only profits the second party at the expense of
the first.3

Drawing on the terms of the scholastics, Christine argues that the common good must be
consistent with the good of women (as a group). Women are human persons, moral agents, and
political subjects. The morals and manners of women contribute to the presence (or absence) of
order and peace, the common good, of the commonweal. This chapter considers Christine’s
notion of the common good in Le Livre du corps de policie.

As to women in Trois vertus, so to men in Corps de policie, Christine teaches how to live
as a Christian in the world. Christine tells the prince that he serves God better through good
works than long prayers.4 Christine exhorts the men of France in the world with three basic
Christian practices: to love and fear of God, to care for the common good, and to defend justice.
In a passage set out to teach the prince, Christine explains that he is charged, first, to “love and
fear God above all else [amer et doubter Dieu sur toute riens];” second, to love and care for “the
public good of his land and country more than his own good [gardera et aimera le bien publique
de sa terre et pais plus que le sien propre];” and, third, “to keep and maintain justice [garder et
tenir justice].”5 In Corps de policie, Christine refers to these three as “good morals” (bonnes

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5 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 34-35; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 32-34.
These are the practices of good morals for all Christian men in the world. Christine explains this at the opening of Part II, addressed to noblemen and knights. She writes that while the same virtue is just as appropriate and necessary for the ordinary person, the simple knight, or the noble, as for princes, nevertheless, the estates differ in their way of life, in their conversation, and kinds of activity; thus it is suitable for my treatment of the subject to differ as well. The thing that is appropriate for the prince to do is not appropriate for the simple knight or the noble, and likewise the opposite. But there is no doubt that one can speak the same to nobles as to princes when it concerns the aforementioned virtues, that is it also their part to love God and fear Him above all else, to care for the public good for which they were established, to preserve and love justice according to their competences; just as it is for princes and other human beings. To be humane, liberal, and merciful, to love the wise and good and to govern by their advice, and likewise they should have all the other virtues, which I do not think I will describe for them, as it suffices to have described them once. What I have said before concerning the virtues serves each estate in the polity, and each individual person, therefore I will not proceed much longer in this form. For it is sufficient to speak of the manner in which everyone ought to do his own part in the order that God has established, that is, nobles do as nobles should, the populace does as it is appropriate for them, and everyone should come together as one body of the same polity, to live justly and in peace as they ought. That is

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what I had in mind when I was speaking of teaching them good morals [c’est ce que j’entens par ce que j’ay dit de les amonner être en bonnes meurs].

Christine explains that she describes the virtues in general [a généralement] because the text is an introduction to the life of virtue (l’introducion des princes en vie vertueuse). She does not want to the prince to have to suffer boring things (choses ennuyeuses) in a long book. “For an abyss could be filled with all the sayings and stories of good habits [les bonnes meurs] which a prince should cultivate. But it seems to me better to exclude length by speaking generally of all the virtues.” Instead, she sets out exempla in order to teach the prince about how to live the life of virtue in the world. Christine sets out her view that “examples of virtue move one more than simple words to desire honor [honneur] and courage [vaillance] more and to love of virtue [amer vertu].” Christine explains the she depends upon Roman exempla in particular. Roman models help her to correct what she sees as the French conflation of wealth with honor. “For this is why I call these worthy brave Roman conquerors ‘princes,’ because they seem like them even if they have neither rule, or extensive lands, nor riches. But . . . Romans attributed the greatness of men to courage and virtue, and not to wealth.” In Corps de policie, Christine teaches the prince that that true honor can only come from good morals and virtue. “If he followed those discussed here, then there would be songs of glory and praise about him.”

7 Ibid.
8 Ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 54.
10 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 55-56; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 54.
12 Ibid.
13 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 55-56; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 54.
In particular, Christine draws from Memorable Doings and Sayings of Valerius Maximus. In 1375, Charles V had commissioned Simon de Hesdin to translate the text of Valerius, which had been composed during the reign of Tiberius (14-37 CE), into French. Simon completed the French edition and having added glosses, examples, and rubrics that set apart the contributions of “l’acteur,” “translateur,” and “addicions du translateur” through the fourth chapter of Book VII before his death in 1383 (three years after Charles V). So Jean de Berry commissioned Nicholas de Gonesse to finish the translation. Nicholas completed the work in September 1401. Faits et Dits Mémorables was “immediately popular.” Indeed, Christine writes that “Because of the noble [notable] book which the great Valerius wrote about the deeds of the Romans, I quote him more than any other. He has given me the subject on which to speak and to prove by example the pure intention that I have, which is, as I said before, to give reason to inspire courage in virtue and in living well [donner cause d’esmouvoir le couraige a vertu et bien vivre], for princes, for knights and nobles, and also for the common people.” Christine also advances the notion that the princes of France could trace their direct hereditary succession to Priam of Troy so she also draws on Greek exempla to elucidate the responsibilities of the sovereign. Altogether, Christine conjures the weight of the ancients to teach the prince to love and fear God, to guard the common good, and to defend justice.


15 Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman, Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting, 1250-1500 (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 45.


17 Sandra L. Hindman, Christine de Pizan’s “Epistre Othéa”: Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 36-37.
Christine devotes a full chapter to setting out her indebtedness to Valerius. The heading of the thirteenth chapter of Part I reads: “The reason why Valerius is so often quoted in this book.” But Christine did not read the text of Valerius unmediated. She read the text together with the translation and the gloss of the text of Valerius made by Simon and Nicholas. (In particular, Christine seems to draw on the part of the text that Simon had translated and glossed, that is, the first half of the text of Valerius.) So, from the start, Christine’s picture of the prince as the servant of the common good brings together classical, scholastic, especially Thomistic, and other Christian theological notions of the common good.

As in Trois vertus, the point of Corps de policie is to teach Christians living in the world how to practice good morals according to their status. Christine writes that the prince “ought to desire that his subjects perform their best in whatever office God has placed them [ses subgez chascun face en paix l’office en quoy Dieu l’a establi].” From the first chapter, Christine sets out Corps de policie as her teaching on the practices of Christian prudence for men. Drawing on the humilitas trope, Christine writes: “Oh, Virtue, noble and godly [chose digne et deifiee], how can I dare to flaunt myself by speaking of you, when I know that my understanding neither comprehends nor expresses you well?” Christine explains that she does not write in order to

19 Ibid.
20 Ead, The Book of the Body Politic, 19; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 16-17. The passage reads: “The nobles ought to do what they ought to do, the clerics attend to their studies, and to the divine service [aux sciences et au service divin], the merchants to their merchandise, the artisans to their craft, the laborers to the cultivation of the earth, and thus each one whatever his rank, ought to live by good policy [et ainsi chascun en son degré vive par bonne policie], without extortion nor overcharging [charge desordenee], so that each may live properly under him, and that they love him as a good prince ought to be loved by his people, and that he have from them the legal revenue that is reasonable to collect and take from his country, without gnawing to the bone his poor commoners.”
21 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 3; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 1. See Madeleine Fernande Rosier (Sr. Marie), “Christine de Pisan as a Moralist” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1945), 97; 118. Rosier’s translation renders this line: “that nature of woman cannot keep under silence the abundance of her courage. . . . . Now come
consider subtle or speculative things. Continuing to enact the *humilitas* trope, Christine writes to Virtue: “But what comforts me and makes me bold [*donne hardement*] is that I sense that you are so kind [*benigne*] that it will not displease you if I speak of you, not about what is most subtle, but only in those areas which I can conceive or comprehend [*non pas es plus soubtiles choses, mais seulement es parties que je puis concevoir et comprendre*].” Christine explains that, instead, she writes in order to teach the application of morals – that is, manners, in the terms of *Trois vertus* – to the men of France. “I will speak about you [Virtue] as far as it concerns the teaching of good morals [*édifice de bonnes meurs*]” and “industry and rule of life” (*l’industrie et rigle de vivre*). Christine sets out her plan for the text: she will teach on morals (*bonnes meurs*) for all Christian persons and on manners (*l’ordre de vivre*) for the men of each estate of France, first, princes, second, noblemen and knights, and, third, the common people.

Christine sets out *Corps de policie* in three parts. She draws on the Christian notion of the three-in-one to explain the body politic as a whole made up of parts that are distinct but interdependent. She offers Part I to the prince. The prince is the head of the body politic (*le chief du corps de la policie*). Part II is for the nobles and the knights. These men are the arms and the hands of the body politic (*les bras et les mains*). Part III is for the common people. The

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23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.


common people are the belly, legs, and feet of the body politic (le ventre, jambes et pied). So, as Cary J. Nederman has demonstrated, Corps de polcie is the interpretation of Christine of the traditional image of the body politic as a human body. Christine writes in the interest of the restoration of order and peace in France. She argues that the problems in France and in all of Christendom (l’université des cretians) are, at root, problems of disorder and dereliction. She insists that “God is just, and all this is the fault of an evil order” (Dieux est juste, et toute ceste faute tient a mauvaise ordonnance). She draws on the image of the body politic in order to make the case that these three estates must work together as one in order to live and to live well. She teaches that each man of France must practice good morals, love and fear of God, care for the common good, and defend justice, each according to his status, in order for order and peace to be present in France. She makes the case that the health of France – each person, each estate, and all of the commonweal – depends on the service of each person according to the particular function of his estate. As Maud Elizabeth Temple, who wrote in the first quarter of the twentieth century, summed up Christine’s project in this text: “The burden of her remonstrance to her old patron, the Duc de Berri, is that the very fundamentals of Aristotle’s conception of the State and man’s duty in it have been forgotten.” Together, the three estates are “formed and joined [soit

27 Ibid.
referu et conjoint] in one whole living body [en un seul corps vif], perfect and healthy [parfait et sain].” 31 Christine explains this at the opening of Part III, addressed to common people:

For just as the human body is not whole [entier], but defective and deformed [defectueulx et diffourmé] when it lacks any of its members, so the body politic cannot be perfect, whole, nor healthy [parfait, entier ne sain] if all the estates of which we speak are not well joined and united together [bonne conjonction et union ensemble]. Thus, they can help and aid each other [puissent secourir et aider l’un a l’autre], each exercising the office which it has to [chascun excercitant l’office de quoy il doit servir], which diverse offices ought to serve only for the conservation of the whole community [pour la conservacion de tout ensemble], just as the members of a human body aid to guide and nourish the whole body [tout ainsi comme les membres de corps humain aident a gouverner et nourrir tout le corps]. And in so far as one of them fails, the whole feels it and is deprived by it.32

Nederman and others have demonstrated that, whether or not Christine knew Jean Gerson’s Vivat Rex (1405), his “harengue” to Charles VI on the natural bond of mutual obligation between the king and his subjects, or some other of his various explications of the notion of the body politic, she and Gerson both drew on Nicole Oresme’s Commentary on the Ethics of Aristotle (1370) and Commentary on the Politics and the Economics of Aristotle (1371), each of which included a translation into French of the Peripatetic’s text, and John of Salisbury’s Policraticus, which Denis Foulechat had translated into French in 1372.33

32 Ibid.
In this chapter, I suggest that Christine also drew on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century considerations of the common good. Many of these texts were composed in response to the conflicts between Philip IV of France (d. 1314) and others with Pope Boniface VIII (d. 1303) about the rights of jurisdiction of temporal and spiritual authorities. Matthew Kempshall has demonstrated that these controversies animated new attention to the notion of the common good as scholastic theologians reasoned that “in order to determine the responsibilities of the spiritual and temporal power, they would have to provide a more precise definition of the goal of the political community.”34 These disputes were revived during the Great Schism (1378-1417).

Christine’s *Corps de policie* bears the marks of these controversies. In particular, Christine draws on the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome’s *De Regimine principum* (1277-80), Dante Alighieri’s *De Monarchia* (ca. 1309-17), and Jean Buridan’s *Commentaries* on the works of Aristotle (1320-1358).

After her lessons on the love and fear of God, Christine turns to teaching the prince about the common good.35 Christine brings together two ideas each of which she attributes to Aristotle: the common good (*le bien publicque*) and the governance or lordship of one (*la gouvernance et seigneurie d’un*), which she refers to as royal lordship (*seignorie royale*).36 Writing as Jean Petit and Jean Gerson debated the notion of “just tyrannicide,” Christine explains that lordship demands the pursuit of the common good above a particular interest.

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34 Matthew S. Kempshall, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press), 266.


Now we have discussed the first point on which the goodness of the prince ought principally to be founded, so next we shall speak of the second point, that is, that the good prince ought especially to love the public good and its augmentation [il droit tres singulierement amer le bien publicque et l’acroissement] more than his own good, according to the teaching of Aristotle’s Politics, which says that tyranny is when the prince prefers his own good over the public good [le prince quiert plus son bien proper que le publicque]. This is against royal lordship [seignorie royale] as well, for he ought to care more for the benefit of his people than his own [plus soignier du proufit de son peuple que du sien meismes]. Now he shall be advised on how to demonstrate this love [en quel maniere s’estendra et demonstrera icelle amour].

So Christine teaches the prince how to build up the common good. She teaches him to practice the divine virtues and the humane virtues in order to guide and guard his subjects and the common good. Above all, Christine prescribes the virtue of liberalité for the prince’s practice of the common good. Perhaps to goad, Christine tells the prince that, although it is the very practice of the common good, liberalité serves his personal good as well as the common good. “The good prince who loves the universal good more than his own should be liberal [liberalité], a very necessary quality from which he will profit triply; first it is for the good of his soul [son ame] (if he is discreet), secondly, for the praise and honor of his reputation [au los et honeur de sa renommee]; thirdly, he will attract the hearts of his own subjects to himself as well as those of strangers [les couraiges tant de ses subgez meismes come des estranges]. There is no doubt that nothing profits a prince as much as discreet generosity [discrete liberalité].”

39 Ibid., II.26.
40 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 26; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 23.
Christine first introduces the notion of *liberalité* in the guise of the scriptural and traditional model of the prince as good shepherd. The prince is the good shepherd (*bon pasteur*) who protects his flock (*ses ouailles*) from wolves and evil beasts (*des loups et des males bestes*). 41 She then explains the virtue of *liberalité* through the Roman *exempla* that she sets out and interprets for the prince. She describes the divine and humane virtues that are present uniquely in the good prince. She directs the prince to practice the divine and humane virtues in order to guide and guard his subjects and the common good. She teaches the prince to practice the divine virtues – *liberalité* and *justice* – and the humane virtues – *humanité*, *clymence*, and *debonnaireté*. Nevertheless, *liberalité* has a special place within this constellation of virtues. There is something of God in the *liberalité* of the prince. Christine writes that *liberalité* “takes its name from God” (*a pris son nom de deité*). 42 And she writes that *liberalité* “is the divine virtue [*vertu divine*] in the good prince.” 43 In this chapter, I will demonstrate that Christine’s notion of *liberalité* is bound together with her notion of lordship (*seigneurie*). Christine envisions lordship as mild and merciful and just and powerful (*benignité et misericorde, et aussi justice et puissance*). 44 Christine teaches the prince that, in him, this combination of gentleness and sweetness and *liberalité* and justice can bring about order and peace, a kind of *Salus Augustus* or *Concordia Augusta*, in France and all of Christendom.

In the model of the prince as good shepherd, Christine describes *liberalité* negatively: *liberalité* is not covetous. The good prince practices *liberalité*, first, as he resists covetousness in

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the collection of taxes. Here, Christine seems to follow Thomas or a text after Thomas. For
Thomas, the proper matter of liberality is money and liberality is “a mean in the matter of
money.” For Christine, the model of the prince as good shepherd is a model of the just taxation
of good lordship.

Christine devotes two chapters to setting out the model of the prince as a shepherd, his
subjects as sheep, and his knights as sheepdogs. She writes that: “The good prince who loves his
country [son pays] will guard it carefully, following the example of the good shepherd. As he
guards his sheep from wolves and evil beasts [loups et des males bestes], and keeps them clean
and healthy so that they can increase and be fruitful and yield their fleece, whole, sound, and
well nourished by the land on which they are fed and kept, so that the shepherd will be well paid
by their fleece, shorn in time and in season.” In his turn, the prince collects taxes. The good
prince sees that the burden of excessive taxation can do as much harm to the common people as
the “wolves and evil beasts” from which he and his knights are defend them.

Christine’s representation of the prince as good shepherd suggests her indebtedness to
Thomas or a text after Thomas. In Question 118 of the Second Part of the Second Part of the
_Summa Theologiae_, Thomas lists covetousness as the first vice opposed to liberality. To explain
the offense of immoderation with regard to riches, Thomas draws on Ezekiel 22:27: “Its princes
within it are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest
gain.” The verse from Ezekiel seems to have inspired the image of the prince in his fiscal

45 Thomas Aquinas, _The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans._ Fathers of the English Dominican
Province (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1920), Second Part of the Second Part, Question 117.
47 See Ezekiel 22:27 (New Revised Standard Version): “Its officials within it are like wolves tearing the prey,
shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.”
function as the shepherd of his people that Christine sets out in her text. What is more, this reference does not seem to be present in the glossed translation of *Faits et Dits Mémorables* of Simon of Hesdin and Nicholas of Gonnesse. So the image seems to have been mediated to Christine by Thomas’s text or by a text after Thomas. (The verse is present in John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* but, in that text, the lines from Ezekiel are used to describe the tyranny of priests.)

Next, Christine describes *liberalité* positively: *liberalité* is beneficent.48 Following Thomas or a text after Thomas, Christine takes *liberalité* to be a kind of generosity. Thomas had defined liberality as the virtue of *largitas* and *liberat* or “free-handedness.”49 Drawing on Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Thomas had set out that “liberality is also called open-handedness, because that which is open does not withhold things but parts of them. The term ‘liberality’ seems also to allude to this, since when a man quits hold of a thing he frees it, so to speak, from his keeping and ownership, and shows his mind to be free of attachment thereto.”50 In her Latinate French, Christine uses almost the same terms. Christine writes that the *liberalité* of the prince means that he is *large et liberal*, especially to persons who are poor or suffering.51

But Christine does not attribute this notion of *liberalité* to Thomas. Instead, she cites Valerius. Christine seems to draw on ideas on liberality that had been set out in Thomas’s *Summa Theologiae* and had been mediated to her through Simon’s gloss of Valerius’s text.

Christine’s notion of *liberalité* is broader than Thomas’s notion of liberality as set out in the *Summa Theologiae*. Christine takes *liberalité*, the practice of being *large et liberal*, to refer to


49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

both a mean in the matter of money and a mean in the matter of might. Here, Christine follows the exempla set out in the text of Valerius. The exempla of Valerius demonstrate that pardon (i.e., the moderation of power) is an aspect of liberalité. Following Simon de Hesdin, Christine retells Valerius’s account of the 1,747 noble men of Carthage who were defeated and captured by the Romans and released without ransom. She cites Valerius’s interpretation: “‘Oh Roman magnificence [magnificence], equal to the kindness of gods [la benignité des dieux], for this gesture was more generous [plentureuse] than your enemies could dare ask.’”52 The abrogation of the ransom in this exemplum shows that liberalité is a mean in the matter of money. But Christine emphasizes the moderation of the might of the Romans over the remission of the ransom. She stresses the mean in the matter of might. She explains the exemplum as a lesson in force and the might of good lordship. She tells the prince that “because of their liberality [liberalité], the Romans acquired sovereignty and dominion [seigneuries et dominacions] more than by force.”53 So liberalité can compel where force would fail, or where force would succeed only with great expense and loss. Following Simon, Christine goes on to argue that: “even though, says Valerius, you do not know which of the virtues to praise most, nonetheless, it seems that the one that is highest is that which takes its name from God, and this means liberalité which is so like divine virtue, extending itself to all and by which one acquires the most friends.”54 Here, Christine seems to draw on ideas on liberality that had been set out in Thomas’s Summa Theologiae and mediated to her through Simon’s gloss of Valerius’s text.

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
Christine argues for *liberalité* as the highest virtue in the prince. Each point in Christine’s case for *liberalité* as the highest virtue in the prince seems to have its root in Thomas’s question on liberality in the *Summa Theologiae*. However, apparently following Simon, Christine puts forth as positive assertions those points that Thomas had set out as objections. So Christine seems to draw on the ideas about liberality that Thomas had reviewed. But she uses them to construct a different conclusion.

Indeed, in the objections that he had set out in Article 6 of Question 117, on whether liberality is the greatest of the virtues, Thomas had recounted many reasons to call liberality the greatest virtue. Thomas describes how scripture refers to it as the most godlike virtue. He points to James 1:5 – “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you” – in order to demonstrate that the person “is likened chiefly by liberality to God.”\(^{55}\) Thomas shows that Aristotle has liberality winning friends; Boethius has liberality meriting honor; and Ambrose has liberality expressing goodness.\(^{56}\) What is more, Thomas sees that liberality “derives a certain excellence from being useful in many ways.”\(^{57}\) Indeed, he takes liberality to serve the individual good, the common good, and the divine good.\(^{58}\)

Nevertheless, for Thomas, “liberality is ordained to a good consequently.”\(^{59}\) And, since Thomas teaches that “we should judge of things according to that which is competent to them


\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
primarily and in respect of their nature, rather than according to that which pertains to them consequently,” he concludes that “liberality is not the greatest of virtues.”

Thomas then takes up the question: “Whether liberality is a part of justice?” Thomas draws on a line from Ambrose’s *De Officiis* to set out his view of liberality and justice. “Justice has to do with the fellowship of mankind. For the notion of fellowship is divided into two parts, justice and beneficence, also called liberality or kind-heartedness.” So Thomas answers that liberality is related to justice but that liberality is not a part of justice. Thomas explains that “liberality is not a species of justice, since justice pays another what is his whereas liberality gives another what is one’s own.”

Christine also draws on a line from Ambrose’s *De Officiis* to introduce her view of liberality and justice. The line that Christine takes as her guide is not present in Thomas’s question on liberality, but it is present in Book V of Simon’s glossed translation of Valerius Maximus’s *Memorable Doings and Sayings*. Following Simon’s use of Ambrose to explain Valerius, Christine sets out: “As St. Ambrose said in the first book of *On Duties*, it is not ‘liberalité’ when one gives to one and takes away from others, because nothing is liberal if it is not just. This is why liberalité is the divine virtue in the good prince.” So, concerning the relationship between liberality and justice, Christine holds that that which is unjust is never act of liberalité. From there, Christine holds that liberalité is the divine virtue in the prince because the

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr 282.
liberalité of the prince includes the justice of the prince. So liberalité is the divine virtue in the
good prince because it includes the justice of the prince.

The second “divine virtue” in the prince is justice. Christine tells the prince that her point
is, not to advise to him on penalties to inflict on offenders, but to teach him about the virtue of
justice (la vertu de justice). Christine sets a version of the Aristotelian notion that justice
consists in giving people what they deserve. Christine writes that justice means giving to people
according to their status (rende a chascun selon son povoir). So what each person deserves
follows from her/his place in in the body politic. Here, then, the practice of equity in all things
“faire équité en toutes choses” that Christine commends to the prince reflects her monarchial
interpretation of justice and her hierarchical notion of equity. Christine explains that the justice
that the prince gives to his subjects is the foundation of the justice that he receives from his
subjects. Justice demands that the prince receives what he deserves according to his status. “For
it is rational [raison] that he has the same right [droit] he gives [faire] to everyone, which means
that he would be obeyed and feared by right and by reason [estre obei et doubté par droit et
raison], as is appropriate to the majesty of a prince [magesté de prince].” The very notion of
justice means that the prince is obeyed and feared. So, in the view of Christine, “in whatever land
or place where a prince is not feared, there is no true justice [ou le prince n’est doubté ne peut
avoir bonne justice].” So Christine sees the prince’s practice of the virtue of justice as a part of
his care for the common good.

65 See ead., The Book of Peace, II.5-7, where Christine maintains the distinction between the virtue of justice, which
exists in the prince, and the administration of justice, which is the work of the officers of the prince.
66 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 38; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 36.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
Later in Part I, Christine turns to the defense of justice as the third virtue in the moral life of the Christian man in the world. There, as she sets out that the life of justice is of a piece with the life of virtue, Christine affirms that, in the world, justice looks different according to status. God has placed the prince in the office of lordship from God. And the justice that the prince receives from his subjects, as fear and obedience, is for the common good, not for his personal good. Practicing justice, each person in the commonweal fears and obeys the prince as a part of the practice of the common good.

Returning to the subject of the third point mentioned before that the good prince maintains justice \([gardera\ justice]\) and grounds himself in following it \([fonder\ et\ poursuivant]\), let us to [sic] look at what things are proper to him for good living \([bien\ vivre]\). But seeing the quantity of virtues which remain to speak of, all of which he ought to have, it would be too long to describe each separately. Let us say more generally how the good prince ought always to be busy with virtuous works \([vertueuses\ œuvres]\) . . . There is no other man who has such hard work to do if he wants to live justly \([se\ justement\ veult\ vivre]\) as a prince should. If he is wise \([saige]\, the office of rule \([l’office\ de\ seigneurie]\) where God has established him \([ou\ Dieu\ l’a\ establi]\) is burdensome.\(^{69}\)

Developing her notion of \textit{liberalité}\ as a mean in might, Christine turns from the most divine virtues to the most humane virtues, and sets out examples in order to teach on \textit{humaine pitié} and \textit{humanité}. Christine offers four examples of princes who practiced \textit{humanité et clemence} to those whom they had vanquished. Christine tells of Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus who defeated Perses and then treated him as a brother.\(^{70}\) She recounts how Marcus Claudius Marcellus had captured Syracuse and then wept with pity \((pitié)\) for the city that he had felled. She relates how Pompey defeated Tigranes and then appointed him prince under

\(^{69}\) Ead., \textit{The Book of the Body Politic}, 48; ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 46-47.

obedience to the Romans. She writes that, to Pompey, “it seemed to him that it was as great an honor to make a king as to defeat one” (il lui sembloit que c’estoit aussi grant honneur de faire roys que de les deffaire). And Christine gives the greatest number of lines to the example of Hector of Troy. She describes Hector as fierce in battle but merciful and even meek (debonnaire) to those whom surrendered.

Christine sets the examples of these four ancient “princes” against the practices of the knights of France in her time. She charges “noblemen” with acting more like beasts than human persons. In her case against the knights of France, Christine uses the phrase “hearts of men” (cuers d’ommes). In this context, her meaning is different from, but related to, her notion of “the heart of a man” (cuer d’omme) in Le Livre de la mutacion de fortune (1403) and Le Livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames (1405-6). In the earlier texts, to have the heart of a man means to pursue one’s own self-interest in the world. Here, as Christine laments “what hearts these men have” (quelz cuers d’ommes avoir), she is referring to self-interest distorted into selfish cruelty (crualté). In particular, Christine charges the knights of France with senseless destruction, including violence against fellow Christians and violence against women. These persons are persons, made in the image and likeness of God, the same as the knights of France. Christine cries out that, in their violence against their fellows, the “noblemen” violate nothing less than the law of nature and the divine law.

71 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 30; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 27.
73 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 29; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 27.
74 Ibid.
Later, Christine returns to her condemnation of cruelty. She writes that “nothing is more reprehensible in a prince than to be cruel.” In the prince and in his agents of the common good, the knights, cruelty destroys that which it is the very function of the prince to establish and order. From God, the function of the prince is to exercise lordship in order to enable the fellowship or civil conversation [conversacion civille] toward which human persons are naturally inclined [naturelment enclin]. So, following Simon’s Valerius, Christine sets out lessons for the prince against anger. Christine describes anger as a “natural vice” which attracts hatred and sometimes causes cruelty. So, although she accepts that anger is natural, Christine compels the prince to control and moderate this vice.

From there, Christine turns to the humane virtues, humanité, clemence, and debonnaireté, together with the divine virtues, liberalité and justice, in the good prince. Taking Simon’s Valerius as her guide, Christine describes how the divine virtues and the humane virtues together are the medicine that the prince administers for the health of the commonweal. The just prince, who exercises lordship, has the power to punish and to pardon. The good prince pardons as well as punishes. The good prince establishes order through justice and compassion together. Christine puts it to the prince that

Valerius tells us (which I have quoted from this book word-for-word because of its beauty and substance) that he could give generosity [liberalité] no better company than humanity [humanité] and mercy [clemence], for they deserve all kinds of praise. And he says that generosity [liberalité] shows itself to those who are poor and suffering, who need one to be generous and liberal [large et liberal] to them. Humanity [humanité] is shown to those who are ill or in prison or

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75 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 54; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 52.
76 Ibid.
77 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 53ff.
insecure in their bodies or their goods. He who has power and right to punish and pardon \([\textit{a seignorie et poissance de pugnir et de pardonner}]\), pardons and alleviates their miseries by the power of the prince. He is responsible for healing them his poor subjects compassionately \([\textit{il est tenu se il veult user de bonté de les medicine compassionnablement a ses povres subjez}]\), by the above virtues \([\textit{les susdictes vertus}]\), maintaining the order of justice and not too rigorously \([\textit{gardant toutevoies l’ordre de justice non trop rigoreusement}]\), and especially in those things that are not contrary to nature \([\textit{such as civil conversation (repunante a conversacion civile)}]\), to which human persons are naturally inclined \([\textit{naturelment enclin}]\).\(^{78}\)

Forhan’s translation leaves off at one “leurs corps” and picks up at another “leurs corps” so this line has been left out: \textit{clemence se demonstre a ceulx qui sont par male fortune cheus en misere en dongier et perilz de leurs corps ou de leurs biens}.\(^{79}\)

Christine uses \textit{clemence} and \textit{debonnaireté} to refer to the virtue of the prince, who, by virtue of his lordship, has the power to punish and, instead, pardons.\(^{80}\) Christine teaches the prince to be “sweet” to his subjects. She tells him to be sweet and kind \([\textit{douls et benigne}]\) and to use sweet words \([\textit{doulces parolles}]\). She explains that his sweetness causes his subjects to obey him out of love and not just fear. She writes that nothing is more delicious to a subject than the sweetness of the prince and that nothing fills the heart of a subject with more love than the \textit{clemence, doulceur, et benignité} of the prince. In the end, the sweetness of the prince fortifies his lordship, his power to enact order. “For without doubt there is nothing more sweet nor more favorable \([\textit{n’est riens plus douls ne plus savoureux}]\) to a subject,” Christine argues, “than to see his lord and prince gentle and kind \([\textit{doulz et benigne}]\) to him, and nothing can satisfy the hearts \([\textit{les cuers}]\) of his men and his familiars more than mercy, gentleness and kindness \([\textit{clemence}, \ldots}]\)

\(^{78}\text{Ead., }\textit{The Book of the Body Politic, 26; ead., }\textit{Le Livre du corps de policie, 24.}\)

\(^{79}\text{Ead., }\textit{Le Livre du corps de policie, 24.}\)

\(^{80}\text{Ead., }\textit{Le Livre du corps de policie, 28-29. See Thomas Aquinas, }\textit{The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 157.}\)
doulceur, et benignité] do, when wisely and discreetly done. . . . He is gentle and kind [douls et benigne] with their requests and petitions, and of gentle speech [doulces parolles]. . . . The higher and stronger foundation a tower has, the less it will take the shock of a little stone."

Again, Christine sets out four good examples to advance her argument for the sweetness of the prince. First, she tells of the great meekness (grant debonnaire[té]) of Philocrates, a “duke” or “prince” of Athens. Philocrates was kind even when his came at him with violent insults and spat on his face. Philocrates’s sons wanted to kill the man and, later, the friend wanted to kill himself. But Philocrates showed great pity (grant pitié). He pardoned his friend, comforted him, and restored him to his good graces. Next, Christine sets out a second account of the meekness (debonnaireté) of Philocrates. Philocrates had a beautiful daughter. “A young man loved her so much that he thought he would die.” Christine retells how “the young man was so struck by love that he could not control himself and kissed her in front of everyone when he passed her. The mother of the girl, Philocrates’s wife, wanted the young man to be executed for this and strongly insisted on this to her lord. But Philocrates answered, compassionately [piteusement], ‘if we kill those that love us, what could we do to those that hate us?’” Christine commends to the prince Philocrates’s response: “This response was most humane [moult humaine].” Third, Christine holds up Pompey as a model of peaceful endurance. Christine

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82 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 30-31; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 28.

83 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 31; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 28.

84 Ibid.
explains that the patience of Pompey followed from his care to guard the common good (le bien publique). \footnote{Ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 28.} Last, Christine describes how Pyrrhus was a model of meekness (debonnairetè). \footnote{Ibid., 29.} Pyrrhus defeated the Romans but he honored them for their greatness.

In all, Christine’s notion of debonnairetè advances her argument for the pardon of the prince. In each exemplum that she offers for the instruction of the prince, the offender merited punishment but the good prince moderated his anger and offered pardon. The lesson for the prince is that his power to pardon, as much as his power to punish, serves the common good. His sweetness serves the common good.

Christine’s case for the clemence and debonnairetè of the prince as “sweet” and “gentle” seems to have its roots in Seneca’s De Clementia and to have been mediated to her through either Question 157 of the Second Part of the Second Part of the Summa Theologiae directly or from a text after Thomas, perhaps even Simon’s glosses of Valerius’s text. Christine refers to Seneca as an auctor at least five times in Corps de policie. But she does not refer to him in the parts of her book that describe the divine and humane virtues of the prince and she does not refer to his De Clementia in Corps de policie. \footnote{See ead., The Book of Peace, I.5.4; I.8.6; I.8.7; I.11.4, where Christine names and cites Seneca’s De Clementia.}

Thomas, however, had cited lines from Seneca’s text about the sweetness and gentleness of clemency. In Question 157, Thomas had considered clemency and meekness (clementia et mansuetudine). \footnote{Thomas Aquinas, The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 157.} Christine does not share Thomas’s concern for the distinction between clementia as the regulation of punishment that a superior demonstrates to an inferior and
mansuetudine as the regulation of anger that a person shows another person. Instead, she restates his ideas as more general lessons for the life of virtue. In particular, Christine seems to incorporate some of the ideas that Thomas had put forth in his reply to the first objection in the third article (“Is each a part of temperance?”). Thomas argues that clementia and mansuetudo are parts of temperance rather than parts of justice. He explains that a certain moderation of the inward disposition is what keeps a person from exercising the power to punish. Thomas argues that

this belongs properly to clemency, wherefore Seneca says (De Clementia ii, 3) that ‘it is temperance of the soul in exercising the power of taking revenge.’ This moderation of soul comes from a certain sweetness of disposition [dulcedine affectus], whereby a man recoils from anything that may be painful to another. Wherefore Seneca says (De Clementia ii, 3) that ‘clemency is a certain smoothness of the soul [lenitas animi]; for, on the other hand, there would seem to be a certain roughness of soul [austeritas animi] in one who fears not to pain others.’

Christine wants the prince to moderate justice with sweetness and to moderate sweetness with justice. “The good prince ought to be feared [estre cremus] despite being gentle and benign [douls et benigne].” The prince must stand for justice. That makes him feared. But he should offer pardon. That makes him loved. “His kindness [benignité] ought to be considered a thing of grace [chose de grace].”

89 Ibid.
91 Ibid. The passage reads: “There is no doubt that the good prince ought to be feared [estre cremus] despite being gentle and benign [douls et benigne]. His kindness [benignité] ought to be considered a thing of grace [chose de grace] which one ought to particularly heed [singulierement garder] rather than scorn.”
Christine describes good lordship as the prince’s practice of the common good. She sets out a picture of lordship that holds clemence and debonnaireté in one hand and liberalité and justice in the other hand. She envisages lordship as both mild and merciful and just and powerful (benignité et misericorde, et aussi justice et puissance). Indeed, Christine allegorizes lordship on the model of the Roman figure of Concordia. For Christine, concord is the heart of lordship. The commission of the prince from God includes instituting political friendship between people of all estates. Christine teaches the prince that, in him, this combination of mildness and sweetness and liberality and justice can bring about order and peace, a kind of Salus Augustus or Concordia Augusta for France and all of Christendom.

Christine describes the ancient goddess of “lordship” as the figure of a queen (a woman “of very high rank [moult haulte maniere] on a royal throne [trosne royal]” “holding in one hand an olive branch [une branche d’olive] and in the other a naked sword [une espee nue], showing that rule [lordship (seigneurie)] must include kindness and mercy [benignité et misericorde] as well as justice and power [justice et puissance].” Christine refashions the Roman figure of Concordia as royal lordship. Roman Concordia holds together peace, represented as the olive branch, and justice, represented as the sword. As lordship, Christine describes the meaning of these objects. The olive branch stands for kindness and mercy (benignité et misericorde) and the sword stands for justice and power (justice et puissance).Christine’s iconography of justice is different here than in Le livre de la cité des dames. In the


93 Christine does not often write on the subject of friendship. The second-to-last chapter of the Le Livre de paix (1414), however, is devoted to the subject of “friendship” (amistie). See ead., The Book of Peace, III.47. She considers in turn peace, civil peace, the absence of discord and unity, goodness, and concord (unité, bonté, et concorde).

earlier text, Christine’s Justice carries a “vessel of pure gold . . . like a measuring cup.” The
iconographic shift suggests the ancient inspiration of the later text.)\textsuperscript{95} Like concord, lordship
balances pardon and power. The classical ideal of concord included cooperation, stability, and
peace. For Christine, these are the very aims of lordship. Christine’s prince is for concord.

Christine returns to this connection between Roman Concordia and royal lordship in the
last lines of Part I. She holds up the model of Julius Caesar. In his time, Julius Caesar caused the
end of the Roman Republic. With the Italian republics of her own time in mind (she names
Bologna), Christine writes that democratic government “is not profitable . . . and also it does not
last very long once begun, nor is there peace in and around it, and for good reason.”\textsuperscript{96} In the view
of Christine, \textit{la policie d’un} and \textit{la gouvernance et seigneurie d’un} secure order, peace, and
concord.\textsuperscript{97} She recounts for the prince how the Romans considered Julius Caesar to be a god. His
virtue was so great that it seemed divine. Above all, the divine virtue of Julius Caesar was seen
in his \textit{justice} and his \textit{clemence}. Christine describes how Julius Caesar practiced his \textit{justice} and
his \textit{clemence} soveraignly (\textit{souverainement}). Julius Caesar is Christine’s model sovereign. He is
the model of lordship for concord or the common good.

So the good prince who desires to reach paradise, as well as glory and praise in
the world from all people, will love God and fear God above everything. And he
will love the public good of his kingdom or country more than his own as well.
He ought to do justice without hindrance and to justly render to each his own
according to the power which is his. As justice commands he will be humane,
genерous, and merciful \textit{[humain, liberal et plain de clemence]} to his dependents as
was described before. And in doing so, he will acquire praise through his good
merits, not only during his life, but eternally, as Valerius said about the excellent

\textsuperscript{95} Ead., \textit{The Book of the City of Ladies}, 14-15.

\textsuperscript{96} Christine de Pizan, \textit{The Book of the Body Politic}, 92; ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 93.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
prince Julius Caesar, who by his merits and good deeds after his death was reputed to be a god. For the ancients of old, who did not yet have the faith, when they saw a person, a man or woman who surpassed others in any superiority of grace, believed that such virtue could not be without divine virtue [vertu divine]. And Julius Caesar had many great virtues. Above all others, he was just and merciful [en lui justice et clemence souverainement]. They said that such virtue in a man could not perish in leaving life, and his soul ascended to heaven, deified.98

In setting out her notion of the work of the prince for the common good as royal lordship on the model of Roman Concordia, directly or indirectly, Christine conforms to the terms of the scholastic considerations of the common good that Albertus Magnus (d. 1280) had set. Albertus was the first scholastic theologian to produce a commentary on the complete text of Aristotle’s Ethics. He took up the recently translated text of the Ethics between 1248 and 1252, “delivering a course of lectures which combined expository comments with specific questions.”99 Toward the end of the 1260s, Albertus wrote a second commentary, “this time as a series of extended paraphrases incorporating what he had gleaned from the other Aristotelian texts which he had been expounding in the intervening period.”100 Matthew Kempshall has demonstrated that “taken together, these two works effectively set out the terms of reference in which an Aristotelian notion of the common good would have to be discussed by all subsequent scholastic theologians.”101

In his second commentary on Aristotle’s Ethics, Albertus defines concord as a kind of political friendship.102 Concord orders persons for the sake of mutual utility.103 “This type of

99 Kempshall, The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought, 29.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid., 62.
concord, the concord of political friendship, is the order which unites imperfect political communities.”

It has been noted often that Christine’s representation of the body politic, although considered as three estates, is not set out in terms of the orders of persons who pray, persons who fight, and persons who work (the traditional image attributed to Alfred the Great). Indeed, Christine’s notion of the body politic sometimes has been called “secular” because she writes about the clerks in the book on the common people. In the introduction to her English translation, The Book of the Body Politic (1994), Forhan suggests that “the position of the clergy among the lower ‘limbs’ by Christine reveals her view that the clergy’s role is a functional one. They provide masses and prayers in the way that a baker provides bread – important to society but not essential. Her society, both real and ideal, has become much more secularized.” In Part III, however, Christine describes “the community of people” and writes that within that group there are three sub-estates: the clergy, the burghers and the merchants, and the common people. Christine writes that “because the clerical class is high, noble, and worthy of honor amongst the others, I will address it first.” In particular, in Part III, Christine addresses students, “whether at the University of Paris or elsewhere.” Indeed, Christine fills the two

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
chapters to clerks in Part III with lessons for students. Christine writes that “the sciences perfect the habits” and commends students to their studies.\(^{110}\) This is a representative line: “And, truly, no matter what others say, I dare say there is no treasure the like of understanding. Who would not undertake any labor, you champions of wisdom, to acquire it? For if you have it and use it well, you are noble, you are rich, you are perfect!”\(^{111}\)

In fact, Christine writes on clerks (not as students but as pastors) in Part I. She describes clerks and knights as the officers of the prince.\(^{112}\) Christine sees priests as the agents of the prince in his work to love and fear God. And she sees the knights as the agents of the prince in his work to build up the common good. So Christine commends the prince to follow the direction of “soldiers and others who belong to that group are those who are capable for military offices; and clerks and students are appropriate for the speculative sciences, philosophy, and liberal arts.”\(^{113}\) The prince is to exercise lordship according to the best counsel available. So Christine tells him to look to experienced knights for guidance in military affairs and to wise clerks for guidance in knowledge and virtue.\(^{114}\)

Indeed, in light of Christine’s attention to clerks in Part I, I take the surprise of Corps de police to be, not a slighting of the clerks or a secularizing of the body politic, but the subsuming of the clerks under the supervision of the prince, as the good shepherd of the commonweal, along the lines of his supervision of the knights. Christine considers the charge of the prince to love and fear God to include the correction of the clergy. Christine concedes that her lessons to the

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\(^{110}\) Ibid., 97.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 96.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., 40.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 41.

\(^{114}\) Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 12; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 10.
prince on this front are expansive. Nevertheless, she concludes: “So the good prince ought to take care of all these things, because despite the fact that correction of people in the church is not his to undertake, nonetheless what prelate, priest, or cleric is so great that he will dare withstand or complain about the prince who reproves him for his manifest vice or sin [magnifeste vice et pechié]?”

In the light of Christine’s interest in the notion that good lordship requires just taxation, her inclusion of the clerks in Part III suggests the influence of texts that had been composed in response to the conflicts between Philip IV of France and others with Pope Boniface VIII about the rights of jurisdiction of temporal and spiritual authorities. The question of the taxation of the clergy became a lightning rod in the disputes about the rights of jurisdiction of temporal and spiritual authorities. In the last decade of the thirteenth century, Edward I of England and Philip IV of France each had begun to use ecclesial revenues to fund territorial disputes in Guienne, forgoing even the traditional pretense of using those monies to fund crusades. In response, Boniface VIII promulgated Clericis laicos (1296). Forcefully, the bull forbade, under threat of excommunication, the laity to receive taxes from the clergy and forbade the clergy to pay taxes to the laity without the permission of the Holy See. As the quarrel between Philip and Boniface continued, Rome was purported to have issued Unam sanctam (1302), which, in part, declared that the “temporal sword” and the “spiritual sword” both were committed to the Church.

Christine’s placement of the clerks in Part III of Corps de policie, apart from the knights who did

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115 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 13-14; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 11.

116 Boniface VIII promulgated Clericis laicos on February 25, 1296. Clement V revoked it.

117 The bull, which is not extant, has been attributed to Boniface. One theory is that it was, in fact, composed by persons in Philip’s camp in order to stoke the perception of Boniface as an extremist.
not pay taxes, and alongside the common people who did pay taxes, suggests her support for the strong temporal authority of the king.

In the first chapter of lessons for the prince who is governing at present, Christine sets out the model of Charles V of France. This section of the text seems to be inspired by the efforts of Charles V to restore union within the Church during the Great Schism, such as when he proposed a general council to the cardinals of Anagni. Christine calls the prince the “vicar of God on earth” (viccaire de Dieu en terre) and charges him to be a peacemaker within the Church.118 “This good prince, as vicar of God on earth [viccaire de Dieu en terre], will care with all his heart for the welfare of the Church, so that his Creator can be served as his reason demands. And if there is any discord through the instigation of the enemy, he will bring peace whatever the difficulty.”119

Having charged the prince to be make peace in the Church, Christine directs the prince to appoint and promote (only) virtuous clerks, to correct vicious clerks, to keep holy Church buildings, and to forbid breaking the law of God by “swearing on or denying” the Creator.120 Since the prince is responsible for certain clerical appoints and prebends, the portions of Church revenues set aside for the support of the clergy attached to it, Christine instructs the prince to appoint clerks on the basis of their merit and virtue, “no matter how much affection he has for the individual who requests it.”121 In service of God, the prince confers each of these offices on a man who he knows “to be a good and prudent cleric and fit to serve God and his service [bon

118 Christine de Pizan, The Book of the Body Politic, 12; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 10.
119 Ibid.
120 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 14-15; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 12.
121 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 12; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 10.
clerc preudomme et propice a deservir vers Dieu et son service].”122 This practice secures both the conscience of the prince and the souls of his clerical officers. Christine draws on a favorite metaphor, the ship, to demonstrate that the promotion of vicious clerks imperils the Church. In particular, Christine takes aim at avaricious and erroneous priests. She warns against the practice of appointing clerks, not on account of merit or virtue, but rather “because of flattery, adulations, and other wickedness, by the requests of lords. Because of this, the ship [la nef] is buffeted by the wind and ruined, because greed [couvoitise] is the reason for their promotion. And even those in detestable and blind error [l’erreur detestable et avuglee] are promoted, which continues even today in the church.”123

Christine goes on to describe bad priests in terms that are similar to those she uses to describe bad knights. In knights, she sees self-interest perverted into selfish cruelty. In priests, she sees appetite perverted into avarice. She describes both bad knights and bad priests as unnatural and inhuman. Bad knights are beasts.124 Bad priests are devils. (The implicit contrast is to good knights who are the sheepdogs of the shepherd prince and to good priests who are angels.) And, against the notion that priests are not angels but (imperfect) human persons, she argues that bad priests are not men but devils. Human appetites have natural limits but the greed of these men surpasses the natural. “The body of a human [le corps d’un homme] is a little vessel which is filled by very little, but they are truly devils [deables] . . . for as the mouth of Hell may never be filled nor satisfied no matter how much it receives or takes, neither can their desires [desirs] be satisfied or filled since they have such great greed in them for money and luxuries

122 Ibid.
123 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 12-13; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 10.
124 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 29; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 27.
Christine then refers to Jesus’ admonishment in the Gospel of Matthew – “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers” – and directs the prince to save churches from commerce and corruption. She teaches the prince to take care that “the temple and the house of God is not polluted nor profaned by the many sins committed there by many of our Christians nowadays.” She tells of the Roman honor for their gods and care for their temples and concludes that “the order which held among the ancient pagans condemns us.”

Last, Christine calls the prince to be a custodian of the commandments of God. In particular, Christine summons the prince to outlaw taking the name of God in vain. She advises the prince to “proclaim an edict throughout his land, which will forbid on pain of severe punishment anyone swearing on or denying his Creator.” She explains that “there is great need in France at present for such an edict, because it is horrible that the whole of Christendom [l’université des cretients] has the custom of such disrespect toward the Savior. . . . Everyone swears horribly at every word about the torments of the passion of our redeemer, and they forsake and deny him.” Like the lesson on churches, this one ends with a shameful contrast

125 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 13; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 11.
129 Ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 14-15; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 12.
130 Ibid.
with the pagans: “I believe that the pagans of old would not have treated their gods and idols so!”

In all, the prince who makes peace, promotes the good, corrects the bad, saves churches, and proclaims and enforces an edict on Christian language, succeeds at demonstrating his love of God in his lordship. Christine concludes this part of the text: “All these things the good prince ought to forbid, because they are opposed to and disapproved by the Christian religion [religion crestienne] and could be the cause of the wrath of God and the subversion of kingdoms and countries where they take place, as some prophesies tell. And so, the good prince who loves God will carefully observe and keep the divine law and holy institutions in everything that is worthy and devout [dignes et devotes].”

Having instructed the prince on how to supervise priests in order to demonstrate his love and fear God, next, Christine writes to him on how to supervise knights in order to demonstrate his love for the common good. In Part II of Corps de policie, she sets out the six good conditions (six bonnes condicions) required of noble knights (nobles chevalereux). The usual term of Christine for this kind of lesson is enseignement. In Trois vertus, Christine sets out enseignements moraux for women in the world. But in Corps de policie, written around the same time as Trois vertus, Christine sets out bonnes condicions. The lexical shift from enseignements to condicions suggests the influence of Dante Alighieri’s De Monarchia (ca.

131 Ibid.
Christine’s six conditions seem to be a development of the six principles to which Dante points when he names the *Magister Sex Principiorum* (i.e., the author of a Commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*).

In the eleventh chapter of Book I of *De Monarchia*, Dante makes the case for the reign of justice in the world in the form of monarchy. Dante argues that “the world is ordered in the best possible way when justice is at its strongest in it.”

Dante explains:

> To clarify the minor premiss, it must be understood that justice, considered in itself and in its own nature, is a kind of rectitude or rule which spurns deviation from the straight path to either side; and thus it does not admit of a more and a less – just like whiteness considered in the abstract. There are forms of this kind, in fact, which are to be found in composites, but which in themselves consist of a simple and unchangeable essence, as the Master of the Six Principles [*Magister Sex Principiorum*] rightly says. Such qualities are present to a greater or lesser degree depending on the subjects in which they are given concrete form, according as these subjects contain more or less of their opposites.

Dante continues: “justice is at its strongest in the world when it resides in a subject who has in the highest degree possible the will and the power to act; only the monarch is such a subject; therefore justice is at its strongest in the world when it is located in the monarch alone.” These lines stand behind Christine’s notion of royal lordship.

Christine was one of the first writers (whether or not she was the first of all is contested) to introduce Dante’s *Divina Commedia* to France. Karen Green has suggested that Christine’s indebtedness to Dante is clearest in her earlier *Le Chemin de long estude* (1402-3). In that text,

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136 Ibid., 15-16.
137 Ibid., 17.
Christine refers to “Dante of Florence.” As Green has described, in Le Chemin de long estude, the Cumean sibyl guides Christine into “the realm of the celestial spheres that Dante had described in both the Paradiso and Convivio. . . . We can deduce from this, given that Vergil took the place of the Cumean sibyl in Dante’s Divine Comedy, that Christine intends to suggest that the Cumean sibyl stands in place of Dante, who is Christine’s inspiration.” Green has demonstrated that Christine is indebted to Dante’s De Monarchia as well as to his Divina Commedia. Indeed, Green has shown that Christine’s indebtedness to Dante is particularly manifest in the verses in which “she paraphrases Dante’s argument that in order to put an end to the greed that causes war and dissension, the world needs a single universal monarch who will reign in justice.” Following Dante, Christine sets out a notion of royal lordship based upon the idea that justice on earth exists in the justice of the prince. The prince alone can secure the justice that is from God and for the common good.

Christine takes the knights to be the agents of the justice of the prince. She sets out the six good conditions to teach them how to succeed in their charge. Indeed, these conditions are the covenantal obligations of the knights to their prince. The six conditions required of the knight are: to bear arms; to serve the prince and the common good (le bien de leur prince et la garde du pais et de la chose publique) and to never desert; to give heart and courage (donner cuer et hardement l’un a l’autre), that is, to support his fellow knights; to be truthful and faithful to his

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139 Ibid., 24-25.

oath; to pursue honor above worldly things; and to be wise and clever in battle.\textsuperscript{141} Christine fills Part II with explanations and examples of these six good conditions.

The first good condition is to practice “the discipline of knighthood” (\textit{discipline de chevalerie}). This is the term of Christine for the office of the knights. The knights take up arms in defense of the common good.\textsuperscript{142} The second good condition is to practice reasonable boldness (\textit{hardiesce}). Christine explains that the virtue of boldness comes from great courage, which the clerks call magnanimity (\textit{c'est une vertu qui vient de grant couraige, que les clers appelloient magnaminité}).\textsuperscript{143} As greatness of heart or greatness of soul, the virtue of boldness follows from reason. The pure and proper boldness that wins praise has its source, not in recklessness, but in reason. The third condition is to be good to the good. Christine charges knights to be good and valiant in theory and in practice (\textit{bons et vaillans en ycelle science et excercite}).\textsuperscript{144} The fourth good condition is to be truthful and faithful. Christine explains that, for the ancient pagans as well as for Christians, truth is the foundation of the moral life. Christine makes the case that, what is more, truth is the foundation of Christian faith and belief: God is truth (\textit{Dieu est verité}); Jesus called himself truth; holy scripture praises truth; clerks pursue truth.\textsuperscript{145} The fifth good condition is to pursue honor above all things in the world.\textsuperscript{146} The knights are charged to follow the good example of the ancients and to prefer honor to riches. Last, the sixth good condition is

\textsuperscript{141} Christine de Pizan, \textit{The Book of the Body Politic}, 63-64; ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 62.
\textsuperscript{142} Ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 63.
\textsuperscript{143} Ead., \textit{The Book of the Body Politic}, 65-66; ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 64.
\textsuperscript{144} Ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 64. See ead., \textit{A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor}, 97-98; ead., \textit{Le Livre de Trois Vertus}, 52.
\textsuperscript{145} Ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 75.
\textsuperscript{146} Ead., \textit{The Book of the Body Politic}, 77; ead., \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie}, 77.
to be *saige, avisez et cautilleux* in all things having to do with arms, chivalry, and “stratagems.” In particular, Christine sets out examples of clever deeds (*cautilleux fais*). Christ...
Thomas had distinguished between prudence (true and perfect prudence), cleverness (true but imperfect prudence), and cunning (false prudence). Prudence is directed to the good only; cleverness may be directed to both good and evil; and cunning is directed to evil only. These ideas seem to be built into Christine’s notion that the good knight is clever in pursuit of a good end.

In conclusion, as Christine wrote *Le Livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames* for women in the world so she wrote *Le Livre du corps de policie* for men in the world. Christine teaches the men of France to practice good morals: to love and fear God, to build up the common good, and to defend justice. Christine yokes the notion of the common good and the notion of justice and, then, presents the common good and justice as bound together with royal lordship. Christine emphasizes her dependence on Valerius. Indeed, Christine’s notion of the common good as royal lordship seems to have been inspired by ancient ideals. This seems clearest in Christine’s retooling of the figure of Roman Concordia as royal lordship and in her imaging of Julius Caesar as the model prince. From there, Christine’s notion of the common good as royal lordship seems to have been formed by scholastic, especially Thomistic, notions of the virtues. She teaches the prince to practice the divine virtues and the human virtues in order to build up the common good. Christine instructs the prince to moderate justice with sweetness and to moderate sweetness with justice. At least some of this scholastic, especially Thomistic, influence

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153 Ibid.
seems to have reached Christine through the “addicions du translateur” sections of Simon de Hesdin’s edition of the text of Valerius. Finally, Christine’s notion of the common good as royal lordship seems to have been set out in the light of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century considerations of the common good. In particular, Christine seems to have incorporated Dante’s notion that justice is most present in the world when it is located in the monarch alone.

In *Le Livre du corps de policie*, it is impossible to consider the notion of the common good apart from the notion of royal lordship. Christine looks to the prince to exercise justice in order to secure order and peace. In the end, then, Christine seems nearer to Augustine than to Aristotle in her hope for the commonweal. Christine writes *Corps de policie* in the interest of concord and peace in France in her time.

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155 Reading Christine’s *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* (1404), Daisy Delogu has concluded that the language of Christine in that text “points to a certain understanding of the state as a concept and, in accordance with newly popularized Aristotelian notions of good government, identifies care of the *res publica* as the primary obligation of kingship.” Delogu, *Theorizing the Ideal Sovereign*, 183.
Christine continues to call the persons of each estate in the body politic to reform their cuers and their courage in the interest of peace in Les sept psaumes allégorisés, Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile, Le Livre de paix, and Ditiè de Jehanne d’Arc. In both Les sept psaumes allégorisés (1409), written for the Burgundian Charles III of Navarre, and in Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile (1410), written for the Orléanist Jean de Berry, Christine addresses all of the estates that make up the body politic in France. As in Le Livre du corps de policie (1406-7), Christine calls to the princes, the knights, the clerks, and the common people to cooperate for the common good. In Sept psaumes and Lamentacion, however, Christine explicitly includes women in the body politic. Within the tropes of traditional Christian devotional writing, Christine advances her theological argument for women as human persons, bearers of reasonable souls, possessors of the potential for prudence, who are capable of virtue and Christian practice, and able to make peace.¹ In these texts, Christine calls on all of the people of France, explicitly including the women of all estates, to make peace.

In 1409, Christine composed Les sept psaumes allégorisés for Charles III of Navarre.² The text is a penitential prayer for peace. Charles was a cousin of the reigning French dynasty. He became known as “Charles le Noble,” in part, for his interest in reconciliation between the

¹ See Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life with An Epistle to the Queen of France and Lament on the Evils of the Civil War, trans. Josette A. Wisman (New York: Garland, 1984), 70-83 for Une Epistre a la Roye de France (1405), another expression of the author’s belief in the capacity of women to be peacemakers.

Orléanist and the Burgundian factions in France. Karen Green has described how “at this stage he was officially the ally of John of Burgundy.”³ After the failure of the Peace of Chartres, which Charles had helped to establish, because of the “arbitrary arrest and execution of Jean de Montaigu, the grand master of the king’s household,” however, Charles “is said to have been disturbed by John’s brutality. The Sept psaumes are thought to have been ordered partly by way of penance, and in translating them Christine powerfully evoked her desire for the French crown to return to its tradition of Christian kingship.”⁴ Christine set out and “allegorized” the seven penitential psalms for Charles of Navarre with a view to the restoration of royal lordship in France and to peace in France and in Christendom. These prayers ask God to return the people of France and all Christian persons to concord and to restore union to France and to Christendom.

Ruth Ringland Rains, who prepared the critical edition of Les sept psaumes allégorisés, has suggested that Christine either translated the psalms from the Latin herself or drew on a translated text without glossing. One possible source text is the Psalter that Charles V had presented to the father of Christine.⁵ Rains has concluded that “the only thing we can say with any certainty regarding the text of her source for the Psalm verses is that it was a Gallican text, or a direct translation of one, since her verse divisions and vocabulary are in perfect parallel to that version.”⁶ From there, Rains has described Christine’s notion of “allégorisés.” Citing the work of Edwin Honig and George Boas respectively, Rains has explained that allegory was taken to be “a ‘trope containing a doctrinal truth.’ This concept was part of the medieval belief ‘that the whole


⁴ Ibid.


⁶ Ibid., 22.
world, of nature as well as of art, was a sort of rebus, the deciphering of which would produce not scientific laws, . . . but moral lessons.”\(^7\) In this sense, to allegorize was to reveal the inner truth of things (veritas rerum) to which all texts bore witness in the end. In an earlier text, Christine had explained this as reading “to our purpose” (à nostre propos).\(^8\) To allegorize “was to interpret, using the entire range of rhetoric from simile to symbolism.”\(^9\) In the end, Rains has concluded that, altogether, Sept psaumes “is in that indefinable area between medieval exegesis and literature.”\(^10\)

The meditations on the first three psalms that Christine set outs and allegorizes (Psalms 6, 31, and 37 as numbered in the Vulgate) are devoted to penitential themes. In her meditations on these three psalms, Christine is nearest to the words of the psalmist. In each meditation, Christine sets out a confession of sin, an affirmation of the mercy of God, and a statement of Christian confidence in the promise of the forgiveness of God.

The meditation on the fourth psalm that Christine set outs and allegorizes (Psalm 50 as numbered in the Vulgate) is a review of Christian teaching. Christine offers prayers in the light of the Trinity; the seven deadly sins (each set in contrast to its life-giving virtue); the five corporeal senses, to which she adds heart (cuer), speech, and feet, and all of which she prays to


\(^{8}\) See Christine de Pizan, Christine de Pizan’s Letter of Othea to Hector, trans. Jane Chance (Cambridge: D.S. Brewster, 1997), 59. In L’Epistre Othéa (1399-1400), Christine teaches her reader how “to recall to the allegory the articles of faith to our purpose, without which the good spirit may not profit.”

\(^{9}\) Rains, Introduction, 40.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 42.
be well governed (bien gouverner); the ten commandments; the twelve articles of faith; and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{11}

Together, the meditations on the last three psalms that Christine set outs and allegorizes (Psalms 101, 129, and 142 as numbered in the Vulgate), recall the life and the death of Jesus Christ and pray for manners for the people of France and for peace for the Kingdom of France. The meditation on Psalm 101 retells the events of the life of Christ from the Annunciation to the carrying of the cross. The meditation on Psalm 129 contemplates the Crucifixion and some of the last words of Jesus Christ on the cross.\textsuperscript{12} In those two meditations, Christine includes prayers for all of the people of France according to their status and estates. The meditation on Psalm 142 contemplates the rest of the Passion, through the Hours of None, Vespers, and Compline. The book ends with Pentecost.

The first seventeen verses of the meditation on Psalm 101 are devoted to contemplation of the life of Jesus Christ. Then, from the eighteenth verse of the meditation on Psalm 101 forward, Christine prays for the Church and for persons in each estate and all groups in France. Christine prays for Isabeau of Bavaria, the Queen of France, and for her royal successors, that they each “live in the world with such grace that their morals and manners are a good example for all persons” (leurs meurs et maniere de vivre soit de tout bon example).\textsuperscript{13} She prays for most of the persons and groups that she had addressed in \textit{Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames} (1405-6) and in \textit{Le Livre du corps de policie} (1406-7) and she prays for some different

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\textsuperscript{11} Christine de Pizan, \textit{Les sept psaumes allégorisés}, 106-16. \\
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 140-43. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 129. 
\end{flushright}
persons and groups in the body politic. For example, Christine adds prayers for all Christians 
(pour tous Xpiens) and for pilgrims in particular (pour tous pelerins).\(^\text{14}\)

In *Sept psaumes*, the political prayers set out according to status in the world are framed 
within ecclesiastical prayers set out according to status of belief. Christine begins with prayers 
for the Church, the pope, and the clergy and she ends with prayers for persons who are outside of 
the Church. First, Christine prays for the Church (*ta sainte Eglise catholique*); Pope Alexander 
(*ton pastour Alexandre*); his pontifical successors (*ceulx qui le succederont*); and all prelates, 
priests, curates, and all the clergy (*tous prelas, prestres, et gens qui ont cure d'amés, pour tout le 
clergie*).\(^\text{15}\) Later, Christine prays for all persons who are outside of the Church to receive the 
grace of conversion, baptism, and true belief.\(^\text{16}\) She prays for “tous mescreans, sarrasins, payens, 
et tous les errans.”\(^\text{17}\) Christine sets apart her prayers for Jewish persons. Her prayers for Jewish 
persons are more pointed and more troubling for modern readers. At the end, Christine prays for 
“l’avugle peuple des juifs.”\(^\text{18}\) She prays that God will illuminate the blindness of Jewish persons 
(*tenebres d’ignorance*) and bring into the Church.\(^\text{19}\) She prays for their conversion: that “their 
circumcision be converted to your baptism” (*leur circoncision soit convertie en ton baptesme*).\(^\text{20}\)

The prayers of Christine in *Sept psaumes* express her renewed optimism about the power 
of the Church in the world. In the earlier *Corps de policie*, she had referred to the prince as the 

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 146.  
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 127.  
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 151.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
“vicar of God on earth” (*viccaire de Dieu en terre*) and had charged him to be make peace within the Church. But, on June 26, 1409, the Council of Pisa had elected Pope Alexander V in an effort to end the schism which had divided the Church since 1378. In *Sept psaumes*, Christine refers to the schism as “the past ruin” (*le ruine passe*). She sets out a prayer to God for “your pastor Alexander, newly elected as your vicar” (*ton pastour Alexandre, nouvel esleu ton vicaire*). She prays for Alexander and for his papal successors, that they each receive from God the “understanding, power, force, and will” (*sens, pouoir, force, et voulenêt*) to exercise their holy office for the growth and strength of the Christian faith (*l’augmentacion et accroiscement de ta benoite foy*), the health of Christendom (*salu de Xpistianté*), and the rehabilitation from past ruin (*la reparacion de le ruine passe*).

From her first prayers for the Church and for Pope Alexander, Christine seems to have amended her notion that the function of the prince is to bring peace to the Church. In *Sept psaumes*, Christine prays for the Church to bring peace to France and to Christendom. The prayers of Christine express renewed confidence that the Church, into which Christine prays non-Catholic and non-Christian persons be received, can unite all Christian persons in peace.

In between Christine’s first prayer, for the Church, and her last prayer, for persons outside of the Church, Christine sets out prayers for persons in each status and estate in France. In *Sept psaumes*, even more than in *Trois vertus* or *Corps de policie*, Christine represents her full view of the body politic. The body politic holds together persons of different status and estate.

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22 Ead., *Les sept psaumes allégorisés*, 127.

23 Ibid. Léopold Delisle was able to assign a date to the text based on Christine’s prayer for Pope Alexander. See Léopold Delisle, “Notice sur *les Sept psaumes allégorisés* de Christine de Pisan,” 551-559.

And the common good, the function of the body politic, calls together persons competing for some private advantage. First, therefore, the body politic holds together the princes of France. Christine names particular princes in the Orléanist camp and in the Burgundian camp and prays for them together as the princes of France. In one line, Christine prays for Charles VI (le roy Charles de France), Louis II of Anjou (le roy Loys de Cecile), Charles III of Navarre who commissioned this work, Christine winks at her reader, for the benefit of his soul and her livelihood (le roy Charles de Navarre par lequel commandement ceste present oeuvre est faite (la quelle au prouffit de son ame et de moy soit)), Jean de Berry (le duc Jehan de Berry), Jean de Bourgogne (le duc Jehan de Bourgongne), and the children, brothers, and all of the descendants (leur enfans, ses freres et tous ceuls de leur linage) of each of these men.25

In two of the three extant manuscripts, the name of Louis of Orleans is absent from her prayer for the souls of the kings and princes of France who had died. This has been taken to support the notion that Christine prepared the manuscript for a patron with Burgundian sympathies. However, Tracy Adams has noted that in, one manuscript of Sept psaumes in which the name of Louis is absent, “Louis” has been written in the margin.26 The point of the text of Christine is to unite in prayer those who are acting against nature for their personal advantage in the world.

Christine prays to God, the author of all concord (acteur de toute concorde), for cooperation between the prelates, the princes, and all of the people to bring about peace and tranquility (paix et transquilité).27 In her meditation on Psalm 129, Christine prays for the

25 Ibid., 130.
27 Christine de Pizan, Les sept psaumes allégorisés, 132; 133.
knights and the clerks together. She prays for the officers of justice (tous les justiciers de France et de autre part, et qui ont office de garder justice, tous avocas et souteneurs de causes) (in Corps de policie, Christine had described knights as the agents of the justice of the prince) and for the officers of the Church (tous ceulx qui exercent office de clergie quel qu’il soit) together. She asks God to guide the knights and the clerks to cooperation for the benefit of their souls (prouffit soit de leurs Ames), the good of their princes (bien des princes), and the advancement of the common good (l’augmentacion de la chose publique).28 The prayers of Christine express her view that all persons in the body politic should cooperate to build up the common good according to their status and estates. For one, she sets out a prayer that the work of all of the merchants, on land and at sea, in the Kingdom of France and in all of Christendom, lead to the growth of their acquisition of property (l’accroiscement de leur chevance) and to the growth of the common good (la plantiveté de la chose publique).29

In Sept psaumes, Christine views the schism as having ended with the election of Alexander. But Alexander was a Franciscan and his election stoked old tensions between the regular clergy and the secular clergy and between the Franciscans and the Dominicans at the University of Paris. So, having united in prayer, first, the princes of France and, second, the knights and the clerks, Christine joins together in prayer all of the theologians (tes theologiens) at the University of Paris “from whatever faculty” (de quelque faculté que ils soient).30 Christine prays: “May all of the clerks, masters, and students at the noble and honored University of Paris, your theologians, whatever faculty they are from, and, likewise, all of the other theologians

28 Ibid., 140. See ead., The Book of the Body Politic, 63-64; ead., Le Livre du corps de policie, 62.
29 Christine de Pizan, Les sept psaumes allégorisés, 141.
30 Ibid., 130.
within Christendom, remain in your holy care. Grant them the strength to endure the labor of study, to understand knowledge well and to apply it profitably, to teach the ignorant and the common people, and to bring them to salvation.”  

Christine returns to her concern for union between all vowed religious and priests in her reflection on Psalm 142. Christine opens a passage of prayers for persons who are poor with prayers for religious and priests who are poor. Christine prays to God: “May you have pity on all poor people whatever faculty they are from [de quelque faculté qu’ils soient]: poor religious and priests, poor clerks, [and] students, may it please you to comfort [them], to aid [them], and to secure their livelihood, grant them patience, provide them with everything that is necessary for their life.”

In *Sept psaumes*, Christine underscores the reason and the prudence of women. She asks God to give the women of all estates grace for prudential and salvific action in the world. In her meditation on Psalm 129, Christine underscores the inclusion of women in the body politic. And she sets out a line of her prayer for all women with a special prayer for women who are pregnant: that their deliveries will be easy and their children will be baptized. Christine seems to suggest a relationship between the work of women who are mothers who contribute to peace in France and in Christendom by uniting their children in Christ in the sacrament of baptism and in Christian practice and the work of the Church, which, as the Mother of all Christian persons, witnesses to the Holy Spirit, the illuminator of hearts for peace, and stands for “holy peace” (*sainte paix*) in the world. Christine prays to God “for all of the devout sex of women [le devot sexe des femmes], whatever estate they are in [de quelque estat que elles soient], grant them the grace to achieve

31 Ibid., 130-31.
32 Ibid., 149-150.
their salvation, keep them from believing bad counsel. For those women who are pregnant, grant
them a good delivery, and bring their fruit to baptism. Comfort women who are afflicted, succor
women who are poor, keep widows in your holy care, and you, Holy Spirit, be their Father.”33

At the end of Sept psaumes, in the last lines of her meditation on Psalm 142, Christine
asks God to “illuminate our hearts” (enluminer nos cuers) as God “illuminated” (tu enluminas)
the apostles on the day of Pentecost.34 From there, the last line sums up the meaning of the whole
text. Christine prays for God to illuminate the hearts of the princes of France for peace. She
closes her prayer: “May your holy peace be sent from heaven to earth, into their consciences, and
between the brothers in Christ, your sons, in the union of the one Mother holy Catholic Church.
Amen.”35

Tracy Adams has argued that Christine consistently supported the Orléanist or Armagnac
faction of Charles VI and Jean de Berry. Even so, Christine composed Les sept psaumes
allégorisés for the Burgundian Charles III of Navarre.36 However, she composed her next text
for Jean de Berry, the supporter of Charles VI. Christine wrote Lamentacion sur les maux de la
guerre civile to induce Jean to make peace.

Lamentacion is a dirge for the Kingdom of France.37 Christine cries out to Jean de Berry
and to all of the people of France to remember the God-ordained function of their particular

33 Ibid., 142.
34 Ibid., 153.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 152. See Adams, Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France, 155 for the author’s argument that Christine
wrote Les sept psaumes allégorisés in order to call on the Duke of Berry to negotiate with his nephew Jean of
Burgundy.
37 See Margarete Zimmermann, “Vox Femina, Vox Politica: The Lamentacion sur les maux de la France,” in
Politics, Gender, and Genre: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan, ed. Margaret Brabant (Boulder: Westview
estates and to exercise their proper offices. Christine calls her readers to remember “the divine
to exercise their proper offices. Christine calls her readers to remember “the divine
law which orders peace” (la loy divine qui commande paix).³⁸ In Lamentacion, Christine holds
up the model of the Sabine women for the women of France.³⁹ Those women, like the women of
France in her own time, had male relatives on both sides of the conflict between the members of
their birth families and their Roman husbands. Christine calls the women of France to emulate
the Sabine women by making peace between their relatives. Christine even offers a rallying cry
to the women of France: “Have pity on our dear loved ones! Make peace! [Ayez merci de nos
chiers amis et parens! Si faites paix!]”⁴⁰

Three years after Christine had offered Le Livre du corps de policie to Louis de Guyenne,
Dauphin of France, and to all the men of France, Pope Alexander V – whose election had been a
source of such great hope for Christine – had died after only ten months, the English aggressions
had continued, and the civil war between the Orléanist and the Burgundian factions had grown
more vicious. Christine composed Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile for Jean de
Berry, the father of Marie de Berry, to whom Christine offered L’Epistre de la prison de vie
humaine et d’avoir reconfort de morts d’amis et patience en adversité (1417).

Josette A. Wisman has suggested that Christine draws on “the ubi sunt topos.”⁴¹ Indeed,
the question “Where are those who were before us?” seems to animate Lamentacion. Wisman
has noted that Christine uses the ubi sunt topos in order to claim “that the noble kingdom of

³⁸ Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 90-91.
for another description of the Sabine women.
⁴⁰ Ead., The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life, 88-89.
⁴¹ Josette A. Wisman, Introduction to The Epistle of the Prison of Human Life with An Epistle to the Queen of
France and Lament on the Evils of the Civil War, by Christine de Pizan, trans. Josette A. Wisman (New York:
Garland, 1984), xxvi.
France has lost the men and women who had made this country glorious and exemplary.”

Christine writes to rouse the people of France to return to the manners of their ancestors in order to restore peace to France. She calls on all of the people of France to reform their hearts, cour and courage, in the interest of peace. Christine calls out in turn to the princes, the knights, the women, the Queen, the clerks, and the people of France. Enacting the ubi sunt trope, Christine asks the princes: “Where is now [ou est a present] the sweet natural blood among you [le doulz sang naturel d’entre vous] which has been for a long time the true summit of kindness in the world [la benignité du monde]?”

Christine calls the princes of France to return to their function in the world from God. Each prince, qua prince, exists for peace and concord. Christine underscores the charge of the princes from God to be peacemakers. The princes are to support and sustain the church, to nurture peace, and to promote cooperation between the estates – and factions – that, together, constitute the body politic. Properly, the princes are “friends of concord.” Christine writes:

Oh, noble and blameless blood of France! How could you, your noble nature [très noble nature], allow – and may the day never come – such a shame to occur, and that those who are the pillars of faith [seullent pilliers de foy], the supporters of the church [sousteneurs de l’Eglise], by whose virtue, strength and wisdom [par quel vertu, force et savoir] it is always sustained and kept in peace [soustenue et pacifiee], and who are the most Christian [sont nommez les trés chretiens] among all nations [entre toutes nacions], developers of peace [acroisseurs de paix], friends of concord [amis de concorde], to come to such an unfortunate pass?

42 Ibid.
43 Christine de Pizan, The Epistle of the Prison of Human, 84-85.
44 Ibid., 90-91.
45 Ibid.
To knights, Christine writes that no honor can come from a battle against one’s own brother. Rhetorically, she asks the knights: “Will it [i.e., victory] be crowned with laurels? Ah me it will have to be shamefully bound with black thorns when it sees itself, not as a victor, but as the very killer of its own blood.”

To women, Christine writes: “cry, cry, beat your hands and cry . . . you ladies, damsels, and women of the kingdom of France! Because the swords that will make you widows and deprive you of your children and kin have already been sharpened!” Christine recounts for the women of France how the Sabine women took their children in their arms, placed themselves between their relatives on the battlefield, and implored the men to make peace. Christine calls out: “Oh, Ladies of the city of the Sabines, we would have needed you for this task, for the dangers and quarrels [le peril et contens jadiz] that once were between your kin were not greater.” In particular, Christine calls out to Isabeau of Bavaria: “Oh, crowned Queen of France, are you still sleeping?”

Next, Christine addresses the clerks. She calls to the clerks to join the Queen in working for peace in France. She writes:

Come, all you wise men of this realm [vous touz saiges de ce royaume], come with your queen! What use are you if not for the royal council [De quoy servez-vous, neiz conseil du roy]? Everyone should offer his hand. You used to concern yourselves even with small matters. How shall France be proud of so many wise

46 Ibid., 86-87.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 86-89.
49 Ibid., 88-89. To Isabeau of Bavaria, Christine continues: “Who prevents you from restraining now this side of your kin and putting an end to this deadly enterprise? Do you not see the heritage of your noble children at stake? You, the mother of the noble heirs of France, Revered Princess, who but you can do anything, and who will disobey your sovereignty and authority [ta seigneurie et auctorité], if you rightly want to mediate a peace?”

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men, if now they cannot see to her safety, and the fount of the clergy keep her from perishing? Where then are your plans and wise thoughts? Oh, clerics of France [clergie de France], will you let Fortune works its influence? Why do you not walk in processions and pray devoutly [faiz processions par devotes prieres]?\textsuperscript{50}

Christine addresses her lament to Jean de Berry above all. She writes in order to compel Jean make peace. She appeals to his “tender heart” (très benigne cuer) and to his “noble heart” (noble cuer).\textsuperscript{51} She tells him that he can save France. He can unite the princes of France and, in so doing, he can unite the people of France. Together, the French princes can vanquish and expel the English. Christine tells Jean that he can save noblemen from violent deaths, secure noblewomen and all women, especially the most vulnerable women, the widows and the orphans, and save all of the people of France. She writes to Jean: “if you work constantly to that purpose, you will be called the Father of this kingdom, keeper of the crown and of the very noble lily, guardian of the high lineage, protector of noble men [nobles] against death, comfort of the people [peuple], guardian of the noble ladies, widows, and orphans [nobles dames, . . . veufves et orphelins].”\textsuperscript{52}

Christine writes that the violence between the Orléanist and the Burgundian princes is killing the body politic in France.\textsuperscript{53} She describes the violent disjoining of the “natural” oneness of the princes and the persons of France for the common good. She writes: “The noble knights and youth of France, all of one nature [toute d’une nature], one single soul and body [un droit ame et corps], which used to defend [seult estre a la deffense] the crown and the public good [la

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 90-91.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 94-95.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 91.

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couronne et la chose publique], are now gathered in a shameful battle one against another, father against son, brother against brother, relatives against one another, with deadly swords, covering the pitiful fields with blood, dead bodies, and limbs."

Prescient, Christine warns that to continue the internecine violence would lead to famine, because of the wasting and ruining of things that will ensue, and the lack of cultivation [cultiver les terres], from which will spring revolts by the people who have been too often robbed, deprives and oppressed, their food taken away and stolen here and there by soldiers, subversion in the towns because of outrageous taxes which will have to be levied on the citizens and dwellers to raise the needed money, and above all, the English [les Angloiz] will obtain a checkmate on the side [par de costé qui parferont l’eschec et mat], if Fortune agrees to it; and there will also be dissensions and mortal hatreds which will be rooted in many hearts [cuers] for this reason and which will engender treason.

Christine goes on to explain that the civil war is making the men of France subhuman. These men are evacuating their reason, the image and likeness of God, that which makes a human person human, and forfeiting their human hearts and human nature in preference of that which is unnatural: the disassembling of the body politic. Christine writes: “Oh, how can it be that the human heart [cuer humain], as strange as Fortune is, can make man [homme] revert to the nature of a voracious and cruel beast [nature de trés devorable et cruele beste]? Where is reason [la raison] which gives him the name of rational animal [le non de animal raisonnable]? How can Fortune have the power to transform man [homme] so much, that he is changed into a serpent, the enemy of humankind [ennemi de nature humaine]?"

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54 Ibid., 86-87. See ibid., 94-95 where Christine calls out for the princes and people of France to “let virtue overcome vice now! Let one way be found to bring to peace men who are loved ones by nature [amis par nature], and enemies by accident [ennemis par accident].”

55 Ibid., 86-87.

56 Ibid., 84-85.
As a lament on the model of scripture, however, *Lamentacion*, both decries the current practices of the people of France and calls the people of France to change of heart. Christine summons her readers to a return to *cuer* and *courage*, to reason, and to the practice of reason in action in the world. “Oh, would that men, since it would indeed please God, had not, on either side [i.e., the Orléanist and the Burgundian], the courage [*courage*] to bear arms!”57 Christine tells her reader that she is “a poor voice crying in this kingdom, wanting peace and welfare for all.”58 She writes: “Sweet, suffering France! Are you really in such peril [*tel peril*]? Indeed, yes! But there is a remedy [*il remede*]. God is merciful [*Dieu est misericors*]. All is not dead [*pas mort*], although it is in danger of dying [*en peril*].”59 And she charges: “So let virtue overcome vice now! Let one way be found to bring to peace men who are loved ones by nature [*amis par nature*], and enemies by accident [*ennemis par accident*].”60

Christine cries for the people of France, the princes of France, and, perhaps above all, the Kingdom of France. Christine, herself a native of the Republic of Venice, views the Kingdom of France – especially as it was during the reigns of Louis IX and Charles V, the latter of whom had become king in the year that Christine was born and was on the throne when she had arrived in Paris as a child – as the standard-bearer of justice and good rule. She fears that, in continuing on in the civil war, France is abdicating its special position as the most noble and most Christian nation. She writes:

57 Ibid., 86-87.
58 Ibid., 94-95.
59 Ibid., 90-91.
60 Ibid., 94-95.
Ah, France, France, once a glorious kingdom [glorieux royaume]! Alas, what more can I say? Because bitter and endless tears flow like streams on my paper [papier], there is not a dry spot where I can pursue the writing of the very painful lament that my heavy heart [cuer], for the love of you, wishes to express. . . . For will you not be compared from now on to the foreign nations [estranges nacions], where brothers, cousins and kin kill each other like dogs [comme chiens] out of false envy and jealousy?61

Christine closes Lamentacion with a prayer to God for Jean de Berry. The line of prayer brings together many of the key ideas of Christine about persons and peace. Christine prays:

“May the Blessed Holy Spirit [le benoit Saint Esprit], Author of all peace [acteur de toute paix], give you the heart and the courage [cuer et courage] to achieve such a thing [tost le mettre a fin!]! Amen.”62 God is the author of all peace. God is just and merciful. The problems in France, the Church, and Christendom are the result of the disorder, or even the evil order, which has begun with error about what makes a human person human and has become error about reason (morals) and reason enacted in the world (manners); justice; and the good that is called public or common. Each heart must be reformed in virtue. The practice of manners, that is, the practice of reason in action is the course to peace through order.

In general, the last line of a text of Christine ends with a request to her reader to remember the author in prayer. The last line of Lamentacion, however, is another prayer to God:

“And may He grant me [et a moy], a poor voice crying in this kingdom [royaume], wanting peace and welfare for all [desireuse de paix et du bien de vous touz], your servant Christine, moved by a very fair mind [tres juste entente], the gift to see that day! Amen.”63 The brief prayer underscores Christine’s notion that the reasonable devotional practice of the text sets out its

61 Ibid., 88-90.
62 Ibid., 94-95.
63 Ibid.
author as a model of just reason acting in the interest of the common good and peace. Christine prays that she will see peace restored to France.

Christine continued to write for the moral formation of persons for peace.⁶⁴ Four years later, Christine wrote again for Louis de Guyenne. Christine composed the first part of Le Livre de paix (1414) after the signing of the Peace of Auxerre in 1412. She writes in the text that she had begun it on September 1, 1412. But she had to leave off when the peace did not hold. She writes in the text that she took up her work again in 1413, which was after the final ratification of a new peace treaty. Christine sets out Paix as a celebration of peace and of the Dauphin as peacemaker. In the second chapter of the first part, Christine praises Louis de Guyenne for exercising the virtues of royal lordship that she had described in Corps de policie. She presents her text to him asking him not to “disdain the writings of your humble servant” but, rather, to “let the liberal clemency of your noble heart [l’umaine clemence de ton noble courage] consent to receive them. And by leave of your gentle humility [ta doulce humilité], do not take it amiss if I address you plainly and in the singular.”⁶⁵ From there, in honor of Louis, Christine writes: “the great joy brimming in my heart [en mon cuer] on account of the new peace, granted through you by divine providence [par mistere divin de toy venue et nee], impels me now to write in admiration of you.”⁶⁶ In the same passage, Christine continues expressing gratitude to God and

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⁶⁶ See Christine de Pizan The Book of Peace, I.2.
to Louis: “Though all things come from God, praise is nonetheless due to you, since he has made you worthy of receiving such a great boon from him, for which let us be forever thankful. And so you, a vassal of God [vassal de Dieu] – are you not by his leave the restorer and comforter of all France [le restoreur, le repareur, le conforteur de toute France]?“67

Christine opens the second part, again, filled with joy at the new peace in France.68 Christine writes in celebration of the peace between the princes of France where, before, there was “a malign spirit jealous of the good of this kingdom, through which the whole of France has turned to ruin.”69 As Christine prays for the princes to resume their God-ordained office, she returns to her notion, set out in Corps de policie, that is impossible to consider the common good apart from royal lordship. Christine prays for the princes of France to repair the bitter destruction of this stricken kingdom for the good of the Crown and the betterment of the polity [au bien de la couronne et augmentacion de la chose publique], in such a way that people can live as they ought [on puist vivre en maniere due], regulated by well-kept justice [ordre de droit justice bien gardee]. If you do so, thereby holding the world in peace, with the goodwill [grace] of God and the world, then everyone will praise you; and proper order [droit ordre] will return in all the estates [en tous les estas], which have been diverted from their right situation through various circumstances.70

Nevertheless, in fact, Paix contains as much instruction as celebration. Christine’s words of honor for the prince sweeten her lessons for him. Even as the author herself writes that the point of Paix to express gratitude to God for peace and to the Dauphin for his peacemaking, the

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., II.2.
69 Ibid., II.1.
70 Ibid., II.1.
text reveals the real sense of Christine that peace is precarious. More than the stop-and-start composition of the text, as peace in Paris was present and then absent and then present again, the text is pedagogical. Christine opens with words celebrating peace but, from there, turns to lessons in how to practice royal lordship in the interest of peace.

Indeed, the peace in Paris was short-lived. In 1418, the Burgundians set upon and killed the Orléanists in Paris. Christine fled the violence of Paris for an “abbaye close,” le prieuré Saint-Louis de Poissy. The daughter of Christine, Marie, had been at the royal Dominican abbey at Poissy since 1397, when the girl entered religious life in company of Marie, the daughter of Charles VI.

In the last known text of Christine, her argument for women as human persons, bearers of rational souls, capable of virtue and Christian practice, entitled to moral teaching, and a vital part of the body politic find powerful support in the reason, prudence, and power of Joan of Arc. Christine composed Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc (1429) at a moment of great hope for French victory and peace. With the Maid, Charles VII had seen his victory at Orléans and coronation at Rheims. As she wrote, Christine expected the King and the Maid to reach Paris, to defeat the Anglo-Burgundian forces, and to end the years of internecine violence and war with the English. So Christine opens her Ditié: “I, Christine, who have wept for eleven years in a walled abbey [abbaye close] where I have lived ever since Charles (how strange this is!) the King’s son – dare


I say it? – fled in haste from Paris, I who have lived enclosed there on account of the treachery, now, for the first time, begin to laugh.”

Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varity, the editors and translators of Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc, have described three aspects of Christine’s joy and hope in Joan. Christine writes in gratitude to God. Christine writes to look forward to sovereignty, concord, and peace in France. And Christine writes to celebrate Joan as providential proof of the potential of women for reason, virtue – including strength, courage, and fortitude – and Christian practice. In Ditié, Christine draws on aspects of her theological notion of the human person and demonstrates their expression in Joan.

First, Christine advances her notion, set out in Le livre de la cité des dames (1405), that human fathers on earth exist in opposition to God the Father. In Ditié, Christine is silent on the subject of the procreation of Joan by her parents. Instead, she emphasizes the creation of Joan by God. Christine writes: “Blessed be He who created you [benoist soit cil qui te créa], Joan, who were born at a propitious hour! Maiden sent from God [pucelle de Dieu ordonnée], into whom the Holy Spirit poured His great grace.”

Second, in Ditié, Christine draws on the notion of the heart to express the extraordinary virtue of Joan. In Le livre de la mutacion de fortune (1403) and Le livre des trois vertus a l’enseignement des dames (1405-6), Christine had set out the notion that to take on the heart of a man means to see and to act in the interest of self-protection and self-interest when there is no one else to do it. In Ditié, Christine sets out the view, not that Joan has taken on the heart of a man, but, instead, that God has given Joan a heart that is greater than the heart of a man. The

73 Christine de Pizan, Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc, 28; 41.


75 Christine de Pizan, Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc, 32; 44.
heart of Joan enables her to see and to act in the interest of the protection and the good of France – and the Church and Christendom. There is no one else to do it.\textsuperscript{76} Christine writes: “This is God’s doing [\textit{ce fait Dieu}]: it is He who guides her and who has given her a heart greater than that of any man [\textit{en qui cuer plus que d’omme a mis}].”\textsuperscript{77} Christine returns to the notion of “the heart” at the end of \textit{Ditié}. She calls upon all of the persons of France to “submit your hearts and yourselves [\textit{vueillez vos cuerz et vous donner}]” to the King who, thanks to the Maid, “is so magnanimous [\textit{debonnaire}] that he wishes to pardon each and everyone.”\textsuperscript{78}

Christine is confident that, having secured peace in France, Joan will make peace in the Church and in Christendom. She writes: “I believe that God bestows her here below so that peace may be brought about through her deeds [\textit{afin que paix soit par son fait}].”\textsuperscript{79} She envisions that Joan “will restore harmony [\textit{concorde}] in Christendom and the Church [\textit{Christianité et l’Eglise}]. She will destroy the unbelievers [\textit{les mescreans}] people talk about, and the heretics [\textit{les herites}] and their vile ways, for this is the substance of a prophecy that has been made.”\textsuperscript{80} In the next verse, Christine continues: “She will destroy the Saracens [\textit{Sarradins}], by conquering the Holy Land [\textit{la Saintte Terre}]. She will lead Charles there, whom God preserve! . . . It is there that she is to end her days and that both of them are to win glory. It is there that the whole enterprise

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 46. Christine writes that “all these wretched people who destroyed the whole Kingdom – now recovered and made safe by a woman, something that 5000 men could not have done.”
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 33; 44-45. See ibid., 36; 47. Christine writes that “preference to all the brave men of times past, this woman must wear the crown, for her deeds show clearly enough already that God bestows more courage [\textit{plus prouesse}] upon her than upon all those men about whom people speak.”
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 39; 50.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 36; 47.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
will be brought to its completion.”\textsuperscript{81} Christine returns to her notion that Joan is for the Church and Christendom two verses later. She writes that “destroying the English race [l’Englecherie] is not her main concern for her aspirations lies more elsewhere: it is her concern to ensure the survival of the Faith [c’est que la Foy ne soit perie].”\textsuperscript{82}

Third, in \textit{Ditié}, Christine enthuses about the virtue exercised by Joan, a girl. Highlighting the reason and prudence of women, Christine writes that “all this has been brought about by the intelligence of the Maid [par la Pucelle sensible] who, God be thanked, has played her part in this matter [qui y a ouvré]!”\textsuperscript{83} Christine compares Joan to Moses. Moses had “led God’s people out of Egypt. In the same way, blessed Maid, you have led us out of evil!”\textsuperscript{84} Listing three women whom she had included in the second part of \textit{Cité des dames}, Christine writes that: “I have heard of Esther, Judith and Deborah, who were women of great worth, through whom God delivered His people from oppression, and I have heard of many other worthy women as well, champions every one, through them He performed many miracles, but He has accomplished more through the maid [ceste Pucelle].”\textsuperscript{85} In \textit{Trois vertus}, Christine had described Judith as having been given

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[81]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[82]{Ibid., 36; 48.}
\footnotetext[83]{Ibid., 30; 43.}
\footnotetext[84]{Ibid., 44.}
\footnotetext[85]{Ibid., 33; 45. See ead., \textit{The Book of the City of Ladies}, trans. Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1999), II.4, II.32; II.32; II.31, II.32 for Christine’s descriptions of the Deborah, Esther, and Judith.}
\end{footnotes}

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“the strength of a man” (force d’omme) by God. In *Ditié*, Christine writes of the strength of Joan: “never did anyone see great strength [force], even in hundreds or thousands of men!”

In her song of Joan, Christine exuberates that a girl has saved France. “Oh! What honour for the female sex [quel honneur au femenin sexe]? It is perfectly obvious that God has special regard for it [Dieu l’ayme].” In all, Christine describes Joan as putting virtue, strength, and power to work for the *salus* of France and peace. Christine delights to see these virtues bound together in the person of a young girl. She writes: “When we take your person into account [considérée ta personne], you who are a young maiden [une jeune pucelle], to whom God gives the strength and power [force et pouvoir] to be the champion who casts the rebels down and feeds France with the sweet, nourishing milk of peace [la mamelle de paix et douce norriture], here indeed is something quite extraordinary [oultre nature]!”

Christine probably died at le prieuré Saint-Louis de Poissy. The convention is to date her death to 1430 or 1431. In the last line of the *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*, she writes that she finished the poem on July 31, 1429. She does not seem to have written again after that. Guillebert de Mets used the past tense to refer to Christine in his 1434 description of Paris during the reigns of

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87 Christine de Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*, 35; 46.

88 Ibid., 34; 46.

89 Ibid., 32; 44. See ibid., 31; 43. Even in her *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*, Christine continues to set out lessons for Charles VII: “I hope that you will be good and upright, and a lover of justice and that you will surpass all others, provided your deeds are not tarnished by pride, that you will be gentle and well-disposed towards your people, that you will always love God who elected you as His servant (and you have a first manifestation of this), on condition that you do your duty.”
Charles V and Charles VI. Martin le Franc wrote of her celebrated name and her lamented death in his 1441 poem, *Le champion des dames*. Martin held up Christine in order to demonstrate that women are capable of all of the virtues of men. He described Christine as “valiant, virtuous, versed in Latin and letters, a Tully for eloquence, and a Cato for wisdom.”91 The scholarly consensus is that Christine would have written about the capture, trial, and execution of Joan if she had been alive during those events. This consensus has emerged, however, in large part because the scholars of Christine have wished Christine to have died happy. Her modern readers have wanted Christine to have witnessed the events that she took to be the vindication of God of her defense of women, to have tasted the peace that she envisioned would spread throughout France, the Church, and Christendom, and not to have lived to know of Joan’s capture, trial, and execution as a heretic.

Christine’s *Les sept psaumes allégorisés, Lamentacion sur les maux de la guerre civile, Le Livre de paix*, and *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc* each represents the particular take of the author on the Aristotelian and Augustinian notion that human personhood and peace are inseparable. To be human is to exist in the image and likeness of God: to have reason and to have heart. The Christian faith represents reason. To be reasonable is to be moral. The acquired virtue of prudence enables the human person to translate reason into action, that is, morals into manners. Christine offers the Apostle Paul as a model of prudence for Christian practice in the world.

90 Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984), 207. Willard suggests that “it is also possible that the permission granted by Henry VI’s government for her daughter-in-law to return to Paris at the end of 1431 was related to the fact that her voice was no longer able to speak out in behalf of the French king or against the English usurpers in the French capital.”

Christine describes women whose *imitatio Christi* is derived through an *imitatio Pauli* to demonstrate that women have lived up to the Pauline directive to: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” 92 Manners are morals put into effect in the world according to the particular status and power or “la possibilité” of each person. 93 Manners engender concord or political friendship and order in the body politic. These are aspects of the common good, which royal lordship secures through the exercise of both the divine virtues, *liberalité* and *justice*, and the humane virtues, *humanité*, *clemence*, and *debonnaireté*. Royal lordship moderates justice with sweetness and moderates sweetness with justice. This is Christine’s prescription for peace, set out for the bodies politic within which she counted herself: France, the Church, and Christendom. Christine writes to form persons in their *cours* and *courage*. She writes to form hearts for peace.
