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North African Catechesis after Augustine

Knowing God in an Apocalyptic Age

In many histories of the catechumenate, the period after Augustine is highly enigmatic. It might seem that the once rigorous adult catechumenate becomes obsolete in a Christian society in which everyone is baptized as an infant.[1] Closer attention to the social history of this period, however, reveals a more complex picture. In North Africa, in particular, the Vandal invasions and resurgence of new "Arian" theologies posed fresh challenges for Christianity, leading scholars to label this period an "apocalyptic age."[2] Fourth- and fifth-century North Africa was fraught with social and political upheaval that left many people – credulous and learned alike – fearful about the end of the world. As Jesse Hoover describes, "this was an era in which the shadow of the apocalypse loomed very large indeed."[3]

[1] For a version of this thesis, which draws on the influential work of Josef Jungmann and Peter Göbl, see Milton McC. Gatch, "Basic Christian Education from the Decline of Catechesis to the Rise of the Catechisms," in *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis*, ed. John H. Westerhoff III and O. C. Edwards, Jr. (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981), 79–108.

[2] Jesse Hoover, *The Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). While focusing on the Donatists, Hoover demonstrates that the apocalyptic mood characterized North Africa more broadly in this period. For apocalypticism in Quodvultdeus, see Daniel Van Slyke, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Apocalyptic Theology of a Roman African in Exile* (Strathfield, AUS: St. Paul's Publications, 2003). And for a good account of the broader social and political history of this period, see Robin Whelan, *Being Christian in Vandal Africa: The Politics of Orthodoxy in the Post-Imperial West* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

[3] Hoover, *Donatist Church*, 8.

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What, then, does catechesis look like in this period? And how did Christian leaders teach what it means to know God in these circumstances? In what follows, we will look first at the sermons attributed to Quodvultdeus of Carthage and then to several anonymous sermons from the post-Augustine period to see how these sermons offer evidence of developments in theological epistemology.

QUODVULTDEUS OF CARTHAGE: APOCALYPTIC PRO-NICENE CATECHESIS

Quodvultdeus was a one-time correspondent and acquaintance of Augustine. He was a deacon under bishop Aurelius in Carthage before himself becoming bishop there in the mid-430s.[4] After the invasion of Carthage in 439, he was taken captive and exiled to Naples where he died around 454.[5] In addition to his most well-known book, the *Liber promissionum*, an apocalyptic treatise on the biblical stages of history (which owes in no small part to Augustine's narration of history in, for example, *De catechizandis rudibus*), there are thirteen sermons associated with his name that for a long time were attributed to Augustine – nine of which appear to be catechetical in origin.[6] It should be noted that the attribution of these to Quodvultdeus is a contested issue, and many scholars might

[4] He wrote to Augustine in the late 420s requesting a catalog of heresies, to which Augustine responded with *De haeresibus*. See Augustine, *ep.* 222–24. On his early career and election to the episcopate, see David Vopřada, *Quodvultdeus: A Bishop Forming Christians in Vandal Africa: A Contextual Analysis of the Pre-baptismal Sermons Attributed to Quodvultdeus of Carthage* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), chap. 2.

[5] As recounted by Victor of Vita, *hist. pers.* 1.15. On his exile and death, see Vopřada, *Bishop Forming Christians*, 65–66.

[6] There are three sermons on the creed (*De Symbolo I–III*), two that are addressed to those "proceeding to grace" (*De accentibus ad gratiam I–II*), and four others whose content suggests catechesis (*De cantico nouo*; *De catyclysmo*; *Contra Iudaeos, Paganos, et Arrianos*; and *De ultima quarta feria*). Morin first identified these sermons as belonging to Quodvultdeus in 1914, though not all are convinced. Germain Morin, "Pour une future édition des opuscules de saint Quodvultdeus, évèque de carthage au Vu siècle," *RBén* 31 (1914):156–62. For good general studies, see Russell J. De Simone, "The Baptismal and Christological Catechesis of Quodvultdeus," *Augustinianum* 25, no. 1/2 (1985): 265–82; Thomas Finn, *Quodvultdeus: The Creedal Sermons*, ACW 60 (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004); More comprehensively, see Vopřada, *Bishop Forming Christians*, chaps. 4–6; Matthieu Pignot, *The Catechumenate in Late Antique Africa (4th–6th Centuries): Augustine of Hippo, His Contemporaries and Early Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), chap. 5.

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well be suspicious of grouping them together as I have done here.[7] For our present purposes, it is not necessary to resolve the specific issue of authorship granted that these are all understood to be North African sermons from the fifth century. I will refer to them as a set group and of Quodvultdeus as their author, recognizing that there is significant disagreement on this issue.

These sermons provide important and unique evidence of North African initiation rites, especially the so-called rite of scrutiny. They also, however, help us understand the character of catechetical knowledge in the period after Augustine. These sermons especially emphasize the ways in which knowledge of God could appear as a radical disruption of ordinary life, calling Christians away from pagan spectacles and into life with God in the church. This approach to knowledge is also characterized by an Augustinian-inflected theology of God and human transformation in Christ.[8] Like Augustine, Quodvultdeus depicts knowledge of God as a dynamic transformation into God, predicated on the revelation of the transcendent God in creation. This transformation entails a highly dramatized rejection of the devil in the waters of regeneration and culminates in the vision of God.

Quodvultdeus's account of knowing God must first be situated within his apocalyptic presentation of history. "The end of the world is near," he proclaims, and Christians should prepare accordingly by joining the church through baptism.[9] For the Christian, Quodvultdeus declares, old things have passed away and a new thing is here: Belonging to Adam has given way to adoption in Christ; earthliness has given way to heavenliness; worship of idols has turned to worship of God; the old land has been traded for the heavenly Jerusalem.[10] In classical North African idiom, he pictures the church as the sole locus of salvation and as a mother who gives birth to the newly baptized.[11] He also pictures the church-world distinction in school terms – the celestial school of the humble Christ

[7] For arguments in favor of authorship, see Vopřada, *Bishop Forming Christians*, chaps. 4–6. For arguments against it, see Pignot, *Catechumenate in Late Antique Africa*, 241–48.

[8] On apocalyptic in the *Liber promssionum*, see Van Slyke, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage*.

[9] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 8.7 (CCSL 60:360; ACW 60:78–79). On his calculation of the end of time, see Van Slyke, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage*, 136–41.

[10] Quodvultdeus, *cant.* 1.17–22 (CCSL 60:382).

[11] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 13.1–7 (CCSL 60:363; ACW 60:81–82). On Quodvultdeus's emphasis on ecclesiology, especially the image of the church as mother, see Vopřada, *Bishop Forming Christians*, 224–30.

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opposed to the false wisdom of the devil.[12] He depicts the rite of scrutiny using the apocalyptic image of the serpent's attack on Mary (Rev. 12:1–4).[13] Invoking Cyprian explicitly, he presents the Christian life in martial terms as a battle between Christian virtues and demonic vices.[14] The knowledge of God, for Quodvultdeus's catechumens, begins with the imperative to turn to Christ and the church in a tumultuous time.

Quodvultdeus frequently contrasts Christian and pagan rites – a theme we have seen at several points thus far.[15] He exhorts *competentes* to flee the spectacles, games, circuses, and theaters whose demonic entrapment deprives them of salvation in the coming judgment. Rather than simply obliterating the desire for visual spectacle, however, Quodvultdeus redirects them to the church's spectacles.[16] Instead of the circus, there are apostolic miracles; in place of charioteers, there is Elijah "our spiritual charioteer"; rather than the sexual gratuity of the theater, there is the chastity of Mary and Susannah; in place of gladiatorial contests with wild animals, there is Daniel in the lion's den.[17] Quodvultdeus proposes a Christianizing eclipse of the pagan spectacles, using the language of

[12] Quodvultdeus, *acc. I* 1.6 (CCSL 60:446): Haec est schola, ad quam paruuli spiritu deducuntur, ut discant a caelesti magistro non alta sapere, sed humilibus consentire. Haec est schola magistri regis, cuius cathedra caelum est, cuius terra scabellum pedum.

[13] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 1.4 (CCSL 60:349; ACW 60:67).

[14] Quodvultdeus, *cat.* 1.7–2.4 (CCSL 60:409–10): Noli esse desertor, nec ut delicatus miles diffluas per uoluptates, et te hostis diabolus inermem diffluentem que inueniat: sed ut fortis miles, quidquid potes age in hoc bello, ut uirtus tua christus non solum te tueatur, uerum etiam alii proficiant ad salutem. Postula a rege tuo arma spiritalia. Bellum tibi, inquit, indicitur, in quo enitescas pugnando, ut ad plenam pacem triumphando peruenias. . . . Ad agonem produceris, contra diabolum uitiorum principem dimicabis in arena huius mundi: utraeque partes, christi scilicet et diaboli, infinita populi multitudo te exspectat luctantem; et quisnam uincat, uide omnem turbam nimia intentione pendentem.

[15] See, e.g., Tertullian, *spect.* 29–30, a comparison noted by Finn (ACW 60:96 n16).

[16] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 2.2 (CCSL 60:307; ACW 60:25): Sed si oblectandus est animus, et spectare delectat exhibit uobis sancta mater ecclesia ueneranda ac salubria spectacular, quae et mentes uestras oblectent sua delectatione, et in uobis non corrumpant, set costuodiant fidem.

[17] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 2.1–28. One may note here the continuity of this imagery in North African art. For instance, housed in the Bardo Museum Tunisia is a mural of Daniel in the Lion's Den, portrayed in the classical *orans* posture, surrounded by lions, from the tomb of an otherwise unknown martyr Blossius Honoratus. Drawing on standard iconography, this fifth-century mural may also allude to the spectacles from the amphitheater and earlier Christian accounts of martyrdom, thus reflecting the fifth-century North African context in which Donatists claimed the rightful lineage of the Church of the Martyrs. For this argument, see Angela Kalinowski, "A Mosaic of Daniel in the Lions' Den from Borj el Youdi (Furnos Minus) Tunisia: The Iconography of Martyrdom and the Arena in Roman North Africa," *Antiquités africaines* 53 (2017): 115–28.

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desideria and *concupiscentia* to depict the desire they should have for Christian baptism.[18]

The most striking rhetorical display of the Christian spectacle comes in presentations of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection in his sermons on the creed.[19] In an ekphrastic register, Quodvultdeus presents the cross as a triumph over Satan, which models for the faithful their own spiritual combat. In one sermon, the crucifixion is depicted as the bridal chamber in which the church is both birthed and betrothed, just as Eve was born and betrothed at Adam's "sleep." On the cross, the bridegroom ascends "the wood of his bridal chamber" and, as he dies, the virgin church comes forth.[20] Elsewhere, the passion is presented as a gladiatorial contest. Betrayed by Judas and hunted by the Jews, Jesus appears as a valiant warrior who permits himself to be defeated to gain the victory for humankind. "In this passion," Quodvultdeus insists, "see a spectacle of such a struggle," for Christ fought to teach the Christian how to conquer.[21] For Quodvultdeus, the ekphrastic description of the mystery of Christ reinforces the apocalyptic character of his theological epistemology.

Supplementing this vision of the Christian life as an apocalyptic combat and counter-spectacle was a complex theological vision, shaped by Augustinian pro-Nicene sensibilities. The world may be filled with calamity and ruin, but it remains the good creation of a providential and loving God. Christians, therefore, learn to know God in a way that rejects worldliness but does not forfeit the belief that creation is the work of a good and providential God.[22] This theological epistemology was perhaps demanded by resurgent forms of Vandal Arianism in North Africa, a combination of Gothic converts of Ulfilas and Italian Homoians fleeing the tumult.[23] We should also note that Manichaeism

[18] Quodvultdeus, *cant.* 1.1 (CCSL 60:381): Omnis qui baptismum Christi desiderat, uitam nouam concupiscit.

[19] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 5.1–24.

[20] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 6.4 (CCSL 60:320; ACW 60:37).

[21] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 5.12 (CCSL 60:357; ACW 60:75): Denique in ipsa passione uidete spectaculum tanti certaminis.

[22] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 1.19–21 (CCSL 60:250–251; ACW 60:69).

[23] On the evolution of "Arianism" in Africa in this period, see Robin Whelan, "Arianism in Africa," in *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed*, ed. Guido M. Berndt and Roland Steinacher (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 239–56. Whelan argues that Homoian Christianity cannot simply be mapped onto the new "imperial Christianity" but continued to operate at logics removed from Vandal kings, even while the latter favored Homoian Christianity.

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was not a vanquished foe by this time.[24] Quodvultdeus has his opponents say that the Father is greater than the Son because of the Son's visible presence in human form, while the Spirit ranks even lower given the appearance as a dove.[25] Quodvultdeus labors to demonstrate the coequality of the Son and Spirit with the Father and, at the same time, to show the meaningfulness of speech about hierarchies in God and creation.[26] There are not graded hierarchies in God, he argues, as there are in creation, and these differing levels of being proceed from a divine unity.[27]

The theological epistemology outlined here is closely attended by a view of divine omnipotence, which further rules out intra-divine hierarchies. To make this point, Quodvultdeus compares speech about human and divine governance. While human kings may be called "powerful," for they do as they please, they lack omnipotence because they are subject to death and exist within a chain of being like all other creatures.[28] Omnipotence entails the creation of both matter (*materies*) and particular creations (*fabrica*); yet since the Son is not generated from matter but from God's own being (*a seipso*), the Son cannot belong within a hierarchy of being. Instead, the Son is the one who "constituted the powers through orderly arrangements by a hierarchy of being appropriate to these very creatures."[29] Against the Homoian critique that corporeal manifestations entail gradations in the Godhead, Quodvultdeus argues for the invisibility – and so omnipresence – of all three persons of the Trinity. He includes a lengthy discussion of Old Testament theophanies and passages that speak figuratively of God using corporeal images (for example, lambs and doves to convey spiritual virtues such as innocence).[30] Quodvultdeus concludes with a concise distinction between

[24] Vopřada, *Bishop Forming Christians*, 60–1.

[25] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 9.6 (CCSL 60:326; ACW 60:43).

[26] Here again, we find similar themes in Tertullian's *Aduersus Praxean.*

[27] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 9.8 (CCSL 60:361; ACW 60:79): Non sunt diuersi gradus, ubi est una trinitas et trina aeternitas. Qui enim diuersos gradus componit, ipse se ab unitate praecidit.

[28] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 3.6–8 (CCSL 60:310–11; ACW 60:28).

[29] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 3.3–4 (CCSL 60:310; ACW 60:28): Hoc est enim esse omnipotentem, ut non solum fabrica ipsa, sed etiam materies ab illo inueniatur esse, qui non habuit initium ut esset; et is qui sempiternus est, crearet, non id quod ipse esset, sed ut ab illo esse iam accepisset. Omne enim quod est, ab illo est: ipse autem a seipso est, qui non ab aliquo factus est. Fecit ergo facta non factus, creauit creaturam non creatus; qui etiam ipsi creaturae conuenientibus gradibus per diuersas ordinationes constituit potestates.

[30] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 9.18–26. On the anti-Homoian polemics of Augustine's discussion of Christ's invisibility–visibility and the treatment of theophanies, see the studies of Michel Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's

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God's being *in se* and the divine economy: "This divine substance of the Trinity, while remaining in itself just as it is, so that it might return what was lost and restore our ruin, revealed itself visibly for human comprehension and for proportioning itself to each individual thing; [in so doing] it did not lose its own unity and equality."[31]

In addition to conceptualizing the difference between God and creation, Quodvultdeus teaches catechumens about God's presence in creation and its implications for knowing God. If the three persons of the Trinity are coequal and by nature invisible, then the Trinity is present "whole and entire" everywhere in creation (*ubique esse totum*), just as sunlight is present wherever the sun's rays extend.[32] Creation, meanwhile, offers signs of God. Like Augustine, Quodvultdeus has the heavens, the earth, and all their respective inhabitants, in personified form, announce that they are not God and that the seeker should look to the creator.[33] In another Augustinian inflection, Quodvultdeus cites Isaiah 7:9 to conceptualize the relation between faith and knowledge.[34] Faith is depicted pedagogically within a spiritual program in which non-visual faith is the Christian's work in the present life that is rewarded with sight in the hereafter:[35] "Through faith he confers on you what he trains you for. By deferring vision of him, he commends rather than denies his gift, so that you will more amply desire the gift deferred, lest you undervalue the gift too quickly vision."[36] This form of faith, however, involves learning to see God in creation – to see God's "face" in the incarnate Son, to see his "hands" in the workmanship of creation, to hear his "voice" in the recitation of God's commands, to seek his "feet" in his apostolic

Trinitarian Theology of 400," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 3 (2003): 329–55; Kari Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God: Augustine's Transformation of Early Christian Theophany Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[31] Quodvultdeus, *sym. I* 9.27 (CCSL 60:329; ACW 60:45).

[32] Quodvultdeus, *sym. II* 7.1–5 (CCSL 60:344–45; ACW 60:61). For Augustine, see esp. *conf.* 1.3.3, as well as *trin.* 5.1.2; *ep.* 148.1; *ep.* 187; *ciu.* 22.29. On these texts in Augustine's theology, see James J. O'Donnell, *Confessions: Commentary on Books 1–7* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 22–23; Stanislaus Grabowski, "St. Augustine and the Presence of God," *Theological Studies* 13 (1952): 340; Gerald Boersma, "Augustine on the beatific vision as *ubique totus*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no. 1 (2018): 16–32. For the Plotinian view on which it draws, see Plotinus, *enn.* 6.4–5.

[33] Quodvultdeus, *sym. II* 2.1–22.

[34] Quodvultdeus, *sym. II* 2.1.

[35] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 2.2.

[36] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 2.4 (CCSL 60:351; ACW 60:69): Tibi confert, quod per fidem te exercet: differendo uisionem suam, commendat donum suum, non negat, ut amplius desideres dilatum, ne uilescat cito datum.

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messengers (Is. 52:7).[37] At the same time, catechumens are instructed not to confuse the creaturely manifestations of God, which are circumscribed in bodies, with the divine nature, which "is not in place but is everywhere entire."[38] The movement from faith to sight requires a proper understanding of the nature of divine and created being.

Many themes in Quodvultdeus's catechesis show an indebtedness to Augustine, and it is not unsurprising that his works were long attributed to the great bishop. What distinguishes the two, however, is the way in which Quodvultdeus's Augustinian theology is deployed within an apocalyptic environment characterized by a more immediate sense of the end of the world. The world is caught up in a great battle; the pagan world and its attendant rituals were at war with the Christian spectacles. However, the Christian gospel has brought a transformation in which old things are passing away and new things are arriving. Quodvultdeus goes to great lengths to help catechumens appreciate both the dramatic novelty of this reality – and the alterity between Christian and pagan spectacle – while also casting a theological vision that perceives God's goodness and presence in the world. Quodvultdeus's account of knowing God in an apocalyptic age asks believers to look beyond the material surface of ordinary life and to grasp the true nature of the conflict going on in the spiritual world.

ANONYMOUS CATECHETICAL SERMONS IN LATE ANTIQUE AFRICA

In addition to the writings associated with Quodvultdeus, we also possess several other sermons from this period that suggest a catechetical provenance. A number of homilies spuriously attributed to Augustine, Chrysostom, and Fulgentius, in particular, provide important clues to developments in catechesis in North Africa.[39] While much more could

[37] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 2.5–8.

[38] Quodvultdeus, *sym. III* 2.9 (CCSL 60:351; ACW 60:70).

[39] The literature on these sermons is still fairly sparse, but a growing number of studies has made important advances. In addition to Pignot, *North African Catechumenate*, see also Leslie Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 164–67; Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 843–49; Shari Boodts and Nicholas de Maeyer, "The *Collectio Armamentarii* (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 175): *Status questionis* and New Avenues of Research," in *Praedicatio Patrum: Studies on Preaching in Late Antique North Africa*, ed. Gert Partoens, Anthony Dupont, and Shari Boodts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 95–143;

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be said about these sermons, two examples will serve to focus our understanding of the ordering of knowledge in North African catechesis. First, we can observe one of the credal homilies attributed to Fulgentius to see the way in which catechetical knowledge drew upon apocalyptic themes in a way adjacent to Quodvultdeus. Second, we can see in a sermon on Psalm 22 attributed to Augustine how catechetical models of instruction could be extended to other texts besides the baptismal creed and the Lord's Prayer.

In the *sermo de symbolo* of Pseudo-Fulgentius (CPL 846), the author treats initiation along a similar pattern of renunciation that Quodvultdeus deployed.[40] The author prepares his hearers to attend to the *rationem* of the "intent of the heavenly sacrament" and to perceive the truth of our redemption. He presents salvation in terms of liberation from captivity: The Christian puts away the devil's weapons of *infidelitas* and *cupiditas* and takes up the Christian arms of *fides* and *caritas*.[41] Like earlier North African credal expositions, this sermon focuses on the meaning of divine omnipotence and paternity in explaining the Son's coequal status with the Father.[42] "By true divinity he created the world; by divine paternity from his own nature he generated a true Son. For if he had not been true God he could not have made visible and invisible things (Col. 1:16); if he had not been true Father he could not have generated a true Son from himself."[43] Outlining a clear understanding of divine creativity is imperative for understanding both the givenness of creation and the divinity of the Son.

In transitioning from a discussion of the Father to the Son, the catechist emphasizes the link between creation and redemption. The divine Son who is coequal with God has been born of the Spirit and Virgin "so that those whom he made could also be restored and those whom he created could be re-created."[44] The exposition of the Son is less dramatic than in

Maureen Tilley, "Donatist Sermons," in *Preaching in the Latin Patristic Era: Sermons, Preachers, Audiences*, ed. Anthony Dupont, Shari Boodts, Gert Partoens, and Johan Leemans (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 373–402.

[40] Text in Germain Morin, ed., "Deux sermons africains du 5e/6e s. avec un texte inédit du Symbole," *RBén* 35 (1923): 236–45, and re-edited in Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles' Creed: Origin, History, and Some Early Commentaries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 441–49. I will cite the text from Westra; translations are my own.

[41] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb.* 4–5 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 442).

[42] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb.* 6–10 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 442–43).

[43] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb.* 6 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 442).

[44] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb.* 9 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 442): Iste unigenitus dei filius uerus naturaliter deus et cum patre unus deus, ut quos fecerat feficeret et quos creauerat recrearet, natura est de spiritu sancto ex uirgine Maria.

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Quodvultdeus but still retains the emphasis on Christ as redeemer and liberator. It is especially "for us" that Christ went to battle on the cross, this sermon emphasizes.[45] One surprise is that the order of topics in the exposition is altered. Following the discussion of the Holy Spirit, the catechist treats the resurrection and eternal life, and only then the doctrine of the church. Within this outline, though, a gradual pattern of knowing God is unfolded: The vision of God is withheld until eschatological beatitude, when the soul has been cleansed from the delight of sinning and the corruption of the body.[46] The catechist then links eternal life with the church, described as "the holy city, the supernal Jerusalem, the eternal Jerusalem."[47] The church – identified as bride, dove, virgin, and mother of the members – is the place in which Christians are now justified and in which they walk by faith in order later to arrive at vision.[48] The *peroratio* contains an exhortation to catechumens to remain steadfast and obedient to the catholic church and to keep the precepts by which they will inherit eternal life.[49]

This sermon attests to the enduring themes of credal catechesis in the West. While there is a strong emphasis on the creed as a sign of faith, which leads to eternal life, there is also an ongoing commitment to cultivating a theological account of the divine nature that organizes Christian knowledge. In this sermon, we see the ongoing legacy of North African catechetical traditions in the period after Augustine: an apocalyptic picture of history intertwined with a trinitarian theology that guides hearers to the vision of God in beatitude.

In addition to credal sermons and instructions on the Lord's Prayer – the two main topics of catechetical instruction in the fourth century – the post-Augustine period sees an expansion of biblical texts that were "handed over" to catechumens. Two sermons from fifth-century Africa, one listed as *sermo* 366 in Augustine's sermon collection[50] and the other as *sermo* 30 in the Pseudo-Chrysostom Morin Collection,[51] make it clear

[45] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb.* 12 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 443).

[46] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb* 28 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 446): Tunc nobis uera dabitur, quando nobis aeterna dei uisio tribuetur, tunc anima nostra null poterit maculari delectione peccati, tun corpus nostrum nec corrumpi poterit omnino nec mori.

[47] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb* 29 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 446).

[48] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb* 29 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 446).

[49] Ps.-Fulgentius, *serm. symb* 32 (Westra, *Apostles' Creed*, 447).

[50] See Ps.-Augustine, *s.* 366 (PL 39:1646–50; WSA III/10:288–95). For a brief discussion of manuscript history and the sermon's relation to the broader catechumenate, see Pignot, "Catechumenate in Anonymous Sermons," 26–28.

[51] Ps.-Chrysostom, *s.* 30 (PLS 4:824–31) is of more doubtful African origin. While Westra proposes southern Italy, Bouhot, Dolbeau, and Pignot place it in Africa, sometime

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that a practice of teaching Psalm 22 (LXX) in catechesis was not uncommon. With its imagery of green pastures, conversion, still waters, and a plentiful table, Psalm 22 was a natural fit for earlier authors to identify with baptismal initiation.[52] But in these two sermons, we see the psalm itself presented and exposited in a manner congruous with earlier catechetical *traditio* rituals. In the pseudo-Chrysostom *sermo* 30, the catechist explains that he is about to hand over the Psalm to the elect, and that they are to memorize it and return it through profession and by good works.[53] In the pseudo-Augustinian *sermo* 366, the catechist echoes the language of handing over the creed. The sermon begins: "To you, dearly beloved, who are hastening toward the baptism of Christ, we are handing over this psalm in the name of the Lord, to be learned by heart; so we must explain its inner meaning, with divine grace to enlighten us."[54] With anti-Pelagian overtones that remind hearers to trust not in their own virtue but in Christ,[55] the catechist exhorts his hearers to listen in silent attention as the word is sown and nurtured in them. He uses the imagery of the verdant, delectable pastures to depict the *competentes*' desire for the church's teaching.[56] The rite of baptism is presented as elucidating catechetical instruction, for "unless your pastures [i.e., Christian doctrine] ... are irrigated by this water [of baptism], it will be impossible for you to be reared, because the commandment of God can neither germinate without the baptism of Christ, nor be eaten so as to satisfy the soul."[57] The catechist warns the *competentes* of the dangers of life in the present age – "under the shadow" (Ps. 22:4) – and exhorts them to a reformation of morals that

between the mid-fifth and sixth century. See Pignot, "Catechumenate in Anonymous Sermons," 29 n80.

[52] Pignot, "Catechumenate in Anonymous Sermons," 30. See, e.g., Eusebius of Caesarea, *dem. eu.* 1.10; Cyril of Jerusalem, *cat.* 1.6; *myst.* 4.7; and Ambrose of Milan, *mys.* 8.43; *sacr.* 5.3.13. For references to other psalms associated with initiation, see Pignot, "Catechumenate in Anonymous Sermons," 32 n9, who mentions Jerome, Peter Chyrsologus, and Cassiodorus.

[53] Ps.-Chrysostom, *s.* 30 (PLS 4:824): Ergo de ista charitate compellit nos ueritas, ut psalmum uobis electis, et ad fidem concurrentibus exponamus. Hos uersiculos psalmi memoria tenete, ore reddite, operibus implete. Non sufficit reddere deo, nisi et cor mundum applicare deo.

[54] Ps.-Augustine, *s.* 366.1 (PL 39:1646; WSA III/10:288): Psalmum uobis, dilectissimi, qui ad Christi baptismum properatis, in nominee domini tradimus memoriae collocandum; cuius necesse est, ut mysterium, illuminante diuina gratia, exponamus.

[55] Ps.-Augustine, *s.* 366.6 (PL 39:1649; WSA III/10:292).

[56] Ps.-Augustine, *s.* 366.3 (PL 39:1647–48; WSA III/10:290).

[57] Ps.-Augustine, *s.* 366.3 (PL 39:1648; WSA III/10:290): Hac igitur aqua nisi rigata fuerint pascua tua, educari non poteris: quia mandata dei sine Christi baptismate germinare non possunt, nec edi ad animae satietatem.

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entails love of God and neighbor. By their virtue, the newly baptized will come to understand rightly the faith they have confessed. He concludes in good Augustinian fashion with an exhortation to remember the eschatological motives for conversion: "It is not, after all, for the sake of this present life that you are becoming Christians, but for the sake of the life to come."[58]

In these sermons, we see new developments in catechetical practice. The catechist uses the Psalm text to chart a path of spiritual growth and connect doctrinal instruction with ritual initiation and moral reformation. These sermons evidence a striking way in which forms of knowledge are extended and enriched through drawing on other scriptural texts – such as Psalm 22. In short, a way of ordering knowledge of God through the creed has now been extended into other patterns of Christian knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Catechesis did not disappear after Augustine. Nor was it simply a slavish imitation of him. Rather, we see in the writings of Quodvultdeus and other anonymous catechetical sermons how the conditions of fifth-century Africa framed approaches to knowing God in catechesis. I have drawn attention to the resurgence of an apocalyptic strand of thought that brought together an Augustinian theology of God with traditional North African themes about the contrast between the church and the world. This is not to say that apocalyptic themes were absent in earlier periods. However, with Quodvultdeus and other anonymous sermons we find a sharper focus on the apocalyptic sense of history, especially evidenced in the dramatic contrast between the church and the world and the radical novelty of the Christian gospel. The old has passed away and the new has arrived, yet new Christians are not simply left to discern this apocalyptic moment on their own. They are guided in a process of discerning the spiritual nature of God and the eternal homeland to which they aspire. To this end, they are trained in a mode of perceiving God and the world that gives credence to the vision of apocalyptic transformation these sermons promote.

[58] Ps.-Augustine, *s.* 366.8 (PL 39:1650; WSA III/10:294): Non enim propter praesentem uitam efficimini christiani, sed propter futuram uitam, quam uobis credentibus et in se perseuerantibus dominus Christus ipse largitur.

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