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The Harbor on High

Cyprian of Carthage and Ecclesial Knowing

Cyprian of Carthage lived in a tumultuous age. A rising stateman in one of the major North African cities, Cyprian was baptized around the year 246 and elected bishop shortly thereafter, in 248, just before the outbreak of the Decian persecution.[1] The persecutions sent shock waves throughout the Christian world, and would dramatically shape Cyprian's life and writing until his martyrdom in 258.[2] Given these conditions, many scholars have emphasized Cyprian's concern for moral preparation in catechesis – an attempt to foster resilient Christians amid these harsh circumstances.[3] He

[1] For a revaluation of the dating of Cyprian's baptism, see Mattias Gassman, "Cyprian's Early Career in the Church of Carthage," *JEH* 70, no. 1 (2019): 1–17. For the view that he went directly from neophyte to bishop, see Michael Sage, *Cyprian of Carthage* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 126–27; Charles Bobertz, "Cyprian of Carthage as Patron: A Social Historical Study of the Role of Bishop in the Ancient Christian Community of North Africa" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1988), 93–119; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "The White Crown of Works: Cyprian's Early Pastoral Ministry of Almsgiving in Carthage," *Church History* 73 (2004): 715–40 (at 722n28). Pontius does, however, make one reference to Cyprian as a presbyter before his election in way that suggests he passed through the appropriate stages. Pontius, *u. Cyp.* 3.4 (CSEL 3.3:10): Multa sunt quae adhuc plebeius, multa quae iam presbyter fecerit.

[2] While Decius's edicts did not specifically target Christians – the more general aim was to restore the *pax deorum* – a popular hostility toward Christians broke out in Carthage. On the edicts, see Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CD* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 47–48; Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 177–88.

[3] Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, repr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 7–9; Andy Alexis-Baker, "*Ad Quirinum* Book Three and Cyprian's Catechumenate," *JECS* 17, no. 3 (2009): 357–80; Everett Ferguson, "Catechesis and Initiation," in *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, vol. 2:

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carefully considered the dangers catechumens faced.[4] He presented baptism as a death to the present age and a birth into the kingdom of God.[5] Martyrdom was for Cyprian, as for Tertullian, a second baptism – a baptism in blood.[6] There is thus much to affirm in this reading of Cyprian's catechesis.

But at the same time, Cyprian's catechetical writing also allows us to observe the importance of the debates about the church in shaping knowledge of God. A key theme in Cyprian's catechesis is that knowing the true God is inseparable from participation in the true church, accessed through baptism. Baptism provides Christians a new "geography" of knowledge – an enclosed garden, a peaceful harbor, a lofty mountaintop. The Christian baptized in the true church, in Cyprian's view, acquires a new memory, informed through the learning of the church's Scriptures. Only by sharing in the life of the church unified by a college of bishops who professed faith in the triune God could Christians truly know God.

In what follows, after first outlining some of the key details of the catechumenate in this period, I consider the way that Cyprian drew on philosophical and rhetorical categories for catechesis in the *Ad Donatum* and *Ad Quirinum*. Next, I turn to the debates surrounding baptism and church unity to observe the way these debates influenced his approach to catechesis, looking primarily at *De dominica oratione* and the letter to Iubaianus (*ep.* 73). In each of these texts, we find that catechesis is characterized by a focus on the church as the *sine qua non* of theological knowledge.

THE CATECHUMENATE IN CYPRIAN'S AGE

Much of what we know about the catechumenate in Cyprian's period is drawn from assumed continuities with Tertullian's references, along with a few other scattered references to initiation rites.[7] In Cyprian's writings, there seems to be a greater role afforded to pre-baptismal renunciations, a

Catechesis, Baptism, Eschatology, and Martyrdom (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 26–29.

[4] Cyprian, *ep.* 18.2.2.

[5] Cyprian, *ep.* 13.5.3.

[6] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.22.1–2; *Fort.* praef. 4.

[7] For a detailed study of the liturgical rites in Cyprian's period, see Victor Saxer, *Vie liturgique et quotidienne à Carthage vers le milieu du IIIe siècle. Le témoignage de saint Cyprien et de ses contemporains d'Afrique*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1984).

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fact mentioned by Tertullian but better attested in Cyprian.[8] Another modification – especially interesting in light of the ecclesial focus of this chapter – is the mention of the baptismal interrogation, "Do you believe in the eternal life and remission of sins through the holy church?"[9] Cyprian defends infant baptism and infant communion.[10] He does not mention, as Tertullian had, the ritual involving the reception of milk and honey, but he does provide evidence of a heretofore unknown ritual involving kissing the feet of the newly baptized.[11]

Cyprian refers to pre-baptized students as *catechumeni* or *audientes*.[12] There is perhaps a greater degree of clarity in his terminology, though the significant discrepancies in the manuscript traditions suggest that the Latinized form of the Greek term *catechumen* was still in flux, and that perhaps the Latin *audientes* was preferred.[13] It may be presumed, though somewhat speculatively, that the role of teaching was more closely concentrated in the hands of bishops or ordained teachers than lay people. We hear of adjacent teaching roles, such as readers (*lectores*), for instance, and "teachers of hearers" (*doctores audientum*).[14] It is especially instructive to hear Cyprian's explanation of the spiritual qualifications for these roles. *Lectores* were tasked with making sure teachers were trained like clergy.[15]

[8] For example, there is the added specification that the oil used in the post-baptismal anointing was sanctified on the altar in the eucharistic liturgy. Cyprian, *ep.* 69.7.1–2; 70.2.1.

[9] Cyprian, *ep.* 69.7. On Cyprian and the creed, see Liewe Westra, "Cyprian, the Mystery Religions and the Apostles' Creed: An Unexpected Link," in *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in his Life, Language and Thought*, ed. Henk Bakker, Paul van Geest, and Hans van Loon (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 115–25.

[10] Cyprian, *laps.* 25.

[11] Cyprian, *ep.* 64.4.1. See G. W. Clarke, "Cyprian's Epistle 64 and the Kissing of Feet in Baptism," *HTR* 66, no. 1 (1973): 147–52.

[12] For *catechumenus* (various spellings), see *ep.* 73.22.1 (CCSL 3C:556); *Quir.* 3.98 (CCSL 3:78); and for *audientes*, see *ep.* 18.2.2 (CCSL 3B:101–2); *ep.* 29.2 (CCSL 3B:138).

[13] According to Diercks's catalog (CCSL 3C:556), the majority of manuscripts (7) have *catecuminos*, followed by *cathecuminos* (5), *catecumenos* (2), *catechumenos* (2), *caticuminos* (2), *catechumenos* (2), *catichuminos* (1). Victor Saxer and Edwina Murphy claim that *audientes* is the preferred term. Saxer, *Les rites de l'initiation chrétienne du II au VI siècle. Esquisse historique et signification d'après leurs principaux témoins* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1988), 140; Murphy, "'As Far as My Poor Memory Suggested': Cyprian's Compilation of *Ad Quirinum*," *VC* 68, no. 5 (2014): 533–50 (at 541).

[14] Cyprian, *ep.* 29.2 (CCSL 3B:138).

[15] Cyprian, *ep.* 29.2. On *lectores*, see Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 218–24. Gamble notes, too, the puzzle of illiterate lectors: Cyprian refers to the

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And because the office of reader was a spiritual and not only pedagogical role, Cyprian emphasized that a prerequisite for a *lector* was moral virtue as much as literacy.[16] The *lector* resounded the truth of the gospel he proclaimed; his hearers not only listened to his words but also imitated his virtues.[17]

The place of catechetical instruction was probably the Sunday Eucharist, which had largely eclipsed the Agape meal as the primary meeting location.[18] We do not have any clearer indication with Cyprian of the length of time one normally remained a catechumen. While Cyprian's hasty election to the bishopric aroused suspicion – which suggests that his case was exceptional – Edwina Murphy has proposed that Cyprian was likely a catechumen for a "significant duration."[19] Her reasoning is that, because Caecilius entrusted his family estate to Cyprian, an activity prohibited for clergy, Caecilius must have died sometime before Cyprian's ordination, which means there must have been enough time for their friendship to develop and for Cyprian to decide to become a Christian before his ordination.[20]

Perhaps the biggest difference in Cyprian's age was the enhanced focus on the role of the bishop. While Tertullian prioritized the bishop's role in baptism, he permitted a hierarchical succession of those who could baptize, including lay persons.[21] He also tended to focus more on the role of the community as the locus of divine power, not primarily office holders.[22] By Cyprian's time, however, it became imperative that baptism be linked with the office of the bishop. Cyprian explains that the

appointment of Aurelius as a lector (*ep.* 38), who is elsewhere described as ignorant of letters (*ep.* 27.1). Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 250 n31.

[16] In *epistulae* 38 and 39, for example, in describing the appointment of two confessors, Celerinus and Aurelius, to the office of *lector*, Cyprian emphasizes their moral qualifications. Cyprian, *ep.* 38.2.1; *ep.* 39.4.2.

[17] Cyprian, *ep.* 39.4.2 (CCSL 3B:190): Nihil est in quo magis confessor fratribus prosit quam ut, dum euangelica lectio de ore eius auditor, lectoris fidem quisque audierit imitetur.

[18] See Cyprian, *ep.* 63, and the discussions in David Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2017), 112, and J. Patout Burns, Jr. and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 251–52.

[19] Murphy, "As Far as My Poor Memory Suggested," 545.

[20] Murphy, "As Far as My Poor Memory Suggested," 545. For Murphy, this partly justifies attributing the authorship of *Ad Quirinum* to Cyprian – a mature Christian and not a recent convert. On the prohibition, see Cyprian, *ep.* 1.2.1.

[21] Tertullian, *bapt.* 17.1–2.

[22] Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 226.

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baptismal waters must be purified by a bishop and that only bishops properly ordained are authorized to perform baptisms.[23]

After Cyprian, we will continue to see a sharpened focus on the episcopacy in catechetical initiation, coupled with a reinforcement of the invalidity of heretical baptisms. The shifting nature of church organization and the importance of locating divine power within the united and episcopally governed church cannot be underestimated.

THE CHURCH ON HIGH: PHILOSOPHICAL ASCENT IN *AD DONATUM*

Cyprian came from an elite family and received a good education.[24] Before becoming a Christian bishop, he was likely a *rhetor* or an *aduocatus*, a kind of legal administrator.[25] He was, in any case, a well-connected member of Carthaginian society through the patronage system, a fact that may have been partially responsible for his election and which continued to shape his activities as a bishop.[26] He was converted to the Christian faith, Pontius and Jerome tell us, through the friendship of a presbyter named Caecilius, whose name Cyprian would later adopt and whose family was entrusted to Cyprian after his death.[27] Again, while we do not know how long Cyprian was a catechumen, both Cyprian himself and Pontius describe his conversion in dramatic terms, entailing a life of continence and the donation of significant personal wealth for the care of the poor.[28]

Cyprian's background helps us appreciate his use of classical forms of teaching in catechesis. Two early treatises – the *Ad Donatum* and the *Ad*

[23] See esp. Cyprian, *ep.* 69.3, 7, 11; 73.2, 21.

[24] Pontius, *u. Cyp.* 2.2–3. On Cyprian's career, see J. Patout Burns Jr., *Cyprian the Bishop* (London: Routledge, 2002); Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*; Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity*, 141–60. On his early career, see G. W. Clarke, "The Secular Profession of St. Cyprian of Carthage," *Latomus* 24 (1965): 233–38.

[25] See the references to Cyprian's career in Jerome, *uir.* 67; Lactantius, *diu. inst.* 5.1.24; and Augustine, *s.* 312.2.

[26] For the importance of his ties to the patronage system, see Bobertz, "Cyprian of Carthage as Patron." Since Bobertz's dissertation, a number of studies have explored the implications of the patron–client relationship: Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Society*, 3–4, 69–74; Carole E. Straw, "Cyprian and Mt 5:45: The Evolution of Christian Patronage," *SP* 18, no. 3 (1990): 329–39; Dunn, "White Crown of Good Works"; Hugh Montgomery, "The Bishop Who Fled: Responsibility and Honour in Saint Cyprian," *SP* 21 (1989): 264–67.

[27] Pontius, *u. Cyp.* 4; Jerome, *uir.* 67.

[28] Cyprian, *Don.* 1–2; Pontius, *u. Cyp.* 2.5. See Stuart R. Thompson, "Philosophical and Christian Conversions in the Second Century," *SP* 93 (2017): 125–26.

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Quirinum – provide especially good examples. *Ad Donatum* is usually considered one of Cyprian's first treatises, written sometime between his conversion and election as bishop.[29] In this work, Cyprian presents a highly stylized account of his own conversion, followed by a spiritual exercise of "cosmic ascent" that shows how baptism secures knowledge of God and a sense of the instability and turbulence of the world. The treatise is notoriously absent of any direct scriptural references, but concludes with an exhortation to read and study Scripture.[30] As Mattias Gassman has recently argued, this suggested reading schedule may have been something like the *Ad Quirinum*,[31] and thus perhaps these two works, though rather different from one another in genre and form, may have been companion works intended to provide catechumens or neophytes with a basic grasp of the faith – what Cyprian refers to in both texts as an "understanding of the heart."[32] The *Ad Donatum*, in this reconstruction, might have served as a kind of protreptic to Christianity, while the *Ad Quirinum* provided a scriptural reading plan for forming "the first lineaments of the faith."[33] As with other pre-Nicene literature, we must exercise due caution in designating these as strictly catechetical works. What we have are published works that present Cyprian's attempt to guide new Christians into the faith, not simply a straightforward view of Cyprian's actual catechetical practice. Nonetheless, by surveying these two works, we gain a clearer sense of how Cyprian understood the relation of faith and learning in the early stages of the Christian life.

Donatus may have been a new convert or perhaps even a catechumen, though in any case one for whom Cyprian figures as a spiritual guide.[34]

[29] Gassman, "Cyprian's Early Career," 4–9. Gassman has argued against reading it as the ebullient work of a neophyte and instead the work of a mature Christian on the brink of election to the bishopric. Revaluating the traditional placement of *Ad Donatum*, Gassman also shows that the date of 245/6 for Cyprian's conversion stems from an uncritical acceptance of seventeenth-century scholarship. Gassman, "Cyprian's Early Career," 9.

[30] Cyprian, *Don.* 15.

[31] Gassman, "Cyprian's Early Career," 11–14.

[32] A similar phrase found in both works: Cyprian, *Quir.* 1.praef. (CCSL 3:3): intellectus cordis; *Don.* 1 (CCSL 3A:3): conscientia pectoris.

[33] Cyprian, *Quir.* 1.praef. (CCSL 3:3).

[34] The treatise could be read fruitfully as a protreptic to a catechumen, exhorting him to baptism, or as a treatise for the newly converted. The reference in *Ad Don.* 15 to Donatus being "already designated for the spiritual camp" does not necessarily mean baptism has already taken place; it could mean something more like election. Cyprian uses this same phrase for catechumens in *ep.* 73.22. For the best recent treatment of the genre of this work, see Mattias Gassman, "Directing the Eye of the Soul: Form and Function in an Ancient Scenic Monologue (Cyprian, *Ad Donatum*)," *JECS* 29, no. 3 (2021): 371–96.

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Cyprian describes Donatus as a devoted hearer, a *totus auditor*, who fixes his attention and affections wholly on his master.[35] The body of this work follows certain patterns of both philosophical conversion narratives as well as dialogical works, in which the author's narration serves not only to describe his conversion but also to provide justification for authentic membership and to give an exemplary model for others to follow.[36] More than simply depicting Cyprian's psychological state, this text illuminates what a bishop wanted to convey to new Christians about the transformation they should expect to receive in Christian initiation.

Cyprian's conversion features not only metaphors of freedom from sin, which one would expect amid North African concerns for ritual purity, but also philosophical illumination and cosmic reorientation. The imagined setting between Cyprian and Donatus is a secluded garden, during the cessation of harvest and away from the clamor of civic life.[37] The garden is a particularly apt image, evoking both philosophical settings as well as Christian baptism.[38] In Cyprian's telling, baptism provides the illumination that establishes the cognitive conditions for evaluating the truth of Christianity. After the "second birth" of baptism, what once seemed difficult and dubious becomes abundantly clearer.[39] Cyprian's discussion also trades on Stoic debates about the "end of the age" and the return to a golden period of history.[40] "How," Cyprian asks, "is such a conversion possible when the innate that has grown hard in the corruption of natural material – or when that which has been

[35] Cyprian, *Don.* 1 (CCSL 3A:3): in me oculos tuos fixus es, qua ore, qua mente totus auditor es et hoc amore quo diligis.

[36] Jakob Engberg, "Education and (Self-)Affirmation of (Recent or Potential) Converts: The Case of Cyprian and the *Ad Donatum*," *ZAC* 16, no. 1 (2012): 129–44 (at 136). Marion Szarmach has characterized this work as a protreptic address. Marion Szarmach, "'Ad Donatum' des heiligen Cyprian als rhetorischer Protreptikhas," *Eos* 77 (1989): 289–97. For the epistolary rhetorical forms in the background of this text, see Jean-Claude Fredouille, "L'humanité vue d'en haut (Cyprien, *Ad Donatum*, 6–13)," *VC* 64, no. 5 (2010): 445–55.

[37] Cyprian, *Don.* 1. While scenic dialogues were more common, Cyprian's depiction of this scenic conversation as a monologue is unprecedented. On the reasons for this form, see Gassman, "Directing the Eye of the Soul," 371–96.

[38] Cyprian elsewhere, along with others in the North African tradition, understood baptism with reference to the "closed garden and sealed fountain" of Song of Songs 4:12. See Cyprian, *ep.* 73.10.3; *Passio Perp.* 11.7, 13.4. Later baptistries in North Africa were also decorated with garden imagery, on which see Burns and Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 111–12; David Wilhite, "True Church or True Basilica? Parmenian's Ecclesiology Revisited," *JECS* 22, no. 3 (2014): 399–436 (at 424).

[39] Cyprian, *Don.* 4.

[40] On the Stoic views at work here, see Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 76–115.

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acquired has become inveterate by the affliction of old age – should so suddenly and swiftly be put aside?"[41] Christian conversion appears in a decidedly philosophical register. It considers conversion as an epistemological transformation that entails a radical revaluation of the entire world.

Following this account of his conversion, Cyprian leads Donatus on an imagined itinerary up the "loftiest peak of a high mountain," from which point he can show his hearer the various delusions of the present age.[42] This literary strategy was common in philosophical discourse as a kind of spiritual exercise that allowed the learner to contemplate his present life from the point of view of death.[43] Separated from the body at death, the soul could contemplate life from an eternal perspective, thus beginning the philosophical life.[44] The goal of cosmic ascent as a spiritual exercise was to rid oneself of desires and passions by viewing worldly matters from the perspective of either the divine being (in the case of Platonic approaches) or universal reason (in the case of the Stoics). As Cyprian describes it, when the baptized person has experienced the illumination of conversion, he or she can see the world for what it truly is – a blood-soaked world of war and horror.[45]

Donatus is asked at several points to direct his vision to several particular sites: to the city with its gladiatorial games and theaters, to private dwelling places hiding illicit deeds, to the public forum and its promulgation of corrupt laws, to the false virtues of those the world considers wealthy and wise.[46] And yet, rather than cultivating a disgust

[41] Cyprian, *Don.* 3 (CCSL 3A:4; FC 36:8–9, alt.): qui possibilis, aiebam, tanta conuersio, ut repente ac perniciter exuatur, quod uel genuinum situ materiae naturalis obduruit uel usurpatum diu senior uetustatis inoleuit?

[42] Cyprian, *Don.* 6 (CCSL 3A:6; FC 36:12): Paulisper te crede subduci in montis ardui uerticem celsiorem, speculare inde rerum infra te iacentium facies et oculis in diuersa porrectis ipse a terrenis contactibus liber fluctuantis mundi turbines intuere.

[43] Fredouille, "L'humanité vue d'en haut," 446: "Dans la tradition à laquelle se rattachent ces pages de Cyprien, l'ascension des sommets est, selon les cas, un exercice de l'imagination, une ἄναδος eschatologique, un envol de la pensée: 'observatoire' (σκοπία, *specula*) d'où le regard plonge sur les réalités terrestres est d'ordre métaphorique – spirituel ou intellectuel." On this strategy more generally, see Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase, ed. Arnold Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 238–50 ("The View from Above").

[44] Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 240.

[45] Cyprian, *Don.* 6 (CCSL 3A:6; FC 36:12): Cerne tu itinera latronibus clausa, maria obsessa praedonibus, cruento horror castrorum bella ubique diuisa. Madet orbis mutuo sanguine.

[46] See Cyprian, *Don.* 6–12.

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of the world, Cyprian promotes this spiritual ascent to cultivate an attitude of both pity (for the world) and gratitude (toward God).[47] Cyprian's itinerary could be thus seen as providing the novice a "narrative script" by which to view the world according to a certain emotional register.[48] Having surveyed the various evils in the world, Cyprian at last reveals the church as a peaceful harbor amid a storm-tossed world.[49] Having raised his perspective from earth to heaven, Donatus will be less likely to see material gain or worldly ambition in the terms he once did. His soul is restored to a former glory: "When the soul, gazing upon heaven, recognizes its Author, higher than the sun and more sublime than all this earthly power, it begins to be that which it believes itself to be."[50]

In the *Ad Donatum*, Cyprian presents conversion to Christianity as a transformation of knowledge that occurs through baptism. This conception of baptism imagines the church as a walled garden, a peaceful harbor, a lofty mountain. This vantage point, in turn, provides the possibility of true knowledge of God and the world. Removed from the tumult of civic life, the Christian finds, through baptism in the one true church, the tranquil harbor of salvation. Upon the lofty peak, the Christian sees the world in all its bloodstained horror and the church as the one true source of stability.

THE MEMORY OF THE CHURCH: *AD QUIRINUM* AND THE FIRST LINEAMENTS OF THE FAITH

Having provided this invitation to the Christian life, Cyprian can then offer a guided scriptural reading program. The *Ad Quirinum* is usually classified as a *testimonia*,[51] a collection of scriptural texts organized by

[47] Cyprian, *Don.* 6 (CCSL 3A:6; FC 36:12): iam saeculi et ipse misereberis tuique admonitus et plus in deum gratus maiore laetitia quod euaseris gratularis.

[48] On the use of such "narrative scripts" in early Christian discourse on compassion, see Paul Blowers, "Pity, Empathy, and the Tragic Spectacle of Human Suffering: Exploring the Emotional Culture of Compassion in Late Ancient Christianity," *JECS* 18, no. 1 (2010): 1–27.

[49] Cyprian, *Don.* 14 (CCSL 3A:11; FC 36:19): Vna igitur placida et fida tranquillitas, una solida et firma securitas, si qui ab his inquietantis saeculi turbinibus extractus salutaris portus statione fundetur.

[50] Cyprian, *Don.* 14 (CCSL 3A:20; FC 36:20): Postquam auctorem suum caelum intuens anima cognouit, sole altior et hac omni terrena potestate sublimior id esse incipit, quod esse se credit.

[51] On *testimonia* collections, see Martin C. Albl, *"And Scripture Cannot Be Broken": The Form and Function of "Testimonia" Collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); C. H. Turner,

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certain headings. It has also been the subject of several studies of Cyprian's catechesis.[52] And while Cyprian's authorship of this text has been questioned, several scholars have discerned a more original aspect, especially in Book 3,[53] which touches on many issues relevant to Cyprian's career.[54] In its final form, it contains three books: Book 1 has twenty-four headings on Christianity's replacement of the Jews. Book 2 has thirty headings on the person and work of Christ, organized in a roughly credal fashion. Book 3, which has a separate prologue, and so may have been produced separately from the first two books, has 120 topics, mostly pertaining to moral and ethical issues. Like *Ad Donatum*, *Ad Quirinum* indicates Cyprian's deployment of pedagogical strategies from classical philosophy and rhetoric – especially his reliance on the education of memory. For Cyprian, catechesis entails the organization of a scriptural memory – learning to perceive Scripture not as the teachings of an individual but as the collective memory of the church.

Cyprian appears well-versed in classical mnemonic pedagogy. In the Prologue to *Ad Quirinum* 1, Cyprian explains why he has compiled this

"Prolegomena to the *Testimonia* of St. Cyprian," *JTS* 6, no. 22 (1905): 246–70; Turner, "Prolegomena to the *Testimonia* of St. Cyprian, II," *JTS* 9, no. 33 (1907): 62–87.

[52] Jean Daniélou includes *Ad Quirinum* in his study of catechesis as an example of an early Christian twofold catechetical pattern: a first section that is primarily dogmatic (Books 1 and 2) and a second section that is primarily moral (Book 3). See Daniélou, with Regine du Charlat, *La catéchèse aux premiers siècles: Ecole de la Foi* (Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1968), 28–29. Everett Ferguson modified Daniélou's argument with the hypothesis of a tripartite catechesis – historical (Book 1), christological (Book 2), and moral (Book 3). For Ferguson, Books 1 and 2 represent a more traditional form of catechesis, comparable with Irenaeus's *Demonstratio*. See Ferguson, "Catechesis and Initiation," 27. This is why, for Ferguson, Book 3 may represent a more original and so distinctively Cyprianic contribution, conditioned by the Decian persecution. Andy Alexis-Baker, too, has highlighted the moral dimensions of Cyprians' catechesis, especially in *Ad Quirinum* 3. Rather than consisting of a random ordering of topics, Alexis-Baker highlights the core ethical themes central to Cyprian's catechesis: especially faithfulness in persecution, economic sharing, nonviolence, and eschatology. Alexis-Baker, "*Ad Quirinum* Book Three," 357–80.

[53] Ferguson, "Catechesis and Initiation," 27. For the argument against Cyprian's authorship, see Charles Bobertz, "An Analysis of *Vita Cypriani* 3, 6–10 and the Attribution of *Ad Quirinum* to Cyprian of Carthage," *VC* 46 (1992): 112–28; Edwina Murphy challenges Bobertz' view by attending to the textual variants in the text, the role of tradition and memory, the formation of this text in the catechumenate, and the fact of why Pontius would have left out this text from his list of Cyprian's works. Murphy, "As Far as My Poor Memory Suggested," 533–50. On this issue, see also Rolf Noormann, *Ad salutem consulere: die Paränese Cyprians im Kontext antiken und frühchristlichen Denkens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 41–44.

[54] Although cf. Gassman's comment that Book 3's emphasis on morality is not particularly unique to Cyprian. Gassman, "Cyprian's Early Career," 10.

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collection of Scriptures. He has "gathered" (*colligere*) the scriptures into an "abridged compendium" (*libellus conpendio*), he writes, so that what appears in the Scriptures as diffuse will not overwhelm or disorient the reader with its abundance of information.[55] He gathers only what is necessary so that he might provide an outline for others to expound these passages more thoroughly. He extols the benefits of *breuitas* precisely in relation to memory and understanding: "Brevity ... is of very great advantage, in that a treatise of too great length dissipates the understanding and perception (*intellectum* and *sensum*) of the reader, while a tenacious memory (*tenax memoria*) guards that which is read in a more precise compendium."[56] In the Preface to Book 3, similarly, he claims to have provided a succinct and careful selection of the divine readings so that the mind surrendered to God will not be fatigued with the voluminous books of Scripture.[57]

While Cyprian drew on the mnemonic pedagogy of classical rhetoric, he deploys it for specifically catechetical purposes. In particular, he appropriates mnemonic pedagogy to understand the Christian Scriptures as the memory of the church. For Cyprian, memory practices were organized not around the teachings of a particular teacher but for guiding catechumens to hear Scripture as the common teaching of the community of the faithful. The questions surrounding the authenticity of this text are thus perhaps not incidental, as Cyprian may have shied away from asserting his own authority as a teacher, claiming instead only "as far as his poor memory allows" to present this collection of Scripture as the church's memory. Even if this is a conceit, Cyprian uses this rhetoric to shift attention to Scripture as the church's common inheritance.

In putting Scripture in the *testimonia* format, Cyprian offers teachers of catechumens an organized compendium of Scripture to aid memory and scriptural recitation. Yet he does so in a way that dissociates himself with the image of a charismatic or inspired teacher. While the bishop is a teacher for Cyprian, he does not claim to teach a unique doctrine but only what has been passed down from the apostles. For Cyprian, this introduction to Scripture and its memorization forms the "first lineaments of

[55] Cyprian, *Quir.* 1.praef (CCSL 3:3).
[56] Cyprian, *Quir.* 1.praef (CCSL 3:3).
[57] Cyprian, *Quir.* 3.praef (CCSL 3:73): Lectionis diuinae succinctam diligentiam quaerens, ut animus deo deditus non longis aut multis librorum uoluminibus fatigetur, sed eruditus breuiario praeceptorum caelestium habeat ad fouendam memoriam suam salubre et grande compendium... . dum in breuiarium pauca digesta et uelociter perleguntur et frequenter iterantur.

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the faith."[58] By attending to a select group of passages culled from the numerous volumes of Scripture, the new Christian's own memory would be embedded within the memory of the church.

CATECHESIS IN THE REBAPTISM CONTROVERSIES: *DE DOMINICA ORATIONE*

Thus far, we have observed the shape of catechesis in Cyprian's early career, before and perhaps during the initial outbreak of the Decian persecution of 249–250. The debates that followed over the next decade would, however, put even more strain on the question of the catechumen's status in the church, the role of doctrinal knowledge learned in creeds, affiliation with venerated martyrs, and the necessity of belonging to the bishop-led church. These debates have been discussed in copious detail elsewhere, so I will only highlight aspects germane to catechesis.[59] Mainly, I want to focus on the way in which an occupation with ecclesial boundaries and the importance of the church as the locus of salvation impacted the approach to knowledge in catechesis.

Cyprian's *De dominica oratione*, a catechetical exposition on the Lord's Prayer written around 252, serves as a key touchpoint. Like Tertullian's work on prayer, Cyprian does not explicitly refer to catechumens as the primary audience. However, scholars have discerned the likelihood of a catechetical context for this text through Cyprian's simple style of exegesis and the way that Cyprian connects the Lord's Prayer with baptism.[60] In this work, Cyprian's interpretation of the Lord's Prayer provides an important glimpse of how he envisioned the role of the church as the central locus of knowing God. Two points are especially worthy of note. First, Cyprian's discussion of the manner of speech and bodily posture in Christian prayer highlights both martyrological and

[58] Cyprian, *Quir.* 1.praef (CCSL 3:3): ad prima fidei liniamenta formanda.

[59] See specially Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*; Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, 250–89.

[60] In *De dominica oratione* 9 and 10, for example, he comments that the person reborn in baptism may now call God "Father" because he has now been made a son and that the "Our Father" can only be said by those who "have begun to be children of God, sanctified through him and restored by a spiritual grace." Cyprian, *dom. or.* 9, 10 (CCSL 3A:94–95; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 70–71). At the end of the text, he again links prayer with the activity of those who have been "spiritually remade and reborn." Cyprian, *dom. or.* 36 (CCSL 3A:113; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 92). The close connection between prayer and baptism thus gives good reason to consider this work as an address to catechumens.

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educational aspects, mostly having to do with the control of voice and body. Second, Cyprian's stress on the unity of the church plays an important role in instructing catechumens about the conditions necessary for attaining true knowledge of God.

One of the most striking aspects of the *De dominica oratione* is the stress Cyprian places on the virtues of restraint and moderation. After beginning his treatise by highlighting the significance of Christ as the revealer of the divine words of the Lord's Prayer, he instructs catechumens about the importance of moderating their voices and bodily movements.

> Let the words and the pleas of those who pray be made with discipline, restrained by quiet and reserve. Let us call to mind that we are standing before the face of God. Both the posture of our body and the modulation of our voice should be pleasing to divine eyes. For whereas the shameless groan and cry out, by contrast it is fitting that the reverent man should pray reserved prayers.[61]

Prayer should be undertaken with peacefulness (*quietum*) and decency (*pudorum*). Imagining prayer as an activity conducted before the very face of God, Cyprian counsels hearers to keep their bodily posture and tone modest (*uerecundus*) – unlike the shameless (*impudentis*) who cry out and groan (*clamoribus strepere*). When Christians gather to make the divine sacrifices, they should observe reverence and order (*uerecundiae et disciplinae*).[62] Cyprian grounds this emphasis on bodily and vocal control, like Tertullian, in a theological vision of God's omnipresence to creation and the related conviction that God listens not to what comes from the physical voice but from the heart of faith. Because God is near at hand to all creatures (Jer. 23:23; Prov. 15:3), one need not shout or wail to gain the Lord's attention. Instead, like the Old Testament figure of Anna, who serves for Cyprian as a type of the church, the Christian should maintain a discipline of modesty, pleading with God quietly within the heart.[63] Cyprian follows this teaching with a litany of Scriptures that highlight the heart as the locus of faithful prayer (1 Kg. 1:13; Ps. 4:5; Bar. 6:6). He reiterates this stress again later in the work when discussing the will of God being done on earth as in heaven: God's will includes, among other

[61] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 4 (CCSL 3A:91; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 67).
[62] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 4 (CCSL 3A:91; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 67).
[63] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 5 (CCSL 3A:92; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 68).

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virtues, "humility in conduct," "truth in speech," "restraint in self-discipline," "holding peace with the brothers," and, when tested, "being a confessor by constancy in what we say, being defiant by fidelity under interrogation, and receiving the crown by patience under sentence of death."[64]

In the emphasis on modesty and discipline, Cyprian's discussion of prayer echos two imagined worlds: the rhetorical school and the martyr's arena. On the one hand, Cyprian's concern for bodily and vocal composure recalls the rhetorical training of the liberal arts, where movement and voice modulation were basic components of good speech-making.[65] For Cyprian, the one who makes his oration to God should likewise conduct his body and voice with dignity and grace. On the other hand, Cyprian's description of the virtuous Christian at prayer also recalls descriptions of the martyrs. Cyprian uses similar language to describe the ordination of a young confessor named Aurelius (*ep.* 27.2; *ep.* 38.1). Cyprian extols Aurelius, who suffered torture and exile, for the modesty of his character (*uerecundiam morum*) as much as the glory of his wounds.[66] Likewise, in a letter to Rogatianus and other confessors (*ep.* 13), Cyprian exhorts his hearers to persevere in faithfulness by maintaining the "quietness, humility, and tranquility of good morals," which are fitting for all Christians. Citing Isaiah 66:2 – "the voice of God looks favorably upon no other than the humble man and the calm man and the man respecting His word"[67] – Cyprian reminds the confessors that their lives serve as an example to the rest of the church.[68]

[64] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 15 (CCSL 3A:99; Stewart, 75–76): Humilitas in conuersatione, stabilitas in fide, uerecundia in uerbis, in factis iustitia, in operibus misericordia, in moribus disciplina, iniuriam facere non nosse et factam posse tolerare, cum fratribus pacem tenere, deum toto corde diligere, amare in illo quod pater est, timere quod deus est, christo nihil omnino praeponere quia nec nobis quicquam ille praeposuit, caritati eius inseparabiliter adhaerere, cruci eius fortiter ac fidenter adsistere, quando de eius nomine et honore certamen est, exhibere in sermone constantiam qua confitemur, in quaestione fiduciam qua congredimur, in morte patientiam qua coronamur: hoc est coheredem christi uelle esse, hoc est praeceptum dei facere, hoc est uoluntatem patris implere.

[65] On the link between rhetorical self-control as a condition for authority, see Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion: Toward a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 48–58; William Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[66] Cyprian, *ep.* 38.1.3 (CCSL 3B:184; FC 51:98).

[67] Cyprian will include this passage twice in *Ad Quirinum*: see *Quir.* 3.5, 3.20.

[68] Cyprian, *ep.* 13.3 (CCSL 3B:74; FC 51:37): Perseuerandum nobis est in arto et in angusto itinere laudis et gloriae, et cum quies et humilitas et bonorum morum tranquillitas Christianis omnibus congruat secundum dei uocem qui neminem alium respicit nisi humilem et quietum et trementem sermones suos, tunc magis hoc obseruare et implere

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By training catechumens to imagine prayer in both rhetorical and martyrial language, Cyprian shows the distinct but overlapping contexts – classical and Christian – informing catechesis. In Cyprian's use of the idioms of self-control and decorum, he invites catechumens to understand themselves as martyr–rhetors. The corresponding virtues of both are available to every Christian who learns the Lord's Prayer.

A second feature of ecclesial knowledge in Cyprian's exposition of the Lord's Prayer is the emphasis on church unity. Cyprian discusses the unanimity of the church especially in his discussion of the phrase "Our Father" in *De dominica oratione* 8. Cyprian's text of the Lord's Prayer is different from Tertullian's, which simply reads "Father in heaven," without the first-person plural pronoun.[69] This cues Cyprian to notice several other ways in which the Lord's Prayer induces a public rather than private Christian identity. The Lord's Prayer, Cyprian notices, does not say "my father" or "my bread" but "ours."[70] He concludes: "Our prayer is common and collective, and when we pray we pray not for one but for all people, because we are all one people together."[71] Cyprian goes on to ground the common prayer of the church in the character of God. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer of concord because it is taught by Christ, "the teacher of peace and master of unity," and is rooted in the very being and action of God: "The God of peace and master of concord, who taught that we should be united, wanted one to pray in this manner for all, as he himself bore all in one."[72] Cyprian finally refers to scriptural examples of unanimity – texts that appear in his *De unitate* as well.[73] The three young men in the fiery furnace from the Book of Daniel exemplify unanimous prayer, as does the harmonious prayer of the apostles (Acts 1:14).[74] The

confessores oportet, qui exemplum facti estis ceteris fratribus, ad quorum mores omnium uita et actus debeat prouocari.

[69] Tertullian, *or.* 2.1.

[70] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 8 (CCSL 3A:93; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 69): Non dicimus: pater meus, qui es in caelis nec: panem meum da mihi hodie, nec dimitti sibi tantum unusquisque debitum postulat aut ut in temptationem non inducatur atque a malo liberetur pro se solo rogat.

[71] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 8 (CCSL 3A:93; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 69): Publica est nobis et communis oratio, et quando oramus, non pro uno sed pro populo toto rogamus, quia totus populus unum sumus.

[72] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 8 (CCSL 3A:93; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 69): Deus pacis et concordiae magister qui docuit unitatem, sic orare unum pro omnibus uoluit, quomodo in uno omnes ipse portauit.

[73] Noted by Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 70n5.

[74] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 8. He returns to this narrative later to demonstrate their rule of thrice daily prayer as a trinitarian figure in *dom. or.* 34. On the popularity of the three young

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apostles' prayer was pleasing to God because it showed that God, "who causes persons to dwell in a house with one mind (Ps. 67:7), does not admit anyone to the divine mind and eternal home apart from those whose prayer is of one mind."[75]

Cyprian's emphases on ecclesial unity and rhetorical–martyrological moderation demonstrate one way in which the ecclesial debates of the 250s shaped Cyprian's approach to catechesis. As a work likely intended for new Christians, *De dominica oratione* shows Cyprian teaching catechumens the pathway to divine knowledge through participation in the unified church. Catechumens were taught the virtues and dispositions that taught the catechumen to be a kind of holy rhetorician, one who learned the eloquence of divine oration not for public office but for addressing God in the *ecclesia*. Cyprian's instruction on prayer invited catechumens to reflect on the meaning of the church as the central locus for knowing God.

FAITH, BAPTISM, AND THE CATECHUMEN AS MARTYR: CYPRIAN'S LETTER TO IUBAIANUS (*EP.* 73)

The differing responses to the lapsed in the wake of the Decian persecution led to further controversy in Cyprian's lifetime. Though Cyprian at first found an ally in the anti-Novatian bishop, Cornelius of Rome (d. 253), one of Cornelius's successors, Stephen, dissented from the African council's decision in the year 256 that agreed upon the necessity of rebaptizing heretics.[76] While these debates touched upon many ecclesiological issues, one question that arose was how baptism was related to the confession of faith.[77] In response to Stephen, Cyprian was compelled

men in the fiery furnace in early Christian art and the potential baptismal connections, see Robin Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), 79–84.

[75] Cyprian, *dom. or.* 8 (CCSL 3A:94; Stewart, *Tertullian, Cyprian, and Origen on the Lord's Prayer*, 70, alt.): Perseuerabant in oratione unanimes orationis suae et instantiam simul et concordiam declarantes, quia deus qui inhabitare facit unanimes in domo non admittit in diuinam et aeternam domum nisi apud quos est unanimis oratio.

[76] See Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Validity of Baptism and Ordination in the African Response to the 'Rebaptism' Crisis: Cyprian of Carthage's Synod of Spring 256," *Theological Studies* 67, no. 2 (2006): 257–74. For a fuller treatment, see Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*.

[77] Liuwe Westra discusses Cyprian as the first Latin author to use the term *symbolum* (*ep.* 68.7.1–2) in a specifically Christian sense, understood not simply as the baptismal ceremony but as the baptismal declaration or questions that catechumens need to answer in the affirmative. Cyprian thus may be, Westra proposes, the oldest witness for the Apostles' Creed. See Westra, "Cyprian, the Mystery Religions and the Apostles' Creed," 121.

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to address how the confession of credal faith, not simply association with the martyrs, connected a person to the true church.

This issue appears at its sharpest in Cyprian's letter to Iubaianus (= *ep.* 73), dispatched soon after the 256 council.[78] Iubaianus had challenged the African position requiring rebaptism, because it appeared no different from Novatian's position. In response, Cyprian elaborated in greater detail how baptism was linked with credal confession, which allowed him both to affirm rebaptism but in a way that distanced himself from the Novatianists. While Novatian apparently affirmed the same credal confession, Cyprian argued, their rejection of church unity equated to a rejection of the Holy Spirit and thus a rejection of triune unity. Cyprian shows the Novatianist error by linking it with the rejection of Marcionite baptism on similar trinitarian grounds. If Marcionite baptism was invalid because Marcion separated Father and Son, Novatianist baptism could be rejected because their rejection of church unity entailed a rejection of the Holy Spirit and thus a rejection of triune unity. The Novatianists, according to Cyprian, did not in fact hold the same confession of faith, since the Holy Spirit as the source of ecclesial unity cannot be separated from Father and Son.[79] Cyprian implies that by severing church unity, the Novatianists in fact do not hold to the same credal faith.

To link credal faith and baptismal unity, Cyprian develops a deductive logic that begins with baptism and ends in trinitarian confession. Baptism, he writes, "inaugurates the origin of all faith"; it is the "gateway of salvation in the hope of eternal life and the divine honor of being purified and vivified servants of God."[80] Thus, if one is baptized, it must entail the forgiveness of sins; if one is forgiven, then sanctified; if sanctified, then a temple of God.[81] But, asks Cyprian, "of what God" (*cuius Dei*) are they a temple? Just as one cannot be a temple of God if one denies God as creator, and one cannot be a temple of Christ if one denies Christ's divinity, so also a Novatianist cannot be a temple of the Holy Spirit

[78] On the context of this letter, see Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, 110–12.

[79] As Adam Ployd notes, Cyprian here seeks a logic that undercuts the difference between heretic and schismatic, rendering Novatianists as those who have ruptured triune unity. Adam Ployd, "*Tres Unum Sunt*: The Johannine Comma in Cyprian," *SP* 65 (2013): 451–57. For a broader treatment of the ambiguities of heresy and schism in late antiquity, see Maureen A. Tilley, "When Schism Becomes Heresy in Late Antiquity: Developing Doctrinal Deviance in the Wounded Body of Christ," *JECS* 15, no. 1 (2007): 1–21.

[80] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.12.1 (CCSL 3C:342, alt.): cum inde incipiat omnis fidei origo et ad spem uitae aeternae salutaris ingressio et purificandis ac uiuificandis dei seruis diuina dignatio.

[81] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.12.2 (CCSL 3C:542–43): Nam si baptizari quis apud haereticos potuit, utique et remissam peccatorum consequi potuit. Si peccatorum remissam consecutus est, sanctificatus est: si sanctificatus est, templum dei factus est.

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because the Holy Spirt cannot sanctify and vivify someone inimical to the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit.[82] Cyprian cites a variant reading of 1 John 5:8 ("these three are one") in this context, as he does also in *De unitate* 6, to substantiate the link between ecclesial and divine unity.[83] In short, Cyprian deduces that for the epistemological effects of faith in baptism to be effective, one must hold to the integral trinitarian faith that begins in baptism and includes belief in the church as the sole source of knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit cannot work in sanctifying baptism apart from faith in the Father and Son.

In these efforts, Cyprian connects dogmatic claims about the triune God with the knowledge of God granted in baptism. This argument, we can suggest, reveals an increasing focus on the link between the confession of faith and baptism, and thus of the need for connecting instruction in the creed with baptismal catechesis. Church unity is now more closely related to the knowledge of God granted in baptism. If one unwittingly attacks the Trinity by severing church unity, one becomes severed from the Spirit's illumination. If one ruptures church unity, this cannot but be an attack on the triune God.

The connection between credal faith and baptism is pressed through a different argument later in the letter where Cyprian refers to the martyred catechumen as obtaining a "baptism in blood." Iubaianus had asked why heretics who died before rebaptism failed to obtain heavenly rewards while martyred catechumens do. This posed another potential inconsistency in Cyprian's position. Here is Cyprian's response:

> Let men of this kind – partisans and promoters of heretics – know first that those catechumens hold the complete faith and truth of the Church and advance to the warfare against the devil from the divine camp with the full and sincere knowledge of God the Father and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; thus they are not deprived of the sacrament of baptism, but are rather baptized in the most glorious and greatest baptism in blood – about which the Lord also said that he had another baptism with which to be baptized.[84]

[82] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.12.2 (CCSL 3C:543): Quareo cuius dei? Si creatoris, non potuit qui in eum non credidit. Si Christi, nec huius fieri potest templum qui negat deum Christum. Si spiritus sancti, cum tres unum sint, quomodo spiritus sanctus placatus esse ei potest qui aut filii aut patris inimicus est?

[83] There is an implicit understanding of inseparable operations here, which will be a hallmark of fourth-century pro-Nicene theology. On Cyprian's use of 1 John 5:8, following the Latin reading of Tertullian, to link the unity of the church with the unity of the Trinity, see Ployd, "*Tres Unum Sunt*," 451–57.

[84] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.22.2 (CCSL 3C:556–57; FC 51:282, alt.): Sciant igitur eiusmodi homines, suffragatores et fautores haereticorum, catecuminos illos primo integram fidem et ecclesiae ueritatem tenere et ad debellandum diabolum de diuinis castris cum plena et sincera

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Cyprian further justifies this argument with an appeal to the robber crucified with Jesus (Luke 23:43). This man, for Cyprian, signifies catechumens baptized in blood and sanctified by the Lord's passion – not because he suffered death but because he held true faith in the Lord's passion.[85]

From these passages, we can draw two points relevant for understanding Cyprian's catechesis as a knowledge-shaping practice. First is the qualified affirmation of baptism's relation to martyrdom. Cyprian cannot reject the authority of the martyrs, as he appeared to be doing against the laxists who had received letters of absolution from the confessors. However, he could not unqualifiedly affirm the authority of the martyrs, since this would justify the laxists' position that martyrdom, not ecclesial unity, provided access to divine knowledge. Cyprian thus carefully qualifies the confessors' authority. Second, for martyred catechumens to receive the eternal reward that belongs to the righteous, they must not only die a noble death but also hold the true faith – belief in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – which now entails a certain kind of commitment to church unity. Such catechumens, Cyprian stresses, have a "true knowledge of God." It is the possession of the "true and integral faith" that provides martyrs with such knowledge of God that warrants heavenly beatitude, not simply their willingness to face death under persecution.

In this letter, in short, we find key impulses stemming from the debates of the 250s about the nature of the church and how they affected catechesis. In particular, Cyprian links baptism in the unified church with the affirmation of faith in the triune God, and he argues that only through baptism can one obtain true knowledge of God.

CONCLUSION

Cyprian's catechetical writings illuminate the role of the church in attaining true knowledge of God. We find this theme in Cyprian's earliest treatises, the *Ad Donatum* and *Ad Quirinum*, in which Cyprian presents the church using several metaphors – a tranquil garden, a lofty mountaintop, a peaceful harbor – all of which serve to present the church as the safeguard and source of knowing God. In *Ad Quirinum*, he draws on

dei patris et Christi et spiritus sancti cogitatione procedere, deinde nec priuari baptismi sacramento, utpote qui baptizentur gloriossimo et maximo sanguinis baptismo, de quo et dominus dicebat habere se aliud baptisma baptizari.

[85] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.22.2.

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classical rhetoric to shape the memories of his hearers in a way that allows them to be conformed to the common memory of the church through the Scriptures. In his treatise on the Lord's Prayer, he foregrounds ecclesial unity as a precondition for obtaining knowledge of God. Finally, in his correspondence over the role of catechumens, Cyprian highlights the centrality of ecclesial unity for maintaining the integrity of the trinitarian confession.

While there is much more we could say about Cyprian's catechumenate, the emphasis on the ecclesial foundation of divine knowledge ranks as one of the most important ideas for understanding the development of catechesis in the early church. Though this emphasis, to be sure, is not unique to Cyprian, his writing reveals the tight connection emerging between baptism in the true church and saving knowledge in the confession of the triune God. Knowledge of God, for Cyprian, is not something debated or arrived at through reasoning. Knowledge of God appears through the Spirit's quickening in baptism – a baptism that is only found in the church united by bishops and the confession of faith. With Cyprian, ecclesiology and knowledge of God become tightly fused, and this fusion would prove difficult to break.

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