7

Catechesis in Late Antique Italy

Cosmological and Apophatic Knowing

If Ambrose was a leading actor in Northern Italy, he was not a solitary one. In this chapter, we look at catechetical knowledge in four other important Christian leaders from this era: Zeno of Verona, Gaudentius of Brescia, Rufinus of Aquileia, and Peter Chrysologus. These figures left a significant body of writings that show the dynamism of catechesis in late antiquity Italy. They approached theological knowledge in different ways, to be sure, but in each we find aspects of continuity both with each other and with earlier traditions. In particular, I will argue, Zeno and Gaudentius allow us to observe aspects of what we might call "cosmological knowing." In their writings to catechumens, they show catechumens how Christianity reveals the true meaning of time and the natural order. Meanwhile, Rufinus and Peter exemplify the way in which apophatic motifs could be deployed in catechetical contexts to structure Christian knowledge. Their writings demonstrate both the radical disjuncture between pagan and Christian ways of knowing while also presenting baptismal faith as the only true condition for attaining true knowledge of God.

Unlike in previous chapters, where I considered each writer separately, here it will be more expedient to present an overview of these figures in their North Italian milieu. Then I will turn to each of their respective catechetical writings to explore the themes of cosmological and apophatic knowing.

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CHRISTIANITY AND CATECHESIS IN LATE ANTIQUE NORTHERN ITALY

The extant writings of Zeno, Gaudentius, Rufinus, and Peter are a precious record of North Italian Christianity in the late fourth and early fifth century.[1] Zeno wrote primarily in the 360s and 370s, Gaudentius and Rufinus in the 390s, and Peter from the 430s to around 450. Zeno's writing thus has a different tenor than his later colleagues. His work is marked by a greater degree of struggle to consolidate Christianity amid a still active traditional Roman cult. He mentions the presence of urban temples, the celebration of *parentalia* festivals, the consultation of *haruspices*, and the use of the official pagan calendar.[2] His is not the voice of a self-confident bishop who has vanquished paganism but the leader of a small but rugged flock, distinguished from the pagan populace by its alternative morals and rituals.[3] He worked hard to establish a Nicene Christian community in Verona through building projects, preaching, and promoting Christian rituals. Zeno also performed his episcopal duties within the framework of the patronage system, especially in preaching against avarice (*tract.* 1.5, 1.14, 1.21) and in the distribution of church funds for the poor.[4] In preaching, Zeno demonstrated his classical credentials, deploying Virgilian diction to articulate Christianity's superiority.[5] He construed pagan rituals as illicit practices that contrasted Christian teaching, which was more commensurate with the expectations

[1] For some of the unique aspects of Christianization in Northern Italy, see Carlo Truzzi, *Zeno, Gaudenzio, Cromazio. Testi e contenuti della predicazione cristiana per le Chiese di Verona, Brescia e Aquileia (360–410)* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1985); Rita Lizzi Testa, "Ambrose's Contemporaries and the Christianization of Northern Italy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 156–73; Mark Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed: Social Environment and Religious Change in Northern Italy, AD 200–400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[2] Zeno, *tract.* 1.25.10–11 (CCSL 22:75). See Lizzi Testa, "Ambrose's Contemporaries," 162.

[3] Lizzi Testa, "Ambrose's Contemporaries," 162.

[4] Resources were perhaps even offered, if Zeno's episcopacy extended to the late 370s, to the asylum seekers displaced after the defeat of Adrianople in 378–79. See Zeno, *tract.* 1.14.8 (CCSL 22:59). In favor of this view is Lizzi Testa, "Ambrose's Contemporaries," 162. Opposed is Gordon Jeanes, who contests the Adrianople reference, as this kind of rhetoric was a stock literary feature of many forms of writing. Gordon Jeanes, *The Day Has Come! Easter and Baptism in Zeno of Verona* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 9.

[5] Louis Palanca, "The Prose Rhythm and Gorgianic Figures in the Sermons of St. Zeno of Verona" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1970).

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of *paideia*.[6] He used the catechumenate to distinguish various grades of Christian membership.[7]

In his efforts to consolidate a Christian stronghold, Zeno utilized many conventional patterns of instruction. His writing shows debts to North African figures such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, and even perhaps Apuleius.[8] However, unlike Tertullian, at least, and more like other fourth-century bishops, Zeno encouraged *competentes* to hasten to the font.[9] At one point, he even needed to defend himself against the charge that his neophytes were underprepared – loaves of bread drawn from the oven too soon.[10] We have no evidence, however, of how long new members were to remain catechumens during Zeno's tenure. Most of the available evidence comes from sermons given around the Easter Vigil. Of his roughly ninety extant sermons and tractates, sixty-two were most likely given in a baptismal setting, and several others during Lent. Some of the sermons on Old Testament figures like Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Susannah, and Job may have been given during Lent, but this is difficult to establish with certainty.[11] More confidently, we can identity a

[6] Bärbel Dümler, *Zeno von Verona zu heidenischer Kultur und christlicher Bildung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 19–20.

[7] Camille Gerzaguet, "Preaching to the *ecclesia* in Northern Italy: The Eastertide Sermons of Zeno of Verona and Gaudentius of Brescia," *SP* 77 (2017): 33–44.

[8] This has even led some to suggest he was of North African descent: see David Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2017), 209–10. Löfstedt counts approximately twenty references to Tertullian and around sixty to Cyprian, half of which are from Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum* (CCSL 22:217–26). Ottorino Vicentini considered him an African who came to Verona from Numidia or Mauritania, while also noting references to Hilary's *Tractatus super Psalmos* and Novation's *De bono pudicitiae*, as well as classical sources like Cicero and Virgil. Vicentini, "La Morale nei sermoni di san Zeno vescovo di Verona," *Studia Patavina: Rivista di scienze religiose* 29 (1982): 243–47. Earlier, however, F. E. Vokes contested a distinctively African influence in Zeno, noting that many Latinate authors shared literary sources across Italy and North Africa. Vokes, "Zeno of Verona, Apuleius and Africa," *SP* 8, no. 2 (1966): 130–4.

[9] Zeno, *tract.* 2.14 (CCSL 22:188; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 90): Eia, fratres, quos beatae sitis exoptatus ardor incendit, cupiditate ac uelocitate ceruina lacteum genitalis fontis ad laticem conuolate.

[10] Zeno, *tract.* 1.41.3 (CCSL 22:112; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 72): Sed fortassis, quod nonnulli [panes] forma uidentur minores, si secus aliquid de pistore sentiatur, mea nihil interest, fratres, quia, etsi pauper sum, tamen frontem meam tueor et fidem meam noui. Certe si quid sciunt, dicant operarii, qui mecum sunt. Lucro gaudeo, sed sine furti conscientia, sane confiteor.

[11] For Lenten homilies, Truzzi proposes *De Abraham* (1.43, 1.59; 1.62), *De somnio Iacob* (1.37), *De sancta Susanna* (1.40), *De Iuda* (1.13), *De Iob* (1.15), and *Tractatus Ionae* (1.34), based on comparison with Ambrose and the recurrence of penitential themes

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cycle of homilies for the Easter Vigil: a passage from Genesis, followed by readings from the Passover and Red Sea crossing of the Book of Exodus, followed by readings from Isaiah and the three young men in the Book of Daniel.[12]

Gaudentius of Brescia (d. 410/11) is another key witness to Italian catechesis from this period. Among the twenty-one extant homilies attributed to him, ten appear to have been given as Easter homilies with baptismal candidates in view.[13] A well-traveled and well-educated bishop, Gaudentius's biography attests to the changing circumstances of episcopal leadership in the late fourth century. While on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he was called upon to fill the see of Philastrius in Brescia at a young age, sometime between 387 and 396.[14] Ambrose presided over his ordination and later invited him to preach in Milan.[15] In one sermon (*tract.* 17), Gaudentius signals the Brescians' solidarity with distant Cappadocian churches as he recounts their reception of relics from a group of Caesarean nuns who had received them from the legendary Basil of Caesarea.[16] Around 404, pope Innocent and the emperor Honorius dispatched him to Constantinople to defend the exiled bishop, John Chrysostom – though their mission ultimately failed.[17] He also encouraged his friend Rufinus of Aquileia to translate the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*, in response to which Rufinus praised the Brescian bishop's learning and eloquence.[18]

The conditions surrounding the publication of Gaudentius's Easter sermons are also instructive. They came at the request of a wealthy ex-

(*Zeno, Gaudenzio*, 205–7). Jeanes is much more circumspect based on the internal evidence (*The Day Has Come*, 137–40).

[12] For a reconstruction of the Lenten and Paschal liturgy, see Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 149–214.

[13] See Stephen L. Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia: Sermons and Letters" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1965).

[14] While it was traditionally thought that Gaudentius was elected in 387, Boehrer puts the start of his bishopric in 396/7. See Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 1–8.

[15] Gaudentius, *tract.* 16.2, 9 (CSEL 68:137, 139; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 185–87). On the election, see Rita Lizzi (Testa), *Vescovi e strutture ecclesiastiche nell città tardoantica* (Como: Edizioni New Press, 1989), 97–109. For Ambrose's invitation, see Gaudentius, *tract.* 20.

[16] On this episode, see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 95.

[17] Palladius, *dial.* 4. See Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 18–26.

[18] Rufinus, *prol. Clem. rec.* (CCSL 20:281): Tibi quidem, papa Gaudenti, nostrorum decus insigne doctorum, tantus ingenii uigor est, immo tanta spiritus gratia ut si quid a te etiam cotidiani eloquii more dicitur, si quid in ecclesia declamatur, id in libris haberi et ad instructionem tradi posteris debeat.

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bureaucrat catechumen named Benevolus, whose illness prevented his attendance. In response, Gaudentius sent Benevolus the sermons along with a letter to assuage the latter's fears about his illness.[19] Gaudentius consoled the affluent but unbaptized Benevolus by interpreting his suffering as a form of martyrdom for his faithfulness against the "Jezebel" Arian patroness Justina rather than a sign of divine judgment.[20] Benevolus is blessed for his decision "to withdraw from public life rather than to serve as one dead."[21] In a setting where wealth and poverty had become key issues in the conversion of elites, bishops like Gaudentius held the power, as Peter Brown puts it, "to either shame or shield the rich."[22] In this case, Gaudentius protected the wealthy ex-politico from critics who might have looked unfavorably upon his wealth.

Gaudentius's catechesis, however, did more than assuage the anxious consciences of wealthy elites. In his paschal homilies, we see how Gaudentius sought to shape the Christian identity of neophytes by presenting a new Christian vision of the cosmos. Gaudentius contrasts traditional Roman rituals, especially those associated with commemorating the dead, the *parentalia*, with the pure rites of the Christian faith.[23] In

[19] Gaudentius, *tract.* praef.1–7 (CSEL 68:3–4; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 36–37).

[20] Gaudentius, *tract.* praef.22 (CSEL 68:6; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 40): non malitiose, sed prouidenter te fecit deus diuitem, ut per opera misericordiae inuenires peccatorum tuorum uulneribus medicinam.

[21] Gaudentius, *tract.* praef.2 (CSEL 68:3; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 36): Nostri namque temporis regina Iezabel, Arrianae perfidiae patrona simul ac socia, cum beatissimum persequeretur Ambrosium, ecclesiae Mediolanensis antistitem. Te quoque, ea tempestate magistrum memoriae, oblitum salutaris fidei arbitrata contra catholicas dictare ecclesias compellebat; quod ne faceres, ultro et promotionis pollicitae dignitatem et ambitionem saeculi gloriam que mundanam pro dei gloria contempsisti, magis eligens priuatus uiuere quam mortuus militare.

[22] Lizzi Testa, "Ambrose's Contemporaries," 166–67; Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 142–43.

[23] In the later fourth century, as Peter Brown argues, contestations about *parentalia* were less an instance of Christian elite shaming the superstition of the common people and rather an example of "rival systems of patronage" between lay and ecclesiastical elite. As family rituals, the *parentalia* put at odds the private interests of the family and the public interests of the community. Christian critiques of such rituals, in turn, served to redirect bonds of natural kinship toward the church as an ideal community, or "artificial kin group," whose "members were expected to project onto the new community a fair measure of the sense of solidarity, of the loyalties, and of the obligations that had previously been directed to the physical family." Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 31. *Parentalia* festivals, in particular, seem to have been popular in Brescia, occurring in late February, just prior to the Easter celebration, involving as many as nine days of spectacular celebrations. For epigraphic evidence in Brescia, see Fanny Dolansky, "Honouring the

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Tractatus 4, Gaudentius exhorts the neophytes to see their invitation to the feast of the Passover as a different kind of celebration – one that called them to flee the idolatry of "poisons, enchantments, pacts, falsehoods, auguries, lots, the observance of omens, and *parentalia*."[24] Should they find themselves troubled or anxious about things, they should convene at the church to sing hymns and canticles: "Let these be the works of your leisure."[25]

Rufinus of Aquileia (d. 411) was another well-traveled and learned scholar. Even more than his Brescian colleague, perhaps, Rufinus demonstrates the influence of late antique education and Nicene polemics. Rufinus's most important work for catechesis is his commentary on the baptismal creed, or symbol – the *Expositio symboli*. This text exposits the Aquileian baptismal creed for an otherwise unknown bishop named Laurentius, though it is clearly intended for the instruction of catechumens.[26] It is worth noting that, like Ambrose before him and Augustine after him, Rufinus comments on the local baptismal creed rather than the more recent ecumenical creeds. Written in the early years of the fifth century,[27] Rufinus's exposition shows the influence of Greek sources, especially Gregory of Nyssa's *Oratio catechetica* and Cyril of Jerusalem's homilies to catechumens.[28] At the same time, as Catherine Chin has noticed, Rufinus's work has a more textual and grammatical character than the more sensory, physical character of his Greek sources.

Family Dead on the Parentalia: Ceremony, Spectacle, and Memory," *Phoenix* 65, no. 1/2 (2011): 125–57 (at 148).

[24] Gaudentius, *tract.* 4.15 (CSEL 68:42; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 78, alt.): Partes enim idolatriae sunt ueneficia, praecantationes, suballigaturae, uanitates, auguria, sortes, observatio ominum, parentalia; parentalia, inquam, unde idolatriae malum extulit caput erroris.

[25] Gaudentius, *tract.* 4.17 (CSEL 68:42; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 78, alt.): haec sint otii uestri opera.

[26] Rufinus states at the beginning of the *Expositio* that his words are intended not to "exercise the minds of advanced Christians but to be adapted to the hearing of little ones in Christ and mere novices" (non tam perfectorum exercitiis digna uideantur, quam ad paruulorum in Christo et incipientium librenter auditum). Rufinus, *Symb.* 1 (CCSL 20:133; ACW 20:28).

[27] J. N. D. Kelly places it in 404 (ACW 20:9); Caroline Hammond Bammel in 400 ("The Last Ten Years of Rufinus' Life and the Date of His Move South from Aquileia," *JTS* n. s. 28 [1977]: 372–429, [at 388–89]); and Francis X. Murphy in 402 (*Rufinus of Aquileia, 345–411: His Life and Works* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1945], 179–85).

[28] Prompting Kelly to refer to the bulk Rufinus' treatise as "a rather free, drastically abbreviated presentation in Latin of St. Cyril's teaching in the *Catechetical Lectures*" (ACW 20:11).

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Rufinus, Chin argues, "insists on the fundamentally verbal nature of the creed, … presenting the creed as a text subject to typical late-ancient commentarial practice."[29] The influence of commentary practices appears in Rufinus's lengthy discussion of the apostolic origin story, especially, but also in his approach to articulating the meaning of ambiguous words or phrases and his understanding of the nature of theological reasoning about God.

The last member of our Italian band is Peter Chrysologus. Peter provides a slightly later vantage point, serving as bishop from 433 to 450 in the port city of Ravenna.[30] In 402, Emperor Honorius had moved the Western imperial seat from Milan to Ravenna.[31] Implementations of the Theodosian Code were established in Constantinople beginning in 437 and presented to the Roman senate in 438 (and so presumably took effect in Ravenna around the same time).[32] Peter had the ear of the Empress Galla Placidia, a patroness of the city who worked with the bishops to secure Ravenna as a major metropolitan city.[33] Once again, we find a Christian bishop working within new political circumstances compared to earlier figures. Attentive to these circumstances, scholars have noticed the different strategies that Peter employed to distinguish Christian and imperial identities.[34] Nathan Ristuccia has demonstrated Peter's use of legal terminology, deployed both to critique the Roman system's dependence on law and to assert the heavenly kingdom's

[29] Catherine M. Chin, "Short Words on Earth: Theological Geography in Rufinus's *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*," *JECS* 21, no. 3 (2013): 391–412 (at 396).

[30] On catechesis and the liturgy in Ravenna more generally, see Rolando Ladino, *La iniciación cristiana en San Pedro Crisólogo de Ravenna* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1969); Franco Sottocornola, *L'anno liturgico nei sermoni di Pietro Crisologo* (Cesena: Centro Stui e Richerche sulla Antica Provincia ecclesiastica Ravennate, 1973); Joseph Lemarié, "La liturgie de Ravenne au temps de Pierre Chrysologue et l'ancienne liturgie d'Aquilée," in *Antichitá Altoadriatiche XIII: Aquileia e Ravenna* (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1978): 355–73; Francesco Trisoglio, "La catechesi popolare: san Pietro Crisologo," *Rivista Lasalliana* 76, no. 1 (2009): 7–24.

[31] On Ravenna during this period, see the overview in Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[32] Nathan J. Ristuccia, "Law and Legal Documents in the Sermons of Peter Chrysologus," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4, no. 1 (2011): 124–56.

[33] In what was possibly his first sermon, Peter addressed her with all due reverence as "the mother of the Christian, eternal and faithful empire." Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 130.3 (CCSL 24B:798; FC 110:197): mater christiani perennis et fidelis imperii.

[34] On Peter's sermons, see especially the work of Alejandro Olivar, *Los sermones de san Pedro Crisdlogo: Estudio critico* (Montserrat: Abadiia de Montserrat, 1962), followed by his critical edition in CCSL 24, 24A, and 24B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975–82).

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independence from such laws.[35] Meanwhile, David Meconi has argued that Peter used deification language to distinguish ecclesial and imperial citizenship.[36] In both cases, we can appreciate the new cultural conditions of Christianity under Peter's episcopacy.

Amid the many novel conditions of the late fourth century, these Christian teachers and bishops continued to treat theological knowledge in catechesis in ways indebted to earlier practices. In particular, we will see in the writings of Zeno and Gaudentius a focus on the ways that Christian rituals and teaching subverted but also revealed the true meaning of the world. In Rufinus and Peter, we will observe a focus on both separating Christian and non-Christian ways of knowing while also showing how true knowledge of God in the world is possible through baptismal adoption.

REORDERING NATURE AND TIME: COSMOLOGICAL KNOWING IN ZENO AND GAUDENTIUS

One of the most notable features of Zeno's Easter mystagogical preaching is his poetic appropriations of pagan nature symbols. Michael Mascari has pointed to Zeno's lyrical style, which sought to "invest the diverse elements of material creation with religious meaning."[37] However, it is not simply the case that Zeno invests the material creation with religious

[35] Ristuccia notes the prominence of legal metaphors especially in the credal homilies: Chrysologus "terms the creed as a *pactum*, *placitum*, *uinculum*, *symbolum*, *cautio*, *lex*, *forma*, *ordo,* and *norma*, and these bonds are of *uita*, *salus*, *fides*, *gratia*, *confessio, spes*, and *credulitas*. . . . Out of the 430 uses of *fides* in Chrysologus, sixty-nine of these instances appear in his eight sermons on the creed, a rate approximately four times more frequent per sermon than in his non-creedal homilies." Ristuccia, "Law and Legal Documents," 152.

[36] David Meconi, "Between Empire and *Ecclesia*: Deification in Peter Chrysologus," in *Deification in the Latin Patristic Tradition*, ed. Jared Ortiz (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 190–207. Though Peter used a variety of language to speak of the Christian's realization of a divine status – God becoming man that man may become divine; divine adoption; participation (*cohaeredem* and *consortes*) – Peter avoided the language of "becoming gods" (Ps. 81:6; John 10:34). Meconi surmises that the absence of such terminology "may suggest that [Peter] did not think the members of the Ravennate court were entirely free of thinking of their salvation as a matter of independent power and self-acclaimed might" (205). The salacious Valentinian III especially may have "appeared to Peter as a possible candidate for bringing imperial apotheosis back to the emperor's cult; and this is perhaps why the bishop stayed away from calling Christians to become a *deus* or *dominus*" (206).

[37] Michael Mascari, "Zeno, Gaudentius, and Chromatius: The Dynamics of Preaching in Northern Italy (360–420)" (PhD Diss., Catholic University of America, 1996), 115.

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meaning, for the pagan conception of nature could hardly be described as "non-religious." Rather, Zeno reconfigures traditional symbols of nature and time around a particularly Christian understanding of the natural world. In this, Zeno highlights the importance of Christian baptism as a form of ritual knowledge that transforms human senses. The baptismal waters, for Zeno, have a transformative power, changing persons "from natural beings ... into true human beings, and ones who will proceed from humans into angels if the advance of years does not disfigure their infancy."[38] For Zeno, the Christian rituals not only displaced pagan practices but also unlocked true knowledge of God and the world.

An especially noteworthy illustration is *Tractatus* I.38, in which Zeno interprets the twelve zodiac signs as allegories of Christian baptism.[39] Explaining to the neophytes how, regardless of their present physical age, they have been born anew to a common spiritual age, he reveals to them "the secrets of the divine horoscope."[40] Aries and Taurus symbolize, respectively, the foundation of Christ's sacrifice as the lamb who clothes the candidates' nakedness with gleaming white wool and the mild and gentle calf whose yoke strengthens the faithful by the subduing of the flesh. Gemini and Cancer symbolize the twin testaments and the vanquishing of idolatry and vice. Leo, Virga, and Libra are Christ's death prefigured in the sleep of the lion's cub (Gen. 49:9), the incarnation from virgin's womb, which brought about Libra's equity and justice; Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Capricorn are serpentine and diabolic forces upon which the catechumen treads; finally, Aquarius is the baptism that wipes away these foes and the two Pisces are the Jews and Gentiles now made into one people. Zeno, then, does not simply deny the practice of astrology; rather, he reinterprets it according to the process of Christian initiation. Some of the signs retain negative connotations (Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Capricorn) and are interpreted as demonic forces, whereas other signs

[38] Zeno, *tract.* 2.10.2 (CCSL 22:182; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 85): Descendeit quippe gladius pius in uiscera peccatoris et uno eodemque ictu, incolumi corporis manente materia, interficit hominem ueterum, creat nouum, sacri gurgitis elemento sepelit. Et cum omnium aquarum natura sit talis, ut, cum in profundum homines susceperit uiuos, euomat mortuos, aqua nostra suscipit mortuos et euomit uiuos, ex animalibus ueros homines factos, ex hominibus in angelos transituros, si prouectus aetatis eorum infantiam non mutauerit.

[39] Zeno, *tract.* 1.38 (CCSL 22:105–6; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 69–71). For discussion of this sermon, see Jeanes, 133–35; Wolfgang Hübner, "Das Horoskop der Christen," *VC* 29 (1975): 120–37.

[40] Zeno, *tract.* 1.38.3 (CCSL 22:105; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 70): Sicut paruulis morem geram sacrique horoscopi pandam tota breuitate secreta.

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are domesticated, rendered as young animals (Aries, Taurus, and Leo). On the whole, however, this is a remarkable case in which a Christian author seeks to Christianize astrology as a form of ritual knowledge.

Another example of Zeno's cosmological knowledge is his presentation of time. He invites hearers to understand Easter as the "great day" around which the annual seasons and daily rhythm of life are ordered. Reflecting on this "marvelous logic," Zeno pictures the immortal character of Easter:

> Turning on the splendid circuit, the sacred day is borne on the four-horsed chariot of the seasons in its daily apportionment of worldly work, rich in its twelvefold exchange of horses on its entire course of the months, content with no resting place, because its course is immortality . . . . The various periods of the innumerable ages renew the cycles of time by wearing them down, and yet their circuit is always one.[41]

In this passage, Zeno seeks to show the neophytes how the twelve months of the year are gathered and ordered around the immortal, eternal day of Easter – itself viewed as both a moment in time but also signifying the eschatological day of eternal time. A similar theme occurs in another sermon on Easter, where Zeno reconfigures time according to a Christian cycle, explaining how the four seasons of the year contain an allegory of the Christian life. The sluggish winter figures those enslaved to idolatry. Spring signifies the sacred font in which the "sweet flowers" (the neophytes) come to life. Summer is the "faithful people, angelic and pure" who endure in good works. And fall is the "the place of martyrdom, in which it is not the vine's blood but the confessor's that is shed so that a blessed life may be procured by the vintage of a precious death."[42] In these examples, we see Zeno teaching catechumens a form of Christian knowledge invested in understanding the nature of time and the cosmos. Learning to envision the natural world using scriptural images is a key aspect of Zeno's pedagogy of knowledge.

A similar approach appears in the writings of Gaudentius. While Gaudentius, too, sought to disentangle Christian and traditional Roman practices, especially the feasts of *parentalia*, he also attempted to instill Christian identity by presenting Christ as the organizing logic of nature,

[41] Zeno, *tract.* 1.26 (CCSL 22:77; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 64): Specioso circulo sacer inflexus dies in mundani operis pensa quadriga temporum fertur duodenis mensum perpeti cursu mutationibus diues, nulla statione contentus, quia immortalitas eius est cursus.

[42] Zeno, *tract.* 1.33.2 (CCSL 22:84; Jeanes, *The Day Has Come*, 68–69).

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time, and the cosmos. One example, which deserves to be quoted at length, is Gaudentius's explanation of the all-encompassing scope of Christ's death and resurrection:

> At an opportune time, the Lord Jesus wanted the most blessed feast to be celebrated – after the cloud of autumn and the frigidity of winter but before the heat of summer. It is fitting, then, for the Sun of Justice, Christ, to scatter the darkness of Judaism and the rigidity of paganism before the future heat of judgment by the peaceful light of his resurrection, and to recall everything to a state of primordial rest (*tranquilli primordii*) that had been disordered in a hideous cloak by that prince of darkness. For indeed God created the world in the springtime. Indeed, it was March about which God said through Moses: "This month shall be for you the initial month; it is first of the months of the year" (Ex. 12:1–2). Now the truthful God would not say of this month that it was first unless it was first, just as he would not have called the seventh day a Sabbath unless the Lord had been first. The Son of God, therefore, through whom all things were made, revivifies the prostrate world by his own resurrection on the same day and in the same season that he himself had first created it out of nothing so that all things that are in heaven and on earth might be restored in Christ – since "from him and through him and in him are all things," as the apostle says, "to whom be glory to the ages" (Rom. 11:36).[43]

In explaining the scriptural significance of the Passover, Gaudentius renders visible for his hearers the way in which Christ appears within preconceived views of nature and time. He then shows how this fittingness stems from Christ's ultimate superiority over and structural ordering of creation. First, he allows the Passover to structure a view of time. The month of March is the most "fitting" season of the year for the Passover, since it is spring, the time of new growth and fecundity.[44] He also

[43] Gaudentius, *tract.* 1.1–3 (CSEL 68:18; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 51, alt.): Oportuno tempore dominus Iesus beatissimam festiuitatem paschae uoluit celebrari post autumni nebulam, post horrorem hiemis, ante aestatis ardorem. Oportebat enim solem iustitiae Christum et Iudaeorum caliginem et rigorem gentilium ante ardorem futuri iudicii placido resurrectionis suae lumine dimouere cuncta que in statum tranquilli primordii reuocare, quae fuerant uelamine taetro confusa ab illo principe tenebrarum. Nam ueris temperie deus condidit mundum. Martio enim mense dixit per Moysen deus: Mensis hic uobis initium mensuum, primus est in mensibus anni. Quem mensem uerax utique deus primum non diceret, nisi primus esset, sicuti septimum diem non diceret sabbatum, nisi dominicus primus esset. Filius ergo dei, per quem facta sunt omnia, eodem die eodem que tempore prostratum mundum propria resurrectione resuscitat, quo eum prius ipse crearat ex nihilo, ut omnia reformarentur in Christo, quae in caelis sunt et quae in terra sunt, quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso omnia, ut ait apostolus, ipsi gloria in saecula.

[44] This was a major theme of earlier Christian writing on the Passover, on which see Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 288–92.

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positions the Christian feast in the "first of the months," supplying a theological justification to the scriptural mandate. It is noteworthy, in a Roman context, that he not only accentuates Passover as a springtime festival but also does so in distinction from the pagan ordering of time, in which March honors Mars – the god of war and of nature – and the seventh day the Day of Saturn.[45] Second, he presents Christ's death and resurrection as initiating the world's return to a state of "primordial rest." Emphasizing the Son as both creator and redeemer, he envisions the world as lying "prostrate" (*prostratum*) under a cloak of darkness that has now been revivified by Christ. Gaudentius accentuates the unity of Christ's work in creation, both in its coming to be from nothing and in its renovation, offering a metaphysical gloss on the Pauline image of all things being "from, through, and in" Christ (Rom. 11:36).

The catechetical writings of Zeno and Gaudentius show the complexities of Christianization in the late fourth century as they sought to reconceive pagan conceptions of time and nature. From reinterpreting astrological signs as baptismal allegories to situating Easter as the pinnacle of calendrical time, Zeno and Gaudentius guided catechumens in a way of knowing God that entailed a radical re-understanding of the very nature of the world.

MYSTERY AND ADOPTION: APOPHATIC KNOWING IN RUFINUS AND PETER CHRYSOLOGUS

Rufinus and Peter present other aspects of shaping knowledge in late antique Italy, especially in their use of apophatic motifs. Both figures, I suggest, articulate for catechumens the deep mysteriousness of knowing God, without thereby positing that such knowledge is infinitely deferred. They want to chart pathways to knowing God that begin with epistemological reserve but that ultimately lead not to the negation of knowledge but its proper orientation.

In his exposition of the creed, Rufinus presents the creed as a kind of text that entails spiritual transformation in its instruction of the basic content of Christian doctrine. As Lewis Ayres has put it, "[Rufinus] wishes the text to be heard and read as ... a text whose meaning is intertwined with a spiritual ascent that it itself teaches."[46] Especially important for this task is the use of mystery language. Rufinus wants to

[45] Gaudentius, *tract.* 1.4–5 (CSEL 68:19; Boehrer, "Gaudentius of Brescia," 52).

[46] Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 337.

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teach catechumens a mode of knowing God that was commensurate with the nature of the God being taught. A good example is Rufinus's discussion of the language of fatherhood in the creed. The term *father*, he explains, is a "secret and ineffable mystery (*archanum*)" that is meant to draw our attention to the eternal generation of the Son, since one cannot be a Father without a Son.[47] Rufinus cautions against rash inquiry here, for those who "pry" are precluded from illumination.

> I would rather . . . you did not discuss how God the Father generated the Son and did not plunge too inquisitively into the depths of the mystery (*in profundi huius archanum*). There is a danger that, in prying too persistently into the brightness of inaccessible light, you may find yourself deprived of the tiny glimpse which is all the good God vouchsafes to mortals.[48]

The cautionary note, however, is not the final word. Beginning with reservation, Rufinus next outlines an approach to knowing the ineffable mysteries that proceeds by a course of analogical reasoning. The catechumen begins with a consideration of the mysteriousness of things within the created order and then proceeds to reflect on the similarities and differences with God. Rufinus suggests, for example, the distinction between human thought and speech, which are two distinctive things that nonetheless form a unity. Even on a human plane, however, the unity of these two things is mysterious – a corollary of its incorporeality. "These facts remain mysterious (*occulta*)," Rufinus writes, "because of their hiddenness from bodily sight."[49]

Rufinus appeals here to several other traditional analogies for considering unity and distinction within the Godhead: the relation between a river and its source and between the sun and its heat and light. Finally, he explains how one moves from reasoning about the mysteries of creaturely diversity-in-unity to understanding the unity of God:

> First exercise yourself in an explanation of these [the relation of word and mind, river and font, sun and light/heat], and discuss to the best of your ability things within your grasp: Then you will come to that which is more sublime . . .. Even if you can explain each of these, you must realize that the mystery (*mysterium*) of

[47] Rufinus, *symb*. 4 (CCSL 20:137; ACW 20:33, alt): Pater archani et ineffabilis sacramenti uocabulum est.

[48] Rufinus, *symb*. 4 (CCSL 20:138; ACW 20:34): Quomodo sane deus pater genuerit filium, nolo discutias nec te curiosius inseras in profundi huius archanum, ne forte dum inaccessae lucis fulgorem pertinacius perscrutaris, exiguum ipsum, qui mortalibus diuino munere concessus est, perdas adspectum.

[49] Rufinus, *symb*. 4 (CCSL 20:138; ACW 20:34): Sed si haec, quamuis in nobis et in animae nostrae substantia habeantur, tamen tanto nobis occulta uidentur, quanto et adspectui corporeo inuisibilia, de apertioribus requiramus.

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divine generation is different from and loftier than these in proportion to the way the creator is more powerful than the creatures, [the way] the artificer is more excellent than his works, and [the way] "the one who always is" is nobler than the one who began to be out of nothing.[50]

In this passage, Rufinus presents a dense mode of theological reasoning in which an analogical view of creation funds an analogical mode of knowing God. There is a similarity between creaturely and divine mysteries, and yet the divine mysteries are "loftier" precisely to the degree that God is greater than creation. Using traditional metaphors, which date at least to Tertullian, Rufinus employs mystery language (*archanum*, *occulta*, *mysterium*) to present a tight connection between ways of thinking about God and creation.[51] Through first contemplating the mysteriousness of creaturely life – both internal and external to the human person – catechumens may then progress toward knowledge of the divine. The mode of reflection itself, and not only the objects of reflection, are structured in proportion to the ontological difference between creator and creation. As the creator is more powerful and excellent than the creation, so too the mode of knowing creaturely *inuisibilia* is analogously related to knowledge of the inaccessible light. In providing this outline, Rufinus's catechesis shows the import of pro-Nicene epistemology as a guiding principle for elementary catechesis. Rufinus not only explains to new Christians what they ought to believe about God – God is, say, one nature and three persons. He also guides them in a mode of analogical thinking in which reflection on the hidden realities of creation serves as a guide to the sanctified contemplation of the "loftier" nature of God.

Rufinus returns to these themes at several points in his exposition of the creed – the generation of the Son,[52] the virgin birth,[53] the descent into

[50] Rufinus, *symb.* 4 (CCSL 20:139; ACW 20:35, alt.): Exerce te prius in horum explanatione et discute, si potes, quae habentur in manibus: et tunc ad horum sublimiora ueniemus. . . . Quod et si haec singula inuestigare potueris, scito adhuc diuinae generationis mysterium tanto esse differentius et eminentius, quanto creator creaturis potentior, quanto artifex opere suo praestantior, quanto ille qui semper est eo qui ex nihilo coepit esse, nobilior.

[51] See, e.g., Tertullian, *Prax.* 8.

[52] Rufinus, *symb.* 7 (CCSL 20:143; ACW 20:41 [listed as section 8]): Exempla non in omnibus his quorum exempla sunt, esse similia; alioquin si eadem essent omnia, iam non exempla dicerentur, sed ipsae potius res, de quibus agitur, uiderentur. nulla creatura talis esse potest, quails creator eius. . . . Et ideo recte unicus dicitur filius. Vnicus enim et solus est qui ita natus sit, nec conparationem aliquam potest habere quod unicum est, nec similitudinem substantiae in facturis suis habere potest ille qui factor est omnium.

[53] Rufinus, *symb.* 11 (CCSL 20:148; ACW 20:47 [listed as section 12]): Substantia dei, quae per omnia incorporea est, inseri corporibus uel capi ab eis principaliter non potest, nisi spirituali aliqua mediante substantia, quae capax esse diuini spiritus possit.

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hell,[54] and the difference between, as he puts it, "believing" God and "believing in" the church.[55] Throughout, Rufinus draws on grammatical techniques to expound the local baptismal creed of Aquileia according to principles of pro-Nicene theology, setting catechumens on a course of theological reflection in which they can approach the sublime mysteries of the holy Trinity with reverence and hope.

In a different idiom, Peter Chrysologus also exemplifies the use of apophatic themes in his catechesis. Peter deploys a two-part strategy in catechetical sermons on the creed and Lord's Prayer, respectively.[56] In the former, Peter emphasizes the sharp distinctions between heavenly and earthly knowledge, contrasting worldly reason and Christian faith. In the latter, however, Peter re-connects earthly and heavenly knowledge by emphasizing the Christian's deified participation in Christ through baptism. Once again, an initial epistemological reserve gives way to a more positive outlook for the possibilities of knowing God.

In his sermons on the creed, Peter draws a sharp line between Christian and non-Christian knowledge, which he articulates variously as the distinction between faith and reason or between worldly and heavenly knowledge. The effect of this language, however, is not to present Christianity as irrational or a kind of fideism but as a loftier, more divine form of knowledge. At the beginning of *sermo* 85, Peter announces that "the one who looks for faith (*fidem*) does not look for reason (*rationem*) and the one who asks for divine things puts human ones aside."[57] This is because the one born of God "transcends nature" (*transcendit naturam*)

[54] Rufinus, *symb.* 27 (CCSL 20:161; ACW 20:62 [listed as section 29]): Inferna et superna nobis dicuntur, qui certa corporis circumscriptione conclusi, intra praescriptae nobis legis terminos continemur. Deo autem, qui ubique est et nusquam deest, quid infernum est aut quid supernum?

[55] Rufinus, *symb.* 34 (CCSL 20:170; ACW 20:71–72 [listed as section 36]): In ceteris uero, ubi non de diuinitate sed de creaturis et de mysteriis sermo est, in praepositio non additur, ut dicatur: in sancta ecclesia, sed sanctam ecclesiam credendam esse, non ut deum, sed ut ecclesiam deo congregatam. . . . Hac itaque praepositionis syllaba creator a creaturis secernitur et diuina separantur ab humanis.

[56] Among Peter's extant writings, *sermones* 56–62 (on the creed), *sermones* 63–66 (on the raising of Lazarus), and *sermones* 67–72 (on the Lord's Prayer) were Lenten catechetical addresses for those approaching Easter baptism. On the manuscript tradition, see Olivar's introduction in CCSL 24, ix–lxv; and Caroline Tolton, "From Memory to Topography: The Architecture of Persuasion in the Sermons of Peter Chrysologus" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2005), 13–14.

[57] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 58.1 (CCSL 24:325; FC 109:221): Qui fidem quaerit, rationem not quaerit; qui diuina postulat; seponit humana.

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and belongs to the God who "owes nothing to time."[58] Peter warns his flock not to seek an "explanation" (*rationem*) of the faith but to "accept the faith by faith alone" (*accipite ergo fidem sola fide*).[59] Catechumens learn the creed not by writing it down on paper but by inscribing it into the soul by memory: "prepare your hearts, not a piece of paper."

> The eternal and heavenly secret cannot be entrusted to perishable, corruptible tools, but it must be placed in the storehouse of the soul itself, in the very library of the spirit within you, so that no profane investigator, nor the power of the enemy, may find anything to dissect and tear apart, for the creed was not written down but memorized carefully.[60]

At one level, this language draws on the discipline of secrecy, in which central mysteries of the Christian faith were withheld from non-believers. This construction, however, also draws on the art of memory tradition, a theme we have explored at several points thus far (and will revisit again in the next chapter on Augustine). As Caroline Tolton has argued, Peter drew on the *ars memoriandi* tradition in ways that rendered catechesis a time for forming a new memory structure upon which to build Christian knowledge.[61] Memorizing the creed is likened to an inscription and storage process, with the heart understood as a tablet organized in the "storehouse" (*arca*) or "library" (*bibliotheca*) of the soul. By inscribing the creed upon the storehouse of the soul, the catechumen is primed to build on that knowledge and allow it to progress unto greater heights.

After stressing the gulf between heavenly and earthly knowledge, Peter's catechesis next outlines the ways in which the creed yields genuine knowledge of God. The compressed nature of the credal formula entails, for Peter, that the truths concealed therein have a generative quality – like the way a "spring gushes out of a small opening and broadens out with its copious flowing waters."[62] Tolton here likens Peter's understanding of the creed to the Augustinian distinction between *signum* and *res*. For

[58] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 58.1 (CCSL 24:325; FC 109:221): Qui deo genitore nascitur, transcendit naturam; et tempori nil debet, qui temporis meretur auctorem.

[59] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 58.1 (CCSL 24:325; FC 109:221).

[60] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 58.2 (CCSL 24:325–26; FC 109:222, alt.): Quia committi non potest caducis et corruptibilibus instrumentis aeternum et caeleste secretum, sed in ipsa arca animae, in ipsa bibliotheca interni spiritus est locandum, ne profanus arbiter, ne inimici robur, quod dilaceret discussor inueniat; et fiat ad contemnentis et ad ignorantis ruinam, quod confitentis et credentis donatum est ad salutem. See also Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 56.5; 59.18; 60.18; 61.15.

[61] Tolton, "From Memory to Topography," 174–78.

[62] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 61.2 (CCSL 24:341; FC 17:112).

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Peter, she writes, "the *symbolum* does not just point upwards to the *res* that it signifies, nor does it just teach of the saving activity of Christ. In the Creed the *signum* of its physical words and the divine *res* to which they point are conjoined: The *res* is contained in the *signum*, the Creed."[63] Because the reality of the divine mysteries is contained in the creed *in nuce*, catechumens should not approach knowledge of God beyond what is appropriate for their stage of learning. Like the luminous sun that "blacks out an imprudent gazing," divine knowledge blinds the seeker if approached irreverently; the one who desires to see God, therefore, must "learn how to observe moderation in his gazing."[64] With the portion of light given in the creed, "we may set out into the darkness of the heavenly mystery, and by walking slowly we may arrive at the clarity of divine knowledge, as far as we can."[65]

If the sermons on the creed outline the gulf between heavenly and earthly knowledge and the epistemological reserve requisite for approaching the divine mysteries, Peter's sermons on the Lord's Prayer, by contrast, provide a more positive, constructive account of divine knowledge. Having curtailed presumptuous forms of knowing in the credal sermons, Peter taught catechumens in the Lord's Prayer how this gulf was overcome through their union with Christ's body in baptism through the Spirit's deifying of the flesh.[66]

Teaching the Lord's Prayer after the creed, Peter wants to show how the two are related.[67] The union with Christ available in the Lord's Prayer is premised upon the filial status granted in the creed. At the beginning of

[63] Tolton, "From Memory to Topography," 162. Elsewhere she comments: "Like Augustine, [Peter] views the Creed not only as a mnemonically helpful summary of the faith but as a saving verbal formula that actively diffuses faith through the catechumen's heart and mind. A true synecdoche, the Creed contains the entire mystery of the divinity whose faith-forming power is unleashed when the formula is pronounced aloud at the pre-baptismal *redditio*" (149).

[64] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 61.3 (CCSL 24:342; FC 17:112): Deum qui uult uidere, uisionis eius discat tenere mensuram.

[65] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 64.1 (CCSL 24A:379; FC 109:255).

[66] It is particularly instructive that a large amount of Peter's deification theology appears in the Lord's Prayer sermons for catechumens, since, as David Meconi notes, this was a fitting site for reflection on the Christian's adoptive sonship and the special privileges afforded the baptized to call upon God as their father and to explain what it meant for the divine will to be done on earth as in heaven. Meconi, "Between Empire and *Ecclesia*," 200.

[67] Peter taught both the creed and the Lord's Prayer before baptism, a practice that departed from the Milanese and some Eastern traditions of reserving the Lord's Prayer until after baptism and instead aligned with the North African practice of teaching it beforehand. Even more strongly than Augustine, Peter emphasized the metaphor of catechumens as

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sermo 71, on the Lord's Prayer, Peter invites his hearers to reflect in trinitarian terms on the adoption and spiritual transformation granted through their reception of the creed.[68] The Son's divine status entails the Christian's adoptive sonship in Christ, which allows the Christian to address God as father.[69] Belief in the Holy Spirit, meanwhile, is the means by which "the mortal substance of flesh has been transformed into the living substance of spirit, ... welcoming flesh to partake of divinity."[70] For Peter, the reception of the creed is the presupposition for praying the Lord's Prayer, which is not only a change in the Christian's status before God (no longer servants but children) but also a change in their being; fleshly nature has been transformed by the Spirit. Being made partakers of the divine nature through the Spirit's incorporation of the Christian into Christ's body, catechumens are provided a more proximate, familial knowledge of God as their father.

The familial knowledge of God afforded in the Lord's Prayer is the result, then, not just of new information but also of the ontological change brought about by the incarnation. It is here where we find Peter, having been much more reserved in reflecting on the divine generation of Christ in the creed, can now be more sanguine about the extraordinary changes to human nature in baptism.[71] Peter does not teach that human nature becomes divine. He stresses that human and divine substances remain unequal and disparate – on occasion putting this disparity as a relation of wills, not substances.[72] Nonetheless, he speaks boldly about

Christians "in utero" to justify this practice. Like John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb or Jacob in Tamar's womb, the catechumen's status as Christian is secured from the foundations of the world, entitling the catechumen to the filial privileges even before the actual "birth" at baptism. See Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 67.11; 68.11; 69.6; 70.3; 71.2. Peter also applies the metaphor in credal expositions: see *s.* 56.1–2; 58.1. For discussion of the placement of the Lord's Prayer in the liturgy, see Roy Hammerling, "The Lord's Prayer: A Cornerstone of Baptismal Education," in *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Roy Hammerling (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 167–82 (esp. 177–78).

[68] The "threefold profession of faith in the Trinity," he writes, has raised catechumens from the status of servitude to heavenly offspring and has transformed their nature from an earthly to a heavenly substance. Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 71.2 (CCSL 24A:424; FC 109:285).

[69] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 71.2 (CCSL 24A:424–25; FC 109:285).

[70] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 71.2 (CCSL 24A:424–25; FC 109:285–6, alt.): Deus spiritus carnem consortem diuinitatis adsumit; fit caelum possession terrenorum.

[71] This is also a theme he discusses beyond the catechetical sermons. See, e.g., Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 30.3; 45.5; 74.6.

[72] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 68.6 (CCSL 24A:409; FC 109:277): Beatus dies ille, qui terrenorum iungit, sociat, exaequat caelestibus uoluntates, ut inter dispares substantias una atque eadem sit uoluntas. Haec est fida pax inconcussa concordia, gratia perseuerans, quando

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the human telos as a deified transformation into godlikeness. Humanity, in its servile state, could never imagine, Peter proclaims,

> that so great an interchange [*commercium*] between heaven and earth, between flesh and God would suddenly be able to occur, that God would be turned into man that man would be turned into God, that the Lord would be turned into a servant that the servant would be turned into a son, and that in an ineffable fashion divinity and humanity would become relatives (*cognatio*) once and for all.[73]

Peter here joins a variety of images to extol the change of human nature resulting from the incarnation. The goal of the *commercium* of divinity and humanity in Christ is for human beings to be transformed from servants to sons and from humans to gods – a change that brings catechumens into the relation (*cognatio*) that now exists between humanity and divinity in Christ. Peter emphasizes that this transformed relationship occurs for catechumens because they are joined to the Son in baptism; through adoption, they are not only free from sin but also born anew, receiving a new nature that renders their previous birth into servitude no longer determinative.[74] It is a marvel, says Peter, that "the celestial nature has carried you off, such that while you are still placed within flesh and on the earth you do not now know the flesh and the earth when you say: *Our Father who art in heaven.*"[75] Such passages provide a unique contrast to the apophatic reserve spoken of when Peter taught Christ's sonship in the creed; here he proclaims the wondrous reality entailed in the adoption and new birth of baptism. For Peter, baptism divulges an unprecedented

unius domini ordine natura familias per diuersas uoluntate fit una eademque reperitur et sensu.

[73] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 72.3 (CCSL 24A:430; FC 109:293) (in full): Hoc est quod pauebam dicere, hoc est quod tremebam proferre, hoc est quod neque caelestium neque terrestrium quemquam sinebat seruitutis propriae conditio suspicari: caeli et terrae, carnis et dei repente tantum posse prouenire commercium ut deus in hominem, homo in deum, dominus in seruum, seruus uerteretur in filium, fieretque diuinitas et humanitatis ineffabili modo una et sempiterna cognatio, ac deitatis erga nos dignatio tanta esset, ut sciri nequeat quid potissimum mirari debeat creatura; utrum quod se deus ad nostrum deposuit seruitutem, an quod nos ad suae diuinitatis rapuit dignitatem.

[74] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 72.3 (CCSL 24A:431; FC 109:294): Hinc est quod, homo, te diuinitas adoriatur, quod tanto nunc tuo amore flammatur, quod adhuc in utero uoce tua te desu adoptat in filium; quod te non fieri liberum uult ille, sed nasci; quod ipsam propter te manumittit naturam, ne quem naeuum, quam tibi maculam inponat ortus pristinae seruitutis.

[75] Peter Chrysologus, *s.* 72.3 (CCSL 24A:432; FC 109:294): Quo te, homo, repente prouexit gratia, quo te rapuit caelestis natura, ut in carne et in terra positus adhuc et carnem iam nescires et terram dicendo: Pater noster qui es in caelis.

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knowledge of God, one that overcomes the great gulf between earthly and heavenly knowledge charted in earlier sermons.

CONCLUSION

The four figures surveyed in this chapter by no means display a homogeneous approach to catechesis. Besides operating with different liturgical and credal customs, their catechetical homilies show a diversity of images, rhetorical strategies, and modes of thought. They also demonstrate a sharper awareness of the increasing prominence of Christians in civic and public life, which affected not only the way bishops presented themselves but also the way they interacted with their catechumens.

Nevertheless, despite these new features, a large degree of continuity exists with earlier catechetical traditions, particularly in terms of shaping knowledge of God in light of core commitments to Christian teaching about the relation between God and creation. In preparing catechumens for baptism, Christian teachers continued to emphasize the radical alterity of Christian knowing while also presenting the world as part of God's good creation. Christians needed to make intelligible how Christian knowledge was both superior to worldly knowledge while avoiding the claim that the world itself was to be rejected as the product of a malicious demiurge. They found in the catechetical traditions a potent site for reflecting on the ways in which true knowledge of God could be discerned in and through creaturely life.

Catechesis in Northern Italy, in short, was informed not only by the many ecclesiastical and political debates of the day but also by real commitments to earlier teaching traditions. To further appreciate the unique ways that local and regional differences affected catechesis, we can now look at similar though distinct dynamics in the neighboring environs of North Africa.

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