THE SACRAMENT OF LEARNING: RECOVERING A MYSTAGOGICAL VISION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SALVATION

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by

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Abstract

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This thesis offers a sacramental account of learning through a thematic reading of the mystagogical homilies of four fourth century bishops: Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. In the initiatory practices of the fourth century, mystagogy was the portion of catechetical instruction given to explain and interpret the rites and liturgy of initiation. My reading of the mystagogies will argue that these homilies reflect a theology of learning in which the end of knowledge is to encounter and embrace God with all of the faculties given to our nature; both the humbly material and the intellective and spiritual. I will propose an analogical relation between mundane learning and the movement into the intimate and divinizing knowledge of God one receives in the sacraments. I present the mystagogues' teachings in terms of the 'capacitation' of our nature for this knowledge of God; a knowledge that becomes indistinguishable from union. The sacraments make humanity *capable* of receiving God, *chōrētikos theou*. I will demonstrate how the mystagogues understand the sacraments as a true participation in union with God here and now and how the Holy Spirit makes humanity capable of union with the divine through conformation to Christ. I will also show how mystagogy proposes a consonance and continuity between mundane learning and the sacramental formation of humanity into a creature capable of heavenly participation. These belong to one divinizing grace. And, thus, learning is primarily intelligible through its relation to salvation and *theōsis*. This account of mystagogy's 'mystery of learning' will be proposed as a remedial challenge to the impoverishments of modern conceptions of the nature and end of knowledge. The beatific end of being divinely capacitated for heavenly communion sits at the heart of the human capacity to learn.

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Statement of Copyright

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Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers Series
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, eds. Walter Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich
FOTC	Fathers of the Church series
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
MC	Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catechesis*
Montf.	Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, Montfaucon manuscripts
NPNF1	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers First Series
NPNF2	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PK	Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, Papadopoulos-Keremeas manuscripts
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
Stav.	Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, Stavronikita manuscripts
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Note on primary texts

The English translations of the mystagogical homilies that I use in the following work and the critical editions of the original languages are as follows:

Ambrose of Milan, *On the Sacraments* and *On the Mysteries*:

> Ambrose. "Sermons on the Sacraments." In *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994).
>
> Ambrose. *On the Mysteries.* Trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 10. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896).
>
> Ambroise de Milan. *des Sacraments, des Mystères, explication du symbole*. Trans. Dom Bernard Botte, *SC* 25bis (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007).

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* and *Mystagogical Catecheses*:

> Cyril of Jerusalem. *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: the Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses.* Ed. F.L. Cross, trans. R.W. Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977).
>
> NB. I have modernized the language of R. W. Church's translation throughout.
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> Cyrille de Jérusalem. *Catéchèses Mystagogiques*. Trans. Pierre Paris, ed. Auguste Piedagnel, *SC* 126 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 1966).

John Chrysostom, twelve baptismal homilies from three manuscript collections, *Stavronikita 1-8, Montfaucon 1&2,* and *Papadopoulos-Kerameus 2&3*:

> John Chrysostom. *Baptismal Instructions.* Trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963).
>
> Stavronikita ms.: Jean Chrysostome. *Huit Catéchèses Baptismales Inédites.* Trans. A. Wenger, *SC* 50 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1957).
>
> Papadopoulos-Kerameus ms.: Jean Chrysostome. *Trois Catéchèses Baptismales.* Ed. Auguste Piedagnel and Louis Doutreleau, *SC* 366, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 1990).
>
> Montfaucon ms.: John Chrysostom, Ad Illuminandos Catechesis I, II: *Κατηχησις Πρωτη, Δευτερα,* in Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus - Series Graeca,* Vol. 49 (PG 49).

Theodore of Mopsuestia, six mystagogical homilies:

> *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, trans. Alphonse Mingana, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009).
>
> *Les Catechetiques de Théodore de Mopsueste,* trad. Raymond Tonneau, O.P. and Robert Devreesse (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1949)

Introduction

A theology of learning: *homo capax dei*

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
John 17:3

This thesis offers a constructive theology of learning through a thematic reading of the mystagogical homilies of four fourth century bishops: Ambrose of Milan (339-397), Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386), John Chrysostom of Constantinople (347-407), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428). My investigation explores the question of what it means *to learn* in light of the end of knowing God and sharing in divine, eternal life. I seek to articulate and recover a mystagogical sensibility, drawn from and building upon the theological pedagogies of these four catechists, which understands learning soteriologically: as intelligible within the wider grace of salvation and *theōsis*. This theology of learning envisions earthly knowledge in relation to the broader reality of divine providence that draws all of creation toward its end in God.

In Jesus' high priestly prayer, He says, 'this is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). From the beginning, Christianity has conceived of knowledge of God as something much deeper and more intimate than the mere accumulation of information. In the early centuries of the church, Christian initiation was known as 'illumination' or 'enlightenment'. And yet, the enlightenment that mystagogy envisions bears little resemblance to the rationalist vision of knowledge and learning that we have inherited in the modern period. The Christian pursuit of illumination and eternal life observed in the sacraments of initiation and in mystagogy departs markedly from the intellectualized vision of salvation offered in the competing religious philosophies of the mystagogues' day. Christian illumination was something wholly other than the Gnostic promise of secret knowledge, for instance, or the Manichaean flight from matter.

What we find in mystagogy is an account of the knowledge of God that is eternal life in which humanity is suffused with God's presence, down through every last point of relational receptivity belonging to our nature; from the intellective and spiritual down through the humbly material. We can see this in the fact that Christians gathered to seek this knowledge and life not only in 'the Apostle's teaching', but also through liturgy and sacrament: 'in the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:42). They gathered in communities of fellowship, worship, and ritual, to adore the incarnated, resurrected, and ascended God in Christ, and to come into union with Him in the ruddy simplicity and humility of matter; in water, oil, and bread and wine. They sought to come to know and commune with the true, the holy, and the ultimate through the noble humility of creation and embodiment.

At the same time, the journey toward God through worship and ritual was not devoid of the discursive. In the early church, those coming to faith underwent a rigorous process of catechumenal preparation which included a thorough instruction in the doctrines of the church, an education in the Scriptures, and a separate catechesis explaining the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. This latter teaching is the mystagogy, and it is in light of the mystagogies of the catechist-bishops of the fourth century that I propose to construct a theology of learning. A particular sensitivity to the Christological and divinizing nature of pedagogy rests close to the surface of their explicit catechesis on the sacraments, and I seek to draw this sensibility to the fore. The argument I offer, as I trace through the mystagogies is, in a way, a theological contemplation on the subjunctive clause in Jesus' high priestly prayer: 'that they *may know you*, Father, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent'.[1] It is a thesis about our *capacity* and *capacitation* for that knowledge; about our movement through that subjunctive into its fulfilment – 'this is eternal life' – and how both the order of creaturely life, of materiality and embodiment, and the order of the human intellect are coherently drawn into this grace of

[1] ἵνα γινώσκωσι σὲ.

capacitation.[2] I propose to consider the salvific movement toward the intimate knowledge of and union with God, and the divinizing movement of Christian 'illumination' that mystagogy reflects on, in terms of *learning.*

One would be forgiven if the proposal to analogize *theōsis* with the notion of learning sparks an immediate dis-ease in the modern reader. What surely comes to mind when we hear the word 'learning' today – formed as we are in the patrimony of modernity[3] – departs fundamentally from the participative, theological vision of learning and knowing *in* which, and *out of* which, the mystagogues preached their homilies. And, thus, a corollary of my argument will, I hope, be a certain rehabilitation of our understanding of learning in light of the true end of knowledge, namely union with Christ. Mystagogy promotes a vision of knowledge and learning in which *to know* is not to accumulate information, but to come into the intimate communion with God that gathers and fulfils the order of creation, including the order of our human nature. My reading of the mystagogues' teachings on the sacraments will highlight particular intuitions and emphases that gesture toward this integrative and holistic vision of learning, embodiment, and *theōsis*. And, through a constructive engagement with these patristic texts, I will argue that all learning – from the rudimentary knowing of sensation, through the discursive knowledge of the intellect, and the intimate, spiritual knowing of Christ in the sacraments – belongs to one divine process of *capacitation* for union with God.

[2] I have borrowed the word 'capacitation' from David Fagerberg, who uses it in his discussion of asceticism in *On Liturgical Asceticism,* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), xiv-xv. Fagerberg offers an account of asceticism as 'the capacitation for liturgy'. Fagerberg, in turn, acquired the term from Paul Holmer: 'Holmer thought about the cost exacted from the subject who knows… True, certain kinds of knowledge can be stored up and handed down as repeatable propositions, but certain other kinds of knowledge must be attempted if they are to be understood. In a class he would often say, "You cannot peddle truth or happiness; what a thought cost in the first instance, it will cost in the second." Whatever it cost Augustine to understand grace, if we would really understand it and not just repeat what the textbooks have said about it. We had to be capacitated to understand – he introduced capacitate as a verb to me.'

[3] In varied constellations of Cartesian dualism, Enlightenment rationalism, empiricist materialism, and Kantian subjectivism.

A sublime intelligence

Mystagogy is an education. The mystagogue walks his hearers sequentially through the rites and liturgy of initiation, explaining their meanings in relation to Scripture, creation, doctrine, ethics, and eschatology.[4] Mystagogy is concerned with imparting knowledge, certainly. As Theodore of Mopsuestia says: ‘Indeed what can mortal words say that is worthy of immortal, heavenly and unspeakable things? It was necessary, however, to speak of them to your hearing, so that you might not remain completely ignorant of the greatness of the gift.’[5] It is immediately apparent that the knowledge that the mystagogue hopes to foster goes beyond the merely cognitive. The purpose of mystagogy does not lie merely in the passing on of an interpretive key for ‘cracking the code’ of the Christian liturgy, or ‘solving’ the mystery of the sacraments. This education is given for the purpose of plunging the learner into a greater mystery: the mystery of *theōsis*, the mystery of uniting to Christ and being transformed into His likeness. Theodore continues,

> It behoves you now to make use of an intelligence consonant with these sublime things of which you have been rendered worthy, and to think well, according to the measure of the greatness of a gift such as this, what we were and into what we have been transformed: that we were mortal by nature and we expect to receive immortality, that from being corruptible we shall become incorruptible, from passible impassible, from mutable, forever immutable… and that we shall enjoy all the good and delightful things found in heaven.[6]

Theodore expresses here a sensibility shared among all four mystagogues. Their catechesis is given in service of the divine gifts encountered and received in the sacraments. These are the gifts of salvation and divinization – or, as Theodore says, the ‘transformation’[7] of human nature into a creature who partakes in the delights of heaven and who comes to share in attributes that belong properly to God, becoming immortal, incorruptible, impassible,

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[4] Theodore and Cyril’s mystagogies also include homilies on the Lord’s Prayer.
[5] Theodore, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord’s Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, trans. Alphonse Mingana. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 115.
[6] Theodore, *Commentary*, 115.
[7] Theodore, *Commentary*, Syriac, 255. ‘into what we have been transformed’, ܘܠܡܢܐ ܫܢܝܢ, from ܫܢܐ *(šnā),* to be altered, to change, to move or depart.

immutable. Mystagogy concerns, at its heart, the *susceptibility* of our nature to this gracious change. In the space of the didactic, the space of explicit catechesis on the rites, mystagogy seeks to shape in the baptised a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2), the mind the Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), or, as Theodore says, 'an intelligence consonant with these sublime things'. To come to possess an intelligence that is 'consonant'[8] with the gracious transformation of our human nature, however, is something far beyond simply the ameliorating of ignorance. This 'intelligence', or *learning,* concerns our capacity to receive this transfiguration, to receive union with Christ and to be subject to the divine work of *theōsis*. And, in this sense, the significance of learning lies not simply in what the neophyte comes to know, but in *what they become.*

Chōrētikos theou

Learning, thus, relates closely with the space of becoming – the movement between what we are and what we will be. As such, learning is intimately related to, or even becomes indistinguishable from, *capacitation*: the capacity to receive and the capacity to change. The theme of capacitation is not explicit in the mystagogical homilies, but rather moves beneath the surface, guiding certain emphases in the mystagogues' teachings. The significance of capacitation is especially discernible in the mystagogues' attentiveness to the sensory aspects of the rites and their discussions of the empowering of our human faculties to receive Christ in the sacraments.

The idea of capacitation involves a sense of openness, acuity, and receptivity; a sense of power and clarity; and a sense of being made fitting for heavenly things. Cyril of Jerusalem's first Mystagogical Catechesis opens with a striking section that gestures toward this sensibility. Here, Cyril introduces his pedagogical and pastoral aims:

> I long ago desired, true-born and dearly beloved children of the Church, to discourse to you concerning these spiritual and heavenly Mysteries; but knowing well, that seeing is far more persuasive than hearing, I waited till this season; that finding you more open

[8] Theodore, *Commentary*, Syr. 255. ܫܘܝܐ, rt. ܫܘܐ *(šwā)*, to be equal, worthy, in agreement.

> to the influence of my words from this your experience, I might take and lead you to the brighter and more fragrant meadow of this present paradise; especially as *you have been made fit to receive the more sacred Mysteries*, having been counted worthy of divine and life-giving Baptism. It remaining therefore to dress for you a board of more perfect instruction, let us now teach you exactly about these things, that you may know the deep meaning of what was done to you on that evening of your baptism.[9]

Cyril, like Theodore, acknowledges that his role as teacher is subservient to, and cooperative with, the divine power working in the sacraments.[10] Here, we also find a reference to the *disciplina arcani*, the practice of admitting only the baptised to participate in, and have knowledge of, the sacraments of the Church.[11] In the fourth century, not only was the 'liturgy of the faithful' (the eucharistic liturgy) kept secret from the un-initiated, but the candidates undergoing baptism entered into the rites not knowing what would be done to them. While a robust curriculum of catechumenal instruction – normally a sequential explanation of the Nicene Creed – did precede the rites of initiation, instruction on the sacraments must wait until the candidates had experienced these first-hand. Only then could the neophytes understand their meaning. It is worth noting the conviction among the patristic catechists who adhered to the *disciplina arcani* (which not all did) that the sacraments themselves performed a vital function in preparing a person to receive knowledge of, and communion with, heavenly

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[9] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments,* trans. R.W. Church, ed. F.L. Cross, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), Mystagogical Catechesis 1.1, 53. I have modernized the language of R.W. Church's translation, and I will continue to do so throughout the thesis; emphasis mine. Cf. *SC* 126, 84.

[10] I do not read Cyril's language of seeing being more persuasive than hearing as simply a question of instrumentality – that Cyril is merely capitalizing on the emotional or psychological impact of 'seeing' and experiencing the rites to help his hearers accept his teaching. Cyril's language suggests that it is rather a question of an actual change in the neophyte which is brought about through the sacraments: εὐπροσαγωγοτέρους, 'finding you more open to the influence of my words' or, more literally, 'you have been brought over'; and χωρητικοὶ… κατέστητε, 'made fit to receive' or rendered (καθίσημι) receptive (χωρητικος) to heavenly mysteries.

[11] The *disciplina arcani,* 'the discipline of secrecy', is evidenced in patristic writings as early as the second century (*Didache* 8; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5 8-9; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1,7; *On First Principles* Preface, 3) as a well-established practice, persisting throughout the fourth and fifth centuries; though with varied application. For an excellent discussion of the historical emergence of the *disciplina* and its relation to the theological notion of 'mystery', see John Witty, "Rethinking the *Disciplina Arcani.*" Studia Patristica (2020).

things.[12] Among our four mystagogues, Ambrose and Cyril adhered to the practice, while the Antiochenes, Chrysostom and Theodore, included mystagogy in the pre-baptismal catechesis.[13]

The reason for the Antiochene inclusion of mystagogical teaching before baptism was not due to any notion that a rational assent or cognitive grasp of the meanings of the rites was necessary for participation in them. Chrysostom, for instance, explains that he informs the candidates of what they will experience so that they will be filled with the hope and pleasure of heavenly things.[14] And, in this, he is in company with Cyril who intends, as he says above, to set for his hearers 'a board of more perfect instruction'. The operative imagery in Cyril is not intellectual, but gastral – a τράπεζα, a table, or a feast![15] I will leave the point here, but the idea that the aim of mystagogical learning is joy and celebration, rather than information-acquisition, will be revisited throughout.

Returning to the notion of capacity, I alight upon Cyril's phrase regarding the receptivity to heavenly mysteries that, he claims, the neophytes have acquired through initiation: 'you have been made fit to receive the more sacred mysteries'.[16] The Greek reads:

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[12] Ambrose, for instance, says, 'The season now warns us to speak of the Mysteries, and to set forth the purport of the sacraments, which if we had thought it well to teach before baptism to those who were not yet initiated, we should be considered rather to have betrayed than to have portrayed the Mysteries'. Ambrose, *on the Mysteries,* NPNF2 vol. 10, 1.2.

[13] Theodore, however, appears to have reserved his explanation of the eucharist for after initiation. See the opening of Chapter V, Theodore, *Commentary,* 71.

[14] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions,* trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers (ACW) 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), homily 2, *Stavronikita* 2.28, 53-54: 'It was not idly or without purpose that I anticipated the event and instructed your loving assembly in all these matters, but I did so that you might be carried on by the wings of hope and enjoy the pleasure before you enjoy the actual benefit. I did it, too, that you might adopt a purpose worthy of the rite'. Theodore, similarly, gives his instruction, 'in order that when you have learnt what is the reason for all of them you may receive the things that take place with great love.' Theodore, *Commentary,* 17. N.B. I will cite Chrysostom's twelve homilies in the Harkins collection by their manuscripts: *Stavronikita 1-8, Montfaucon 1&2, Papadopoulos-Kerameus 2&3.*

[15] Cyril, *MC* 1.1, Greek, 12: τῶν ἐντελεστέρων δεῖ μαθημάτων παρατιθέναι τράπεζαν.

[16] NB: Pierre Paris' text and translation in *SC* 126, p. 85, excludes ἀξιοθέντες (you were accounted worthy) on grounds of its weak support in manuscript evidence. Thus, the meaning of the sentence changes subtly to read: 'since you became capable of receiving/understanding the heavenly mysteries of divine and lifegiving baptism' (my translation). This omission does change the sense and emphasis of the sentence, but it does not reduce the importance of the notion of *chōrētikos.* The birth of this new openness either to instruction or to heavenly mystery remains tied to the experience of initiation, as earlier in the paragraph Cyril says this receptivity arrives: ἐκ ταύτης λαβὼν τῆς ἑσπέρας, after these [things you experienced] in the evening. *SC* 126, p. 84.

τε καὶ χωρητικοὶ τῶν θειοτέρων κατέστητε μυστηρίων.[17] The term Cyril uses, translated by R.W. Church as 'fit to receive', is χωρητικός *(chōrētikos),* which literally means 'able to contain'. Straightforwardly, Cyril simply means to say that after initiation the neophytes were able, or rather allowed, to participate in and hear about the hidden parts of Christian worship. Though Cyril does not dwell upon the word in any deliberate way, I propose to take it as the central theme of my argument. I suggest that the greater end for which Cyril and his fellow mystagogues undertake the task of instruction is uniquely signalled in this word *chōrētikos* – being made 'fit to receive' heavenly mysteries. In initiation, one is made *capacious* toward communion with the divine*:* open, worthy, sensitive, and susceptible to the transfiguration of our nature that draws us into and fits us for union with God.

This capacitation occurs in the sacraments, which are as irrevocably tied to materiality and creatureliness as they are to Christology. The baptismal candidates 'put on Christ', recapitulate His Passion, and come into union with Him in the humble mundanity of water, oil, bread, and wine. In the liturgy, there is a sense in which all of creation is entailed in this salvific movement toward heavenly things. And, thus, the notion of capacitation also reflects upon the order and end of creatureliness and the order and end of human knowledge. And, indeed, I will argue that *chōrētikos* also signals the ordering principle, the *telos,* that underlies both learning and creation itself. I will thus claim that creaturehood, knowledge, and the particularity of mystagogical teaching, relate to each other and are intelligible within this principle. It is not, we should note, that one is *educated into* a 'fitness to receive'. As Cyril says, it is in the sacraments by which humanity is united to Christ that one is made *chōrētikos*.[18] Cyril's teaching serves the receptivity of the baptised *to that receptivity* which is a divine gift. The theology of learning that I offer will thus orient around this notion of *chōrētikos,* of being made

[17] Cyril, *MC* 1.1, 12.
[18] Cyril, *MC* 1.1, 12. 'especially as you have been made fit to receive the more sacred Mysteries, having been counted worthy of divine and life-giving Baptism'.

'fit to receive the most heavenly mysteries', and what it means for humanity to become *chōrētikos theou:* capable of receiving God.

At the root of the word *chōrētikos* is *chōra/chōros:* space or place. Although the word *chōrētikos* itself does not appear in Scripture, the roots of the later patristic considerations of capacity for the divine lie in the biblical metaphors of becoming a dwelling place or vessel of God's presence: new wineskins to hold new wine (Matt. 9:17), the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), treasure held in jars of clay (2 Cor. 4:7), the body filled with light (Matt. 6:22, Luke 11:34).[19] *Chōrētikos* featured in Greek philosophical texts, when paired with *anthrōpos,* to highlight the intellective capacity of human nature. Unlike other animals, humans have the capacity for speech and reason, being *chōrētikos logismou*.[20] While the Greek philosophical notion tended to be somewhat dualistic, focussing on the potentialities of the human intellect in opposition to the merely 'animal' faculties of the body, the early Christian understanding affirmed a sense of the noble calling of the body to receive the grace of salvation. This was expressed clearly in the eucharistic theologies of the early church and in their commitment to the doctrine of bodily resurrection.

In the second century, Irenaeus wrote concerning the 'capacity' of the flesh to receive resurrection. He argued that flesh *(sarx)* is 'capable' *(epidektikos)* of both corruption and incorruption, of life and of death,[21] and that the same flesh which God created and sustains by

[19] The verb *chōreō* does appear in Scripture. Aside from its literal usage (e.g., the ten stone jars at the wedding at Cana *containing* water for purification, or John's gospel's concluding comment that the world could not *contain* enough books to record all of Jesus' deeds), *chōreō* is related to the idea of being capable of receiving a spiritual teaching: e.g., Matt. 19:11-12, Jesus says 'he who is *able to accept* [this] should accept it'; or 2 Pe. 3:9 says that the Lord's longsuffering is not a delay of promises, but the divine desire that all may 'come to repentance' (εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι).

[20] E.g. Claudius Aelianus (175-235 AD), *de Natura Animalium* 11.2: ἄνθρωπος ζῷόν ἐστι λογικὸν καὶ νοῦ καὶ λογισμοῦ χωρητικόν, 'man is a rational animal, capable of understanding and rational thought'.

[21] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 5.12.1: 'For as the flesh is capable of corruption, so is it also of incorruption; and as it is of death, so is it also of life. These two do mutually give way to each other; and both cannot remain in the same place, but one is driven out by the other, and the presence of the one destroys that of the other. If, then, when death takes possession of a man, it drives life away from him, and proves him to be dead, much more does life, when it has obtained power over the man, drive out death, and restore him as living unto God. For if death brings mortality, why should not life, when it comes, vivify man?' Irenaeus' text uses the word *capax* in Latin, or

His wisdom is also 'capable of receiving' *(chōrētikos)* the same divine power of resurrection.[22] Origen is the first to explicitly use the term *chōrētikos theou*, and to write concerning the possibility of becoming 'capable of God'.[23] For Origen, this possibility related most intimately with contemplation and spiritual knowledge; and thus he was somewhat less positive in his estimation of the body's participation in this end.[24] The mystagogues, on the other hand, express a fundamental confidence that the body, no less than the mind or the spirit, can be made-capable of communion with God.

I do not intend to establish any textual or etymological genealogy between Irenaeus, Origen, and the mystagogues, but simply to say that the question of having, acquiring, and training one's receptivity to God was 'in the water', so to speak, for the mystagogue catechists. It serves in the present discussion not as a textual inquiry, but rather as a thematic anchor. I endeavour to show how the mystagogues concern themselves not merely with information-delivery or ritual exegesis, but with *chōrētik-izing;* with tending and guiding *all* of the faculties of our nature to receive God. My investigation will highlight the ways in which each of the mystagogues turn their teaching to this end and how mystagogy, when read in terms of divine

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epidektikos in Greek (capable of containing, capable of, or receptive; from *dektikos*, fit for receiving, and *dechomai,* to take or receive).

[22] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* 5.3.2: 'And that flesh shall also be found fit for and capable of receiving the power of God [χωρητικός ἡ σὰρξ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως] which at the beginning received the skilful touches of God.'

[23] In his treatise *On Prayer,* Origen gives a litany of Old Testament exemplars and argues that the saints can be empowered to perform the same feats in a spiritual sense and can be made 'fit to receive' the Holy Spirit through the power of Christ; Or.*or.*16.3. In his commentary on John's gospel, Origen interprets the narrative detail in the story of the raising of Lazarus, that Martha ran out to Jesus whilst Mary stayed in the house, as symbolic of their respective 'capacities' to receive Christ. Mary, who in Luke's gospel 'chose the greater part' in sitting and listening at Jesus feet, was here 'capable of His visitation', ὡς χωρητικὴ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐπιδημίας; Or.*In Joann.*xi.18 p.290.

[24] Matthew del Nevo argues that Origen's concept of spiritual knowledge involved two intertwined aspects, contemplation *(thea, theoria)* and spiritual understanding *(noein,* which was predominant, or *chorein)*. See Matthew del Nevo, "On Spiritual Knowledge", *Sydney Studies in Religion,* 2008. The notion of 'capacity' for goodness and truth is carried into the writings of both Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory of Nyssa writes concerning the capacity for virtue in *virg*.4: ὅσον ἐστι τις χωρητίκος αὐτος τε πληροῦται τῆς ἀγαθῆς ἐπιθυμίας, 'as each is capable each has this noble longing satisfied'. *Cf.* Basil *eun*.1.27. *Chōrētikos* also appears in early Trinitarian theologies, as Fiddes writes: 'Even before the technical term 'perichoresis' appeared, the idea that the persons were mutually 'in' each other and receptive and permeative of one another *(chōrētikos)* was there'. Paul S. Fiddes, *Participting in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity,* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 75.

capacitation, reveals a set of fundamentally Christian intuitions regarding creation, human nature, embodiment, and *theōsis*.

Already is there on you the savour of blessedness

While the mystagogues' catecheses are explicitly about the sacraments as those indispensable, mysterious acts whereby humanity is joined to Christ, they also contain a profound affirmation of the place of creation in that movement toward divine communion. In a way, mystagogy bears, alongside its explicit exegesis of the rites, a parallel exegesis of creation; one that reveals the created order as essentially entailed in the gift of *theōsis*. The education of mystagogy has something to say about the nature of creatureliness, no less than it has something to say about the nature of blessedness. And the mystery of learning, I suggest, resides precisely in the space *(chōra)* between. The profound sense of this entailment of creation in *theōsis* is an aspect of mystagogy that is often passed over, or altogether missed, in discussions of liturgical provenance or doctrinal development, and I intend to afford this ontological affirmation the careful attention it has generally lacked. I seek to highlight how the mystagogues' pedagogy implies that the end of capacitation for divine communion is written into the very origins and logic of creation and that creation itself and earthly knowing also, in their own ways and to the degree that belongs to them, mediate and participate in the grace of *theōsis*. The mystagogies alert us to how truly comprehensive the grace of coming-to-know God really is.

I will show how the making of humanity *chōrētikos theou* is both an extrinsic divine gift of grace, making us capable of receiving realities inestimably beyond our nature, and also an indigenous anticipation written into our natural faculties and pervading all of creation. We can see this in the unique character of mystagogical pedagogy. In the mystagogues' explanations of the sacraments, we observe the interplay between a consistent and repeated appeal to analogies from nature and the fundamental focus on Christ and the Paschal mystery.

The sacraments are explicitly and indissolubly about Christ, about His Passion and His resurrection; and yet, they are intimately about creation too, precisely because they are about Christ, by Whom, through Whom, and in Whom all things were made.

Here again, Cyril affords an emblematic phrase that captures this sensibility. Cyril's *Procatechesis,* a homily given just before initiation, opens with: 'Already is there on you the savour of blessedness, O you who are soon to be enlightened… already are you at the entrance-hall of the King's house, may you be brought into it by the King!'.[25] In this 'already', I suggest, lies the mystagogical sense of the prevenience of pedagogy; the propaedeutic heart of the created order, in which lies the rudimentary instruction of humanity through the senses of the body. This rudimentary education gives a hint, a scent or 'savour', of the *telos* of blessedness; training us to recognize, and whetting our desire for, the things of heaven.[26] My argument will trace the itinerary of mystagogy, as it interweaves the 'already' of creation and the divine work of salvation, the gift of being 'brought in by the King'. The 'already' and the 'being brought in' constitute one, gracious, divinizing reality; the latter consummating the former. In the mysteries of the church, the mystery of creation and the mystery of learning are enlisted in God's gracious work to draw all things to Himself.

Outline of the thesis

Methodology

My reading of the mystagogical texts endeavours to recover and build creatively upon the theological pedagogies of the mystagogues, in both content and form. This thesis is, therefore, not solely or primarily a work of reconstruction. Rather, I approach the mystagogies, these catechetical commentaries on the sacraments of initiation, as fitting sources within which

[25] Cyril, *Procatechesis* 1, 40.
[26] Chrysostom, *On 1 Corinthians,* NPNF1 vol. 12, homily 4.2: 'It is a mark of those who perish not to recognize the things which lead to salvation'. Chrysostom means this in the negative sense, but its converse is true – it is a mark of those who perish-not to *recognize* the things which lead to salvation.

to explore, and out of which to expound, a theological account of learning as located within the divinizing grace that spans from creation to eschaton and makes humanity *chōrētikos theou*. And this is precisely because the mystagogies are commentaries on the liturgy of initiation; commentaries on the earthly, ecclesial acts of uniting to Christ. The first object of their discourse is this union, and second the rites that mediate it. The mystagogues themselves treat the liturgy as a pedagogy oriented toward ultimate ends, toward union with Christ. They read the details of the rites, particularly details of sensation and embodiment, as invitations for extrapolative contemplations on the nature of creation, education, and salvation. This mystagogical pattern of exegeting the liturgy which embraces extrapolation and allegory – and, in this, it bears distinct similarities to patristic patterns of reading Scripture – is a formal feature of the catecheses that I endeavour to emulate. The form, or method, of mystagogy, no less than its theological content, conveys by aesthetics a sacramental (and therefore pedagogical) vision of reality. And so, just as the patristic exegetes felt free to expand theologically on the words and poetics of Scripture, and just as the mystagogues felt free to take the invitation of some detail of the rites to launch into a contemplation on divine providence, I, also, will take the invitation of various words and phrases of the mystagogies to offer a theological contemplation of my own on the sacramentality of learning.

I take these homilies, and the rites they interpret, as sources of a liturgical metaphysic in the light of which the task of theology is to be undertaken and understood. My investigation thus fits most comfortably within the modern theological tradition of *ressourcement*, having particular affinity with the movement's orientation toward the retrieval of patristic sources and the constructive re-appropriation of classical theological metaphysics.[27] I seek not only to articulate this liturgical metaphysic through my discussion of the mystagogies, but also to bring

[27] See Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); also: Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

that perspective into a critical and constructive dialogue with modern thought, especially in relation to contemporary assumptions around creation, knowledge, and learning. In this, the present thesis shares similarities with Radical Orthodoxy's discourse of retrieval and critique, as can be found in the work of John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Peter Candler, and William Desmond, among others.[28] This thesis also engages with the growing interest among scholars in the field of Early Christian Studies in themes of embodiment, materiality, and sensation, which can be seen, for instance, in the work of Wendy Mayer, David Grummett, Adam Serfass, and Georgia Frank.[29]

Learning and the capacitation of the senses

In the mystagogies, the divine capacitation of human nature for union with God, received in the ruddy mundanity of the sacraments, robustly affirms the gracious entailment of matter in the gift of salvation and *theōsis;* and, in particular, it affirms the mediative role of the senses. Learning, as I will argue, is primarily intelligible within the grace of capacitation for union with God. And union with God is a *consummation* our humanity – even and especially our bodiliness – rather than an escape from it. Thus, I will read the initiation journey through the sacraments toward Christ as a heuristic for the journey toward knowledge, revealing the theological nature and end of learning. I will present the theology of learning that the mystagogies offer, where the embrace of God penetrates through the entire order of our nature, as a capacitation of the senses for the 'most sacred mysteries'. I will read the mystagogical

[28] The seminal text of the movement is the collection of essays, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology,* eds. John Milbank, Graham Ward, Catherine Pickstock, (London: Routledge, 1999). See also the following works of critical retrieval: John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* (London: Routledge, 2001); Catherine Pickstock, *Ascending Numbers: Augustine's de Musica and the Western Tradition,* (London: Routledge, 1998); Peter Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); and the edited volume *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community,* eds. Lewis Ayers and Gareth Jones, (London: Routledge, 1998).

[29] See Chris de Wet and Wendy Mayer, eds., *Revisioning John Chrysostom: new approaches, new perspectives,* (Boston: Brill, 2019); also Wendy Mayer, 'Training the Soul, Embracing the Body: John Chrysostom and Embodied Mystagogy', paper delivered at the Third International Congress on Early Christian Mystagogy and the Body, Netherlands Centre for Patristic Research, Utrecht, 2017, cited with permission; David Grumett, *Material Eucharist,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Georgia Frank, '"Taste and See": The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century,' *Church History* Vol. 70. Issue 4., (Dec. 2001).

progression through the rites alongside a parallel progression through the capacitation of our human faculties.[30] My argument will not focus solely upon the physical senses but will consider more broadly the transfiguration of *all* our capacities as human beings – those of the body and the intellect. There are four 'faculties' that will serves as themes in the first four chapters of the thesis: hearing, speech, sight, and touch. I will explore these in terms of their literal, embodied order and also in the ways in which they symbolize intellective knowledge. These will be paired with four stages of initiation: the pre-baptismal rite of the Opening, the renunciation and adherence, baptism and anointing, and, finally, the eucharist.

Chapter One considers the capacitation of hearing and explores this in light of a pre-baptismal rite called the *Ephphatha*, or the Opening. This rite, found only in the Latin tradition, is performed to open the ears and mouths of the candidates, enabling them to participate in the baptismal rite, and, as Ambrose says, to hear and speak of the heavenly mysteries.[31] In this chapter, I will consider what it means for the ears to become *chōrētikos theou,* capable of receiving God. What anticipatory clues lie in the earthly order of hearing which might echo and participate in the end of hearing Christ the *Logos*? Here, I explore how hearing relates to humanity's knowledge of God and of creation. I will propose that the baptised are opened to Christ the Word not merely in an abstract, spiritualized, sense, but rather in a sacramental sense which orders even our 'ordinary' modes of hearing toward divine speech, and attunes to the eschatological. The opening of the faculty of hearing, I will argue, includes being opened and restored to the 'logocity' of being; that is, the communicative and pedagogical essence of creation which is grounded in its participation in the divine *Logos.*

[30] This is not to suggest that 'capacitation' occurs in a discreet sequence, affecting different faculties in turn, but I employ this way of reading to organize and orient my account of learning-as-*theōsis* around particular themes.
[31] Ambrose, 'Sermons on the Sacraments', 1.2-1.3, in Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 101.

In Chapter Two, I consider the capacitation of speech in relation to the rite of renunciation and adherence. I focus on Chrysostom's teaching that, through initiation, the baptizands gain a great 'confidence' or 'freedom of speech'. Here Chrysostom employs the Greek word, *parrhesia*. Chrysostom says that, in initiation, one is freed from a diabolical servitude which had rendered humanity 'unable to speak' (*aparrhesia*). The candidates renounce the devil and speak words of allegiance to Christ; and they do this with their voices and bodies in collaboration with the order of nature. In this discussion, I highlight how the capacitation of speech extends beyond the formally linguistic to include the 'speechfulness' of the body and of the wider created order. I explore the relationship between speech and truth, and show how, in liturgy, this relationship is drawn toward its fulfilment when the human *logos* is employed for words of union and words of eschatological participation.

Chapter Three considers the capacitation of sight in relation to baptism. Here, I discuss the theme of 'illumination'. In this chapter, I again draw on an emblematic phrase from Chrysostom's mystagogy. Chrysostom says that the grace given in baptism enables the illumined to see things 'as they really are', *met' akribeia* – which translates as 'with precision'. In my argument, I present illumination as, in part, the acquisition of a Christologically-anchored 'precision' of knowledge, founded in the theophanic truth of Christ, and also as the unveiling of the sacramental epiphany of creation. In my reading of the mystagogues' interpretations of the white baptismal robes, I argue that illumination involves not only an empowerment of sight and knowledge, but, ultimately, the drawing of the baptised into the divine Light of Christ itself, the divine disclosure of the Son.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the capacitation of touch in relation to the eucharist. This chapter reflects on touch as the fundamental sense, following Aristotle. In the intimate eucharistic embrace of Christ, I propose that we discover what sensation is *for*. Here, I highlight the mystagogues' preference for nuptial readings of the eucharist, arguing that this joyful and

consummatory intimacy with Christ also models the true end of knowledge. In my discussion of the epiclesis, I demonstrate how, in the mystagogues' teachings on the power of the Holy Spirit to transform the eucharistic elements into the body and blood of Christ, we encounter capacitation in terms of humanity being *made-fitting* for union with the divine.

In these first four chapters, I assemble a series of theological intuitions that mystagogy imparts concerning the order and end of creation, and the order and end of human knowing. In these, I argue, we discern the mystagogical understanding of learning. Learning, when ordered and understood theologically, becomes indistinguishable from the capacitation for heavenly mysteries. To learn is to be formed, through the pedagogical graces of creation, and the salvific graces of the sacraments, into a creature that is 'capable of God', *chōrētikos theou*. The mystagogues operate out of a liturgical and sacramental metaphysic which sees coming-to-know, or learning, as intelligible only within a greater order of divine providence that suffuses and moves creation toward beatitude and which authors and consummates the indigenous capacities of creatureliness.

This sacramental, participatory, and eschatologically-oriented vision of learning diverges markedly from the ontological and epistemological commitments that dominate modern and post-modern metaphysics. Thus, the final chapter of this thesis departs from the task of retrieval, and turns to a critical consideration of modern discourse. The mystagogues' joyous valuation of the earthy order and earthly learning, and their confidence in the potential of these to be gathered into the divine work of *theōsis*, presents a challenge to the impoverished horizons of modern understandings of the mystery of learning. As such, mystagogical pedagogy can be enlisted to a salutary critique of our present context. In Chapter Five, then, I will position mystagogy in contrast with certain modern metaphysical commitments that encumber the potential and meaning of pedagogy. I endeavour to address prevalent assumptions regarding the *possibility* of encounter, knowledge, truth, and communion.

Contemporary approaches to creation and knowledge, I will argue, are haunted and hamstrung by the spectres of nihilism and absolute alterity. And so, though the mystagogues preached their homilies to those who were *newly-capacitated* to heavenly mysteries, I intend to bring the mystagogical perspective to bear for those who have been *in-capacitated* to mystery by the anaesthetic scepticism of modernity. This final chapter will thus take the form of a remedial critique – a 'cure of pagan maladies' for the present context.[32]

This thesis pursues something more than conceptual archaeology and reconstruction. I do not approach the mystagogies as artefacts – as repositories of evidence for historically-bound contexts, thought worlds, and people. Though the mystagogues preached their homilies from within and to hearers belonging to particular contexts, and though our four mystagogues bear and express the contingencies of their own individual regions, schools of thought, and personalities, the mystagogies all serve one, abiding reality: the mystery of salvation, met in the mysteries of the sacraments. The intent of their teaching is not simply that, on the other side of initiation and mystagogical instruction, the neophyte will have a set of ritual symbolic correspondences sufficiently lodged in their intellect. To be sure, the homilies take the form of 'explanation', but this explaining serves an end beyond cognition and assent. That end is *theōsis*, participation in God. Mystagogy seeks to furnish the journey of the baptised into that one Mystery, which traverses, gathers, and makes intelligible the meaning of creation and the end of knowledge. The essence of learning is coterminous with that journey. And its itinerary, running through the trenches of creatureliness, and encountering God in the humblest recesses to the noblest heights of the creaturely order, brings about in our nature a special kind of *capaciousness*; not one of quantity, but one of quality - the quality of *god-likeness.* That is, learning is part of the journey toward *theōsis.*

[32] Chapter Five takes its title from Theodoret's apologetic work, *A Cure of Pagan Maladies.*

It is through deification that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence;
and it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence.
Maximus the confessor, *The First Century on Love*

Chapter One

The *Ephphatha* rite and the capacitation of hearing

Introduction

As with the rite of initiation, my point of departure for constructing an account of *chōrētikos theou* commences in the ante-chamber of the baptistery on the eve of baptism. In the Latin practice, as documented in Ambrose's mystagogy, initiation begins with the rite of 'the Opening'. Here the initiating bishop recapitulates the healing miracle from Mark 7 – Christ's healing of the deaf man – by touching the baptizands' ears and nostrils and speaking the Aramaic word of healing used by Christ: '*Ephphatha'* – be opened. The *Ephphatha* is a prebaptismal rite belonging only to the Latin tradition.[1] Therefore, in this chapter I will engage primarily with Ambrose's two mystagogies, *de Sacramentis* and *de Mysteriis*, while bringing in relevant material from the other three mystagogues where appropriate. The *Ephphatha* concerns the healing, restoring, and igniting of our faculties. As such, the rite conveys an account of the ends for which our senses were created, how they relate to the *telos* of beatified humanity which the sacraments serve, and of the role of materiality and embodiment in that end. The rite is intended to 'open' the ears and mouths of the baptismal candidates. My task in the following chapter is to consider *to what* and *for what* these faculties are opened and how the *Ephphatha* rite sheds light on the capacitation of our faculties for union with God.

[1] Textual evidence for the *Ephphatha* rite commences with Ambrose in Milan in the late fourth century. However, Yarnold suggests that it may have originated as part of the prebaptismal exorcisms, which in certain traditions involved the celebrant breathing on various sense organs. For instance, the *Apostolic Tradition* 20.8 reads: 'Let him breathe on their faces and seal their foreheads and ears and noses, and let him raise them up'. See *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 18. The Egyptian rite, attested to in the *Canons of Hippolytus* (canon 19), similarly records that during the Saturday night vigil before baptism the bishop would exorcise the candidates, breathe on their faces, and sign them on the breast, forehead, ears, and nose. See Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), e-pub. 659/1649.

Ambrose's discussion of this rite is brief but fertile in meaning. Placing our starting point here will serve as the beginning strokes of a picture of what it means to become *chōrētikos theou.* Ambrose's teaching on the *Ephphatha* in *On the Sacraments* and *On the* Mysteries are as follows:

> What was it that we did on Saturday? We began with the Opening. The mysteries of the Opening were performed when the bishop touched your ears and your nostrils. What does this mean? In the gospel, when the deaf and dumb man was brought to our Lord Jesus Christ, he touched the ears and his mouth… And he said: *Ephphatha,* a Hebrew word which means 'be opened'. The reason why the [bishop] touched your ears was that they might be opened to the word and to the homily of the priest… In the gospel, our Lord touched the man's mouth because he was dumb. He was unable to speak of the heavenly mysteries: so he received from Christ the power of speech.[2] (*On the Sacraments* 1.2-3)

> Open, then, your ears, inhale the good savour of eternal life which has been breathed upon you by the grace of the sacraments; which was signified to you by us, when, celebrating the mystery of the opening, we said, *Ephphatha,* which is, Be opened, that whosoever was coming in quest of peace might know what he was asked, and be bound to remember what he answered. Christ made use of this mystery in the Gospel, as we read, when He healed him who was deaf and dumb. But He touched the mouth… that he might open his mouth with the sound of the voice given to him.[3] *On the Mysteries* 1.3-4.

Ambrose says that the 'mystery of the opening' has its archetypical instance in the healing miracle found in Mark chapter 7, in which Jesus heals a man who was deaf and suffered from a speech impediment (μογιλάλος, speaking with difficulty). Jesus healed the deaf man by putting His fingers into the ears and touching saliva to his tongue. The change from touching the mouth to the nostrils in the baptismal rite is explained by Ambrose as an accommodation for the sake of propriety as, the baptizands being both men and women, it would be untoward for the male bishop to touch women's lips. This detail is not passed over in the mystagogy as mere etiquette-logistics. The touch of the nostrils allows Ambrose to say that these beginnings

[2] Ambrose, 'Sermons on the Sacraments', 1.2-1.3, in Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 101. Yarnold notes that Ambrose's use of *sacerdos* corresponds uniformly to 'bishop' throughout these homilies (*presbyter* for priest, and *levita* for deacon). I have also here altered Yarnold's spelling of *Ephphetha,* as *Ephphatha* is closer to the Aramaic pronunciation, which is more accurately rendered as *Ethpataḥ*. Henceforward cited as Ambrose, *Sac.*

[3] Ambrose, *On the Mysteries,* In NPNF2 Vol. 10, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.), 1.3-1.4.

of initiation invite the candidates to 'inhale the good savour of eternal life' breathed through the sacraments, and that the touch to the nostrils is intended 'that you may receive the sweet fragrance of eternal goodness… and so that the full fragrance of faith and devotion may dwell in you.'[4]

My focus in this chapter is the idea of beginnings: the beginning of the initiation liturgy, the beginning of learning, and the beginning of *theōsis.* The *Ephphatha* stands both sequentially *and* epistemologically on the threshold of the sacraments that unite a person to Christ. And I suggest that we can take the capacitation of hearing as an emblematic instance of the transfiguring empowerment of all of our human faculties. On 'thresholds' – and the faculty of hearing for that matter – Cyril of Jerusalem has this to say:

> But now you are standing on the frontiers; see that you let nothing out. Not that the things spoken do not deserve telling, but the ear that hears does not deserve receiving.[5]

Cyril's warning relates to the *disciplina arcani*, which I addressed in the Introduction. What I wish to highlight here is the idea of the ear *becoming deserving* of the things which lie beyond the 'frontier' – here Cyril plays with the word 'border' (μεθορίος) to refer to the physical threshold of the baptistery, but also to suggest the spiritual frontier of salvation. Cyril says that the 'things spoken', that is, the liturgies of baptism and eucharist, are *worthy,* ἄξιος, of being spoken, but the ear needs to be *made worthy* of receiving them.[6] The liminal space of the ante-chamber, and of the beginnings of mystagogical education, is the place of embarking on a process of becoming worthy of heavenly mysteries. Worthiness, or becoming *axios,* does not primarily refer to merit. It bears more a sense of correspondence and fittingness; and it has, I suggest, an intimate affiliation with *chōrētikos.* The ordinary, everyday use of *axios* in antiquity

[4] Ambrose, *Myst.* 1.3; *Sac.* 1.3, 101. We can already see that any pedantry about strictly distinguished sense faculties is not present in Ambrose. Though the ears and mouth have priority of attention here, we can see that an opening of sensation itself is implied when Ambrose includes the inhaling and smelling of the 'good savour of eternal life' and the 'sweet fragrance of eternal goodness'.
[5] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments,* ed. F.L. Cross., trans. R.W Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1951), *Procatechesis* 12, 47.
[6] Cyril, *Procat.* 12, Greek: 8. The ears of the uninitiated are 'unworthy of receiving', ἀναξία τοῦ δέξασθαι.

comes from economics, and simply meant 'weighs the same as', hence 'worth the same as'. It is a relation between two things that unites them by some proportion or measure; a correspondence and fitting-together-ness. In the present argument, *axios* is a question of the fitting-together-ness of human nature and heavenly beatitude. *Axios*, in a mystagogical sense, concerns what in the order of our nature and in the order of creation is *already* oriented toward this heavenly relation, and how, in the sacraments, that heavenly correspondence is graciously wrought in us. Thus, my purpose in this chapter is to sketch what it means to have human hearing *made worthy*, or made *capable of receiving*, the secrets of Christian worship *and* the heavenly ends which they proclaim, embody, and inaugurate.

The first aspect of capacitated hearing to consider is that it begins with healing; with a restoration of the faculties of our nature at the hands of Christ. In the appeal to the Markan healing, it is acknowledged that we come to the mysteries not merely insufficient, but disordered by sin. That human nature should become worthy or capable of union with divinity is neither inevitable nor self-fulfilling. Underlying the practices of initiation and mystagogical instruction lies not only the end of *chōrētikos* and embrace of God, but, in light of the Christian understanding of sin and fallenness, first the need for healing and the unbending of our faculties of receiving. We have been *in-capacitated* through sin. The state of fallenness is, in one sense, a state of anaesthesia: of frustrated and dysfunctional sensitivity and receptivity. Thus, the restoration of the senses to health is a theme that features in initiation alongside the primary liturgical narrative of Christ's Passion and salvation.

Secondly, I will discuss how the opening of the senses, as we find them it in the mystagogies, maintains and promotes an intimate relation to creatureliness: to time, space, and embodiment. Becoming *chōrētikos*, though heavenly-oriented, is intimately tied to earthly realities. Indeed, becoming *chōrētikos theou*, I will suggest, includes an attunement not only to the 'heavenly mysteries' but to the mysteriousness of creation as well. The creaturely depths

to which our hearing is made sensitive is the anticipation of beatitude written into the creaturely order. Though the concrete examples of this earth-embracing feature of spiritual knowledge will be built up throughout the forthcoming chapters, my reading of the *Ephphatha* rite will allow a trace of some general characteristics. I will argue that sacramentally-capacitated hearing is associated with the ability to hear truth. Hearing is a fitting faculty to start with in the initiation liturgy for two reasons: Firstly, in Scripture, the theme of hearing occupies a place of privilege in representing humanity's relationship with God. God addresses His people, He calls the patriarchs and the prophets, the faithful harken to the word of the Lord. Secondly, because, phenomenologically, hearing is irrevocably bound to time, it provides the occasion to highlight how our capacitation for union with God meets us in the situated and the creaturely; in the mundane rhythms of life.

Lastly, I will consider the relationship between a capacitated faculty of hearing and the faculty of speech. We must not neglect the fact that in the gospel's healing account, as in the *Ephphatha* rite, hearing and speech are restored together. Far from presenting the human creature merely as a receptacle, an inert vessel, *chōrētikos* includes the capacitation of *all* human faculties. We are not only receptive; we are responsive. Thus, the *Ephphatha's* command, 'be opened', touches not only the ears, but also the voice. Christ restores our capacity to hear rightly – to hear truth, to learn – and to speak rightly out of this hearing. As such, I will end by sketching the beginnings of a mystagogical account of speaking in which the healed capacity for speech relates to our ability to name ourselves and our fellow creatures truly.[7] I will argue that epistemology is measured by doxology. True knowledge, or hearing rightly, entails 'speaking clearly' – *laleō orthōs*, as in the gospel healing (Mark 7:35 'his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly') – speaking by language which reflects the participative

[7] The bulk of my argument concerning speech, however, will be found in the following chapter on Renunciation and Adherence.

heart of creaturely ontology. The capacitation of hearing enables one to be taught by Christ through the world. Here 'to learn', as to hear, is about letting the truth in and speaking truth out.

As the sensory theme for this chapter, hearing serves as an emblem for the kind of being and knowing into which the initiate is being led, by rite and by instruction. And in this it begins to give form to what it means to become *chōrētikos theou*. On the surface, the quotations from Ambrose suggest that hearing is oriented toward, and opened for, simply the didactic aspects of mystagogy and the verbal aspects of the initiation liturgy - the things 'asked' and 'answered', as Ambrose says. However, its meaning extends far beyond a pedagogical command to 'Listen up!'. When the candidate hears the voice of the bishop in initiation, and when they sit at the feet of the mystagogue, the priestly voice speaks with Christ's voice. Their teaching and liturgical presiding participate in the deeper reality of Christ's divine creative *word,* which has the power to transform and transfigure the sinner into a creature capable of union with her Creator.

1. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment of speech

> Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.
> Mark 7:34-35
>
> καὶ ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐστέναξεν, καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· Εφφαθα, ὅ ἐστιν Διανοίχθητι· καὶ ἠνοίγησαν αὐτοῦ αἱ ἀκοαί, καὶ ἐλύθη ὁ δεσμὸς τῆς γλώσσης αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλει ὀρθῶς·[8] (SBLGNT)

I begin with a reflection on the physiological link between hearing and speaking. We must establish an account of the spiritual malady in order to grasp the implications of the

[8] 'Plainly', *orthōs,* does not mean only 'directly' or 'clearly'. ὀρθῶς has a semantic range which includes the idea of 'rightly' or 'uprightly' e.g. Plu.2.166e - ὄρθωσις λόγων καὶ ἔργων, the proper guiding of speech and work. NT usage: *orthōs* appears in Luke's gospel when Jesus commends an interlocutor's understanding of his teaching, Luke 7:43 "You have judged correctly." Cf. Luke 10:28, 20:21.

liturgical remedy. One whose hearing is impaired will, as a result, to greater and lesser degrees, have a speech impediment. Deafness as a metaphor reflects the phenomenon of *echo* in the negative sense: it is the dampening of the capacity to perceive exterior sounds and, where there is some perception of sound, it is the unbalanced excess of one's own muffled voice. It is an excess of internality; and this partial and truncated hearing is what makes the speech of a person experiencing these conditions more or less unclear.[9] Deafness prevents one from hearing with clarity the world, the words of others, and the words of the self. The relationship between hearing and speaking metaphorizes the relationship between experience, or meeting the world by sense and intellect, and knowledge.

In light of the mystagogues' propensity to allegorize bodily ailments as images of spiritual impediment, we may think about deafness as an analogy for the effects of sin: humanity's auditory horizon, as a symbol of our openness to the world and the voice of God, is closed in on itself.[10] We could say this another way: sinful Man is *homo incurvatus in se*; his relationality and sensitivity are contracted and impoverished.[11] This is a universal condition of fallen humanity; not all suffer from physical deafness, but all struggle with incapacitated spiritual ears. Given the centrality of the metaphor of hearing to express humanity's relationship with God, we could say that the first aspect of our nature which is restored to health

[9] Drawing upon medical and physical conditions as analogies for sin and fallenness, though a well-worn practice in the history of theology and homiletics, is not without its problems – the cost of which has been borne by generations of people with various disabilities. Rosamund Oates explores how, in the emphasis upon preaching and hearing emerging throughout the Reformation, Protestant preachers negotiated and challenged historical understandings of Rom. 10:17, 'faith comes by hearing'. Rosamund Oates, 'Speaking in Hands: Early Modern Preaching and Signed Languages for the Deaf', *Past & Present*, 30 October 2021.

[10] As we will see further on, Chrysostom reads various medical conditions, especially impairments of sight, in terms of spiritual knowledge. Ambrose, similarly, says that before baptism the candidates were 'blind of heart'.

[11] Here I draw upon Matt Jenson's work in *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on homo incurvatus in se*, (London: T&T Clark, Continuum, 2006), in which he discusses sin as a form of noxious internality. Jenson notes that though the term *incurvatus in se* is attributed first to Augustine, it does not appear verbatim as a definition of sin in Augustine's works. The maxim rather encapsulates Augustine's hamartiology. Augustine, he notes, thinks of sin primarily in relation to pride, and pride is where the metaphor of 'incurvature' is most prominently displayed. Jenson looks particularly to Book 14 of *The City of God* to explore the pathology of incurvature. It is Luther, Jenson, remarks who 'radicalizes' the Augustinian hamartiology. Jenson draws upon Eberhard Jüngel's description of sin as 'the urge towards relationlessness and dissociation', or, as Jenson says 'an insidious gravitational force' which twists our constitutive human relationships (Introduction, p. 2).

and function in the *Ephphatha* is the unbending of the spiritual, ontological, and epistemological *incurvature* caused by sin.

The incurvature of fallenness affects humanity's relation to God, our relation to creation, and our relation to knowledge. It manifests in the estrangement of creatures from each other and from their fraternity in a shared origin and end in God the Creator – what I will style further on as the harmonious melodies of creation. Deafness frustrates the kinship between creatures, and this relates to knowledge. When we struggle to 'hear' creation's truth, especially the ontological truth which unites all creatures, we have also failed to *know* them. This deafness toward creation is an internality that promulgates a dis-integrated ontology – an account of reality riddled with dissociation and autonomy, and one that impedes our perception of the intimacy between natures *and* between nature and grace. In the incurvature of sin, our understanding of our own humanity is equally impoverished. Here, deafness lies in the disordered internality which seeks to discover the 'authentic', autonomous self. The incurvature of this kind of inward turn manifests the desire to hear one's 'own' voice alone. In both of these, our understanding of creation and ourselves seeks a 'truth' outside of the generative speech of the Creator.

A corollary of these curtailments of hearing is the incapacitation of speech. The thesis that, like the self, all 'things' and 'others' have authentic, autonomous voices – whose authenticity is measured *by their very autonomy* – goes on to suggest the insidious prohibition of speech. That is, that we should not presume to 'name' an other. Said another way, our struggle under an epistemology of deafness results in metaphysical *mogilalos,* 'speaking with difficulty', to use the Greek term from Mark's gospel to describe the afflicted man's speech. It is the inability to hear the ontological voice of creation that speaks of its origin and end, and the inability to heed the invitation to a shared song of praise and thanksgiving.

I suggest that the autonomy sought in the paradigm of deafness and the incurvature of sin, the power of *self-speech,* relates to the temptation in Genesis. The temptation of the serpent's speech to Eve, that she should *be* and *know* like God – but apart from God – and the suggestion that the integrity of human nature is fulfilled when the goods of being and knowledge are gained through autonomous human power, is the empty echo of isolation. Hearing ordered toward God, on the other hand, is the condition of true knowledge; it is the condition of knowledge of the self, of fellow creatures, and of the glorious end offered in Christ. The *Ephphatha* rite stands at the beginning of the sacramental restoration of the capacity to hear and speak a truth which demolishes the isolation and contraction of this sin.

The *Ephphatha* commences the *chōrētik-izing* of our nature in initiation through an opening of the human powers of perception to a Christological and teleological sensitivity. The truth for which hearing was intended is the 'sound' or 'word' of creation moving toward an eschatological beatitude. The healing of this faculty does not simply mean the conceptual assent to a certain ontology. But rather this knowing, styled as hearing, restored to its purpose, is part of our deified, beatified nature. Our kinship with creation is enlivened – and hearing creation rightly, here and now, becomes enveloped into the heavenly doxology of the new heaven and earth. That is, we catch whispers of the harmonious order and song of creation when we use creaturely natures in the Christian liturgy, which itself stands as a foretaste and advent of heavenly eschatological realities. Ambrose speaks the healing word, *'Ephphatha'*, to the Milanese baptizands because he is about to conduct a symphony in which humble creatures like water, oil, bread, wine, and human bodies, become creatures that receive and bear the paschal song and partake in heavenly praise.

2. The mystery of the Opening was performed when the bishop touched your ears

2.1 The mystery of the Opening

When Ambrose introduces the *Ephphatha* rite, he says Christ 'made use of this mystery' (NPNF's translation), or Christ 'celebrated', or 'performed', this mystery: *hoc mysterium celebravit Christus*.[12] Ambrose seems to suggest that the healing Christ brought to the deaf man in the region of the Decapolis was a manifestation and an emblem of a greater mystery. Ambrose's language implies also that the pre-baptismal rite is not so much imitative of the healing event, but rather continuous with this broader *mysterium* of divine healing: a sacramental manifestation of Christ's eternal power to heal humanity and bring salvation: an appearance of Christ the Physician.

The pattern of reading Christ's healing miracles as signs of the divine work of salvation is firmly established in patristic exegesis.[13] Lactantius (250-325), for instance, interprets a litany of Christ's healings as prophetic inaugurations of the divine saving work to open all of the faculties of our nature to God and to salvation:

> He opened the ears of the deaf. It is plain that this divine power did not limit its exercise to this point; but He declared that it would shortly come to pass, that they who were destitute of the truth would both hear and understand the divine words of God… He loosed the tongues of the dumb, so that they spoke plainly… For when the tongue has begun to speak truth – that is, to set forth the excellency and majesty of the one God – then only does it discharge the office of its nature. [14]

[12] Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*, NPNF2 vol.10. Ambrose, *de Myst.* 2.7, in *SC* 25 bis, trans. Dom Bernard Botte (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 156. *Celebro* can also mean to make known or proclaim.
[13] E.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, v.12: 'For the Maker of all things, the Word of God, who did also from the beginning form man, when he found His handiwork impaired by wickedness, performed upon it all kinds of healing… For what was His object in healing them to their original condition, if those parts which had been healed by Him were not in a position to obtain salvation?... Or how can they maintain that the flesh is incapable of receiving the life which flows from Him, when it received healing from Him? For life is brought about through healing, and incorruption through life. He, therefore, who confers healing, the same time does also confer life; and He [who gives] life, also surrounds His own handiwork with incorruption.'
[14] Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, Bk.4.xxvi, ANF VII, 127.

Lactantius' phrase that only when the tongue speaks truth does it 'discharge the office of its nature', *tum demum officio naturae suae fungitur,* invites our attention.[15] I propose, following Lactantius, that, like the tongue, each faculty or organ of sense has an 'office of its nature', and that these 'offices' – or, for the sake of my argument, these *capacities* – lie in their relation to divine Truth. The ear must also have an office of its nature which is equally informed by its relation to the Truth. Notably, Lactantius gives the tongue's office a particular character: to set forth the excellence and majesty of the *One God*. Lactantius thus leads us to the *Shema.*

Scripture privileges hearing as a metaphor for humanity's relationship with God. And central to this biblical thematic is the great commandment given in Deut. 6:4-5 and repeated by Christ:

> *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[16] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

Ambrose also comments on the *Shema*, saying, 'the first word from God says to thee: Hear!'.[17] Hearing, theologically, lies at the beginning of true knowledge, and knowledge of truth. In other words, the ear is made for God. Throughout Scripture, hearing the voice of God features at the heart of Israel's story: In the Pentateuch God calls to Abram and Moses; at the close of the age of the Judges, God calls Samuel who will anoint the first kings of Israel; in Proverbs, God's Wisdom calls out in the streets; the prophets repeat the refrain, 'hear the word of the Lord'.[18] In the mysterious and erotic poetry of Song of Songs the *sound* of the lovers has its place in the rapturous sensoria of their union.[19] Finally, Christ's teachings, perplexing to the crowds and the religious elite, can be received, as Jesus says, by those with 'ears to hear'.[20]

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[15] Lactantius, *divin. Inst.* iv.26, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum vol. 19, 1890, 378.
[16] Or: *The Lord our God is one Lord*; *The Lord is our God, the Lord is one*; or *The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.* ESV. Most Bible translations advert to this textual ambiguity.
[17] Ambrose, *on the duties of the clergy,* I.2.7, NPNF2 vol. 10, 2.
[18] 'incline your ears' (e.g., Jeremiah 7:23-24, 11:7-10, 25:4), and Isaiah's lament over heavy or uncircumcised ears (Isa. 6:10).
[19] Song of Songs 2:8 'Listen! My Beloved!' [*lit.* an exclamation, 'the call/sound of my beloved!'], 2:14b 'Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely', 5:2 'listen, my beloved is knocking'.
[20] Matt. 11:15, 13:9, 13:15, 13:43; Mk. 4:9, 4:23, 7:16; Lk. 8:8, 14:35.

God forms His people by His call. But there is another, subtler, implicit, and ongoing sounding of God's speech and truth which we must not neglect. In Genesis, God speaks creation into being. Creatureliness originates in divine speech. In a way, to exist is to hear; to hear the word 'Be' from the One to whom being properly belongs. And to continue in existence is simply to speak out the Lordship and Oneness of God. The Oneness to be *heard* is His absolute priority as the One God, as reflected in the alternate translation of the *shema*: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone'.

The Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ sits within the tradition of the divine call. God invites, instructs, and shapes His people through His address. The thematic of 'ears to hear', especially in Jesus' teaching, is about the capacity to listen to, and *be formed by*, divine speech. The hearing faculty opened in the *Ephphatha* rite is surely opened not only to the immediate words of the initiation liturgy, but to the very voice of God as it has come to us through nature and sacred history. The *Ephphatha* rite sits at the crest of the long story of God's summons to His creation, the sounding of which rings from the first moment of creation – 'and God said let there be' – through Israel's storied history of hearing and heeding (and variously not heeding) the great commandment. The mystery of the Opening is the fulfilment, at least the sacramental beginning of the fulfilment, of the capacity to hear God's address and fulfil the true 'office' of the ears. In the Christian rite, the capacity of our nature to *attend,* to receive God through hearing, is made *chōrētikos;* it is made capable of receiving the Lord in the truth of His Oneness at the healing word of Christ.

2.2 On the place of embodiment and creation in chōrētikos theou

Ambrose says that the mystery of the Opening was performed *('celebrata', celebro)* with the episcopal touch to the ears.[21] As such, we must attend to the physicality of the rite. Ambrose's comments from later in his mystagogy are instructive on this point and demonstrate

[21] Ambrose, *de Sac.* 1.2, *SC* 25bis, 61.

the theological anthropology which underlies the significance of physicality. In the mystagogies, embodiment is highly regarded and honoured as the theatre of perceiving and receiving God; and it is not, as was common in contemporary Hellenistic philosophies and cults, something to be overcome and cast aside. In the mystagogies, as in the sacraments themselves, we find that the body and its attendant faculties are not outgrown but *fulfilled* as integral parts of the whole human nature which is invited to participate in God. In the following example, Ambrose speaks of the fulfilment of the 'faculties' or 'senses' of our nature in terms of wisdom. Here he addresses why the anointing oil is applied upon the head, Ambrose says:

> Why over your heads? Because the 'the faculties of the wise man are situated in his head', says Solomon. Wisdom without grace is inert; but when wisdom receives grace then its work begins to move toward fulfilment. This is called regeneration.[22]

The realism in Ambrose's explanation is worth noting. As part of the work of grace to regenerate human nature, and to enliven our faculties *(sensus)*, allowing them to serve the end of wisdom, the *physical head* must be covered in anointing oil.[23] A theology of the body is implied here in which humanity possesses capacities that are ordered toward receiving God, and these are simultaneously proper to our nature and also in need of the intervention of grace to fulfil their end. These capacities exceed the 'merely' physical and yet include, or even commence with, the physical. I suggest that the *Ephphatha* works in much the same way. The ears have their own unique capacity, poised for fulfilment by grace. The natural, earthly capacity for hearing communicates prophetically about the end of hearing God. The physical touch to the organ of hearing and the command from the bishop, using the words of Christ,

[22] Ambrose, *Sac.* 3.1, 120. Ambrose, *de Sac*. 3.1, SC 25 bis, 90: Quare supra caput? Quia *sensus sapientis in capite eius,* Salomon ait. Friget enim sapientia sine gratia, sed ubi gratiam acceperit sapientia, tunc opus incipit esse perfectum. Haec regeneratio dicitur. Both Yarnold and Srawley note in Ambrose's reference to Ecc. 2:14 his substitution of *sensus* (faculties or senses) for *occuli*, as found in LXX and Vul. Srawley concludes that this is in line with Ambrose's view in other works (e.g. *in Psalmi*) that *occuli* stands for, or includes, *sensus.* See, St Ambrose, *On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries,* trans. T. Thompson, ed. J.H. Srawley, (London: SPCK, 1950), 70.

[23] Ambrose exhibits a similar disposition regarding the foot-washing rite followed in the initiation practices of Milan. The foot is the embodied location of weakness to sin – the sacrament of foot-washing is intended 'that at that point where the serpent made his treacherous attack a stronger reinforcement of sanctification may be applied'. Ambrose *S*, 2.7, Thompson's translation, 75.

'*Ephphatha,* be opened', calls upon divine grace to move the ears and their natural capacity towards perfection. For Ambrose, the end of wisdom *(sapiens)* is an innate orientation of the human creature, and one for which the faculties (*sensus*) of the body have the potential to serve when gathered and transfigured by grace. The fulfilment of our faculties, as of our nature as a whole, is to be filled with grace.[24]

I have already suggested that the *Ephphatha* rite fits within the biblical thematic of hearing. As Ambrose has led us to consider wisdom, I will offer a brief comment on Wisdom's 'calling out' in the book of Proverbs. There is a sense in which our relationship with God, as expressed through the theme of hearing, clings intimately to mediation. That is, ordinary, earthly hearing is *already* attuning us to the posture of listening to God. Walter Moberly's discussion of Wisdom's personification in Proverbs reflects on how the sensitivity to God that is called 'wisdom' includes a sensitivity to His presence *in* creation. In light of Prov. 8:1-5, where Wisdom 'calls out to all the sons of men', and Prov. 3:19 which claims that The Lord 'by wisdom' founded the earth, Moberly concludes:

> [A] corollary of the world being made through wisdom is that wisdom should be seen to be in some way an inherent dimension of the world (though it is hard to find the *mot juste*). Wherever people are, Wisdom is present and is calling out to them; she is somehow there, anywhere in the world. This also means that those who learn to love wisdom are in some way engaging with the true nature of the world, with reality as it is, and conforming themselves to it; and this should bring something of the joy that characterizes wisdom's relationship with God.[25]

The transfiguration or capacitation of our hearing, far from pushing us into an esoteric enlightenment, welcomes and moves through the ruddy truth of creation that we meet, creature to creature, as much as it lifts us to heavenly heights. This suggests that the truth of creatures,

[24] This demurs from the dichotomy between nature and grace. I wish to highlight in Ambrose how the fulfilment of wisdom, which involves the physical anointing of the body, is the receiving of grace. This is different than saying that wisdom is fulfilled in the exterior application of grace upon an autonomous and chronically insufficient nature. The latter would be to emphasize the extrinsicity of grace, which must then intervene in human faculties altogether bereft of its influence prior to its descent.

[25] Walter Moberly, 'God, Wisdom, and the World: a reading of Proverbs 8', seminar lecture delivered at Durham University Theology and Ethics Research Seminar, 6 Nov. 2019. Quoted with permission.

'reality as it is' as Moberly says, is continuous in some fashion with Truth itself, or divine Wisdom. This is embodied in the physical touch to the ears by the bishop and the voices of creation that we are capacitated to hear. A sharp ear for the voices of the humble and earthly and a sensitivity to the truth of creation as uttered by God is part of what it means to become wise.

2.3 Some help from Aristotle

Wisdom, in the above quotation from Ambrose, is the name for what occurs when the faculties of a human person encounter and conform to grace: 'Wisdom without grace is inert; but when wisdom receives grace then its work begins to move toward fulfilment.' It seems that for the senses to become wise, as with the human person, a certain likeness to divine grace must be effected. In the context of the initiation rites, this occurs not in spite of, but *through* the body. We can find parallels between Ambrose's comments on the 'regenerative' effect of anointing – how in the physicality of the rite grace brings inert wisdom toward perfection – and Aristotle's theory of sensory perception. Though Ambrose does not engage with Aristotle in his catechesis, drawing in the Aristotelian understanding of perception offers a fruitful contribution to the present discussion of the *Ephphatha* rite, and also to the account of *chōrētikos* that I am constructing. What we find in Aristotle are clear categories for expressing how truth enters the soul by means of the body and the kind of change this encounter brings about. I suggest that we can appropriate Aristotle's theory as an allegory to articulate how divine grace transfigures the one who partakes in the sacraments.

Aristotle speaks of perception as an 'alteration' *(alloiōsis)* or change. For Aristotle, sensation is the interaction between the innate capacities of the senses and external objects which 'act upon' them: the senses are moved (*kineisthai*) and affected (*paschein*) by the

world.[26] Perception occurs when the soul receives the *form* (*eidos)* of a sensible object through the impression of its likeness; sensory knowledge is a process of likeness-making (*homoiōsis*).[27] The sensing faculties, according to their order *(logos)*, receive impressions *(sēmeion)* of the material world, and in some way become 'like' what they perceive.[28] In this way, the human soul meets the world through the senses and is shaped, in humble and mundane ways, by truth. For Aristotle the form of a material thing which penetrates the soul, is a kind of truth borne in the particularity of matter.[29] The change toward likeness which, for Aristotle, constituted perceptive knowledge is an echo of what occurs also in higher forms of knowledge. In Plato, for instance, knowledge of the Forms was fulfilled not in contemplation alone, but in the knower's being *made-like* the known.[30]

With Ambrose, as the Christian mystagogue, the truth received through the sensory encounter of the rites is, ultimately, the grace of Christ. If we read Ambrose's attention to physicality in his mystagogy in an Aristotelian way, we can suggest that when the senses receive the physical world in the context of the sacraments, the impression received, and the likeness produced in the soul, is that of Christ. If, as Aristotle suggests, to perceive is to *be made like* in some way, then when the senses receive grace in the sacraments the 'alteration'

[26] Aristotle, *de Anima,* 2.5 416b.33-35: 'Now perception arises, as we have said, in the animal's being moved (κινεῖσθαί) and affected (πάσχειν) – for it is held to be a kind of alteration (ἀλλοίωσίς).'
[27] Aristotle, *de Anima,* 2.5 417a.20: 'For it is what is unlike that is affected, but on being affected it becomes like what has acted on it (πεπονθὸς δ'ὅμοιόν ἐστιν).'
[28] In Aristotle's analogy of the wax seal, the body is receptive to the sensible world of matter, and the soul is capable of being impressed with the intelligible forms of matter: *de anima,* 2.12.424a, 'the sense is the recipient of the perceived forms without their matter [τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν ἄνευ τῆς ὕλης 424a.18], as the wax takes the sign [δέχεται τὸ σημεῖον] from the ring without the iron and gold… And the primary sense-organ is the thing in which this capacity (δύναμις) is located.'
[29] Aristotle, *de Anima,* 2.5 417b.22-23: 'perception in activity is of particular things (ἡ κατ' ἐνέργειαν αἴσθησις), knowledge of universals (ἡ δ' ἐπιστήμη τῶν καθόλου), which are in a way in the soul itself.'
[30] Plato suggests that the purpose of contemplation is to be conformed to the truth and stability of the eternal realities which can be discerned within the 'revolutions' of earthly realities: 'that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them… and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.' Plat., *Tim.,* trans. Benjamin Jowett, 47b-c.

brought about in the human person, in her psycho-somatic integrity, is nothing less than divinization.

What is particularly interesting about Aristotle's theory of perception is his notion of *suitability*. He suggests that for perception to occur a prevenient suitability must obtain between the sensing subject and the sensible object; a kind of compatibility. He speaks of the capacity (*dektikos)* and the power *(dunamis)* to receive the 'change' of perception.[31] Sensing is not merely a question of mechanics, but also of fittingness. The knower is, in a way, *poised* for the encounter of learning.[32] If we bring Aristotle and Ambrose's insights together, we can speak of humanity becoming *chōrētikos* in this way: The 'faculties of the wise man' have a potential capacity, an 'inert' inclination, toward grace – they are *suited* to, or poised for, receiving the impression of grace and becoming wise, becoming likened to Christ. In the earthly order, this end is foreshadowed and the fittingness educated in the ordinary, mundane exercise of our bodily faculties. The potential of our faculties is actualized, and the fittingness consummated, when grace is received – when grace *moves* and *acts upon* them, bringing about its likeness. The fittingness of our faculties and the change they await, within their very *logic (logos)* – the perceptive in Aristotle and the regenerative in Ambrose – fundamentally includes the body. What this suggests is that 'ordinary' hearing is an exercise of anticipation for hearing, and so being made like, God.

2.4 On time and eternity

Ambrose appears to imply that the perfection of wisdom is, on earth, a *process*. As he says: with the reception of grace its work *begins* to move towards fulfilment: *incipit esse*

[31] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J.A. Smith. 2.12: 'By a 'sense' is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things (424a.18 τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν) without the matter… [what it is to be perceptive] will be a formula *(λόγος)* and capacity (δύναμις*)* of what perceives.' (424a.27-28).
[32] Aristotle speaks of this in terms of 'potentiality': Aristotle, *de anima,* 2.5.417A 'It is clear that what is sensitive is only potentially, not actually' (τὸ αἰσθητικὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνεργείᾳ, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει μόνον). He charmingly compares the potential for sensation with 'combustibility': *de anima*, 2.5.417A 'The power of sense is parallel to what is combustible, for that never ignites itself spontaneously, but requires an agent which has the power of starting ignition'.

perfectum. This signals to us the inaugural sense of initiation, and yet it also signals the nobility, depth, and mysteriousness of earthly life. The E*phphatha*-ed are capacitated to encounter time and space as places of growth and becoming. Phenomenologically, our experience of hearing is sequential, tied irrevocably to time (there is no hearing a symphony 'all at once'). We *live through* sound, speech, song; hearing is a temporal embrace of the world and an invitation to join its processional nature. The *Ephphatha* is at heart, then, concerned with the capacity to hear God's call, or God's Word, from all sources of its sounding. In our creaturely context, our first and most elementary encounter with God's voice is in the created order. *For He spoke and it was created; He commanded and it stood firm* (Ps.33:9). The *Ephphatha* (in the Latin practice) is the first sacramental movement of capacitation toward union with God; and, for union, *perception* is required. This rite embodies the sacramental awakening of the capacity to hear, or perceive, God. This is a capacity which belongs to our human nature as a potentiality, it is suited and ordered to a communicative, sacramental world which is already singing a song of return, and it is enlivened by the divine power of God in the sacraments of initiation.

I have focussed above on how the healed capacity of human hearing is an embracing capacity, one which relates to the hearing of truth in all of creation. But we must also notice how the healing of the senses in the *Ephphatha,* and therefore the truth to which this capacity is attuned, irrevocably depends upon and is informed by Christ. Here we can return to the details of the Markan healing narrative: Jesus took the man aside, away from the crowd; He put His fingers in his ears, and spat and touched his tongue. This healing involved the calling of all attention to Christ's presence – the deaf man was taken aside, with Christ 'alone' ('κατ' ἰδίαν' Mk.7:33), away from the crowds. It is Christ's voice and Christ's word which marks the beginning of his restored hearing. The healing also involved an almost uncomfortable tactile intimacy, with Christ's fingers stuck into the ears and saliva touched upon the tongue. This is an act of creation, or recreation. Though not found explicitly in Ambrose's mystagogy, there

is a patristic tradition of reading Jesus' use of His hands, dirt, and spit in the healing miracles as acts of divine creative power (Cf. John 1:3, Rom. 11:36).[33] They reveal Christ's divinity by recapitulating the work of creation wherein God formed humanity out of the dust. As Ambrose says above, initiation is 'regeneration', or re-creation.

The *Ephphatha* rite retains Christ's healing command in Aramaic, and this also reveals how initiation is an eschatological capacitation – and by this I mean *of the new creation*. When Ambrose comes to speak of the eucharistic liturgy, and the point where the priest uses Christ's words in the prayer of institution, he says, 'What is this word of Christ? It is the word by which all things were made.'[34] Ambrose argues that the very words of Christ have the power of creation, and of making the recipient of the sacrament into a 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17).[35] The ears of the candidate, hearing Christ's word '*Ephphahta',* and touched physically with the hands, are the first of the bodily senses to be set loose toward their beatified calling.

3. That they might be opened to the word

3.1 The logocity of being

Ambrose says that the *Ephphatha* rite is performed that the ears 'might be opened to the word and to the homily of the priest': *ut aperirentur aures tuae ad sermonem et ad alloquium sacerdotis.*[36] Here I will consider what the ears being 'opened to the word' might include, beyond simply the immediate liturgical and catechetical discourse of initiation. I will present the *Ephphatha* in terms of a sensitivity to Christ, the *Word* of God, as mediated in the creaturely realm. This is not to suggest that the opening of the ears to the *word-ness* of creation

[33] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* ANF 1, 5.15.2: 'To that man, however, who had been blind from his birth, He gave sight, not by means of a word, but by an outward action; doing this not without a purpose, or because it so happened, but that He might show forth the hand of God, that which at the beginning had moulded man... Now the work of God is the fashioning of man. For, as the Scripture says, He made [man] by a kind of process: And the Lord took clay from the earth, and formed man. Wherefore also the Lord spat on the ground and made clay, and smeared it upon the eyes, pointing out the original fashioning [of man], how it was effected, and manifesting the hand of God to those who can understand by what [hand] man was formed out of the dust.'
[34] Ambrose, *Sac.* 4.15, 133.
[35] Ambrose, *Sac.* 4.16, 133.
[36] Ambrose, *de Sac.* 1.2, *SC* 25, 60.

holds a central priority over and against the evangelistic word of preaching or the Christological heart of the liturgy. My aim is rather to vigorously affirm the inclusion of the earthly order within the *word,* as Ambrose says the *sermo,* to which the ear is made receptive; especially as this earthly aspect tends to be neglected. I thus seek to establish the radical completeness of the *Ephphatha* healing.

It is necessary to bear in mind the significance of the Christian (Johannine and early patristic) tradition of Christ as the divine *Logos* in whom the diverse *logoi* of creation are grounded. Ambrose's text speaks of the *'sermo'* to which the ears are opened. Textually, we cannot directly equate *sermo* with *Logos;* first, because it is plainly not the immediate intent of Ambrose's explanation, and, secondly, because Ambrose uniformly translates the Johannine *Logos* with *Verbum.* However, there is something to be said for the theological significance of the word *sermo.* While, by the fourth century, *verbum* had won out as the preferred Latin translation of John's λόγος, it should be noted that the oldest Latin traditions favoured *sermo.* And this was especially due to its sense as *dialogue:* Christ as the 'eloquent discourse of God'.[37] This sense of discourse, or conversation, helped to highlight the relational, self-expressive reality of the Godhead and, as all things were created through and for Christ (Col. 1:16), it suggests that a dynamic, communicative character also marks God's creation. The cosmos is made by and for divine conversation.

When the ears are opened in the *Ephphatha* to the salvific particularity of the liturgy of initiation, I suggest that a greater consonance descends which enlists and envelops the

[37] 'In the beginning was the conversation.' See Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "*Sermo*: Reopening the Conversation On Translating Jn 1,1", *Vigiliae Christianae* 31:3, 161-168 (North-Holland Publishing Company, 1977). O'Rourke Boyle expertly tracks the parallel development of both *sermo* and *verbum,* showing that *sermo* appears as early as Tertullian and Cyprian. Its usage almost entirely declines in favour of *verbum* by the fourth century, for the sake of apologetic felicity: *verbum,* meaning a discrete word, as opposed to *sermo* which means utterance, or speech as such, could better express the finality or completeness – and so the consubstantiality and divinity – of the Son. Medieval practice, similarly, favoured *verbum* for expressing divine simplicity. Though interest in *sermo* reignited with Erasmus' translation of the New Testament (1519), the final establishment of *verbum's* primacy is cemented in the Tridentine sanction of the Vulgate.

speechfulness of the cosmos. As the candidates participate in a liturgy that mediates the salvific word through their fellow creatures, they can begin to sense the voices of creation falling into place in a song that beats toward beatitude. I will refer to this as the *logocity* of being. The affirmation of creation as disclosive of God, and missionally so, is a prominent theme of patristic thinking. As David Rylaarsdam argues, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Chrysostom all consider creation's intelligibility as part of God's 'divine remedial pedagogy'.[38] Rylaarsdam demonstrates how, in Chrysostom's account of divine pedagogy, though the ultimate clarity of God's self-revelation is found in Christ, creation itself nevertheless, in its humble language, communicates truth about God with 'precision' (ἀκριβεία).[39]

The idea of the logocity of being, and the prevalence of a pedagogical vision of nature, cannot be 'proof-texted' in Ambrose's mystagogy. Rather, my assertion that the healed ears are opened to a much greater, all encompassing, sensitivity to Christ emerges in light of the sensory and aesthetic nature of the sacraments and mystagogy themselves. The rituals of initiation unite the candidates with Christ through a harmonious oeuvre of word, matter, and spirit; no less physical than they are spiritual. The sacraments feature the voices, or songs, of particular natures at particular moments. We could say, for instance, that oil, water, bread, and wine perform solos in the salvific opera of initiation, in which the drama of Christ's work to redeem our nature and unite us to divinity is played out. In this way the fundamental speechfulness of creation is consummated when it is elevated and enveloped into the worship

[38] See Rylaarsdam's excellent presentation of Chrysostom's pedagogy as imitative of divine adaptation/accommodation (συγκατάβασις). He adverts to this theme as it appears also in Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa (see Ch.3 Chrysostom's Coherent Theology). David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[39] Rylaarsdam, *Divine Pedagogy*, 104-5. 'Despite the accommodated nature of God's revelation, corporeal things can communicate truth with precision (ἀκριβεία). Chrysostom emphasizes that even though divine συγκατάβασις means that God appears not as he is, the perceptible objects or experiences through which he reveals himself accurately imitate God's essence and therefore communicate with precision.'

which celebrates and performs our union with God. Here the logocity of being is fulfilled by becoming doxology.

Similarly, though in a more didactic frame, the mystagogues' pedagogical practice of employing analogies from the natural world to instruct their hearers in the meanings of the rites, shows the same affirmation of a harmonious creaturely overture that mediates the union of humanity to God. In their mystagogies, the language of creation and the language of liturgy and teaching harmonize. As such, the receptivity awakened in the *Ephphatha* can be said to apply not only to the explicit verbal, discursive content of the liturgy and mystagogy, but also to the ontological reality which underlies it: that all of creation speaks of God because it derives of Christ the *Logos* and is thus capable of instructing humanity concerning the end of divine communion, and even of mediating God's gift of that very end. The reason for this capacitation is to enable the neophyte to join the polyphonous song of return; hearing the *logoi* of creation is for the end of praise.

3.2 Logocity and Learning

The logocity of being has directionality. The disclosure of creaturely natures, and the Christological heart within their utterance, serve as an exhortative and instructive call to humanity. When hearing becomes listening, our relationship with the world becomes *learning.* To learn is to be shaped by the things uttered. This is our first education, the sonorous pedagogy of nature. The kind of hearing restored in the *Ephphatha* is concerned with humanity's openness to our first education as much as to the sacramental or mystagogical education. This first education is the prevenient pedagogy of the created order. To 'hear' or learn in this way is to sense the *spokenness* and *speechfulness* of the created order. Here we meet creation as language and song – and so as pedagogy and doxology. Grasping this account of the world is fundamental for understanding the mystagogues' preponderant utilization of analogies from

nature to instruct on the meaning of the sacraments and, for that matter, to understand why Christians partake of such embodied forms of worship in the first place.

Hearing calls us to apprehend the mysteriousness of the created order. It, among the senses, has a unique way of emphasizing the sacramental, and so pedagogical, depth of nature. On this point, Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* offers a poignant contemplation on the relation of hearing to time and context. Ong adverts first to the relationship of sound to time. 'Sound exists only when it is going out of existence',[40] Ong says; and yet it is precisely this contingency that gives speech a greater propensity for creating communities. Not only does sound, as speech, create communities of hearers and listeners – co-*participants* in an aural/oral event – it also, Ong argues, lends itself to the cultivation of intimacy and empathy: 'For an oral culture learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known'.[41] Ong also highlights the 'unique relationship of sound to interiority'.[42] He reflects on the phenomenology of human speech specifically, and its physiological procession from a person's bodily interior, as emblematic of orality's unique access to interior truth and meaning.

> Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups.[43]

Building on Ong's intuition about interiority, and pairing this with Chrysostom's claim that creation communicates truth about God with precision (ἀκριβεία) – a precision which does not compete with the revelation of God in Christ, but which signals the integrity of creation's relation to the Creator – I propose that there is an analogous interiority of creaturehood to which our hearing is also made capable of perceiving. The *Ephphatha* capacitates the initiate to

[40] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1982), 2002 reprint, 69.
[41] Ong, *Orality*, 45.
[42] Ong, *Orality*, 69. Ong also notes how, phenomenologically, sound reveals interiors without violating them ('destroying interiority'), as in the example of a sealed box: the interior can be met without violating its integrity through listening, while to encounter the interior with touch one must thrust their hand or finger inside, and to meet the interior with sight one must tear an opening, *technically turning insides into outsides*. pp.69-70.
[43] Ong, *Orality*, 72.

perceive the interiority of creatureliness. And, by discerning the directionality of the inner voices of creation, that is, how the *logoi* or 'words' of creatures speak of their origin in God and call the hearer to a common end in God, humanity and creation are drawn into an eschatological community, joining a conversation of return. This is liturgy.

It serves at this juncture to draw in Cyril's *Procatechesis,* as in it he also gestures toward the relationship between hearing and interiority. Cyril addresses the catechumens and, employing a rhetorical play on the Greek ἀκούω (to hear), he teaches that in initiation the Holy Spirit empowers the neophytes' capacity to hear truly.

> Look, I beseech you, how great a dignity Jesus presents to you. You were called a Catechumen *[Κατηχούμενος]*, which means, hearing *[περιηχούμενος]* with the ears, hearing *[ἀκούων]* hope, and not perceiving; hearing *[ἀκούων]* mysteries, yet not understanding: hearing *[ἀκούων]* Scriptures, yet not knowing their depth. You no longer hear *[περιηχῇ]* with the ears, but you hear within *[ἐνηχῇ]*; for the indwelling Spirit henceforth fashions your mind into a house of God. When you shall hear *[ἀκούσῃς]* what is written concerning mysteries, then you will understand, what hitherto you did not know.[44]

Cyril tells the catechumens that they will be made capable of perception (εἶδειν), of understanding (νοεῖν) mysteries, of knowing the depth (εἶδειν τὸ βάθος) of Scripture; and all of these because the Holy Spirit 'fashions the mind' (διάνοιάν σου ἐργάζεται) into a house of God. Thus, when the mind is a place of God's dwelling, and made so by the work of the Holy Spirit in initiation, the hearing faculty is capacitated to perceive the depths, to receive mystery, and to admit true knowledge. Cyril calls this transfigured and divinely empowered capacity 'hearing within'. Capacitated hearing means the awakening of a sensitivity to interiority and to depth. The inner 'depths' toward which the initiated ears are made sensitive are those of, as Cyril lists, hope, the Scriptures, the mysteries of the Church, but also – I suggest – the inner depth of creation and of the human person. These have depth insofar as they orient towards the mystery of God. Divine speech is what resounds beneath the surface. At the heart of the human

[44] Cyril, *Procat.* 6, 43-44.

capacity to hear and encounter the depth of being, however, lies a more fundamental capacitation: the Holy Spirit makes the human person (or in Cyril, the 'mind', *dianoia*) into a house of God; or, said another way, the Holy Spirit makes us capable of receiving His presence, *chōrētikos theou.* Strikingly, Cyril also suggests that in the teaching on the sacraments that he as the mystagogue will give all of the depths will align and be brought to light: 'when you hear what is written concerning the mysteries then you will understand what hitherto you did not know'. This is mystagogical learning. The vocation of hearing and the gift of its capacitation is to be opened and conformed to truth. And, if *to know* is to be transformed into a dwelling place of God, then to truly learn must, in some way, mean our knowledge conforms to divine intelligence.

3.3 Capacitated hearing and knowing like a country-bumpkin

To give greater character to this claim that the hearing and knowing enabled in the sacraments is a conformation to divine knowledge, I will draw upon a particular analogy that Catherine Pickstock explores in *Truth in Aquinas*.[45] Athough Pickstock's discussion concerns Thomas Aquinas's *de Veritate,* and is in no (explicit) way concerned with mystagogy nor the theologies and practices of the fourth century, there is a particular argument that she highlights in *de Vertitate* which helpfully brings to the surface the divinizing aspect of sacramental hearing and knowing, and its simultaneous embrace of creatureliness.[46] This is the analogy of the *rusticus,* or the 'country bumpkin'.[47] I appeal to Pickstock's discussion here primarily for its attentiveness to time and embodiment and the noble place that the earthly order is afforded in the sacramental grace of becoming *chōrētikos theou*.

[45] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* (London: Routledge, 2001). I mention only Pickstock here as she authored the chapter in which the bumpkin-discussion appears.
[46] This is not to say that *Truth in Aquinas* is un-mystagogical. In fact, though 'mystagogy' does not feature in the work, Pickstock's and Milbank's presentation of knowledge as an alignment and participation of the soul, and even the body, in the processions of the Trinity and in divine intelligence could appropriately be called both mystical and mystagogical.
[47] In a pleasing happenstance of language, the Greek word for a rustic, agrarian man of the countryside is: χωριτικός, *chōritikos.*

The *rusticus* appears in Aquinas' rebuttal to Avicenna's proposal that God knows every singular, but only universally (*de Veritate* Q.2a.5resp.). The main thrust of the argument is Aquinas' affirmation of God's direct and unmediated apprehension of His creation: God knows not only by His transcendence but with an intimate immediacy, analogised in the simple rustic and his intuitive knowledge of agrarian life. Pickstock's evocative summary of the *rusticus* reads:

> God is much more of a country bumpkin *(rusticus)* capable of a brutal direct unreflective intuition of cloddish earth, bleared and smeared with toil. For God's mind, although immaterial, is (in a mysterious way) commensurate with matter, since God creates matter. Because he can *make* matter, so also can he *know* it. This does not mean that he receives matter into Himself; He does not receive forms or species either. Rather, He knows by the one species which is His essence and knows things outside Himself entirely by His productive capacity – form and matter alike – for both are more fundamentally existence.[48]

With the bumpkin-analogy, Aquinas' concern is not to limit God's knowledge to universals alone, but to affirm an equally intimate knowledge of the particular; precisely because God is the cause and ground of being. Thus Aquinas contrasts the way the *rusticus* will, by way of example, apprehend a lunar eclipse to that of the astronomer. The astronomer represents the kind of knowledge Avicenna wanted to predicate of God – knowledge by causes and universals alone:

> An astronomer, for example, knowing all the motions of the heavens and the distances between the celestial bodies, would know every eclipse that will occur even for the next hundred years, yet he would not know any one eclipse as a distinct singular so as to have evidential knowledge that it actually exists or not – which a country bumpkin has when he sees an eclipse. (Aquinas *De Ver.* 2.5.resp.)

God knows, on the other hand, more like a *rusticus* in an intuitive, earthy, hands-dirty sort of way because He is the *maker* of all things.[49] God apprehends the very ground of creation, its deepest truth and its innumerable diversity, with ultimate precision and intimacy, with the

[48] Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* 14.

[49] Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* 14. 'For although God is pure Mind without remainder, and therefore a more spiritual kind of knower than human beings, nevertheless His knowledge is more concrete than ours. This is because when we know a thing, we cannot directly apprehend its material individuation, since, for Aquinas, following Aristotle, matter cannot enter the human intellect. The limits of one's intellect, as we know from Augustine's famous topos in the *Confessions* that to make is to know, keep pace with one's capacity to produce.'

precision and intimacy of divine self-knowledge, because God is that very ground. Here Aquinas affirms God's intimacy with creation, a fundamentally intimate knowledge beyond the capacities of creatures, while simultaneously upholding God's transcendence. *We* are the ones whose knowledge can be more aptly represented in the astronomer, because we know through abstraction.[50] And yet, Pickstock is keen to point out that in Aquinas we find a certain hope of human knowledge transcending the capacities of our nature. As Pickstock says, 'a token of bumpkinhood is not denied us'.[51] I suggest that Cyril intuits this same hope when he speaks of the Holy Spirit's 'fashioning' of the mind in the sacraments of initiation, making the inner depth of the human person into a house of God. It is this kind of knowing that, I propose, correlates with the hearing enabled in the *Ephphatha.* I suggest that this is what it means to hear the inner voice or logocity of being. To 'hear within', or to 'be opened', is to hear *with God*, and to apprehend the divine origin and end of creation's *logos*.

If we return to Cyril's idea of the ears becoming worthy, *axios,* of the mysteries, we can see that this involves a synergy of nature and grace. There is a kinship which we share by nature with our fellow creatures, both in our materiality and in our depths of logocity. The *Ephphatha* as a word of grace from Christ opens us to the intelligibility of our kinship and to our end, that is, to the sacramental and eschatological tune which pervades and unites creatureliness. As such, we can describe the pedagogical aim of mystagogy, in part, as *learning to be a rusticus;* as aspiring to this 'noble estate of bumpkinhood'.[52] By this I mean not only to apprehend, but to *commune with the logic* of creatureliness, which originates and returns to the

[50] It is important to point out that there need not preside a dualism between astronomers and bumpkins: God *knows universals,* in a way like the astronomer, but He does not know *by universals* as we do. As Pickstock says, 'of course, as a proper bumpkin, God does not need to be subject to such complex phases, for He does not know discursively or by syllogism or dialectic'. Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* 16.

[51] Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* 14. The hope of knowledge lies in the fact that the human intellect and all of creation derive of the Divine Intelligence, 17: 'there is an intrinsic *proportio* or analogy between the mind's intrinsic drive towards truth, and the way things manifest themselves, which is their mode of being true… the proportion creatively ordered by God between mind and things really and dynamically flows between them, and in receiving this proportion, and actualizing it, we come to know.'

[52] Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* 14.

Creator. To become *chōrētikos,* in terms of hearing, is an attunement to the truth of creatureliness and a sensitivity to the movement of being toward beatitude. In this hearing can become an analogical participation in the communion of the Godhead; that is, hearing can, in the nobility of its humility, participate in *theōsis*.

4. To speak of the heavenly mysteries

On the healing of the mouth, Ambrose says, 'He [the deaf and mute man] was unable to speak of the heavenly mysteries: so he received from Christ the power of speech' (*de Sacramentis* 1.3),[53] and that Christ touched his tongue in order that He 'might open his mouth with the sound of the voice given to him' (*de Mysteriis* 1.4).[54] In the following sections I will begin my account of the sacramental capacitation of the faculty of speech or, as Mark 7:35 says, the loosing of the tongue to 'speak clearly' *(laleō orthōs)*.[55] One aspect of speaking rightly as the fruit of hearing rightly is the capacity to *name*. Naming here means speaking of things, or relating to our fellow creatures, in a way that both reflects and participates in the truth which one has been capacitated to hear. As the baptismal candidate is admitted into the baptistery following the *Ephphatha* rite, marking their admittance into Christian *speech* – the liturgy – we could say that the loosed tongue is given the capacity to *liturgize*.[56] In this section, I offer a contemplation on initiation, and liturgy in general, in terms of naming the world rightly. This, I suggest, is the sacramental and mystagogical meaning of 'and he spoke clearly': καὶ ἐλάλει ὀρθῶς. The speech enabled in the *Ephphatha,* the capacity to *liturgize*, does not imply a mastering objective stance by which one circumscribes and colonizes the world through appellation. If one's ears are truly opened and have discerned in the voices of creation their

[53] *ut quia loqui non poterat sacramenta caelestia uocem acciperet a Christo.* Ambrose, *de Sac.* 1.3, *SC* 25, 60.
[54] *ut os eius infusae sono uocis aperiret.* Ambrose, *de Myst.* 1.4, *SC* 25, 156.
[55] A fuller account of capacitated speech will be addressed in Chapter Three.
[56] I use the term 'liturgize' to capture David Fagerberg's intuition that we must think about liturgy 'in more profound terms than being just one more elective activity a Christian might choose, and instead see liturgy as foundational to Christian identity.' As he says, '"To swim" is a verb, "swimmer" is the noun; "liturgy" is a verb, "Christian" is the noun. Liturgy is the verb form of "Church" and "Church" is the noun form of "liturgy."' David W. Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism,* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 1.

varied songs of praise, then the opening of the mouth through Christ's word, '*Ephphatha,'* can only mean that the hearer is set free to join the voice of *their* nature to creation's doxology. In this way, knowing is fulfilled in the response of praise; or, as I said in the introduction, epistemology is measured by doxology.

The 'power of speech' *(vocem)* given by Christ in the *Ephphatha* rite refers to the unique *vocation* of human nature. This is the vocation of liturgy: to hear the orientation and end of creation in God and to administer it through the clarity of the Church's worship and through the eschatologically-sensitive way of being and knowing into which initiation enlists us. The use of the tongue to 'name' is thus not simply a Christian predilection for predication. 'Speaking clearly' in the liturgy refers to our use of creaturely natures in ways that draw out and affirm their depth (βάθος) – the sacramentality of the created order which allows creatures to be *signs* of truth, and even *bearers* of Truth: 'This is my body'.

'Speaking clearly' also turns inward and includes, crucially, the hearing and apprehending of our own nature and speaking its true name. When we understand our name and our destiny, we can perceive and participate in the cosmic reach of the liturgy. Here I turn to Cyril and Chrysostom, both of whom offer mystagogical interpretations of the name-changes through which the initiates progress.[57] Those seeking baptism begin as *catechumens (katēchoumenoi, lit.* those being instructed, κατηχέω), and these receive the creedal catechizing of the bishop. Among the catechumenate, the number who are about to be baptized are called by Cyril the *phōtizomenoi,* 'those being illumined', while Chrysostom calls them *phōtizesthai,* 'those about to be illumined'. The newly baptised are the *neophōtisoi,* 'the newly illumined'. Finally, both Chrysostom and Cyril comment on the significance of receiving the name *pistoi,*

[57] Ambrose also makes a comment about the name faithful at the very beginning of *de Sacramentis:* 'I shall begin now to speak of the sacraments which you have received. It was not proper for me to do so before this, because, for the Christian, faith must come first. That is why, at Rome, the baptized are called the faithful… So you were baptized and came to believe. It would be impious for me to conclude otherwise. You would never have been called to grace, had not Christ judged you worthy of his grace.' Ambrose, *Sac.* 1.1, 100.

'the Faithful', once the candidates have passed through initiation and partaken of the mysteries of the faith. I will leave for the moment an exploration of the theme of illumination, passing over the names relating to '*phōtizō',* as these will be considered in relation to the eyes of faith in Chapter Three, and turn instead to the last name, *pistos,* as it bears upon the themes of hearing and speaking.

4.1 Anthrōpos and Pistos

Chrysostom's discussion of receiving the name *Faithful* offers a helpful expression of the relation between hearing and knowing a nature rightly and fulfilling this knowledge through a fitting name.

> Let us do this, therefore, and let us examine closely the names of this great gift… If you think about the common name of our race, you will receive the greatest instruction and exhortation to virtue. For we define the noun "man," [ἄνθρωπος] not as the pagan philosophers do but as Holy Scripture commands us. Man is not simply one who has the hands and feet of a man, nor only one who is rational, but one who is confident in the practice of piety and virtue [ὅστις εὐσέβειαν καὶ ἀρετὴν μετὰ παῤῥησίας ἀσκεῖ]… *Fear god, and keep his commandments, for this is all man* [Ecc. 12:13]… But if the noun "man" furnishes such an exhortation to virtue, does not the word "faithful" give a much greater one? You are called "faithful" both because you believe in God [πιστεύεις τῷ θεῷ] and have as a trust [πιστεύῃ] from Him justification, sanctity, purity of soul, filial adoption, and the kingdom of heaven.[58]

Chrysostom suggests that to apprehend our nature properly, we need to look not only to the immanently material (hands and feet), but rather to the unique mode of relatedness to God which belongs to it. *Anthrōpos,* Chrysostom argues, means a creature oriented toward piety, virtue, and the fear of the Lord. The fact that we fail to live in or embody these things does not mean that this account of the name 'Man' is wrong, but rather that we suffer from a chronic condition of inhumanity. What is noteworthy in Chrysostom's discussion is that the movement from *anthrōpos* to *pistos* seems to express a logic of fulfilment rather than one of fundamental change or superimposition. Chrysostom's anthropology, in which the originative nature orients

[58] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions,* trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), homily 12, *Montfaucon* 2.4-6, 174-5. Greek: PG 49, 232.

at its heart (however badly) toward the fear of God, piety, and virtue, suggests that a subtle anticipation of the gift of becoming 'Faithful' obtains. The name Faithful, which Chrysostom elaborates as being 'entrusted' with, or given the firstfruits of, justification, sanctity, purity, filial adoption, and the kingdom of heaven, is not something fundamentally foreign to our basic nature or name – though this litany of gifts are clearly outside the capacities of our creaturely anthropology. The gifts of the Faithful constitute the *telos* of those meanings of *anthrōpos* which Chrysostom drew from Scripture. That is, the base orientation of our nature toward the divine anticipates and reaches out for the advent of justification, sanctity, purity, divine adoption, and the kingdom of heaven.

And so, what we see in Chrysostom is that the true anthropology, the true *sound* of our first name, *anthrōpos,* rings out an echo of its *telos*, to become Faithful. Or, to utilize a musical analogy, we could say that *anthrōpos* is like a *motif*; a simple musical phrase that is carried into, adorned, and fulfilled in the beautiful logic of a piece of music. From a mystagogical perspective, the motif is not merely 'built upon', but rather holds in its simplicity the prophetic hope for the swelling crescendo and resolution – it looks toward its grand adornment in the climax. *Pistos*, in other words is the consummation of *Anthrōpos.* What is crucial to notice in Chrysostom is how his teaching contains an implicit affirmation that a certain continuity obtains between our created nature and the gift and dignity of receiving the name Faithful. The two are not in competition, the first is premonition, participatory, the other *pleroma*.

Lest I should be accused of an egregious Pelagianism, let us be careful to mark the centrality and indispensability of Christ in the transfiguration of *Anthrōpos* into *Pistos.* The fact that *anthrōpos* is fulfilled in becoming *pistos* does not imply that human nature matures into, or wills itself toward, or works its way into the kingdom of heaven. We must attend to the fact that, in the sequence of the initiation liturgy, the voice loosed in the *Ephphatha* speaks a

true word in what follows immediately: the rejection of the devil, and adherence to Christ.[59] The faculty of speech is consummated in these acts. In the renunciation and the adherence, the candidates by voice acknowledge Christ as the utterly unique door of eternal life, the only way from *anthrōpos* to *pistos,* and the only source of those beatified gifts which are 'entrusted' to the Faithful.

4.2 The Name of God

Turning to Cyril's discussion of the name Faithful, we find that his aim is to impress upon the candidates the fact that 'faithful' is a Scriptural predicate of God. The initiates must understand that they receive the gift of sharing God's name as their new baptismal nature.

> And think not that it is a trifle which you receive. You, a wretched man, receive the Name of God; for hear the words of Paul, *God is faithful;* and another Scripture, *God is faithful and just.* This the Psalmist foreseeing, since men were to receive the Name ascribed to God, said in the person of God, *I have said, ye are Gods, and are all the children of the Most High.*[60]

Even here in the *Procatechesis,* Cyril suggests to the catechumenate that *theōsis* lies at the heart of initiation.[61] Joining 'the Faithful' is to become part of an earthly community of divinization.

I digress here to acknowledge that the 'Name of God' is a problem theologically. The ineffability of God's essence is unanimously (though diversely) affirmed in patristic writings. And yet, the mystery of the Incarnation and the appellation and predication of God in the Scriptures tempers any impulse towards an absolute apophaticism. Benedict XVI suggests that

[59] In addition, some form of profession of faith, or even recitation of the creed or a shorter rule of faith, would accompany the words of adherence. Theodore's adherence includes a Trinitarian confession, as does Cyril's along with an affirmation of 'one baptism of repentance'. Ambrose records a threefold confession of the Trinity, standing in the waters of the font. Chrysostom, in later writings, gives evidence of a recitation of 'the doctrines which have come down from heaven'. See Bradshaw's genealogy of the development and evolution of the timing and content of baptismal professions of faith: Paul F. Bradshaw, 'The profession of faith in early Christian baptism', *Evangelical Quarterly,* 78.2 (2006), 101-115.

[60] Cyril, *Procat.* 6, 44.

[61] I agree with Donna Hawk-Reinhard's thesis regarding the significance of divinization in Cyril's understanding of initiation. See, Donna R. Hawk-Reinhard, 'Cyril of Jerusalem's Sacramental *Theōsis', Studia Patristica* LXVI (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 254.

the purpose of names, rather than definition, is relationship. Benedict argues that the giving of the Divine Name *YHWH* (Exodus 3) is God's act of placing Himself within reach of our call:

> [W]e are now in a position to understand the positive meaning of the divine name: God establishes a relationship between himself and us. He puts himself within reach of our invocation… Yet this means that in some sense he hands himself over to our human world. He has made himself accessible and, therefore, vulnerable as well. He assumes the risk of relationship, of communion, with us.[62]

God's Name represents both the humility of God and the exaltation of our nature. The second is only possible because of the first. The narrative of the initiation liturgy rehearses this truth. The union with God which is both heralded and established in these sacraments is extended at the cost of divine vulnerability. We *receive* God's Name, in one sense, in the Lord's giving of Himself into our hands; '*Who do you say that I am?'.* We receive Him to be *named* by us. And so we may respond '*Crucify Him!'* or '*My Lord and my God!*'. Those who name Him Lord – in our case, the initiates who receive His radical vulnerability in the sacraments of initiation – *receive* the Name in another sense *as their own name,* in the manner Cyril and Chrysostom speak of above, by becoming 'the Faithful'. The self-gift becomes the gift of self. And the initiation liturgy by which one receives God's name is the rite of receiving the treasure of filial adoption bought at such a cost. As such, while initiation is concerned with the capacitation of human beings for union with God, it is predicated on the divine gift of condescension. We are transformed into creatures *capable of receiving,* but He has first inclined towards us, making Himself *receive-able.* Thus, Benedict beautifully links the gift of the Name and the gift of the Cross:

> What began at the burning bush in the Sinai desert cos to fulfilment at the burning bush of the Cross. God has now truly made himself accessible in his incarnate Son. He has become a part of our world; he has, as it were, put himself into our hands.[63]

[62] Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth,* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 143.
[63] Benedict XVI, *Jesus* 144. Also, John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* 76 : 'the life that touches and is touched, is absolutely and existentially vulnerable… Only what might entirely die, entirely and indestructibly lives.'

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the capacitation of hearing as an initial piece of the sacramental end of becoming *chōrētikos theou*. I have read hearing as an embodied emblem of the receptivity to God which belongs to our nature and our openness to learning to hear Christ in creation. The mystery of the Opening is an explicit constituent part of the Latin rite of Ambrose, but what I have constructed here concerning the capacitation of the senses and the attunement of our knowledge to doxology and eschatological union obtains across the mystagogies because the capacitation of the whole human nature for God is the end of initiation. The *Ephphatha* begins with healing. I have argued that the state of spiritual deafness, as a consequence of sin and the fall, manifests as an insidious internality which results in spiritual, relational, and epistemological isolation – the empty, contracted echo of *incurvature*. It is a deafness to mystery. And mystery, as I have traced it throughout this discussion, refers to the depth and *logocity* of being, the ground of which is the relation of creation to God. There is a mysteriousness about creation, about Scripture and history, and about our own human nature. The capacitation of hearing means that we become attuned to these and discern the voice of God in the tones of creatureliness. The liturgy, for which the ears are explicitly opened, is precisely the place where these depths come to mingle and form a beatific song which accompanies and mediates our union with Christ. The 'office' of the ears is in the hearing of this deifying symphony.

The *Ephphatha* is the beginning of the sacramental education, the goal of which is participation in God's life. But this hearing awakened by the word of Christ does not bypass our creaturely nature or environs; it envelops and ennobles them. Hearing, then, is propaedeutic. That is, hearing emblematizes the entry into a process of learning as transfiguration – receiving the salvific pedagogy of the *Logos* and being transformed into His image, impressed upon us by means of faculties capacitated by the Holy Spirit. And this process

begins on earth. The ways in which hearing accommodates mundane learning are the foothills of a greater, divine education. *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17).* The Catechumen sits under the particularity of Christian tutelage; but this learning is second to her being raised first under the tutelage of creation. The voices of creation are more gruff and subtle than those of the preacher and the mystagogue, but, in the clarifying grace of the *Ephphatha,* the consonance between the pedagogy of nature and the preaching of salvation comes into focus – united in their common measure, the Word of God. The *Ephphatha* rite capacitates hearing, along with its symbolic relation to knowledge, towards its 'office': to hear God's invitation to union with Him. The capacitation of hearing bestows the ability to heed the command given on the mount of Transfiguration: 'This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.'

I have presented the *Ephphatha* rite as a sacramental consummation of our nature as hearing creatures; and, as in the Markan healing, this rite also touches our nature as the *physis logikos* – the creature possessing the power of speech.[64] Building upon the teachings of Cyril and Chrysostom on the name of our nature and our re-naming through initiation, we can extend their teaching to express a sacramental epistemology. In this, I read naming as a metaphor for knowing, and as the capacity to 'speak clearly' *(laleō orthōs)* by expressing the truth. With opened ears we begin to understand ourselves, and so by extension all creatures, as fundamentally oriented to the Creator. Receiving the name *Faithful,* and understanding it as the fulfilment of our *anthropo*logy, we are entrusted to name the world around us – a recapitulation of the Adamic naming of the creatures. And this naming is part of the orienting of creation towards worship. This, I suggest, is to borrow the voice of Christ, or, as Ambrose

[64] Here I am playing with the philosophical trope of Man as the 'rational animal', λόγον ἔχον as Aristotle has it, or *animal rationale* as in the Latin scholastics, and the fact that *logos* can simply mean 'speech'. However, as I have argued, the healing of the *Ephphatha* upon the faculties of hearing and speaking also entails the intellectual faculties that these symbolize. If Christ heals the organs of sense, He likewise heals our intellective powers.

says, to have our mouths opened 'by the sound of the voice given to Him'. To call a fellow creature by its name is to first hear aright its belonging to Christ, and to name it – that is, to liturgize, or use it and treat it – in accord with that universal end of the creaturely order. And the place where the mystery of creation is spoken at the height of earthly clarity is in the Christian liturgy. Here we join human speech and our use of creatures and creatureliness to God's creative speech. Our receiving of God's Name deploys us to the task of *sharpening creation's diction*.

My focus on the earth-ward aspects of the capacitation of hearing is not to deny the centrality of hearing and receiving the evangelical and sacramental content of the faith, as this is the *Ephphatha's* explicit purpose, but rather to intentionally draw attention to an aspect of salvation and *theōsis* which is often neglected; and that is how salvation reaches down into the crannies of creatureliness, drawing all things into a joyous, eschatological celebration. Hearing is intimately tied to the temporal and physical, and this secures at the outset a crucial character of what it means to become *chōrētikos theou*: meeting Christ and moving towards union with Him is an irrevocably embodied affair. The *Ephphatha*, as the first of the Latin initiatory rites, affirms a sacramental ontology and an incarnational soteriology. It is here, in the humble embodied features of earthly life where we meet Christ sacramentally, but it is also here in 'cloddish earth' that with wakened ears we discern the chorus of creation crescendoing within and towards Christ. And with loosed tongues we sing along.

Chapter Two

Renunciation of the Devil and Adherence to Christ: the capacitation of speech

Introduction

The liturgy of initiation moves from the *Ephphatha*, where practiced, to the *apotaxis* and *syntaxis* – the renunciation of the devil and the adherence to Christ. Aside from Ambrose, for whom the *Ephphatha* marks the baptismal rite's beginning, the remainder of our four mystagogues mark the commencement of the baptismal liturgy at the renunciation.[1] With this rite I resume my account of *chōrētikos theou* as it regards the human faculty of speech. What does it mean for speech to be capacitated to God? I will read the mystagogues' explanations of the exorcisms, renunciation, and adherence as thematic articulations of capacitated speech. In Ambrose, the renunciation follows immediately after the *Ephphatha*. It should not go unmarked that upon being ritually loosed, the first thing the mouth must do, *is able to do*, is to break allegiance with the devil and to transfer that allegiance to Christ.[2] This is done, as we shall see, through personal address and active speech of both words and body. I will argue that the liturgical sequence of renunciation and adherence suggests what speech is *for*.

[1] The pre-baptismal phase includes: enrolment, the exorcisms, fasting, a vigil on the night before baptism, and, in some traditions, a profession of faith.

[2] For Cyril, renunciation is the first rite belonging to the baptismal liturgy that he comments upon. Both Theodore and Chrysostom, following after their explanations of enrolment and exorcism, speak of the renunciation as the first rite in the baptismal sequence. Chrysostom's homilies reflect different scenarios: the *Papadopoulos-Keremeos* manuscript, sect.3.19, states that the renunciation took place at 3 o'clock on Good Friday ('at the ninth hour'); *Stavronikita* 2 specifies no time, but Harkins (ed.) surmises that it happened on Holy Saturday since there is no (textual) evidence of a time interval between the renunciation and the anointings and baptism, the latter of which were on the Saturday night. Theodore, similarly, does not indicate an obvious time interval between exorcisms, *reditio symboli* (recitation of the creed), and renunciation and adherence to Christ. These all appear to occur in immediate sequence. See Theodore's mystagogy, the end of Ch. 2 – beginning of Ch. 3, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist,* trans. Alphonse Mingana (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009); John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, Ancient Christian Writers (ACW) no. 31, ed., trans. Paul. W. Harkins (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963). See also, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: the Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses,* ed. F.L. Cross (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1951).

In Chapter One, I argued that in initiation the faculty of hearing is in certain ways fulfilled in the liturgy. The same will be argued here regarding the human capacity for speech. Recalling Lactantius' phrase concerning the 'office' of the tongue – 'when the tongue has begun to speak truth… only then does it discharge the office of its nature'[3] – I will show how, in the mystagogues' explanations of the *apotaxis* and *syntaxis,* the initiation liturgy engages the *vox humana* in its end. In light of initiation, I will propose that the end of speech lies in its relation to truth and our union with Christ and that the 'education' of this faculty lies in its capacitation for those ends. My argument will establish how speech, as our natural power for expressing truth and entering into communion, is capacitated by divine grace to be fulfilled in a union with Christ that accords with its nature. In this discussion, I will consider 'speech' more broadly in terms of the *communicativeness* of human nature itself; our *logos* in the widest sense. Speech extends beyond the spoken word to include the *form* of communication, the communication of our bodies, and the communicativeness of creatureliness.[4] The liturgical deployment of these communicative capacities gives us clues as to the meaning and end of the *logos* of our nature. The divine capacitation of the faculty of speech in initiation brings the union-making potential of speech to a heavenly and divinizing plane; and it also sheds light on the 'office of its nature' here and now.

I will organize my discussion of the capacitation of speech around a particular word that Chrysostom uses repeatedly to characterise the speech of the baptised: *parrhesia (παῤῥησία). Parrhesia* means 'confidence', 'boldness', or 'freedom of speech'.[5] The term

[3] Lactantius, *divin. Inst.* IV.26, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum vol. xix, 1890, 378. 'For when the tongue has begun to speak truth – that is, to set forth the excellency and majesty of the one God – then only does it discharge the office of its nature'.

[4] In contemporary parlance this is called 'non-verbal communication'. However, the common understanding of the notion fails to include a theological register.

[5] I list below the appearances of *παῤῥησία* in Chrysostom's mystagogical homilies. I have italicised the phrases which represent *παῤῥησία* and derivatives. *Montf.* 2.5, 'man' is 'one who is *confident* in the practice of piety and virtue'; *Stav*. 1.17 Christ poured forth his blood that he might 'present to Himself those who before were in dishonour and *unable to speak with confidence*'; *Stav*. 1.22 'Answer [the Arians] with *confidence*, and show them that the Son is like in substance to the Father'; *Stav*. 1.35 'But the raiment with which Paul adorns women can

comes from the vocabulary of Graeco-Roman civic rights and public freedoms that belong to the full (male) citizen of the *polis*.[6] The free citizen may 'say anything' publicly: *παῤῥησία* derives from *πᾶς*, 'everything', and *ῥῆμα*, 'that which is said'. The slave, the woman, and the foreigner, on the other hand, could not participate, practically or orally, in the *ekklesia.* They could not participate in public debates or trials, for instance, or contribute to decision-making on behalf of the *polis*, and so could not express or enact the fullest belonging to the city. Thus, *parrhesia* implies legitimacy and belonging, emblematized in the ability to speak freely. Throughout his mystagogical homilies, Chrysostom uses *parrhesia* to express the joyous freedom and boldness of baptismal belonging, particularly as the initiates are endowed with 'citizenship in heaven' (Phil. 3:20, Eph. 2:19). In the renunciation and adherence, this is the boldness to abjure Satan and to approach the Throne of God as those 'received into the rank of sons'.[7] *Parrhesia* is contrasted with the 'schema of captivity,'[8] that is, the situation of the unbaptised who are captives of sin and suffer under the dominion of the 'Tyrant' (*τύραννος*), Satan.[9] Chrysostom says that the unbaptised suffer a diabolical oppression that results in

neither be stolen nor does it wear out; it lasts forever, abiding with us here, going along with us hereafter; it provides us with *confidence* in abundance'; *Stav*. 1.47 'If, therefore, you show this concern and care for the health of your souls, you will win God to a greater kindness, and you will enjoy greater *confidence'*; *Stav*. 2.29 'For He has granted you great *confidence*, He has enrolled you in the front ranks of his friends, and has received into the adoption of sons you who were formerly captives and slaves with *no right to speak out*'; *Stav*. 3.5 'Before yesterday you were captives, but now you are free and citizens of the Church; lately you lived in the shame of your sins, but now you live in *freedom* and justice'; *Stav.* 4.3 'Only yesterday and the day before, these were slaves of sin, with *no freedom to speak,* subject to the domination of the devil'; *Stav*. 7.3 'If [the martyrs] enjoy such honour here from us, their fellow subjects, what sort and how great *a freedom to speak* will they enjoy from the Master on that dread day when they are going to shine forth more brilliantly than the rays of the sun?'; *Stav*. 7.4 the martyrs 'have won the *freedom* to address the King of heaven'; Stav. 7.27-28 lauds the *parrhesia* of the centurion Cornelius; *PK* 3.31 'All of you now have great *confidence* in approaching the King'. *PK* 2.2 refers to Hebrews 10:19-20 'St Paul says: Having much *confidence* to enter the holies in virtue of the blood of Christ, a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh)'. In *SC* 50, *Huit Catéchèses Baptismales,* trans. A. Wenger (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1957), which contains the eight *Stavronikita* homilies, *παῤῥησία* is rendered with *l'assurance*.

[6] H. Schlier, s.v. "*Παρρησία",* TDNT vol 5, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 873. 'At the height of Gk. democracy the full citizen alone has the right to say anything publicly in the ἐκκλησία… Aliens and slaves have no such right… The full citizen of the Gk. *polis* has the objective right to manifest himself in the *logos.*'

[7] Chrysostom, *Stav*. 4.3, ACW 66-67.

[8] Here I borrow Wendy Mayers' phrase, 'the schema of captives' from her translation of *PK* 2.14; Cat.II.6.9, Jean Chrysostome, *Trois Catéchèses Baptismales,* SC 366, trans. A. Piédagnal (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990), 188. Wendy Mayer, "Training the soul, embracing the body: John Chrysostom and embodied mystagogy" pre-publication, used with permission.

[9] Cyril, *MC* 1.4, 55: 'I renounce thee, Satan, thou wicked and most cruel tyrant!'.

aparrhesia, no freedom to speak: 'Only yesterday and the day before, these were slaves of sin, with no freedom to speak, subject to the domination of the devil.'[10]

Parrhesia relates not only to the *conditions* of speech, however; it also concerns also the *content* of speech. *Parrhesia* bears an important relation to *aletheia;* to truth, *logos*, and reason. Schlier, for instance, offers an explanation of *parrhesia* as the practice of stating the 'actuality of things'.[11] It can imply frankness with regard to the truth.[12] By its relation to truth, *parrhesia* can also involve risk. The full citizen may participate in the governance and guidance of the city by virtue of the *parrhesia* which is his right, but his frank speech may draw him into conflict with the powers that be, as he has the freedom, and also the duty, to challenge tyrannical powers. As such, *parrhesia* can also imply the courage to speak truth in the face of intimidation and censure.[13] This last aspect of courage in the face of a tyrant contributes largely to Chrysostom's usage, as the baptismal candidates lack *parrhesia* under the *tyrannos*, Satan, but, by the bold speech of the exorcists and the candidates themselves, rebuking the tyrant to his face, they are released from their captivity and *aparrhesia*, receiving the right and

[10] Chrysostom, *Stav*. 4.3, ACW 66-67. Cf. *Stav*. 3.5: 'Before yesterday you were captives, but now you are free and citizens of the Church; lately you lived in the shame of your sins, but now you live in freedom (*παῤῥησία*) and justice'. Also, *Stav*. 2.29, ACW 54: 'For He has granted you great confidence, He has enrolled you in the front ranks of his friends, and has received into the adoption of sons you who were formerly captives and slaves with no right to speak out'.

[11] Schlier, s.v. "*Παρρησία",* TDNT 5, 872-3. '[S]tress may be placed on the fact that in παρρησία the actuality of things is stated, so that there is a relation to truth [ἀλήθεια]'. Further, 'In such contexts παρρησία takes on the sense of openness to truth.' Following this, Schlier notes that in the face of obstacles to freedom of speech and openness to truth, παρρησία also implies an aspect of courage: 'In face of such obstacles παρρησία is the courage of openness, i.e., candour. This candour opposes all those who would limit the right to reveal truth or hamper the unveiling of truth.' This candour may, politically, end up requiring the *parrhesiastes* to challenge power structures, the *tyrannos* for example, for the sake of truth: 'By defending the right to say anything, notwithstanding the anger of the tyrant, it keeps the reality of things open in candid objectivity'. παρρησία can also have a negative meaning of 'shamelessness' or 'babbling' in the sense of an *unrestrained* and immoderate freedom of speech. Schlier (874): 'It is worth noting that sometimes παρρησία can abandon the connection with λόγος and acquire a sense of "liberality".

[12] Rylaarsdam shows how Chrysostom employs *parrhesia* in his preaching, here meaning frankness of speech ('tough love' or harsh speech), as part of his rhetorical and pastoral pedagogy. See David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[13] Indeed, arguably Chrysostom's *parrhesia* in his conflict with the Empress Eudoxia contributed to his repeatedly being exiled. Philip Schaff quotes his *Letter to Cyriacus,* 'When driven from the city, I cared nothing for it. But I said to myself, if the empress wishes to banish me, let her banish me.' NPNF ix, 14.

confidence to come before the true 'Master of all things' (another favoured Chrysostom phrase).[14]

> "I renounce thee, Satan" …Whence came this boldness of yours? "I have a weapon," you say, "a strong weapon," What weapon, what ally? Tell me! "I enter into thy service, O Christ," you reply. "Hence, I am bold and rebel. For I have a strong place of refuge. This has made me superior to the demon, although heretofore I was trembling and afraid.[15]

Taking my cue from Chrysostom's use of *parrhesia,* I will offer an account of the capacitation of speech along the *parrhesiastic* themes of truth and boldness. I will show how, in the mystagogies, the fulfilment of the *logos* of our nature is an embrace of Christ which expresses itself in truth-telling and in exorcistic and eschatological boldness. In this pattern of truth and boldness, I suggest, we discern the *telos* of speech and the nature of its 'office'. In initiation, truth-telling is confessional – admitting the truth of our fallen nature; it is adorative – acknowledging the Lordship of Christ; and it is catholic – it participates in a cosmic liturgy of return. Capacitated speech is bold insofar as it rejects the devil and engages in a missional infiltration of his 'pomps and service' here on earth.[16] Finally, capacitated speech is bold insofar as it participates in the heavenly order, and, as such, it brings the *logos* of human nature into the ambit of *theōsis*.

1. True speech as embodied confession and adoration

1.1 Garments of sackcloth

Both Theodore and Chrysostom teach that the body's participation in the rites of exorcism, renunciation, and adherence is just as communicative and formative as the verbal liturgy. In other words, the body *speaks* in concord with the oral words 'I renounce thee, Satan'.

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[14] Chrysostom, *Stav*. 2.12, 'For even if the demon be fierce and cruel, he must withdraw from your hearts with all speed after this awesome formula and the invocation of the common Master of all things.'

[15] Chrysostom, *PK* 3.24, ACW 168. See *SC* 366, Cat. III.6, 232. Here 'boldness' is not παῤῥησία, but the verbs θαρρεῖν/θαρρῶ from θαρσέω, to be of good courage.

[16] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 2.20: 'I renounce thee, Satan, thy pomps, thy service, and thy works'. Cf. Theodore, *Commentary,* 37: 'I abjure Satan and all his angels, and all his service, and all his deception, and all his worldly glamour'.

These Antiochene mystagogues give special attention in their homilies to the 'schema of captivity'.[17] This refers to the posture taken during the prebaptismal exorcisms, and the repetition of similar posture of humility for the renunciation of the devil. Chrysostom tells the candidates that by 'the external attitude of captivity… you may remind yourselves by your posture from what evil you are delivered and to what good you will dedicate yourselves.[18]

Theodore similarly speaks of the disclosive and instructive language of the body. He says that a 'picture of captivity' is undertaken during the exorcisms.[19] In this, we must take note of Theodore's affirmation that the posture of the exorcized is instructive by its physicality. Theodore says:

> You stand, therefore, with outstretched arms in the posture of one who prays, and look downwards and remain in that state in order to move the judge to mercy. And you take off your garment and stand barefooted in order to show in yourself the state of the cruel servitude in which you served the devil for a long time… You stand also on garments of sackcloth so that from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember your old sins and show penitence and repentance of the sins of your fathers, because of which we have been driven to all this wretchedness of iniquities, and so that you may… rightly say: "Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness."[20]

I will attend especially here to Theodore's comments on the sensation of bare feet standing upon sackcloth. In ancient near eastern cultures and in biblical imagery, barefooted-ness was a

[17] Chrysostom uses the phrase 'schema of captivity' when speaking about the posture of the candidate during the exorcisms. Theodore does the same in *Commentary,* Ch.2 p.32 'Your aim in this posture is also to move the judge to mercy, and it is this picture of captivity that is implied in the words of God who spoke thus through the prophet Isaiah: "Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot…"'. 'Picture of captivity' in Syriac reads ܐܐܣܟܝܡܐ ܕܫܒܝܬܐ (*ʾeskimā d'šbítā,* p.160), *ʾeskimā* is a Syriacization of the Greek σχῆμα.

[18] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 2.18, ACW, 50; *SC* 50, 143-144: 'you may remind yourself by your posture' – διὰ τοῦ σχήματος ἑαυτοὺς ὑπομιμνήσκειν τίνος.

[19] Theodore, *Commentary,* 32.

[20] Theodore, *Commentary,* 31-32. See Quasten's discussion of the 'rite of the cilicium' and its origin in the Church of Antioch: Johannes Quasten, 'Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Exorcism of the Cilicium.' *Harvard Theological Review* 35, no. 3 (1942): 209–19. Quasten suggests that the *cilicium* rite occurred twice, once during the exorcisms and again on Easter Eve as part of the baptismal rite (p. 211). Quasten concludes this because it is referred to by Theodore in two separate homilies, one dealing with exorcism and one with baptism, however I am inclined to conclude that the second reference seems more like a recollection of the exorcistic 'picture of captivity' in order to both relate it to and contrast it with the renunciatory genuflection.

sign of slavery.[21] Similarly, sackcloth bore associations of mourning, desolation, and penitence. Thus, the initiates' bare feet standing upon sackcloth signalled to those cultural associations along with the biblical themes of slavery, exile and redemption. In the rites of exorcism, the sensation and imagery of bare feet and sackcloth are meant to convey both an acknowledgment of humanity's captivity under the dominion of sin and Satan and also our redemption from that state.[22] Here, the haircloth, or *cilicium*, may also serve as a symbol of the Fall – the fountainhead of all servitude. When Theodore comes to explain the details of the exorcisms, he employs a rhetorical drama of a trial scene. Theodore digresses into an *ethopoeia*[23] from the perspective of the devil who seeks to defend his ownership over the human race:

> He pleads that from ancient times and from the creation of the head of our race we belong to him by right; he narrates the story of Adam, of how he listened to his words and by his will rejected his Maker and preferred to serve him… [']that by his will he chose my lordship he clearly appears to belong to me, as I am "the prince of the power of the air, and work in the children of disobedience".'[24]

In the tradition of allegorical readings of Genesis 3:21 (God's fashioning of garments of skin for Adam and Eve after the Fall), starting with Philo and carried through early Christian exegesis, haircloth or sackcloth came to serve as a symbol of humanity's exile from paradise and the curse of death.[25] Quasten suggests that, amid the overwhelming symbolic associations with slavery, the *cilicium* also intimates victory in the fact that the exorcized stand *upon* the sackcloth – in a way, treading it underfoot.

> The fact that, according to Genesis, God made tunics of skin for the first parents after their fall presented an excellent opportunity for the ecclesiastical preachers to explain the *cilicium* as a symbol of the original sin… The *cilicium*, then, becomes the sign of

[21] Theodore quotes Isaiah 20:3-4: 'Like my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot… that he might become a sign… so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians and Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot.'

[22] Cf. Augustine, *City of God*, 15.20.4: 'And in that haircloth there was a reminder of sins, because the goats were to be set on the left hand of the Judge; and therefore, when we confess our sins, we prostrate ourselves in haircloth, as if we were saying what is written in the psalm, My sin is ever before me.'

[23] *Ethopoeia*: one of the rhetorical techniques taught in the *progymnasmata*; a speech-in-character, or impersonation.

[24] Theodore, *Commentary*, 28.

[25] Quasten, 'Cilicium', 218-19. Quasten points out that in diverse Mediterranean religious contexts animal skins were banned from temples as they were a (literal) sign of death.

> corruption and death… In this way, besides its penitential meaning, the Rite of the Cilicium symbolized the doing away with all that is in any way connected with death; therefore, the Baptismal candidate treads on the *cilicium* as a sign of his contempt.[26]

Theodore's attention to the physicality of the rite and the sensory experience of the candidates who are being exorcized reveals his sensitivity to the pedagogy of sensation; and it betokens a participative sacramental ontology in which it is not only the abstract invocation of the symbols of servitude, as an incorporeal *idea*, that speaks of sin and salvation, but also the material encounter with them. The physical discomfort of bare feet upon sackcloth, the 'prickliness' as Theodore says, is itself pedagogic: 'from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember your old sins and show penitence and repentance of the sins of your fathers'. He invites the baptizands to tarry with the sensation of this bodily encounter and guides their attentions to encounter in it the wound of fallenness; to be summoned to apprehend the origins of our distress through the seemingly mundane features of a scratchy cloth, and to and be drawn to 'penitence and repentance' in the language of the body.

1.2 The 'schema of captivity' transfigured

Theodore suggests that there is a consonance between the rites of exorcism and the bodily posture of the candidate. It is fitting to stand on sackcloth and have eyes downcast and arms outstretched because, Theodore says, 'in all this you are in the likeness of the posture that fits the words of exorcism'.[27] The body speaks alongside, harmonizes with, both the confession of fallenness and the bold repudiation which the exorcists mount on the candidates' behalf. But, when the exorcisms are completed, a new speech is to be made with the body: 'it is right that after you have cast away that posture and those memories you should draw nigh unto the

[26] Quasten, 'Cilicium', 218.
[27] Theodore, *Commentary*, 36, Syr. 165. There is a play on words in Syriac here. Theodore says the candidates are in the posture, *eskima* (ܐܣܟܝܡܐ, σχῆμα), of one who prays, and in all these things they are in a likeness of the *eskima* (here meaning the order or manner) of the exorcisms.

Sacrament which implies participation in the future benefits'.[28] After the exorcisms, the candidates recite the Lord's prayer and vow adherence to the Creed, completing the preparatory rites.[29] As they come to the baptismal rite itself, which commences with the renunciation and adherence, a second *schema* of servitude is taken up. But this posture is a subversive and victoriously ironic repetition of the *schema* of captivity – the candidate signals now that they are captives of Christ and, in that, finally free.

> First you genuflect while the rest of your body is erect, and in the posture of one who prays you stretch your arms toward God. As we have all of us fallen into sin and been driven to the dust by the sentence of death, it behoves us to "bow our knees in the name of Jesus Christ," as the blessed Paul said, and to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God His Father." In this confession we show the things accrued to us from the Divine nature through the Economy of Christ our Lord… it is with justice that you, who through the Sacrament become partakers of the ineffable benefits, to which you have been called by your faith in Christ, bow your knees, and make manifest your ancient fall, and worship God the cause of all those benefits… the rest of your body is erect and looks upwards toward heaven, and your hands are outstretched in the guise of one who prays so that you may be seen to worship the God who is in heaven, from whom you expect to rise from your ancient fall.[30]

This posture is held throughout the renunciation of Satan and the adherence to Christ (in Theodore's case, adherence to the Trinity).[31] Here, the body speaks, or 'confesses' as Theodore says, two realities. The candidates bend in homage to Jesus Christ as master and Lord; and yet the bent knee and the downward movement of the body into a posture of genuflection also 'makes manifest' humanity's ancient fall.[32] At the same time, the upper part of the body and the arms orient upward away from the earth to which we have 'fallen' reaching towards God and the heavenly realm. And this communicates to the candidate performing this posture, and

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[28] Theodore, *Commentary,* 36. The 'sacrament which implies participation in the future benefits' here refers to the baptism liturgy, including renunciation and adherence which are what Theodore is about to comment on in his text.

[29] It is not clear how long of an interval there was between the end of the preparatory rites (exorcisms and profession of faith) and commencement of the baptismal sacrament. On the evolution and incorporation of the originally separate 'profession of faith' into the baptismal rite itself, see Paul F. Bradshaw, 'The profession of faith in early Christian baptism', in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 78 no.2 (Apr 2006), 101-115.

[30] Theodore, *Commentary,* 36 and 45.

[31] The words of renunciation Theodore gives are: 'I abjure Satan and all his angels, and all his service, and all his deception, and all his worldly glamour; and I engage myself, and believe, and am baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'.

[32] ܚܘܝܢܐ, Pael participle of ܚܘܐ, to show, to make manifest. Theodore, *Commentary,* 166.

also to those witnessing, an anticipation of being 'raised up' from that ancient fall. In the *schema* Theodore describes, the human body speaks truly about the ancient fall and also about the promise of resurrection.

In Theodore's teaching, the body speaks through posture, through its communicative capacity by shape and demeanour, a theology of inaugurated eschatology founded in Christ. The bent knee communicates that humanity was 'fallen to the earth,'[33] captive to sin and the devil; yet this vanquished bodily position is transfigured into the kneeling of worship, adoration, and submission to the Saviour, who Himself met us down at the lower, earthly part, trampling death by death. This is a 'speech' by the body to acknowledge the truth of Christ's Lordship. Theodore says that the abjuration of Satan is possible because Christ has freed humanity from the yoke of the Tyrant, and so the posture of *apotaxis* and *syntaxis* speaks truthfully: 'I have recognised my benefactor. I know now my Lord, and He is truly my Lord, who created me while I was not, who does not relent in His daily beneficence to me, who did not forsake me even when I sinned against Him.'[34] Meanwhile, the upper half of the body reaches toward restoration, resurrection, and immortality, claiming it with confidence (*parrhesia)* as already in some way present and beginning. '[He] granted us this wonderful participation in benefits'.[35]

Chrysostom shares Theodore's delight in the dual meaning of the genuflection and makes explicit the transfiguration of the 'schema of captives':

> The captivity of men leads one from freedom to slavery, but this captivity changes slavery into freedom. Furthermore, the captivity of men deprives one of his fatherland and leads him to foreign soil; this captivity drives one forth from foreign soil and leads him to his homeland, the heavenly Jerusalem. The captivity of men bereaves one of his mother; this captivity leads you to the common mother of us all.[36]

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[33] 'Because all these things have to be performed by us all, who "are fallen to the earth" according to the words of the blessed Paul, it is with justice that you… bow your knees' Theodore, *Commentary,* 36.
[34] Theodore, *Commentary,* 38.
[35] Theodore, *Commentary,* 38.
[36] Chrysostom, *PK* 2.15, 154.

Like Theodore, Chrysostom reflects a simultaneity in the bending of the knee for renunciation and adherence which speaks of the captivity of sin and the eschatological adoration of Christ. The kneeling for the *apotaxis,* which is meant to 'remind' the candidate 'from what you have been delivered', becomes the kneeling of adoration:

> Sacred custom bids you to remain on your knees, so as to acknowledge His absolute rule even by your posture, for to bend the knee is a mark of those who acknowledge their servitude. Hear what St. Paul says: *To Him every knee shall bend of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.*[37]

The Greek vocabulary used by Chrysostom reflects a linguistic account of the body. Chrysostom tells the candidates that by the *schematos* (σχήματος) of the bent knee they 'acknowledge' God's absolute rule.[38] This kneeling is a mark of those who 'acknowledge their servitude': των τὴν δουλείαν ὁμολογούντων ἐστίν.[39] The operative verb here, 'to acknowledge', which is repeated twice is *ὁμολογέω/homologeō:* which means to agree with, to correspond, to consent. Literally, the word means 'to say the same thing'. Without pressing the etymology into an excessively evidentiary role, I venture to say that Chrysostom's teaching on the body language of the *apotaxis* and *syntaxis* reflects with great clarity the abiding theo-linguistic account of the body which is shared by all of the mystagogues. In this rite, the body's natural capacity for communication is enlisted and capacitated to speak truly, to perform *parrhesia* by posture, alongside the verbal acts. It speaks the truth about – or *says the same thing* as – our former captivity of fallenness, and it participates in the consummation of bodily logocity in the genuflection of adoration. That is, the body's capacity to 'speak' is given on earth for the truth-telling of confession, or the 'acknowledgment' of our sin, and its consummation lies in the bending of every knee before Christ. The truth that the body is capacitated to speak is the gospel of Fall and Redemption, expressed in the *schema* of servitude.

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[37] Chrysostom, *PK* 3.22, ACW, 167.
[38] Chrysostom, *PK* 3.22, ACW, 167. Greek: *SC* 366, p.230: διὰ τοῦ σχήματος ὁμολογῆσαι τὴν δεσποτείαν.
[39] Chrysostom, *PK* 3.22, ACW, 167. Greek: *SC* 366, p.230: Ὅτι γὰρ τὸ γόνυ κάμψαι των τὴν δουλείαν ὁμολογούντων ἐστίν.

As Theodore reiterates, 'your knee is bowed to the ground both as a sign of adoration which is due from you to God, and as a manifestation of your ancient fall to the ground'.[40] The descent of the body 'to the ground' rehearses also *Christ's descent* to humanity and mortality, through which He conquered the *Tyrannos*, proving Himself to be the Lord before whom the knee should bow. And in the candidates' speech of posture, in unison with the words of abjuration and adherence, Theodore says, 'you have… directed your course toward Him'.[41] The teachings of both Chrysostom and Theodore on the *schema* of captivity gesture towards eschatological participation, as signalled in their quotations of Philippians 2:10, 'that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth'. And so, in this genuflection, the worshipper *says the same thing as (homologeō)*, and as such *participates in*, this eschatological adoration. The capacity for communication belonging to our nature, in this case to our bodies, is fulfilled in these things. Speech is made for truth, and Christ is the Truth. In the liturgy of initiation, as the genuflection of confession and repentance becomes the kneeling of adoration, human speech (both verbal and bodily) moves from communicating truth to communion with Truth. If 'body language' participates in the eschatological adoration of Christ, then, in these rites, the linguistic aspect of our nature is becoming *chōrētikos theou* – made capable of receiving God.

2. True speech as logical and catholic

2.1 Michel Foucault: Parrhesia and the autourgos

I depart briefly from the mystagogies at this point to introduce an insight offered by Michel Foucault regarding the cultivation of *parrhesia*. Foucault intuits a fundamental link between *parrhesia* and education. This intuition appears in his 1983 Berkeley lectures:

[40] Theodore, *Commentary*, 45.
[41] Theodore, *Commentary*, 45: 'This is the reason why you have, through the promises and engagements [renunciation and adherence] which we have already described, directed your course towards Him.'

Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia.[42] Foucault writes of *parrhesia* as 'the activity of truth-telling', and his lectures consider the development and evolution of the conditions of true and free speech as reflected in classical Greek literature and drama. His primary interest is the relation of *parrhesia* to power, and he explores this in his first lecture through a thematic reading of Euripides' *Orestes.* In this lecture, Foucault focusses on the four *'parrhesiastic'* orations that make up the trial scene of the play.[43] Although my discussion of *parrhesia* in the mystagogies shares with 'Discourse and Truth' neither texts nor the focus on power relations, Foucault's introduction of the figure of the *autourgos,* one of the orators in the play, warrants attention. His argument regarding what makes the *autourgos* a 'true *parrhesiastes'*, or truth-speaker, offers valuable insights into the relation between the order of creation and the capacitation of speech. Foucault's presentation of the *autourgos* alerts us to the relationship between *parrhesia* and learning, and, more specifically, to the capacity of the pedagogy of creation to furnish our perception and expression of truth.

In the play, the drama of Orestes' trial reaches its climax with the oration delivered by the final speaker; an unnamed man identified as an *autourgos,* which Coleridge translates as 'farmer'.[44] Foucault makes much of the *autourgos;* and he offers an interpretation of the literary description of this figure that identifies the elements that have made him the true *parrhesiastes*.

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[42] Delivered at the University of California at Berkley in 1983, these lectures were transcribed and published as *Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia,* ed. J. Pearson, 1999 digitized: https://foucault.info/parrhesia/foucault.DT1.wordParrhesia.en/. The lectures were later edited and published as: Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech,* Ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).

[43] Lecture 1, 'The Meaning and Evolution of the Word "Parrhesia"'. Foucault concludes that being entangled in or complicit with structures of power impedes and frustrates truth-telling. For instance, in *Orestes*, Talthybius, who is among those who give speeches at Orestes' trial, is the most preoccupied with social capital and self-advancement, and this makes him a failed *parrhesiastes*. His speech is confused and ambiguous. 'He spoke out of both sides of his mouth, a mere tool of those in power as he always is' (*Orestes,* line 889). He thus does not advise the city of Argos with true wisdom. 'Talthybius cannot speak directly and frankly at Orestes' trial since he is not free, but dependent upon those who are more powerful than he is.' Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,* 23. Cf. Euripides, *Orestes* in *The Complete Greek Drama,* vol.2, eds. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., trans. E. P. Coleridge (New York: Random House. 1938).

[44] Euripides, *Orestes,* lines 919-924: 'Another then stood up and said the opposite; he was not handsome in appearance, but a brave man, rarely coming in contact with the town or the circle in the market-place; [920] a farmer—and they are the only ones who preserve our land—but clever, and eager to grapple with the arguments, his character without a blemish, his walk in life beyond reproach.'

Foucault first alights upon the name *autourgos,* which literally means ‘self-working’, or ‘one who works his land himself’. Foucault translates this as ‘manual labourer’. Here is where the question of learning enters. Foucault reads this manual labour, and the life it implies, as an education, or *mathēsis*. The *autourgos’* rural simplicity, and his hard-won, rustic prudence, form him into the exemplary truth-teller.

Foucault focuses particularly on the *autourgos’* intimate familiarity with his land, and how this rootedness has imparted to him practical skills and social and physical competencies which enable him to speak wisely at Orestes’ public trial.[45] Further, this natural *mathēsis* has encouraged in him a binding to the land and its people, a binding of knowledge, duty, and defence, which has sensitised him to truth and endowed him with the boldness to speak it. It is precisely this rootedness and sensitivity which the city folk, and the other orators at Orestes’ trial, lack. The *autourgos* is contrasted with the penultimate speaker, also unnamed, who serves as a foil for this final, wise *parrhesiastes*. Both of these men use *parrhesia* (the civic right); the first in the pejorative sense of ‘babbling’ – he speaks ‘freely’, with liberality, but not with *logos*[46] – while the *autourgos* speaks wisely to bring about the just outcome which contributes to the peace and flourishing of the city of Argos.[47]

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[45] Foucault takes three descriptions of this speaker given in the text as indicative of the *autourgos’* competence as a *parrhesiastes*: (1.) As landowner and labourer he is invested in the prosperity and security of the land. He willingly marches to war and is an excellent defender. He is familiar with the countryside because he owns *and cares for* his own land, he will, thus, be one of the first to take up arms to defend not just the city, but the rural villages. He is not interested in the social posturing and idle rhetoric that occurs in the *agora.* (2.) He can, however, ‘“come to grips in argument” i.e., is able to use language to propose good advice for the city’ precisely because he regularly instructs his servants and collaborates on practical projects, and, as such, is practiced in making decisions. (3.) He is a man of moral integrity, Euripides says, ‘his character without a blemish, his walk in life beyond reproach’. See, Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,* 26.

[46] Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,*24. ‘His first trait is that he has "a mouth like a running spring"—which translates the Greek word "athuroglossos". "Athuroglossos" literally refers to someone who has a tongue but not a door. Hence it implies someone who cannot shut his or her mouth… As Plutarch notes, when you are athuroglossos you have no regard for the value of *logos*, for rational discourse as a means of gaining access to truth.’

[47] Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,* 27. ‘will the decision concerning Orestes be an aggressive one that will institute the continuation of hostilities, as in war, or will the decision institute peace? The *autourgos’* proposal of an acquittal symbolizes the will for peace.’

The point I wish to draw out of Foucault's discussion is the role of *mathēsis* (knowledge, education and *paideia*) in the cultivation of good *parrhesia* as exemplified in the *autourgos*. In Foucault's reading, it is precisely a lack of *mathēsis* which makes the penultimate speaker a failed *parrhesiastes*.[48] Foucault invites us to consider that *parrhesia* is not only something bestowed, but something which must be developed and tended. He suggests that true *parrhesia* is best acquired through the humble, rustic learning of a rural life. As Foucault concludes:

> *[P]arrhesia* in and of itself is no longer considered adequate to disclose the truth. The *parrhesiastes'* relation to truth can no longer simply be established by pure frankness or sheer courage, for the relation now requires education or, more generally, some sort of personal formation. But the precise sort of personal formation or education needed is also an issue (and is contemporaneous with the problem of sophistry). In *Orestes*, it seems more likely that the *mathēsis* required is not that of the Socratic or Platonic conception, but the kind of experience that an *autourgos* would get through his own life.[49]

An education of a certain kind, then, is required to utilize *parrhesia* for the good. For Foucault, the salient features of an education which enables true *parrhesia* are its aloofness from the machinations of power dynamics emblematized in city life and its intimate engagement with concrete realities. Foucault appeals to Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* to expound this *mathēsis* in terms of order and practical prudence; but this prudence, crucially, emerges out of the very rustic, hands-on manner of life of the *autourgos*. On the indispensability of this kind of natural *mathēsis,* Foucault concludes: 'only then will parrhesia be more than *thorubos* or sheer vocal noise.'[50]

What we can glean from Foucault's discussion of the *autourgos* and the *mathēsis* which engenders his sensitivity to truth is the intuition that something in the humble rudiments of

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[48] Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,* 25. 'The final characteristic of the third (negative) speaker is that he also puts his confidence in "κάμθει παρρησία" — "ignorant outspokenness [parrhesia]… What designates his parrhesia as parhessia in its pejorative or negative sense, however, is that it lacks mathesis – learning or wisdom.'
[49] Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,* 28.
[50] Foucault, *Discourse and Truth,* 25.

nature is deeply pedagogical. And while Foucault may read what is gained through this education primarily as an imperviousness to the compromising influence of power, I suggest that what Foucault's intuition truly identifies is the capacity of natural pedagogy to attune the learner to *divine truth*; that creation's teaching sensitizes the learner to the truth of Christ. At this point, one may notice that the *autourgos* bears some resemblance to Aquinas' *rusticus.* Recalling the previous discussion of the *rusticus* in Chapter One, I propose to take Foucault's argument in a direction that he did not apparently intend. If we think of *parrhesia* as an attribute of the speech of the *chōrētikoi,* then we can suggest that the *mathēsis* one needs in order to be *capable* of true speech is the education received through an intimate and learning openness to the sacramental cosmos. There is a prevenient preparation for truth and true speech reverberating throughout creation.

In Chapter One, I argued that, by its relation to Christ the *Logos,* all of creation is fundamentally pedagogical. The baptismal candidate's whole life has been shaped by a mundane pedagogy; an immersive, embodied, hands-dirty instruction. Building on Foucault's image of the *autourgos,* we can say that creation is the elementary *mathēsis* which begins the subtle attunement of the soul to the truth that we are designed to speak. True *parrhesia,* then, is a result of apprehending the *Logos* Who sits at the heart of the creaturely *logoi.* Foucault's *autourgos* has been formed positively by a natural *mathēsis* and has been sensitised to a certain wisdom by which he benefits his fellow countrymen. An important difference between Foucault's *autourgos* and Aquinas' *rusticus,* however, is that the pedagogy of nature can only truly be fulfilled in the learner by divine power and in its (and their) participation in Christ. The good formation and the sensitisation to truth brought about in the *mathēsis* of creation are only the foothills of a greater transformation – a greater capacitation for Truth itself. In initiation, as Cyril said, 'the Holy Spirit fashions the mind into a house of God', and only in

and through God does the pedagogy of nature become enlisted into a transfiguring *mathēsis* out of which true speech flows.[51]

In concert with the rites of initiation, the mystagogue gives to the neophyte a unique kind of liturgical and Christological *mathēsis* which tends and furnishes their capacity for *parrhesia.* The *aparrhesia* Chrysostom speaks of from which the baptismal candidates are released by exorcism and renunciation is not the silence of disempowerment, or complicity with power in the Foucauldian sense, but rather an impediment and a diminishment born out of estrangement from Truth and Life itself. The *parrhesia* of the baptismal candidate arises out of belonging to and being formed by the indwelling of divine Truth. The humble contribution of creation to this divine capacitation is in the *mathēsis* of earthly realities, the rehearsal of mundane rhythms of truth-telling about Christ. The liturgy of initiation enlists and fulfils this fundamental education when it incorporates the rhythms of nature, this raw *mathēsis,* into the rite of *apotaxis* and *syntaxis.* This is expressed with clarity in Ambrose and Cyril's mystagogical readings of the bodily orientation of the candidate during the renunciation and adherence.

2.2 The liturgy of the earth: the 'region of darkness' and the 'place of light'

Ambrose and Cyril provide evidence for the practice of turning from west to east for renunciation of the devil and adherence to Christ. In the following section, I will consider how capacitated speech, as practiced in initiation, accords with the *logos* of creation – or, as above, the *mathēsis* of nature – and how it gathers fellow creaturely voices into the liturgy of union with Christ. Here we find that, along with the human body and word, another voice is enlisted to 'say the same thing' in this rite: the voice of creation.

In Ambrose we read:

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[51] Cyril, *Procatechesis* 6, 44.

> After this the Holy of holies was opened to you, you entered the sanctuary of regeneration… You entered, then, that you might discern your adversary, whom you were to renounce as it were to his face, then you turned to the east; for he who renounces the devil turns to Christ, and beholds Him face to face.[52]

And in Cyril:

> First, you entered into the outer hall of the Baptistry, and there facing towards the West, you heard the command to stretch forth your hand, and as in the presence of Satan you renounced him… However, you are instructed with arm outstretched to say to him as though actually present, I renounce thee Satan. I wish to say, why you stand facing to the West; for it is necessary. Since the West is the region of sensible darkness, and he being darkness, has his dominion also in darkness, you therefore, looking with a symbolical meaning towards the West, renounce that dark and gloomy potentate. [53]

In these interpretations of the turning from west to east we can identify the affirmation that the order, or 'speech', of creation is poised for enlistment in the return of humanity to God. Our embodied experience of the material world, in this case the circadian rhythms of sunset and sunrise – what would seem, in an empiricist paradigm, a mere inevitability of the laws of motion and gravitation – is an example of the *mathēsis* of creation which fosters true *parrhesia*. Here, capacitated speech is true in that it accords with the *logos* of creation – it is 'logical'. The mystagogue's pedagogy capitalizes on the richness of this *mathēsis*. Here, the rhythm, or *logos*, of sunset and sunrise belong to what in the Introduction I called the 'already' knowledge that pervades earthly life.[54] The embodied orientation of the candidates when they pronounce the speech of *apotaxis* and *syntaxis* reflects a thickly communicative cosmos which has, in a way, a natural liturgy itself. Nature has a speech, a *logos*, proper to it that the renouncer joins along with and takes in hand in the liturgy of initiation, and in this they also perform and perfect the liturgy of creatureliness. In this case, the creaturely liturgy is the phenomenon of sunrise and sunset, the rhythm of darkness and light, joined with the candidate's own voice and body to

[52] Ambrose, *On the Mysteries* 2.7, in NPNF2, Vol. 10.
[53] Cyril, *MC* 1.2, 1.4, pp.53-55.
[54] Cyril's 'already is there on you the savour of blessedness'. Cyril, *Procatechesis* 1, 40.

enact the sacramental returning of allegiance to Christ. The cardinal orientation of the body for the *apotaxis* and *syntaxis* reveals the coherent, ecclesial-cosmic collaboration that characterises the Christian sacraments and is part of the consummation of speech. The church enlists nature in its liturgy and enlists itself in the liturgy of nature. And thus we can say that capacitated speech is also *catholic* in the widest sense: it gathers the cosmic *whole* in the return to Christ.

Ambrose says that the candidates face the west and 'discern the adversary', and Cyril says that they turn to the 'realm of sensible darkness' to reach out the hand and speak against he who is darkness.[55] The turn to the west for renunciatory speech implies a fittingness of the phenomenology and symbolism of this cardinal direction to the renunciation rite. The region of sunset holds a symbolic constellation that includes the sensible and the psychological: darkness and confusion, fear and danger, sleep and death, diurnal endings symbolic of existential endings, etc. The west also, from Cyril's vantage point of Jerusalem, is the symbolic location of bondage: Egypt.[56] Cyril may gesture, rhetorically and physically, to the geography of slavery and then to the geography of the Garden regained: 'there is opened to thee the paradise of God, which he planted towards the east'.[57]

Cyril unifies the cyclical repetition of earthly rhythms with the particularity of the salvation narrative of Scripture, both in Old Testament typology and in the events of Christ's Passion.[58] This reveals the liturgy of initiation (and the liturgy in general), as a locus of

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[55] Taking our cue from Cyril's lengthy analogy of the Exodus, which forms a significant piece of his interpretation of the renunciation rite, we can this physical element recalls God's 'outstretched hand' by which He smote the Egyptians and the many commands to Moses to 'stretch out your hand' during the narrative of the ten plagues. Cyril says, "you heard the command to stretch forth your hand," ἐκτείνειν τὴν χεῖρα, and these are the same words used in Exodus 3:20 (LXX): The Lord says, "So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it," καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα. This formula is repeated numerous times throughout the Exodus narrative: The Lord stretches out his hand against Egypt, and both Moses and Aaron are commanded to stretch out their hands or staffs to enact the plagues, or part the waters to enable the Israelites' escape.

[56] The typologies of Exodus are favoured by both Cyril and Ambrose. Ambrose, *Sac.* 1.11-12, 1.20-23; *Myst.* 48-49; Cyril, *Mystagogical Catechesis* 1.2-3.

[57] Cyril, *MC* 1.9, 57.

[58] Cyril *MC* 1.3, 54. 'Now you must know that this figure is found in ancient history. For when Pharaoh, that most cruel and ruthless tyrant, oppressed the free and high-born people of the Hebrews, God sent Moses to bring them out of the evil thraldom of the Egyptians… Now turn from the ancient to the recent, from the figure to the reality.

convergence between the grammars of creation and salvation. Cyril's mystagogy shows the coherence and harmony between all these orders or *logics* – the natural, the narrative, the typological, the Paschal. The plodding return of the rotation of the planet speaks to our bodies about sleep and wakefulness, death and resurrection; about light conquering darkness. The historicity and particularity of biblical narratives (which, to be sure, possess a certain kind of return, or typological rehearsal) function in a clarifying way. These grammars of creation and salvation cooperate as the backdrop and raw material of the candidate's *mathēsis,* an intimate and bodily attunement to the truth of Christ, and so of their first steps in speaking the sacramental language of *parrhesia.* True speech, in this case, is speech which participates by its proper power in the union of humanity with Christ. In the renunciation, this takes the form of the explicit words of rejection of Satan. But it also includes a bodily *parrhesia* in the choreography of cardinal orientation which collaborates with, and liturgizes, the rhythm of sunset and sunrise.

The true speech exemplified in the Latin and Palestinian practice of cardinal orientation is *logical* and *catholic* insofar as it discloses and administers the harmony of the *logos* of creation and the *logos* of the gospel in a coherent and unitive utterance. And this disclosure confirms and adorns the speech of the individual candidate declaring words of faith and adherence to Christ. Cyril tells us that the candidates turn their bodies eastward to say: 'I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, and in one Baptism of repentance'.[59] In these words the natural capacity of human speech and the *logic* of the eastern sunrise participate in their own fulfilment by speaking truth and speaking words of union. The

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There we have Moses sent from God to Egypt; here, Christ, sent by His Father into the world: there, that Moses might lead forth an oppressed people out of Egypt; here, that Christ might rescue mankind who are whelmed under sins: there, the blood of a lamb was the spell against the destroyer; here, the blood of the unblemished Lamb Jesus Christ is made the charm to scare evil spirits: there, the tyrant pursued even to the sea that ancient people; and in like manner this daring and shameless spirit, the author of evil, followed you, even to the very streams of salvation. The tyrant of old was drowned in the sea; and this present one disappears in the salutary water.'

[59] Cyril, *MC* 1.9, 58.

candidate speaks the truth of the Triune Godhead and professes their desire for union through the baptism of repentance. The road to union is this repentance: the *metanoia* or 'turning' to God through Christ in initiation. The speech of the body undertakes this *metanoia* by its physical power. And the speech of creation is consummated when, as it accompanies and reverberates this end of union, it has its inner Christological and Paschal logic revealed and deployed in this rite. The sunrise speaks of Christ's resurrection and lights the Way of return. These consummations are overlaid, administered, and celebrated in the liturgy of the Church.

It must be stated that my characterisation of capacitated speech as logical and catholic, or even true, should not be read as the ability to think, know, or say 'correct things' about the world. It is not that renunciation and adherence paired with bodily orientations *explains* sunrise and sunset in any mechanistic sense. And yet, it is, I argue, nevertheless to state 'the actuality of things' (to repeat Schlier's phrase) in a deeper sense. This 'actuality' is the common *telos* of creation. The true speech of adherence is not a speech of representation, but a speech of union that consummates the *logoi* of humanity and of creatures to Christ. This speech by word and gesture illumines and affirms the Christological *logic* of creation. The attraction of creaturely natures to the light of the sun, to the turn of spring, and the return of the dawn, rehearses the fundamental orientation of creaturehood toward Christ. Our liturgical use of fellow creatures for the *metanoia* from darkness to light is true not insofar as it is 'accurate' in terms of natural causes, but insofar as it resonates alongside the tone of inner ends. Its truth lies in the gathering of a catholic creaturely chorus of return.

3. True speech and its Christological grounding

3.1 Sunrise, the East, and Christ's embodied victory

Cyril says that upon the 'utter break' of the renunciation (or, literally, the 'treading underfoot', πατέω, of all covenant with Satan)[60], the paradise of God opens to the candidates. This joyous eschatological confidence is reiterated in Ambrose's remark, 'for he who renounces the devil turns to Christ, and beholds Him face to face.'[61] Here, I will consider the Christological grounding of the capacitation of speech. Cyril's teaching on the renunciation and adherence continues in the following:

> What then did each of you standing up say? 'I renounce thee, Satan, thou wicked and most cruel tyrant!' meaning 'I fear your might no longer; for Christ has overthrown it, having partaken with me of flesh and blood, that through these he might by death destroy death, that I might not for ever be subject to bondage… When therefore you have renounced Satan, utterly breaking all covenant with him, that ancient league with hell, there is opened to you the paradise of God, which he planted towards the east, whence for his transgression our first father was exiled; and symbolical of this was your turning from the west to the east, the place of light. Then you were told to say, I believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, and in one Baptism of repentance.[62]

Cyril's description of the physical turning as 'symbolical' does not mean that it is a 'mere sign' of a separate reality or an abstract spiritual allegiance. The true and bold speech of body and mouth in the *syntaxis* is not merely referential; it is effective. In the above quotation, Cyril affirms that the power and efficacy of the adherence hinge upon Christ's incarnation. We can see this in Cyril's paraphrasing and embellishing of the words of renunciation: 'I fear your might no longer; for Christ has overthrown it, having partaken with me of flesh and blood, that through these he *might by death destroy death,* that I might not for ever be *subject to bondage'.*[63] Here Cyril interweaves quotations of Hebrews 2:14-15: 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through

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[60] Cyril, *MC* 1.9, Greek 16.
[61] Ambrose, *Myst.* 2.7.
[62] Cyril, *MC* 1.4, 1.9, 53-58.
[63] Cyril, *MC* 1.4, 55. Scripture quotations italicized: Heb. 2:14, 15.

death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'. Cyril's Scripture-laden flourish implies that in the union of divinity and humanity in Christ, by His incarnation, death, and bodily resurrection, matter has been drawn in to the trampling of death and the defeat of the perpetrator of bondage. When Cyril calls upon these phrases from Hebrews 2 (and perhaps from early Paschal hymnody) that speak of Christ's partaking with us of flesh and blood and trampling death by death, he draws his hearers toward the concrete reality of salvation won by Jesus Christ as God in time and flesh. In light of this, then, speech made *chōrētikos* means the capacitation of our human linguistic nature to partake also in Christ's conquest of death and diabolos.

4. True speech as adherence to presence

4.1 The 'putative' presence of Satan

There is a subtle contrast in the language that Cyril and Ambrose use in relation to Satan, as the recipient of abjuration, and the language they use to speak of the adherence to Christ. Both Cyril and Ambrose use what I will call 'putative' language when they speak of the presence and address-ability of the devil.[64] Cyril says that, as they turn to the west, the candidates must speak renunciation 'as in the presence of Satan', ὡς παροντι... τῷ σατανᾷ,[65] and 'as though [he were] actually present', ὡς πρός παρόντα.[66] Similarly, Ambrose says, 'You entered, then, that you might discern your adversary, whom you were to renounce as it were to his face'.[67] Though a developed account of evil as privation is not necessarily operative, something of that sensibility fits with the putative language I highlight here, signalled in the

[64] I use the phrase 'putative presence' in this section as a play on Ambrose's use of *putaris* when he describes the renunciation. This is an aesthetic choice on my part rather than a suggestion that Ambrose's use of the term here implies a particular theory regarding the being or non-being of evil.
[65] Cyril, *MC* 1.2, Greek, 12.
[66] Cyril, *MC* 1.4, Greek, 13.
[67] Ambrose, *Myst.* 2.7, Ambrose, *de Myst.* 2.7, in *SC* 25 bis, trans. Dom Bernard Botte (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 158-159. *Ingressus igitur ut aduersarium tuum cerneres cui renuntiandum in os putaris.*

'as though/ὡς' language in Cyril and Ambrose's use of the subjunctive 'that you might discern/*cerneres*' and the phrase 'as it were/*putaris*'. This mood is juxtaposed strikingly with the language used by both to express the unabashed and un-caveated 'face to face' encounter with Christ in the turn to the east. As quoted earlier, Ambrose says, 'for he who renounces the devil turns to Christ, and beholds Him face to face', *illum directo cernit obtutu.*[68]

It is worth noting the poetics in Ambrose's Latin. Ambrose constructs an aesthetic and syntactical contrast between Christ and the devil which highlights the ontological and spiritual distinction between the two. In the short lines of *de Mysteriis 2.*7, we see that in the turning *ad orientam,* the candidate moves from the subjunctive, putative space and ethos of the devil to the substantive and intimate space of Christ's presence; from *'in os putaris',* 'as it were to his face', to beholding Christ face to face, *'directo cernit obtutu'*. I have arranged the lines below to show this contrast and how it pivots on the turn to the east and to Christ:

Ingressus igitur ut aduersarium tuum *cerneres* cui renuntiandum in os putaris,
ad orientam converteris:
qui enim renuntiat diabolo ad Christum convertitur, illum *directo cernit obtutu.*[69]

You entered then that you might discern your adversary
who you renounced as it were to the face
You turn to the east
Since he who renounces the devil turns to Christ and beholds him face to face.

The contrast is expressed particularly in the repetition of the verb *cerno* – to distinguish, discern, perceive. The first line of this section reflects a subjunctive mood both syntactically and, I would argue, ontologically. *Cerneres,* a subjunctive, paired with *putaris* which can also

[68] Ambrose, *de Myst.* 2.7, *SC* 25 bis, 158.
[69] Ambrose, *de Myst.* 2.7, *SC* 25 bis, 158.

bear a somewhat tentative mood (from *puto* to reckon, suppose, deem), suggests that the renouncer *may suppose* that they discern the adversary; they speak the abjuration of Satan toward a somewhat insecure presence.[70] After 'converting' *(converto) ad orientam*, the mood changes to the indicative. The renouncer now sees and perceives without qualification: *directo cernit obtutu*. Translated more literally, this final line would read: 'The one who renounces the devil turns to Christ, and this one sees [Him] with direct gaze'. Cyril, similarly, leaves behind the 'as though/ὡς' language at the turn to the east, after which he says with assured, indicative confidence, 'then *there is opened to you* the paradise of God', ἀνοίγεταί σοι ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ.[71]

Building on the aesthetic progression of the *apotaxis-syntaxis*, from the subjunctive and putative to the space of 'direct gaze' and divine presence, I suggest that we can interpret capacitated speech through this contrast between Christ and the devil. Christ and Satan are an asymmetrical pair. In Cyril and Ambrose, the devil dwells in the darkness of diminished substance. It is the space of disjunction between speech and reality, the space of 'as it were': speculative, deferred, reluctant, provisional. This mood communicates the faltering *logos* of fallen being. The renouncer rejects that space and fate and turns to the 'place of light',[72] toward the truly substantial: the divine Word, Christ. In light of this, we can say that in initiation speech is capacitated to embrace the indicative and the substantial in the deepest ontological sense. The 'I adhere to Christ' and the turning of the *syntaxis* are true in their proclamation of the *One who is.*[73] That is to say, in the conversion to Christ symbolized in the physical re-*orient*-ation

[70] The NPNF translation attempts to capture *putaris* and the subjunctive sense with 'that you might' and 'as it were'. In the critical edition, *SC* 25 bis, Botte gives 'recontrer ton ennemi à qui tu as pensé qu'il fallait resister en face.' NB. One Latin manuscript gives the variant *sputaris* (to spit) in place of *putaris,* but, as there is no evidence of a spitting ritual in the West, the consensus is that *sputaris* is a scribal error.

[71] Cyril, *MC*, 1.9, Greek, 16. Emphasis mine. 'When, therefore, you have renounced Satan… the paradise of God opens to you… and symbol of this (is) your turning from west to east, the place of light.'

[72] Cyril, *MC* 1.9, Greek 16. τοῦ φωτὸς τὸ χωρίον.

[73] Ὁ ̓ΩΝ, the 'one who is', the 'being one', is the Greek Septuagint's rendering of the divine Name, *yhwh,* and appears written in Christ's halo in the Byzantine iconographic tradition starting in the eleventh century (and possibly earlier in Egypt). See Fr. Steven Bigham, 'On The Origin of Ὁ ̓ΩΝ in The Halo of Christ', Orthodox

if the body the candidate exercises their *logos* to proclaim and embrace the Lord of Light and Being. In the renunciation and adherence, the candidates sacramentally enact not only the victory of the Light and their allegiance to Christ, but their defection from the realm of dissemblance. They convert from privation to the reality of presence.[74]

We find a similar sensibility regarding Christ as the true ground of substantiality in Chrysostom when he speaks of God's answer to the candidates' words of adherence. Chrysostom says that the *syntaxis* is returned in the gift of 'realities': 'Did you see His boundless goodness? Receiving only these words from you, He entrusts to you the treasure of realities'.[75] Here, the divine gift of making of human speech *chōrētikos* – capable of truth and union – appears with clarity. It is God's goodness that measures and secures the truth, substance, and end of creaturely *logos*. The earthly words of the candidates (τὰ ῥήματα), as emissaries of our natural capacity of speech, are given a power beyond their nature to correspond truly with 'realities' (τὰ πράγματα).[76] The occasion and guarantor of this power is Christ. Human *logos* is capacitated by the *Logos* made flesh to take part in the union of humanity with God. The speech of our nature is true, not when it speaks *about* the real, but when it speaks words of union with the real. Here speech comes to rest and language enters the beginning of its fulfilment. I say beginning because the human nature, by voice and body,

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Arts Journal, June 26, 2016. https://orthodoxartsjournal.org/on-the-origin-of-%E1%BD%81-%E1%BD%A4%CE%BD-in-the-halo-of-christ/

[74] We must acknowledge, however, that although inferring a doctrine of privation is appropriate to a point, we must not neglect the fact that the mystagogues explicitly instruct the candidates to renounce the devil by *personal* address. What I have called the putative presence of the devil suggests a diminution of substance – as is the darkness a diminution of the light. However, the mystagogies are clear that, as far as the devil *is* face-able, one must renounce him to his face and speak his name: *'apotassomai soi, Satana'*. The liturgy does not call for the renunciation of a mere abstraction in the fashion of: 'I reject the general principle of enmity with God and all privation of the good'. Any attempt to modify the liturgy of renunciation toward a more impersonal, abstract address should not be hastily construed as a move of theological sophistication. The mystagogues commend to their hearers the renunciation of a diabolical power bent on fomenting the estrangement of creation from Creator, and sinner from Saviour.

[75] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 2.21. This quotation is my translation of the Greek, Τὰ ῥήματα δεχόμενος παρὰ σοῦ μόνον, τοσοῦτον ἐμπιστεύει σοι πραγμάτων θησαυρόν. *SC* 50, 145. Harkins translates the final clause as 'he entrusts to you such a store of treasures' (ACW, 51), and Yarnold 'he entrusts to you realities, a great treasure', Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 159.

[76] See Greek of Stav. 2.21 above.

engages in other consummations of speechfulness as the liturgy progresses. The candidates will pray the Lord's prayer, they will participate in the seraphic praise of the Sanctus, and they will say 'Amen' to Christ's presence in the eucharist. The renunciation shares with these later utterances a divine empowerment by which the speech of the baptizands is enveloped into the true and the real. The rite of renunciation and adherence stands as the earthly commencement of this radical empowerment of language.

5. Bold speech as exorcistic mission

5.1 The persistence of renunciation and adherence

I turn now to a unique instruction that Chrysostom gives at the close of homily *Montfaucon* 2 which is addressed to the *phōtizesthai*, those soon to be initiated. Chrysostom's final instruction is that the candidates ought to mimic or practice the renunciation and adherence at every threshold:

> When you are going to cross the threshold of a doorway, first speak these words: "I renounce thee, Satan, thy pomps and service, and I enter into thy service O Christ." And never go forth without saying these words. This will be your staff, this will be your armour, this will be your impregnable tower. And after you speak these words, make the sign of the cross on your forehead. In this way no man will be able to hurt you, nor will the devil himself be able to do so, when he sees you appear with these weapons to protect you on every side. Therefore, teach yourself now, so that when you receive the sign, you will be a ready soldier, and that after you raise the trophies of your rout of the devil, you will receive the crown of justice. May we all obtain this by the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom be glory to the Father together with the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.[77]

Chrysostom's immediate explanation of this practice is that it is a spiritual protection over those in the period of baptismal preparation, during which, he warns, the devil lies in wait to assault their resolve.[78] I propose that we read Chrysostom's commendation also as an emblem of the kind of life and mission into which the initiates are called. It is not clear from the text

[77] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.60-61, ACW 191-92.
[78] This homily includes Chrysostom's argument that the true meaning of *anthropos* is 'one who is confident in the practice of piety and virtue', as well as lengthy warnings against vice and the 'pomps' of the devil in the form of pagan cultural practices, the temptation of wealth, and, in the case of women, the temptation of vanity.

whether the instruction to repeat the renunciation and adherence upon every threshold is intended only for those preparing for baptism or if Chrysostom prescribes the practice for all the Faithful, but I suggest that, if not literally, then at least rhetorically, it is a persisting instruction. We can infer its persistence from his language at the end of the quotation: 'may we all obtain this'. Furthermore, Chrysostom's favoured characterization of initiation and the Christian life is that of military enlistment as soldiers of Christ engaged in a continued combat against the devil.[79]

The life of the initiated, it seems, is to be characterized by an ongoing *apotaxis* and *syntaxis*. Chrysostom says, 'never go forth without saying these words'. However, the Greek reads: καὶ μηδέποτε χωρὶς τῆς φωνῆς ταύτης ἐξέλθῃς.[80] Here φωνή (sound) is used instead of ῥῆμα (utterance, which appears twice elsewhere in the same quotation), giving a subtle emphasis upon the physicality, the 'sound', of the act over its linguistic character. Building on this subtle linguistic aesthetic, I suggest that we read Chrysostom's instruction as an image of capacitated speech. The whole existence and presence of the initiated is meant to *sound of repentance*, of *metanoia*, to sound of the *turn* from evil to Christ. We could say that to 'sound like' renunciation and adherence is to reverberate the truth of creation. I established in the previous chapter that created natures are divine *words.* We, and all fellow creaturely natures, arise out of nothingness by God's speech. And so, given my earlier suggestion that the renunciation directed towards the darkness of the west also includes a renunciation of absence, I propose that the baptised must spread abroad the tone of being, grounded in its divine source;

[79] Cf. *Stav.* 1.1 'To call what takes place today a marriage would be no blunder; not only could we call it a marriage but even a marvellous and most unusual kind of military enlistment'; *Stav.* 2.1 'Again let me address a few words to those who have enlisted in Christ's special army; let me show them the power of the weapons they are about to receive'; *Stav.* 3.8,11 (post-baptismal homily) 'Up to now you have been in a school for training and exercise… But from today on, the arena stands open… Let us, therefore, take courage and strip ourselves for the contests'.
[80] Chrysostom, *Ad Illuminandos Cat. Deut.* 2.60, In *PG* 49, 240.

and that they must, as Chrysostom directs, across every threshold scatter the silence of non-being.

Speech made *chōrētikos theou* entails the calling of the baptised to bring a bold exorcistic mission into the contexts they enter. Chrysostom says 'therefore, teach yourself now' – σαυτὸν ἤδη παίδευσον – the practice of threshold renunciation, adherence, and cross-signing.[81] The candidates are not instructed simply to adopt a ritual habit, or to take on a Christian idiosyncrasy; they must learn the *paideia* of *apotaxis* and *syntaxis,* and be conformed to its logic. In the physical gesture of the sign of the cross the body speaks of Christ's victory, and by the words of repudiation of the devil and enlistment into the service of Christ, the baptised collude with Christ's demolishment of death and diabolic power. The repetition of the words, *apotassomai soi, Satana,* and *syntassomai soi, Christe,* at the thresholds of concrete places, paired with the physical signing with the cross on the forehead, is to bear liturgical and exorcistic healing into mundane life and everyday spaces. We should notice that, even if this rehearsal of renunciation and adherence is only meant for a short prebaptismal period, the instruction is not to adopt a disembodied renunciatory disposition, but to speak it with words and body in unison – conducting these to 'say the same thing', *homologeō* – and to carry this coherent, exorcistic, and Christocentric speech into physical places.

Chrysostom's instruction may appear strangely superstitious – more so, since it concludes a homily which is preponderantly concerned with the excising of seemingly similar pagan habits like the swearing of oaths, the observance of omens, and the use of incantations and amulets (*Montfaucon* 2.48-60). However, the threshold renunciation and adherence, I argue, is an instance of the incarnational *catholicity* of capacitated speech. The whole of creation, all 'spaces', await Christ's salvation. The initiated are made capable of participating

[81] Chrysostom, *Ad Illuminandos Cat. Deut.* 2.60, *PG* 49, 240.

in the salvific dissipation of diabolical dissemblance in their coming in and going out. Christ conquers the devil by his incarnation and bodily resurrection. And, in this missional reading of the renunciation and adherence, the baptised become bodily bearers of reconciliation. This is to infiltrate *aparrhesia*, silence and incapacitation, with the consummation of language in the union of humanity with God.

6. Bold speech as 'Heavenly Conversation'

The final aspect I will add to this account of capacitated speech is that it is a participation in eschatological realities. On this point we find Theodore's second homily, which deals with enrolment, exorcism, profession of faith, and the renunciation and adherence, particularly instructive.[82] In this homily, when he speaks about the mode of life into which the initiates are moving, Theodore makes frequent use of the phrase, 'the conversation of heaven' (ܗܘܦܟܐ ܫܡܝܢܐ, *húpākā šmayānā*). In the following, I will consider how Theodore's language of 'heavenly conversation' reveals the eschatological tone of capacitated speech.

As we have seen, Theodore employs *ethopoeia* with great flourish to portray the rage into which the devil is thrown at conversions to Christ and the advancement of these converts towards initiation. Theodore creates the scene of the devil's protest first at enrolment, and then resumes his speech-in-character when he comes to describe the exorcisms. But Satan is silenced there, such that, at the renunciation, the candidates can finally abjure the devil with

[82] On the profession of faith and contracts, see Theodore, *Commentary*, 33: 'When the time for (the reception of) the sacrament draws nigh and the judgment and fight with the Demon – for the sake of which the words of exorcism have been used – are at an end;… you are brought by duly appointed persons to the priest, as it is before him that you have to make your engagements and promises to God. These deal with the faith and the Creed, which by a solemn asseveration you declare that you will keep steadfastly'.

confidence.[83] As Theodore presents it, enrolment affirms that the candidate is ‘long before the time and while still on earth, enrolled in heaven’.[84] At this the devil fulminates,

> How, then, is it possible that this man, who from the beginning and from the time of his forefathers belongs to me… should be taken away from this world and from its life, and consequently from my lordship also, which he himself chose willingly, and should become immortal, a thing which is higher than his nature, and be seen in the life and citizenship of the abode of heaven, a thing which does not pertain to men or to beings who have this (human) nature.[85]

Here, in what Mingana has translated as ‘citizenship’ of heaven, we find the first instance of ‘conversation of heaven’. Theodore says, in the voice of Satan’s objection, that the candidates will be seen ‘in the life and citizenship of the abode of heaven’: ܒܕܘܒܪܐ ܘܗܘܦܟܐ ܕܥܘܡܪܐ ܫܡܝܐ.[86] Mingana’s translation is accurate and reads smoothly, but it neglects the linguistic undertones in the Syriac vocabulary.[87] This line could alternatively be translated with: ‘they will be seen in the order (*dúbrā* from the root *dabar*, ‘word’) and the conversation (*húpākā*) of the abode of heaven’. This is not to say that Theodore (or his Syriac translator) intended to evoke an explicitly linguistic sense in these words. In the Syriac usage, both *dúbrā* and *húpākā* have civic or institutional meanings that do not directly call upon their linguistic semantic roots. And yet, the sensibility that the order, belonging, and life of the heavenly realm can be represented in terms of language – and, further, that one can be inducted into this ‘conversation’ – invites our attention.

We can consider whether ‘heavenly conversation’ (*húpākā šmayānā*), in a mystagogical context, brings to the fore a sense of dialogue. Its root, *hpk* ܗܦܟ, covers a large semantic

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[83] Theodore, *Commentary*, 37-38: ‘Formerly, even if you wished it, you did not dare to make use of these words, because you were afraid of his servitude, but as you have, by a Divine decree, received deliverance from him, you proclaim and abjure him with confidence and by your own words.’ Here ‘confidence’ is not the Syriacized *parrhesia,* but ܬܘܟܠܢܐ, *túklānā*.
[84] Theodore, *Commentary,* 26.
[85] Theodore, *Commentary,* 28.
[86] Syriac: Theodore, *Commentary,* 156.
[87] Mingana switches between ‘citizenship’ and the more literal ‘conversation’ in his rendering of ܗܘܦܟܐ.

range.[88] This range, nevertheless, orbits around a sense of circular or dialogical movement and return.[89] Mingana suggests that the Greek which may lay behind it is πολίτευμα, 'citizenship' or 'citizen rights'.[90] However, in just the same way that we have read *parrhesia* mystagogically, and so more deeply and more thematically than simply the socio-civic right to 'speak freely', 'heavenly conversation' also encourages a theological reading. This phrase opens to us the contemplation of reality as divine dialogue. I suggest that when the human capacity for speech is made *chōrētikos* it means the capacity not just to speak, but to *participate in a conversation.* And the conversation into which the candidates are enabled to enter is the conversation of being. But this has two aspects; an ontological aspect and an eschatological aspect. The first is the conversation between heaven and earth. This is the dialogue of creation and return: the divine word by which things come to be, the divine summons by which they return, and the sound of natures chiming in their journey back. In the earlier discussion of the *schema* of captivity and the *schema* of adoration, I noted how Theodore says that by the utterances of voice and body 'you have… directed your course toward Him'.[91] This first earthly pole of conversation is the dialogue of 'courses' streaming toward the Creator and Saviour. Here, 'heavenly conversation' is heaven-ward conversation.

The second conversation is the language which marks belonging to heaven. This is the inducting of our nature into the divine household and order. It is an eschatological dialect. At the very end of the second homily, Theodore says:

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[88] J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1903), s.v. ܗܦܘܟܐ, ܡܗܦܘܟܐ rt. ܗܦܟ – a going or turning back, round or about; hence a course or revolution of the stars, a revolving in the mind, deliberation, controversy; a manner or way of life, conversation, converse, dealing, often pl. ܡܠܬ ܗܦܘܟܐ answering back.

[89] J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary,* s.v. ܗܦܟ. The entry for ܗܦܟ is extensive and its meanings range among the following: to turn, return, going and coming, to turn over in one's heart, to have intercourse or converse, to be intimate with, to answer. It can refer to natural processes such as: the sun 'went down', the wine begins to 'turn'. It also can infer negative meanings such as 'to pervert', but this association does not seem to fit the context here.

[90] Theodore, *Commentary,* Alphonse Mingana's note, footnote 4, p.30

[91] Theodore, *Commentary,* 45.

> After we have, by our profession of faith, made our contracts and engagements with God our Lord, through the intermediary of the priest, we become worthy to enter His house and enjoy its sight, its knowledge and its habitation, and to be also enrolled in the city and its citizenship [conversation, *húpākā*]. We then become the owners of a great confidence.[92]

Theodore refers here to the impending commencement of the baptismal liturgy, and, more broadly, to the candidate's admission into the worship and liturgy of the church. And these, he is clear, are participations in heavenly realities. Above we find Theodore using the word *parrhesia* to speak of the 'great confidence' acquired by those made worthy to enter the house of God.[93] It is noteworthy how Theodore also says that those belonging to the household and city of God receive the 'sight' (ܚܙܘܬܐ), 'knowledge' (ܝܕܥܬܐ), and 'habitation' (ܡܫܟܢܐ) which are native to that city.[94] This suggests that *parrhesia,* true knowledge, and true speech are features of belonging to God, and that this belonging is inaugurated 'long before the time and while still on earth'. While the devil – or Theodore's *ethopoeia* as the devil – claims that this heavenly belonging 'does not pertain to men or to beings who have this nature', Theodore speaks of initiation as *reverting* to our Lord. After explaining the adherence to Christ, Theodore says:

> We have rightly reverted to our Lord to whom we belonged before the wickedness of Satan, and we are, as we were at the beginning, in the image of God… By His grace we rightly left for ever the mortal world, moved to the heavenly abode and citizenship, recognized our Lord, and are now hastening to go to our firstfruits[95] which were picked on our behalf and through which the Maker and the Lord of all gave us immortal life and a heavenly abode and conversation.[96]

In the trial scene that Theodore paints for his listeners, the devil is incensed not only at the breaking of his grasp upon those converting, but, perhaps more so, over their receiving of things 'higher than their nature'. In Theodore's mystagogical exegesis of the liturgy,

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[92] Theodore, *Commentary,* 34. Syr. 163.

[93] ܦܪܗܣܝܐ, a Syriac transliteration of παρρησία.

[94] These three words are in the construct/possessive form, emphasizing their affiliation – *its* sight, *its* knowledge, *its* habitation. The line that reads, 'and to be also enrolled in the city and its citizenship' could be rendered more literally with: 'also in the city, and in the conversation that is in her, we are inscribed'.

[95] These firstfruits are specifically those of the initiation liturgy as the candidates have undertaken enrolment and are moving toward baptism and eucharist.

[96] Theodore, *Commentary,* 30, Syr. 159. Though Mingana employs heavenly 'citizenship' and then heavenly 'conversation', *húpākā šmayānā* appears in both instances.

eschatology features prominently, and in this, I argue, we can discover the nature of the boldness of capacitated speech. In initiation grace admits and conforms human nature to divine life and draws us to participate in future blessings. Thus, the speech of those being initiated can be called 'bold' insofar as it is eschatological. It participates in things higher than the creaturely nature. It participates in the admission of humanity into divine union and to the immortality of the order of heaven. To the devil, this is audacious, to the mystagogue it is fitting, and for the candidate it is divinizing. The speech of liturgy, speech that is becoming *chōrētikos theou* is speech that participates in *theōsis.*

The 'conversation of heaven' is a supernatural end that is received through 'reverting to our Lord', is, in a paradoxical way, *our mother tongue;* it is 'higher than our nature' but given as the true end of speech in Christ.[97] Because of sin, this language laid hidden, impeded, and forgotten beneath the overlay of the muteness *(aparrhesia)* and incoherence (*mogilalos)* that paraded as our true dialect. Its restoration, though, could not be recovered by didactic instruction. The end of heavenly citizenship, as with heavenly speech, is extended at the cost of Christ's cross, and through His cross we 'revert to our Lord'. This is the heavenly conversation: the *logos* of our nature sounding of the 'leaving for ever the mortal world', the 'recognizing of our Lord', and the 'hastening to the firstfruits' of *theōsis*.[98] In the clarity of recognizing our Lord the speech of the initiate is capacitated to serve this eschatological end. The mystagogues emphasize that Christ is the conqueror, the true exorcist, the winner of firstfruits, and the looser of tongues. The liturgy consists in the acts that unite and conform our nature – and our speech – to Him and capacitate us for beatific ends. Christ the divine *Logos* is Himself the sight, the knowledge, and the habitation of heaven.

[97] This is the native dialect practiced in the Church.
[98] Theodore, *Commentary,* 30. Quoted above.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the faculty of speech made *chōrētikos theou* along the theme of *parrhesia* as true and bold speech. In the renunciation and adherence, *chōrētik-ized* speech takes the form of repentance, *metanoia.* The *vox humana* makes a true confession of fallenness, of captivity to sin and to the devil. This confession is true in both its content and form. As I showed in Theodore and Chrysostom's teachings on the *schema* of captivity, the candidates confess with their whole constitution, in body and word. Body and voice participate together in eschatological adoration of Christ in the words and *schema* of adherence; they 'say the same thing' *(homologeō)* and acknowledge the absolute Lordship of Christ. In my discussion of the turn from west to east in Ambrose and Cyril, I argued that capacitated speech is true when it is logical and catholic. When the candidates enlist the speech of creation in the return to Christ by directing their renunciation of Satan to the darkness of the west and speaking their adherence to Christ toward the light of the eastern sunrise, their speech accords with the sacramental *logic* of creation and gathers the *logoi* of the creaturely order into a universal *(catholikos)* and harmonious song of return. The baptizands have been attuned to this song in the propaedeutic *mathēsis* of nature and they are empowered by divine grace to become a true *parrhesiastes.*

The speech which is *chōrētikos theou* brings with it an exorcistic calling. In Chrysostom's instruction to repeat the '*apotassomai'* and '*syntassomai'* at every threshold, and to speak the same with the body in the sign of the cross, the initiates conform to the *paideia* of repentance. They become *christophoros* – Christ-bearers – as they spread abroad the sound, *phonē,* of the service of Christ; as Chrysostom says, the blessed captivity which leads to the homeland of the heavenly Jerusalem and to the common mother of us all.[99] This exorcistic mission includes the rejection of the putative tone of non-being wherever the diabolic silence

[99] Chrysostom, *PK* 2.15, ACW 154.

of *aparrhesia* descends. The *chōrētikoi* boldly punctuate this silence with the gospel of the Lord of substance, the I Am, making the 'regions of darkness' into 'places of Light'.

Lastly, in the liturgy, speech is made capable of 'heavenly conversation'. The candidates are made capable of participating in divine dialogue; of being made fitting to the life, knowledge, and habitation of heaven. I have suggested that the speech practiced in the liturgy of initiation is to engage the human *logos* in its end. This is the office of the tongue: to speak truly about ourselves and about creation, to speak words of union to Christ, and, in the time before His *Parousia*, to sabotage the darkness and silence of the enemy's dominion. These features represent the fulfilment of the *vox humana.* This is *metanoia;* it is the sound of return.

Chapter Three

Baptism and the Capacitation of Sight

Introduction

In this chapter, I offer an account of the capacitation of sight in relation to baptism. To build an account of the transfiguration of the visual faculty we turn to the ritual sequence of baptism: the stripping off of the baptizand's garments, immersion in water, robing in white, and anointing with oil. Through a sequential and thematic exploration of the mystagogues' baptismal homilies, I will place as a guiding theme of enquiry the name most frequently used for baptism in the early church: 'illumination'.[1] Upon being initiated, as I have noted previously, the baptizands are called *neophōtisoi*, 'newly-illumined'.[2] The 'eyes of faith' appear throughout the mystagogies, but they are most prominently mentioned in connection with baptism; for instance, Ambrose says, 'through the font of the Lord and the preaching of His passion, at that moment your eyes were opened'.[3] It is important to establish at the outset that, for the mystagogues, sight is intimately associated with knowledge. And while, liturgically speaking, the eyes of faith are directly tied to the candidates' subsequent admittance to the eucharist and the capacity to see and know that Christ is truly present in the eucharistic elements, the argument of this chapter will reflect more broadly on how the notion of illumination and the acquisition of the 'eyes of faith' informs our understanding of seeing and knowing as such, and what it would mean for these interrelated faculties to be made *chōrētikos theou*, capacitated to receive God.

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[1] See Michael Peppard's excellent discussion of the traditional vocabulary of 'illumination' to refer to initiation in the early church and the archaeological evidence preserved in Syro-Palestinian baptisteries from the fourth to sixth centures. Michael Peppard, 'The Photisterion in Late Antiquity: Reconsidering Terminology for Sites and Rites of Initiation' *JEH*, Vol. 71, No. 3, July 2020.

[2] Particularly in the mystagogies of Cyril and Chrysostom.

[3] Ambrose "Sermons on the Sacraments," 3.15, in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994), 127. Henceforward cited as Ambrose, *Sac.*

The larger category of 'illumination' extends beyond the subject-centred question of active seeing to include *being seen* and *being known*, and also, as I will show, the idea of becoming part of the Light itself. I will argue that *chōrētik-ized* or 'illumined' sight lies in the capacitation of our human nature to 'see clearly', to shine forth its inner Christological truth, and in the consummation of visuality through the drawing of the baptised into Light itself. My argument will be constructed along four movements of transfiguration: the illumination of humanity as subject, that is, our receptivity to truth as 'seers' and 'knowers'; the illumination of humanity as object, or the unveiling and sharpening of the disclosure of our nature; the drawing of our nature into the Light of Christ; and, lastly, the priestly calling upon the illumined in the here and now. As with the other two senses or faculties we have considered, hearing and speaking, the 'end' of the visual faculty is to unite with and be filled with Christ. This capacitation, however, is not simply the empowerment of a receptive faculty, and as such it includes not only the capacity to behold Christ, but also, as I have said, the consummation of visuality itself. My argument assumes that there is an *epiphanic* dimension to reality, belonging properly to the Godhead and, by participative analogy, to creation. Here *epiphany* is a feature of being; the self-disclosure of natures being a constituent part of creation, an image of the divine self-disclosure and the perfection of knowledge and truth that belong to the Trinity. Illumination and the capacitation of sight, I will suggest, relates intimately to epiphany, drawing the creaturely into the divine.

Akribeia

In order to furnish and accommodate my account of the faculty of sight being made *chōrētikos theou*, I will utilize another Greek term that features in Chrysostom's mystagogy: ἀκρίβεια. *Akribeia* means 'exact', 'accurate', 'precise', and it appears a number of times in Chrysostom's homilies as a defining characteristic of the vision and understanding enjoyed by the baptised. As we will read shortly, Chrysostom tells the baptismal candidates that they will

'learn with exactness *(akribeia)*' in initiation that 'death is not death'. A brief survey of its classical usage reveals that the 'precision' of *akribeia* is not merely forensic or immanent. *Akribeia* infers a fundamental relation to the transcendent – especially in the sense of imitative perfection.[4] In its artistic usage, it implies typological success; a faithful portrait or sculpture is one that represents the archetype or reality with *akribeia*. *Akribeia* also relates to teleology, a completeness by which a thing may be measured. Thus, it can be used when something functions, excels, or thrives, according to its nature.[5] Illumination, then, understood in relation to this notion of *akribeia*, is not only about seeing a static truth, or even a participative truth, but it is about the consummation of the faculty of sight itself.

Akribeia features prominently in Chrysostom's other works, especially in his homilies *On the Incomprehensibility of God. Akribeia* touches on the mystery of revelation, and Chrysostom uses it in two senses. The first sense refers to 'precise knowledge' of the fullness of God's being; a knowledge impossible for creatures and enjoyed by the divine Persons alone. Chrysostom says, 'All things concerning Him are precisely [μετ' ἀκριβείας] known only by the Son and the Holy Spirit and by no one else.'[6] Its second use appears when Chrysostom speaks of the sight or knowledge of God that humanity *can* come to through God's self-revelation. Even this 'accomodated' knowledge, though incapable of the exactness of the mutual knowing of the Trinity, is still 'precise' in its own way; it is true insofar as it reflects

[4] Bauer translates ἀκρίβεια as 'strict conformity to a norm or standard, exactness, precision', BDAG 4th edition, s.v. ἀκρίβεια, p.34. We see this in the artistic usage of the word: for instance, in the sculptor Xenocrates' three criteria of *symmetria* (commensurability), *rhythmos* (composition), and *akribeia* (accuracy of detail), see Andrew Stewart, *One Hundred Greek Sculptors, Their Careers and Extant Works*, online: Perseus Digital Library, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:abo:sec,00024 . In Plato, however, it is often used in a pejorative sense to refer to the distraction of pedantry: 'one should not be carried away into the *minuter points* of philosophy' Pl. *Gor.* 487c, and 'the avoidance of strict precision is in general a sign of good breeding' Pl. *Tht.* 184c.

[5] A sense of functional order and teleology also pertains in the military usage: Thucydides' comments on the (loss of) the rigid discipline and efficiency, or 'purity' *(akribeia)* of Athenian naval prowess, Th. *Hist.* 7.13; and Aristotle describes the development in weaponry to improve 'precision', Arist. *Pol.* 1331a.

[6] Jean Chrysostom, *Sur la Providence de Dieu.* Trans. Anne-Marie Malingrey. *SC* 79 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1961), 3.5, p.76: Τὰ γὰρ ἐκείνου Υἱῷ καὶ Πνεύματι ἁγίῳ δῆλα μόνον ἅπαντα μετ'ἀκριβείας ἑτέρῳ δέ οὐδενί.

and leads humanity to God.[7] This second use of *akribeia* brings to light a significant piece of my present argument concerning capacitated sight. These two *akribeias* are not utterly distinct. Chrysostom's deliberate repetition of *akribeia* to describe both divine knowledge and the knowledge opened in the illumination of initiation affirms that the latter is graced with a continuity, albeit a derived continuity, with its transcendent and inaccessible source.

In his fourth homily of *On the Incomprehensibility of God,* which features a lengthy exegesis of John 1:18,[8] Chrysostom vigorously and repeatedly establishes that creatures cannot know God with exactness (μετὰ ἀκριβείας).[9] Even the celestial hierarchies do not have access to precise knowledge of God's essence, as seen in Isaiah's vision (Isa.6) in which the Seraphim are said to cover their faces:

> And so, when the prophet says that they could not endure to look upon God, even though God was condescending and accommodating himself to their weakness, he means just this: they cannot endure to comprehend him with a pure and perfect knowledge; they dare not look fixedly at his essence pure and entire; they dare not look at him even after he has accommodated himself to them. And to look fixedly means to know.[10]

The capacity to 'look fixedly' at God or to 'comprehend with a pure and perfect knowledge' equally eludes humanity: 'The evangelist, John, knew that knowledge of such matters is beyond human nature.'[11] It is the Son, Chrysostom says, who possesses perfect knowledge of God. The exactness, truth, and perfection of the Son's knowledge arise out of His consubstantiality and

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[7] See David Rylaarsdam's excellent monograph which thematises God's 'adaptation' or 'accomodation', συγκατάβασις, as a fundamental principal of divine remedial pedagogy. *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: November 2014.

[8] 'No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, Himself has revealed this.' Among the textual variants for Jn 1:18, Chrysostom reads 'the only-begotten Son' rather than 'God'. He also uses εκεινος to mean 'this' for part of his argument, as in 'the only-begotten has revealed this', and later to mean 'the only-begotten Son has revealed Him'.

[9] 'no one knows God in his essence with complete exactness'. John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensibility of God,* trans. Paul W. Harkins, The Fathers of the Church (FOTC) vol.72, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1984), hom.4.22, pg.124. Cf. *SC* 28, *Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu,* IV.221-222, pg.246 : ὅτι τὸν Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἔγνω οὐσιωδῶς μετὰ ἀκριβείας ἁπάσης.

[10] Chrysostom, *Incomp.* 4.23, FOTC 124. *SC* 28, IV.229-230, p.246: ὅτι τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτοῦ τετρανωμένην καὶ ἀκριβῆ τῆς καταλήψεως ἐνεγκεῖν οὐ δύναται. *SC* 28, IV.233, p.246: : Τὸ δὲ ἀτενὲς ἰδεῖν τὸ γνῶναί ἐστι.

[11] Chrysostom, *Incomp.* 4.24, FOTC 124.

intimacy with the Father. Thus, Chrysostom reads the epithets for the 'only one who has seen God' (Jn. 1:18) – 'son', 'only-begotten', and '[He] who is in the bosom of the Father' – as expressions of consubstantiality. He alights especially upon the third:

> from the expression "bosom," you must understand the Son's closeness to [ἐγγύτητα] and confidence [παρρησίαν] in the Father who has begotten him… For the Father would not let himself have the Son in his bosom unless the Son were of the same essence… Therefore, since he is the Son, since he is the only begotten, and since he dwells in the Father's bosom, he knows perfectly all that the Father knows [πάντα τὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐπίσταται ἀκριβῶς].[12]

Though the knowledge enjoyed by the divinely con-substantial is beyond the nature and capacity of creatures, the question of seeing and knowing God does not end in a cul-de-sac of absolute ontological and epistemological distance. Here we return to Chrysostom's second use of *akribeia.* His rather surprising use of *akribeia* to describe the knowledge of God that is possible for humanity through divine revelation, albeit in a derived and analogous manner, is the very kind of vision and knowledge which initiation capacitates our nature to receive. The *akribeia* that humanity can acquire comes through creation, Scripture, and Christ. Christ, the third of these, is preeminent and undergirds the other two. Chrysostom presents the gift of this knowledge in terms of divine pedagogy:[13]

> This is why [God] brought in to teach us this doctrine the one who is seated at the right hand of God and who has a perfect knowledge of these things.[14]

Chrysostom's confident affirmation of the *akribeia* of both creation and Scripture as well is particularly present in his homily on Genesis. Chrysostom interrupts his sequential exegesis of

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[12] Chrysostom, *Incomp.* 4.28-29, FOTC 126-127; *SC* 28, IV.276-288, p. 250-252. Note the appearance of *parrhesia* again, this time with regard to the Son. Interestingly, Flacelière translates the penultimate line with '... il connaît parfaitement tous les secrets de son Père,' though perhaps secrets is not borne out in the Greek text.

[13] Rylaarsdam's *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy* (2014) tracks this in terms of God's pedagogy of accommodation or adaptation (*synkatabasis*).

[14] Chrysostom, *Incomp.* 4.24, FOTC 124; αὐτον τὸν ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ καθήμενον καὶ ταῦτα ἀκριβῶς ἐπιστάμενον παράγει τοῦ δόγματος ἡμῖν τοὺττου διδάσκαλον. *SC* 28 IV.236-237 p. 246-248.

Genesis 1 to extol the lovingkindness (φιλανθρωπία) of God, who instructs humanity with *akribeia* through the created order and the Scriptures.

> Did you see how he brings everything from non-being into being? Did you see the precision of the teaching [εἶδες διδασκαλίας ἀκρίβειαν]? Did you see the adaptation [εἶδες συγκατάβασιν] of the Lord, and how far he demonstrates it in regard to our human race? I mean, how could we have learned these things precisely [μετὰ ἀκριβείας μαθεῖν], had not he in his unspeakable lovingkindness deemed it proper to teach humanity through the tongue of the prophet, so that we might know the order of created things and the power of the Creator, and how his word took effect, and his utterance endowed creatures with life and the way to existence?[15]

Here both the inherent, divinely-spoken, order of created things and the Scriptures manifest a *precision* in their conveyance of divine realities. The precision of God's teaching through creation and Scripture, given as a divine condescension of love, is intended for humanity *to see* (εἴδω) and to *learn* (μανθάνω). The 'accuracy' of these accommodated means of revelation surely does not refer to exact representation, or exhaustive delineation of divine truth, as both are clearly impossible for creaturely powers. It seems, in Chrysostom's text above, that the precision of God's teaching refers rather to its suitedness to God's love ('in his unspeakable lovingkindness [He] deemed it proper') and His desire to 'endow creatures with life' and draw them on the 'way to existence'. I will argue in the following that it is the *akribeia* of the creaturely order in this sense to which the illumined are capacitated to see. They perceive the precision of creation, of the Scriptures, and of the Incarnate Christ with special clarity in the liturgy to the end that they might travel the way to existence.

1. Pathologies of Sight

> The eye is the lamp of the body; so if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light inside you is darkness, how great and terrible is that darkness!
>
> Matthew 6:22-23

[15] John Chrysostom, *In Genesis*, hom. VII, PG 53.64–5; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17,* FOTC 74, trans. Robert C. Hill, hom. 7.9-10, 96. The translation quoted here is Rylaarsdam's; see Rylaardsam, *Divine Pedagogy,* 114. *see* also In Gen. 3.12 (PG 53.35–6)

1.1 Snakes and robbers

Sin frustrates both visibility and vision. As with the *Ephphatha* and the healing of deafness in the prebaptismal rites, there is a theme of healing which accompanies baptism as well: the restoration of sight to the blind. And so, we must begin by asking from what sort of blindness, or obscured sight and obscured shining, are the baptised delivered before describing into what sort of seeing they are inaugurated. As an orienting starting point, I offer a section from Chrysostom's mystagogy where we find both an instructive account of the darkness before baptism, along with an exemplary appearance of *akribeia* to express the sight and understanding given in initiation. Chrysostom employs the analogy of a man walking about in the dark to diagnose the pathology of sight and understanding suffered by the un-baptised. By means of this image, he explores the epistemological, and deeper ontological, disadvantage of the paradigm of darkness. There are four important insights to draw from the following text: first, illumined sight and understanding is characterized by *akribeia*, here as clarity and truth; secondly, the heart of the truth which the newly-illumined are capacitated to see is that, because of Christ, death is not death; thirdly, the way of acquiring illumined sight is through the sacraments and the liturgy; and fourthly, capacitated sight results in coherence and peace among creatures, who cooperate toward an eschatological hope.

Chrysostom thus says to those about to be baptised:

> You shall be called "newly-illumined," because your light is always new, if you wish it that way, and is never extinguished. Whether we shall have it so or not, night follows the light of this world; but the darkness knows not the shining of this new light. *The light shines in the darkness; and the darkness grasped it not.* Certainly, the world is not as bright when the sun rises as is the soul which is illumined and becomes brighter from the grace it has received from the Spirit.
>
> Consider more closely the nature of these things. When night falls and it is dark, many a time a man sees a rope and thinks it is a snake; and when a friend approaches him, he flees from him as if he were a foe; when he hears a noise, he is frightened. Nothing like this would happen in the light of day; everything is seen then just as it really is.

> This same thing happens in the case of our soul. Whenever grace comes and drives out the darkness from our mind, we learn the exact nature of things; what frightened us before, now becomes contemptible in our eyes. We no longer are afraid of death after we have learned carefully from this holy initiation that death is not death but a sleep and repose which lasts but for a time.[16]

1.2 Akribeia: The clarity of the light and the darkness of death

In the above passage about seeing things in the dark, ἀκρίβεια (or a derivative thereof) occurs three times: Chrysostom instructs his hearers to 'consider *more closely'* the nature of the visual impairment of the man walking in the dark; later, he says that when grace drives out darkness 'we learn the *exact* nature of things', and, finally, we 'learn *carefully'* from this holy *mystagogias* that death is not death.[17] In all three instances, ἀκρίβεια appears paired with the verb μανθάνω *(manthanō)*, to learn or consider. *Manthanō* is related to the noun *mathēsis*, education, and also to the word for disciple, *mathētēs*. In his instruction to 'consider more closely' the phenomenology of seeing in the dark, Chrysostom invites the neophytes to consider with *accuracy (akribeia)* the nature of these things.[18] This phrase is mirrored when Chrysostom describes the kind of seeing and understanding which follows the dawn of grace and the banishment of darkness from the mind: μανθάνομεν τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἀκρίβειαν, 'we learn the exact nature of things'. *Akribeia* functions in Chrysostom's analogy to suggest a relation to truth. Chrysostom suggests that the sight of the illumined is, in one sense, about the capacity to see truth in creation, or, more generally, the truth of 'reality' (τὰ πράγματα); that is, to see rightly. To 'learn with *akribeia'* implies a sight and an understanding that is sensitive, discerning, and susceptible to truth.

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[16] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), homily 12, *Montfaucon* 2.10-2.12, 175-6. The Greek of the *Montfaucon* homilies is found in John Chrysostom, *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis: Catechesis Deutero*, in Migne, *PG* 49.233.

[17] We should also observe that when Chrysostom says that in the daylight 'everything is seen then just as it really is' (ἀλλα πάντα οἷαπερ ἐστὶ *φαίνεται*), a phrase which is similar to 'learning the exact nature of things', it is not *akribeia* which serves adverbially, but φαίνω: to bring to light, to appear, to reveal or disclose. This only strengthens and nuances the tie between 'accurate sight', visibility, and light.

[18] Καὶ μάνθανε τῶν πραγμάτων ακριβέοτερον τὴν φύσιν.

Akribeia's truthfulness, however, clearly entails more than 'factuality'. Chrysostom's story of the man walking in the dark, who mistakes a rope for a snake and his friend for a villain, provides a diagnosis of the encumbered sight and understanding of un-illumined humanity. His analogy gives an account of the hermeneutic of darkness. The issue, for our twilight perambulator, is not merely that he sees 'wrongly'. It is, more seriously, that the world of the dark is characterized by finitude, death, and fear. The heart of the above passage, as regards our knowing and seeing of the world, resides where Chrysostom says, 'what frightened us before, now becomes contemptible in our eyes. We are no longer afraid of death…'.[19] Chrysostom suggests that it is not ropes or friends or sounds, neither truly snakes or foes, which become contemptible in the light of day. The fear from which humanity is delivered is rather the thing that *really* frightens us: death. The man in Chrysostom's story was afraid first of his own mortality, and only subsequently of his fellow creatures *as coloured by it*. The light of initiation – the 'light of grace' as Chrysostom says – has saved him from the fear of death; and, we may suggest, from the *hermeneutics of death* and the paradigm of darkness.

The mention of death suggests that this is something deeper than a simple perceptual and epistemological reorientation. Chrysostom means to say that with baptismal illumination one can see the world aright: 'in the light of day we see things as they really are'. However, building on Chrysostom's image, I suggest that his analogy of incapacitated and disordered sight also reflects the suffocating and obscured ontology of the paradigm of the curse. When death is the ultimate end of all things, and is inflected upon the things of this world, our engagement with creation is coloured by a finitude of being and finitude of the good. The pattern goes something like this: Physical death is the herald to me of *my* finitude and, just as

[19] Chrysostom continues with the following, which restates that illumination heals our fear of finitude: 'Nor are we afraid of poverty or disease or any such misfortune, because we know that we are on our way to a better life, which is impervious to death and destruction and is free from all such inequality.'

I am limited in this paradigm so all of creation is limited. And, concomitant with my sense of finitude, I read the objects around me through the lenses of scarcity, enmity, and competition.

This is the logic of death. It unfolds in a physical sense, in that forms of violence arise by which we stake a claim on being, and it unfolds in an epistemological sense as well. Fear may lead us to use knowledge as a means to map the space each 'thing' takes up in the limited horizon of being. The hermeneutics of death is a tool to console ourselves and hedge ourselves in. In this paradigm, we acknowledge our precarious hold on our own existence and exercise a violent bid to claim a space.[20] We recognize that existence doesn't *properly* belong to us. Only this – the acknowledgement that existence was never properly 'ours' – will remain when we move out of the realm of darkness and into the light. The narrative of the darkness is answered by the peace that attends the paradigm of illumination and light. Returning to Chrysostom, it is worth noting the vocabulary by which he speaks about the clarity of sight that the illumined now have. Chrysostom says above that the illumined see everything 'just as it really is', πάντα οἷαπερ ἐστὶ *φαίνεται* – or, rather, everything 'comes to light', is disclosed, as it is.[21] That is, by the light of grace they see and understand with clarity the disclosure of truth within created realities.

1.3 'We learn with exactness from this holy initiation'

We must remain ever aware of how illumination and its 'exactness' hinges fundamentally and irrevocably upon Christ. In my reading of Chrysostom's analogy, I have argued that the deeper truth that the neophyte is capacitated to see is that 'death is not death', and that this has some relation to the light by which the *neophōtistoi* see the exact nature of

[20] E.g. Emmanuel Levinas' characterisation of the bid for subjecthood as being 'torn away *(etre arraché)* from the there is *(Il y a)*,' to become a 'master of being' and a 'name in the anonymity of night', or what Phillip Blond calls subjectivity's 'upsurge from the nameless horror of undifferentiated Being.' See Phillip Blond, "Emmanuel Levinas: God and Phenomenology" in *Post-Secular Philosophy: between philosophy and theology*, ed. Phillip Blond, (London: Routledge, 1997), 211.
[21] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.11; Chrysostom, *Ad Illuminandos: Cat. Deut., PG* 49.233.

things. That 'death is not death' is true only because of Christ's descent into that last enemy and His victory over it.[22] And this truth, Chrysostom says, is *learned* in the mysteries. It is 'learned with precision from this holy initiation *(mystagogias)*': μαθόντες ἀκριβῶς παρὰ τῆς ἱερᾶς ταύτης μυσταγωγίας. This establishes a foundational link between 'things as they really are' – as they really are because of Christ – and the liturgy.

Chrysostom can only suggest that we learn that death is not death from holy initiation if humble matter is capable of communicating that truth. He has already suggested that an intimation of this salvific truth echoes preveniently in the mundane 'nature' (or phenomenology) of light and dark; hence his invitation to 'consider carefully the nature of these things'. Though by no means explicit in the present text, I suggest that underlying the possibility of this kind of *mathēsis,* that death is not death, is the account of creation that I sketched in the previous chapters, namely, the pedagogy of nature and the logocity of being. When nature and gospel enter their Christological choreography in the liturgy of initiation, the *mathēsis* becomes eschatological. A crack in the horizon of finitude appears at the lip of the font, as at the mouth of the tomb, and the advent of eternity mingling with time alters our vision of the world even as it inaugurates us into the next. Christ's resurrection underlies the coming of grace which drives out the darkness in Chrysostom's analogy. But this *exact* truth and knowledge spills forth upon all of creation, and henceforward illumines all of our encounters with the world. This is the healing of the paradigm of death through Christ's resurrection and its dissemination through baptismal illumination.

[22] Chrysostom follows this line with: 'Nor are we afraid of poverty or disease or any such misfortune, because we know that we are on our way to a better life, which is impervious to death and destruction and is free from all such inequality.' Here, too, we observe the fear of darkened finitude. And again we can read the overturn of this fear Christologically. Christ upends poverty through his incarnation and descent into death – His poverty, *taking the form of a slave,* and *obedience unto death* pour upon the baptised riches of immortal life and a shining brighter than gold.

1.4 Some help from Plato: the mingling of lights

In Chrysostom's metaphor of meeting things in the dark as opposed to the light, there is a dual effect of illumination. It seems that two things happen with the advent of the light: the vision and understanding of the night-sojourner are enlightened, *and* the world around him is bathed in light. Both of these together characterize the birth of the capacity to 'learn the exact nature of things'. Here it serves to introduce the extramission theory of vision; one among a variety of antique theories of perception. It is not obvious which ancient Graeco-Roman account of light and sight Chrysostom subscribed to, and it is certainly not his aim in his mystagogies to tell us. However, a brief discussion of the metaphysical assumptions of the extramission theory can help to draw out the way that illumination touches not only the subject's capacity to see, but also creation's capacity for epiphany – the capacity to reveal and manifest.

In the theory of perception promulgated in Plato's *Timaeus,* the human soul is thought to be constituted of fire; and this fire proceeds through the eyes and mingles with the ambient light of the world. This mingling of kindred lights is the condition of perception: 'From the communion [κοινωνίας] of the internal and external fires', like mingles with like (ὅμοιον πρὸς ὅμοιον), alights upon objects, and returns impressions of the sensible world to the soul.[23] For Plato, this mingling which occasions perception serves the highest ends, philosophy and contemplation:

> God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them [συγγενεῖς]… and that we, learning [ἐκμαθόντες] them and partaking [μετασχόντες] of the natural truth of reason, might imitate [μιμούμενοι] the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.[24]

[23] Plato, *Timaeus, The Dialogues of Plato,* vol. 3, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892), 466. Cf. Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 9 trans. W.R.M. Lamb. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), Greek: *Tim.* 45c, 45d and 46a.

[24] Plato, *Timaeus,* [47b-c], Jowett, 466-7. Lamb's translation highlights the poetic repetition of linguistic roots: God devised and bestowed upon us vision to the end that we might behold the revolutions of Reason in the Heaven

For our purposes, there are two significant points to draw from the extramission theory as expressed here in the *Timaeus*. The first is the kinship between humanity and the world, expressed as the kindred light or 'fire' which abides in the human soul and in the world. The second is that the *end* of this order of reality, and of perception itself, is the imitation of transcendent truth. Sight is fostered by kinship and intended for likeness.

Reading Chrysostom's account of Christian illumination alongside the metaphysical understanding of sight from the *Timaeus* helps to remind us of the ancient assumption that sensation is involved in a process of knowing and learning which operates within a teleological frame. For Plato, sight – which is predicated upon a certain kinship between humanity and the world, and between human reason and transcendent reason, and occasioned in their communion – serves its true end when it accommodates the contemplation of the 'unerring courses of God'. Reading baptismal illumination alongside the extramission theory, leads us to consider the deeper meaning of sight, and moves away from imagining the visual faculty simply as one of information acquisition. The man walking in the dark in Chrysostom's analogy has not merely gained the insight that a rope is not a snake. 'Accurate sight' occurs, rather, when he begins to participate in the ends for which sight and knowledge are given him. Seeing with *akribeia* is vision ordered toward its own *telos* of seeing divine sights, and it is the capacity to see creation in terms of its participation in an eschatological choreography as well. This eschatological *telos* of sight, which I am suggesting is implied in *akribeia,* is about sight being filled with Christ, with life and light, and concerns a visuality which recognizes the *epiphanic* in fellow creatures such that, in the mundane communion between the illumined and creation – i.e., in earthly learning – a Christological luminescence is enflamed.

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and use them for the revolvings of the reasoning that is within us, these being akin to those, [47c] the perturbable to the imperturbable; and that, through learning and sharing in calculations which are correct by their nature, by imitation of the absolutely unvarying revolutions of the God we might stabilize the variable revolutions within ourselves.

In Chrysostom's analogy, light now *shines forth* un-distorted from the world: fellow creatures are no longer foes and competitors, but are sacramental heralds and co-pilgrims in their own diverse particularities. Light also shines with clarity *upon* the world from the newly born eyes of faith of the baptised. This light is the capacity to recognize and read the world in light of Christ's resurrection. These lights *mingle* to occasion perception in service of the initiatory *imitation* of Christ and the eschatological *likeness* which is our end.

1.5 Gummy cataracts and teleology

Remaining with the theme of visual pathology a little longer, it serves to notice Chrysostom's use of late antique medical knowledge regarding the impediments of sight. Chrysostom says of the grace of initiation:

> It did not change their substance, but made over their will, no longer permitting the tribunal of the mind's eyes to entertain an erroneous notion, but by dissipating the mist [λήμη] which was blinding their eyes, God's grace made them see the ugly deformity of evil and virtue's shining beauty as they truly are.[25]

Wendy Mayer draws attention to the way Chrysostom describes this particular impediment of the mind's eye as λήμη; 'mist' for Harkins, and 'eye gum' for Mayer.[26] She points out that within the medical culture of antiquity, this 'gum' was supposed to be one of the causes of acquired blindness; and, as Hippocrates and Galen tell us, it was believed to come as a result of overeating and poor digestion. Chrysostom reads the physiological problem spiritually as the pathology, or 'passion', of indulgence.[27]

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[25] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 4.14, 72. *SC* 50, 190: οὐ τὴν οὐσιαν μεταβαλοῦσα ἀλλὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν μετασκευάσασα και τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τῆς διανοίας τὸ κριτήριον οὐκ ἀφιεῖσα λοιπὸν ἐναντίαν περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἔχειν τὴν ὑπόληψιν, ἀλλὰ καθάπερ λήμην τινὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀποσκεδάσασα παρέσχεν ἀκριβῶς ὁρᾶν καὶ τῆς κακίας τὸ δυσειδὲς καὶ ἄμορφον καὶ τὴς ἀρετῆς τὴν πολλὴν εὐμορφίαν καὶ τὴν φαιδρότητα.

[26] Wendy Mayer 'Training the Soul, Embracing the Body: John Chrysostom and Embodied Mystagogy', paper delivered at the Third International Congress on Early Christian Mystagogy and the Body, Netherlands Centre for Patristic Research, Utrecht. Aug. 30- Sept. 1, 2017. I am indebted to Wendy Mayer for sharing her paper with me.

[27] Mayer, 'Training the Soul': 'The eye disease he references is peculiarly suited to his psychagogic emphasis. Similar to Asterius' 'mist that satiety usually pours down over the eyes', which fasting removes, leaving the eyes clear and undarkened, the gummy excretion (λήμη) that John adduces as darkening the mind's eye prior to baptism has, according to the Hippocratic writings and Galen, its origins in overeating and inadequate digestion.'

The objects that one is enabled to perceive, following the ophthalmic surgery of grace to remove these cataracts, Chrysostom says, are the beauty (εὐμορφία) and brilliance (φαιδρότης) of virtue, and the ugliness (δυσειδής) of the deformity (ἀμορφία) of evil; all of which trade, at least in part, in visibility. The vocabulary Chrysostom uses in this contrast of beauty and deformity, εὐμορφία and ἀμορφία, should give us pause. Here is a prime example of how illumined vision is the perception of reality through an attunement to teleology. The *a*-morphous-ness of evil, as contrasted with the *eu*-morphous-ness of virtue, is, by etymology, a privation; one of form or shape. And it implies, in a mystagogical sense, a privation in terms of iconicity. Beauty and ugliness are not equally substantial states of manifestation. Rather, this pair provides us with the contrast of good *(eu)* formation and imitation, over and against *a*-formation, *formlessness* or chaos. Taking our cue from the Greek, then: for a thing to be 'beautiful', *eu-morphous,* its shape, *morphē,* or manner of being must be rightly conforming to the higher reality of which it is a visible image.[28] Vice is ugly and 'deformed', or *a-morphous,* insofar as it is aborted or arrested becoming.

Chrysostom's teaching suggests that the removal of this λήμη, the eye-gum, and the subsequent ability to discern true from distorted reflections of eternal good and beauty are part of the gift of grace to see these things 'as they truly are', or to see with *akribeia*.[29] Again, we find here a subtle, yet significant, tinge of teleology abiding within Chrysostom's presentation of the sight of the baptised.

[28] Returning to Plato's *Timaeus* [50c-d], on the notion of shape or figure, μορφή, we find that the sub-stratum 'in which' becoming and the conformation of a thing to its source occurs is called the 'mother' and the 'receptacle and nurse of all generation [or becoming]', and it is itself *formless,* ἀμορφός. Lamb's translation is also helpful: '... we must conceive of three kinds,—the Becoming, that "Wherein" it becomes, and the source "Wherefrom" the Becoming.' See, *Plato in Twelve Volumes,* Vol. 9 trans. W.R.M. Lamb. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). See also Lampe's Patristic Lexicon, in which *ἄμορφός* can refer to chaos, formlessness, and soul-less-ness (i.e., physical death).

[29] Or: he is furnished with [the ability] to see accurately, παρέσχεν ἀκριβῶς ὁρᾶν.

Speaking in terms of aesthetics fits well with the way the mystagogues bring together the pre-reflexivity of sensation alongside the discernment of and communion with heavenly realities. Beauty is uniquely and intimately tied to the body and the senses, and, in a special way, to sight. Yet, at least in its classical sense, it is just as crucially tied to the immaterial and transcendent. Beauty is the name for their meeting and co(in)herence. Thus, illumined and 'accurate' sight also includes a special sensitivity to beauty as the relation and convergence between heavenly glory and earthly visibility.

2. Illuminating the Subject:

2.1 Anthropology and akribeia: seeing ourselves truly

After the dispersal of the darkness and the healing of eye diseases discussed above, we come to the first positive (that is, more than remedial) piece of capacitation: the illumination of the baptised as subject. This is the enabling of the power of vision to see truly. A rich site for exploring the notion of true vision can be found in the mystagogues' reflections on anthropology and baptism. In various ways, the mystagogues suggest that at baptism the true meaning of our nature begins to shine forth, and our self-knowledge is enlightened. Here I turn to Ambrose, who, like Chrysostom, draws upon the theme of healing when he speaks of the vision of the truth, or as I have said, the illumination of the subject.

2.2 He has spread the mud over your eyes

Much like his appeal to the Markan healing of the deaf-mute in his explanation of the *Ephphatha*, Ambrose here draws upon the Johannine account of Christ restoring sight to the blind man (John 9:1-12) when he speaks of the convert's recognition of their need for baptism. Unlike the foreign accretion of λήμη which impedes sight and knowledge, Christ's application of mud and spit upon the eyes in John 9 is a positive intervention. Ambrose associates the healing of the blind with enrolment for baptism:

> When you gave in your name [Christ] took mud and spread it over your eyes. What does this mean? It means that you had to confess your sins, examine your conscience, do penance for your faults, you had to acknowledge, that is to say, the lot of human kind.[30]
>
> So the one who seeks refuge in the baptism of Christ acknowledges himself to be a man. Christ has spread the mud on your eyes, that is, reverence, prudence and the awareness of your frailty; and he has said to you: 'Go to Siloam'. What does Siloam mean? 'It means', the evangelist says, 'Sent'; that is, go to the font where Christ's cross is preached; go to the font in which all your errors are redeemed.[31]

There is no historical evidence of a Latin mud-spreading rite. Thus, we can assume that Ambrose's use of the healing miracle here is rhetorical, meant to draw his hearers to contemplate the symbolic details of the story – chief among them the mud that Christ used to heal the blind man. Ambrose overlays the narrative sequence of the healing upon the baptismal candidates' personal and ritual movement toward baptism, leading them to consider the Christological source of illumination. As with Chrysostom, the healed sight here implies and entails knowledge, namely self-knowledge, restored to truth.

The mud is an emblem of human nature. A thematic association between the mud of John 9 and the dust of Genesis 2 is established early in patristic exegesis. And, though Ambrose does not explicitly allude to the creation story here, a sensitivity to the theme of creation will help us to read Ambrose's point about 'acknowledging the lot of human kind' and to discern the connection between healed sight and self-understanding.[32] In the creation account of Genesis 2, God creates Man from the dust of the ground and divine breath. And it is to dust bereft of breath that humanity is condemned to return after the Fall. In John 9, Christ heals the

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[30] Ambrose, *Sac.*, 3.12, 126.
[31] Ambrose, *Sac.*, 3.14, 126.
[32] Irenaeus, for instance, writes: 'Wherefore also the Lord spat on the ground and made clay, and smeared it upon the eyes, pointing out the original fashioning [of man], how it was effected, and manifesting the hand of God to those who can understand by what [hand] man was formed out of the dust. For that which the artificer, the Word, had omitted to form in the womb, [viz., the blind man's eyes], He then supplied in public, that the works of God might be manifested in him, in order that we might not be seeking out another hand by which man was fashioned, nor another Father; knowing that this hand of God which formed us at the beginning, and which does form us in the womb, has in the last times sought us out who were lost, winning back His own, and taking up the lost sheep upon His shoulders, and with joy restoring it to the fold of life. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* XV, ANF 1.

blind man by the application of mud made from the dust of the earth and His own spit; earth and water.[33] A baptismal reading of the healing account is, of course, at hand for Ambrose as the blind man in the story must first 'go to Siloam and wash' upon which he returns seeing.

The gospel healing story is sensory, tactile, and intimate – even uncomfortably so, with the spit, that is. In Ambrose's use of the text, the mud smeared on the eyes represents self-knowledge, but not, it seems, one arrived at through deduction. We see ourselves 'as we really are', to return to the notion of *akribeia.* Ambrose's invitation to contemplate the mud in particular is both an anchor and a warning. As created matter, the mud recalls to us our ontological provenance as creatures, to an 'awareness of our frailty' as vivified dust. We are reminded that we have no hope of a future other than dust, dust without breath, unless we are born and fashioned anew through the waters of baptism.[34] Accuracy of knowledge *(akribeia)* is acquired through the intimate nearness of our creatureliness, as in the image of mud smeared on the eyes. But it is also fundamentally a gift given by Christ in the application of his self – by the water of his mouth in the gospel healing and in the waters of baptism through the Church. Our ontological dependence and the necessity of baptism, which Ambrose says one comes to see when Christ heals and enlightens the candidate's sight, is perceived through an intimate attention to nature; creatureliness smeared upon the eyes, and by Christ's divine, creative, and restoring power shockingly embodied in spit and touch.

[33] Cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia: 'These things dealing with birth happen to you in the water because you were fashioned at the beginning from earth and water, and having fallen later into sin you assumed a thorough corruption through the sentence of death.' Theodore, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, trans. Alphonse Mingana. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 57.

[34] As Ambrose says of the one who denies the need for baptism or delays, 'such a one has never received the mud: Christ has not spread it over his eyes: he has not had his eyes opened. For there is no man without sin.' Ambrose, *Sac.*, 3.12-13, 126.

2.3 The common 'stuff' of creation

Building on Ambrose's association of enrolment for baptism with Christ's healing of sight, I suggest that, alongside the mis-apprehended anthropology that Ambrose warns of, a mis-apprehension of the whole of creation is equally included in the blindness of the un-illumined. The relation between the two pathologies (the anthropological and the epistemological) arises when we consider the kinship among all creatures who were brought forth from the dry ground in Genesis 1 and 2, and the subsequent fracture of this creaturely harmony with the advent of sin. The punishment God speaks over Adam after the Fall includes a curse upon the ground:

> Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:17-19 ESV)

We alight here upon the *koinonia*, the communion or kinship, of the creaturely order; a cooperation and communion which is frustrated by sin. In the curse and the blindness of sin, just as we lose sight of a right anthropology, we have been sundered also from the very ground itself, the common 'stuff' of all earthly natures.[35] I suggest, then, that Ambrose's association of the mud of healing and baptism can include within illumined, 'accurate', sight the restoration of that coherence and mutual luminescence of created natures and the collaboration between the epiphany of creation and our perceptive faculties.

2.4 Seeing the light of the sacraments

Ambrose continues after his baptismal interpretation of the healing of the blind man with the following:

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[35] This is a semeiotic and metaphysical problem, but it is also a practical and ecological one. The sundering between Man and earth and its impact upon the relations between humans and nature is explored from a theo-ecological perspective in Michael Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and *Place, Ecology and the Sacred* (Bloomsbury Academic USA, 2015).

> '[T]hrough the font of the Lord and the preaching of the Lord's passion, at that moment your eyes were opened. Before, you seemed to be blind of heart; but now you began to perceive the light of the sacraments.'[36]

While the sacramental light which Ambrose refers to in the accusative, 'you began to see the light of the sacraments', is intimately associated with the eucharist, as the next line reads, 'so, my beloved brothers, we have reached the altar', there is also a light and healing *by which* the illumination of the heart is born. As Ambrose says: by the font of the Lord, *per fontem domini,* and the preaching of His Passion. The Christological power behind the gift of illumination and the capacitation of the sight of the heart, the *corde videbaris*, is Christ's incarnation and descent into death, which are proclaimed in the 'preaching of the Lord's Passion'. Death is the very wedge-point between the spiritual and the material, the place where the desperate and loose bindings of their frustrated postlapsarian union, which we wrestle in the shadow the diabolical to hold together, finally fissure. The Lord's Passion and His resurrection, 'preached' by word, imitation, and sensation at the font, knits them back together. In the mysterious *mimesis* of baptism, the baptised unite themselves to His victory and His reconciliation of realms estranged.

In the three discussions I have traced thus far on the restoration of sight – that of the man walking in the dark, the removal of λήμη from the eyes, and the application of mud to heal blindness – the illumined are enabled to see *because* of the liturgy, and *by* the liturgy. The sacraments have opened their eyes to the integration of spheres that were fractured and estranged because of sin. The eyes of faith see the restoration of relation. The beholding of reconciliation appears in the specificity of Christ's sacrifice and victory, as narrated in the sacraments, the scriptures, and catechesis; but this reconciliation becomes the *way* of seeing as

[36] Ambrose *On the Sacraments* 3.15, 127. Per fontem domini et praedicationem dominicae passionis tunc aperti sunt oculi tui; qui ante corde uidebaris esse caecatus, coepisti lumen sacramentorum uidere.

well, the eye-beam of the illumined, as their sensitivity to the telos of peace and consummation becomes the cornerstone of their knowing of the world.

3. Illuminating the Object

3.1 Being seen: baptismal nakedness and truth

The mystagogues offer a further exploration of anthropology when they come to explain the practice of baptising candidates in the nude. Baptismal nakedness relates to the possibility of being-seen and being-known truly. The precision or clarity of the disclosure of the baptismal body, the human person unveiled, is in its manifestation of truth, un-mediated by the camouflage of clothing and un-distorted by sin. Here the epiphanic aspect is not so much an epistemological epiphany, but a manifestational one; illumination allows natures, starting with our own, to shine forth with *akribeia*.[37]

Chrysostom, Theodore, and Cyril comment on baptismal nakedness. In the first instance, all three explain the removal of the candidate's garments as a recapitulation and recovery of Adam and Eve's innocence; their nakedness without shame in the garden. Chrysostom says:

> After stripping you of your robe, the priest himself leads you down into the flowing waters. But why naked? He reminds you of your former nakedness, when you were in Paradise and you were not ashamed. For Holy Writ says: *Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed,* until they took up the garment of sin, a garment heavy with abundant shame.[38]

And Theodore, similarly, says:

> As when Adam was formerly naked and was in nothing ashamed of himself, but after having broken the commandment and become mortal, he found himself in need of an outer covering, so also you, who are ready to draw nigh unto the gift of the holy baptism… rightly remove your covering, which is a sign of mortality and a reproving

[37] Between the stripping and immersion in the font, there also occurs a full-body anointing with oil (in Cyril, Chrysostom, and Theodore), followed, after baptism, by a second anointing. I will break up the chronology of these rites somewhat in order to discuss nakedness and baptismal garments here, and will treat anointing separately.

[38] Chrysostom, *PK* 3.28, ACW 170.

> mark of that (Divine) decree by which you were brought low to the necessity of a covering.[39]

This nudity manifests an anthropological truth – a disclosure in the dis-robing. There is a sense in which nakedness is associated with truth, namely the originative truth of human nature.[40] Baptismal nakedness, then, can be taken as an analogy for the epiphany of the illumined; for the showing forth and being-seen of things as they really are without the mediating or obfuscating interventions of human contrivance and sinful distortion. Both Chrysostom and Theodore firmly present sin, shame, and mortality as superfluous and alien to our fundamental nature.[41] The mystagogues lead the neophytes to think on their experience of nakedness in baptism in terms of theological anthropology: of Paradisal origins and of the indigeneity not of shame, but of peace and confidence in the presence of God and others. This nakedness-as-knowledge, however, is not the disclosure of bare, inert data about the self (or things). The ritual disrobing is not a dissection. It is a disclosure of inner truth and a glimpse of consummation – of the end which looks like the beginning, of paradise regained. The eyes of faith, guided by the mystagogue's instruction, learn to see in this nudity both the origin of the creature, and, as we turn to Cyril's teaching on the ritual disrobing, a sign of humanity's glorious end.

In the above, both Chrysostom and Theodore explain the baptismal stripping as an embodied reclamation of paradisal nakedness. There is implied a restoration of innocence; innocence from sin, as it is washed away through baptism, and a return to a prelapsarian clarity *(akribeia)*. It represents the recovery of the *claritas* of human epiphany. This epiphanic

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[39] Theodore, *Commentary,* 54.

[40] E.g., in English the 'naked truth', or, in Syriac, Theodore's translator writes that one 'nakedly', as in really and truly, feeds on the grace of the Holy Spirit and participates in immortality at the resurrection. Theodore, *Commentary,* 112. 'the grace of the Holy Spirit flows unto us and feeds us into an immortal and incorruptible existence, ... when we shall really [lit. nakedly, ܥܪܛܝܢ] feed ourselves from the grace of the Holy Spirit, without signs and symbols, and shall become completely immortal, incorruptible, and unchangeable by nature.'

[41] Though, in Theodore's writings, he seems at different times to suggest an account of creation in which humanity was created mortal from the beginning, and elsewhere he emphasises the *addition* of mortality to our nature at the Fall.

nakedness is confessional, repentant, eschatological, and nuptial. The baptismal nakedness, functioning much like Ambrose's 'mud', embodies an honesty without dissembling, a truthful anthropological confession to God and to the witnesses of this rite. The baptismal candidates come entirely bereft of any sign of, or recourse to, earthly strength or merit.[42] The prebaptismal nakedness, especially in Chrysostom, is part of the 'schema of captivity'. The nakedness of slaves expressed a total vulnerability and poverty – slaves, we recall, go naked and barefoot. This nakedness, however, is transfigured while staying the same 'schema' – just as with the bent knee of servitude. There, the bent knee of captivity became the bent knee of adoration. Here, the nakedness of slavery is at the same time, and suddenly, a restoration of the nakedness of Eden.

The reading of nudity as a disclosure of truth, has a social, relational aspect as well. Human nakedness is a kind of honesty that becomes contextualized (and problematized) when other people are involved. Our first nakedness, of course, is at birth. And the mystagogues speak of the font not only as a sacramental tomb, but also as a womb.[43] Newborn nakedness signifies newness, but also vulnerability: newborns are exposed. The physical vulnerability of an infant, covered and protected with swaddling clothes, becomes a metaphorical and personal vulnerability to be administered and mitigated as a person matures. Nakedness is constituted most fully in the presence, and *sight,* of another. *Their eyes were opened, and they knew that*

[42] Speaking on the rites of exorcism, in which all the candidates share the 'schema of captivity', Chrysostom says, 'this rite does away with all difference and distinction of rank. Even if a man happens to enjoy worldly honour, if he happens to glitter with wealth, if he boasts of high lineage or the glory which is his in this world, he stands side by side with the beggar and with him who is clothed in rags, and many a time with the blind and lame. Nor is he disgusted by this, because he knows that all these differences find no place in the world of the spirit, where one look only for a soul that is well disposed [εὐγνωμοσύνη, courteous, prudent].' Chrysostom, *Stav.* 2.13, ACW 48. Cf. *In 1 Cor.* 10.1, 'Men and women of every age and condition go into that bath of waters in the same way; kings and peasants enjoy the same cleansing. This above all others, is the greatest proof of the nobility among us, that we initiate in the same manner the beggar and the prince.'

[43] Theodore, *Commentary,* 55. Also, Cyril, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments,* ed. F.L. Cross., trans. R.W Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1951), Mystagogical Catechesis *(MC)* 2.4, 61: 'And what Solomon spoke of others will suit you also; for he said, *There is a time to bear and a time to die;* but to you, on the contrary, the time to die is also the time to be born; and one and the same season brings about both of these, and your birth went hand in hand with your death.'

they were naked. The interventions applied to protect the 'soft and newly constituted' body of the infant, [44] become interventions and techniques for managing our exposure – for curating through social and sartorial coverings the access of others to the intimacy and honesty of our nakedness.

To be seen in our nakedness implies an unveiling of things we prefer to hide. Here we return to shame. *And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.* The 'naked truth' to be managed in the postlapsarian paradigm are negative truths, a precision in our apprehension of our fallenness; i.e., what I am 'really' like beneath the clothing of etiquette and social fluency which I operate, in varying degrees of success, while in 'public' – that is, while *visible*. The aspect of shame and hiding is important to note because the 'naked truth' disclosed through baptismal nakedness is quite the opposite. The baptismal disrobing and epiphanic unveiling can also be read as a reversal of the original and primordial response of humanity to sin, the impulse to hide (Gen.3:8). The anthropological truth shining forth in these rites is this: what one is 'truly' like is to be seen and known without shame. The primordial impulse to hide affects more than our relationships with others and with God. In a sense, sin hides us from ourselves. The illumination of our own anthropology and the reordering of our self-understanding and our self-disclosure begins by means of the candidate's experience of ritual nakedness before baptism.

3.2 The epiphany of anthrōpos

To the Antiochene reading of the baptismal stripping as a return to paradisal nakedness Cyril adds two inter-woven meanings. First, the baptismal nakedness participates by *mimesis*

[44] Theodore speaks of mystagogy itself as the 'swaddling clothes' which protect the 'newly constituted' bodies of the baptised. *Commentary*, 71.

in Christ's nakedness on the cross, and secondly it is a sacramental disrobing for the nuptial intimacy between Christ and His Bride:

> As soon, therefore, as you entered in [to the baptistry], you put off your garment; and this was an image of *putting off the old man with his deeds*. Having stripped yourselves, you were naked; in this imitating the nakedness of Christ upon the cross, who by His nakedness *stripped principalities and powers, and openly triumphed over them on the tree*… May no soul which has once put him off [the old man], again put him on, but say with the Spouse of Christ in the Song of Songs, *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?* O wondrous thing! You were naked in the sight of all, and were not ashamed; for truly you bore the likeness of the first-formed Adam, who was naked in the garden, and was not ashamed.[45]

Cyril teaches that the stripped baptizands imitate (μιμέομαι) Christ who, by *His* embodied nakedness, 'stripped' the authority of principalities and powers.[46] This is a salvific and victorious reversal of the vulnerability symbolised in human nakedness. The stripping for execution that Jesus experienced is usurped and upended, becoming an unveiling of divine victory over death. Christ's nakedness echoes, and literally embodies, the schema of captivity: *he took on the form of a slave* and was executed according to the visuality of the Roman Empire's violent coercion of vassal states. And yet, His nakedness, imitated in the baptizand's doffing of the garment, elevates our power of sight to the unconquerable brightness of truth when it is united to Christ's paradoxically victorious nakedness. Christ's nakedness and the baptizand's *imitatio Christi* represent the precision of our nature's epiphanic calling.

This appears especially in the link to the paradisal nakedness. Putting off the 'old man' reveals the 'true' *Anthrōpos*. *Behold the Man,* the second Adam. In Cyril's teaching, the physical *mimesis* of Christ in the baptismal nakedness (μιμούμενοι… γυμνωθέντα Χριστόν) draws the initiate into Christ's revealing of true humanity.[47] That is, the disclosure of truth in

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[45] Cyril, *MC* 2.2, 59, 60. I have adjusted R.W. Church's translation slightly to highlight the repetition of 'nakedness' and 'stripped' in the Greek.

[46] Cyril, *MC* 2.2, 18. *ἀποδυθέντες* γυμνοὶ ἦτε, μιμούμενοι καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὸν ἐπὶ σταυροῦ γυμνωθέντα Χριστόν, καὶ τῇ γυμνότητι *ἀπεκδυσάμενον* τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ ἐξουσίας, καὶ μετὰ παρρησίας ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ θριαμβεύσαντα. Cyril creates a play on words using the etymological relation between ἀποδύω and ἀπεκδύομαι and relates the stripping of the candidates with Christ's despoiling or 'stripping' of the powers and principalities from Colossians 2:15: '...ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας'.

[47] Cyril, *MC* 2.2, 18.

the *Ecce Homo* spreads itself from Christ over the whole human race. The nakedness of Christ on the cross, the nakedness of the first Adam, and the nakedness of the candidate converge, and the mystagogue bishop leads the neophyte to think these truths together. The eyes of faith have the capacity to see these three integrated in the ritual instantiation of the individual's nakedness. The 'naked truth', then, consists in the simultaneity of what is and was (ontology), what ought to be (soteriology), and what will be (eschatology). 'Naked' true anthropology is only complete with reference to these three planes: creation, redemption, and consummation. Illumination, in one sense, means that the individual baptizand's visibility is enabled to bear and manifest these three planes. The mystagogical account of illumination that I trace here is founded on the affirmation that sacramental *mimesis* (emblematized in this case in the μιμούμενοι, the imitators of Christ's nakedness)[48] manifests presence; that somehow Christ, Adam, human nature itself, and the individual candidate *participate together* in the choreography of baptism as they make with their bodies the *form,* μορφή, of this nakedness, immersion, and robing together.

We find the third plane, consummation, when Cyril quotes from Song of Songs: 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' (Song. 5:3). The nakedness of disclosure, of innocence, and of victory, becomes also the nakedness of nuptial union with Christ the Bridegroom. Here the nudity of the baptismal candidate moves beyond the anthropologically epiphanic to suggest its final cause. The true end of the disclosive aspect of our visibility is, again, not to convey truth as information; its purpose is, rather, attraction, desire, and love between humanity and God. The nudity, the washing, and the robing that comprise the baptismal rite enact the transfiguration of the epiphanic character of our nature – our visibility and all that it is given to

[48] Cyril, *MC* 2.2, 18. *μιμούμενοι* καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὸν ἐπὶ σταυροῦ γυμνωθέντα Χριστόν.

signify – such that the integrity of our human nature may unveil itself for the sake of union with the divine as the Bride of Christ.

4. Φῶς: Participating in the Light

The capacitation of sight relates not only to the receptive and disclosive aspects of sight; that is, not only to vision and visibility. It also includes the drawing of the *neophōtistoi* into the Light of Christ which undergirds the epiphanic character of being.[49] This is the third meaning of illumination. The idea of participation in divine Light appears especially in the mystagogues' teachings on the post-baptismal robing in white and the anointing. Here, my argument turns its focus from seeing, unveiling, and being-seen to the divine reality which underwrites all of these, and the notion of epiphany moves subtly from an association with knowledge to the idea of shining; to manifestation, beauty, and the eschaton. The newly-baptised rise from the font and are dressed in 'a white garment that shines'.[50] As we continue in the mystagogical progression through the baptismal rite, I suggest that we find that the transformation of human nature to become *chōrētikos theou* is a transfiguration that goes *beyond* and *beneath* the subject-object duality. In the following, I will show how the baptised are, in the end, drawn into the very logic of sight itself. They become a manifestation – the *φαίνω* part of epiphany. The capacitation of sight becomes more than just the capacitation to see truly, or to be seen truly; it is to *become a vision to behold* by being drawn into Light itself.

[49] While the idea of entering into divine Light belongs to its own genre of, particularly eastern, patristic theology, one with which the mystagogues are *not* explicitly engaging (because they long pre-date it), we can still identify a prevalent sense of participation as a fundamental component of the mystagogues' understanding of illumination. The most robust and sophisticated development of the notion, and later doctrine, of divine uncreated light and the possibility of humanity's participation in it is found in the texts produced during the Hesychast movement of the fourteenth century, with Gregory Palamas serving as its chief defender. My aim here is not to situate the four mystagogues in any sense as proto-hesychastic sources, but rather to suggest that baptismal illumination, for the mystagogues, clearly includes the initiates' being drawn into and shining with the divine Light of Christ.

[50] *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuesati on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, trans. Alphonse Mingana, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 68. Cf. Chrysostom, *Stav.* 7.25, ACW 114, 'Did you see the power of this garment? Did you see the luster of this robe which time cannot touch, which age cannot dim? Did you see its irresistible beauty?'

We observe an initial hint that this moving-beneath that I am suggesting is part of becoming *chōrētikos theou* if we return to Ambrose's explanation of the *Ephphatha,* and a short comment he makes on the bishop's touch upon the nostrils. As Ambrose tells us, the touch to the mouth is moved to the nostrils for propriety's sake, and Ambrose gives even this pragmatic adjustment a spiritual interpretation: '[the bishop] touches the nostrils so that you may receive the sweet fragrance of eternal goodness; so that you may say… "We are the aroma of Christ to God;" and so that the full fragrance of faith and devotion may dwell in you.'[51] In this, I argue, Ambrose signals toward the deeper level of capacitation; a deeper effect of Christ's touch upon the faculties of our nature, which leads to participation in Him. Rather than concluding that Ambrose's interpretation is clumsy rhetoric that awkwardly forces together Scriptural texts that mention smell to bolster his explanation for the ritual touch to the nostrils rather than the mouth, I suggest that this text implies that initiation brings about the participation of the human faculties in the Christological ground of sensation itself. When the nostrils are touched, the initiates begin to smell like Christ, 'we are the aroma of Christ'; and so in baptism the *newly-illumined (neophōtistoi)* are drawn into the shining of His Light. The participation of the newly-illumined in the Light of Christ appears in the mystagogies in discussions filled with the language of union, love, and eschatological participation. However, alongside these lofty participative themes, we must also be careful to acknowledge the mystagogues' affirmation that participation in divinity is entered into *through* material mediation.

[51] When he comes to describe the neophytes approach to the altar, Ambrose returns to this notion of becoming the fragrance of Christ: *Sac.* 4.4 'From this altar a sweet fragrance constantly ascended. In the same way, you too are now the sweet fragrance of Christ; there is no longer in you any stain of sin, any taint of serious error.'

4.1 Union and Love: The raiment of the Bride

Partaking in divine Light involves union and intimacy with Christ. Thus, for Ambrose, the postbaptismal robing has a nuptial meaning. Like Cyril, Ambrose quotes from Song of Songs in his interpretation of the baptismal garment:

> But Christ, beholding His Church, for whom He Himself… had put on filthy garments, now clothed in white raiment, seeing, that is, a soul pure and washed in the laver of regeneration, says: *Behold, you are fair, My love, behold you are fair, your eyes are like a dove's,* in the likeness of which the Holy Spirit descended from heaven. The eyes are beautiful like those of a dove, because in the likeness of a dove the Holy Spirit descended from heaven.[52]

In Ambrose's use of the biblical love poem in *de Mysteriis,* he reads the baptismal robe as the raiment of the Bride, and we find in the above that her visage kindles the desire of Christ the Bridegroom. The visuality of the scene, with the candidates rising from the font washed of stain and clothed in white, is read in terms of attraction and desire. We see this in how Ambrose pairs Christ's 'beholding' of His Church with the Lover's cry, 'Behold, you are fair, my love!'. This is a crucial point: Christ's response to *His seeing* of the newly baptised and robed, as Ambrose tells it, is not primarily a theological or metaphysical declaration; but, rather, an instantaneous cry of joy. It is the pre-reflexive exclamation at the appearance of beauty. We have moved from being-seen generally, to being beheld and desired *by Christ.* The eyes of faith are undergirded and answered in His gazing upon us with the gaze of love. The sight and joy between lovers is not a dispassionate love for beauty as such – it is the love of beauty *in belonging*. And perhaps this is part of the logic behind the prevalence of biblical and patristic use of erotic language to speak of Christ and the Church and the sacraments of their union. This kind of gaze and cry of joy says, 'O Beauty! Beauty that is Mine.' *At last, this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.* The natural and derived beauty of the creature is redoubled and magnified as beauty consummated to Saviour and Spouse.

[52] Ambrose *on the Mysteries,* 7.37; Zech. 3:3, Song of Songs 4:1.

The focus of Ambrose's interpretation of the robe in the first half of the quotation is Christ's sight and His being moved with desire by the scene. The epiphanic sense here, then, is something other than a conceptual revelation. The 'point' of the visibility of the baptizands here is not so much a revealing of divine or anthropological truth; *akribeia* doesn't quite fit as it did elsewhere. The visage of the baptised, rather serves to fan the flame of love. Ambrose's nuptial and erotic reading of the visuality of the newly baptised in *de Mysteriis* suggests that, in addition to the washing away of sin, baptism uncovers and bestows a beauty ordered toward the union of love between humanity and Christ. This rising from the font seems to represent the cresting of a peak of attraction; a peak from which the flow of love rolls toward the altar as to a foretaste of eschatological consummation. From here the lovers 'come away' together. The eschatological element abides alongside and intertwines the nuptial in Ambrose's reading. It appears with greater clarity further in this section when Christ the Bridegroom recites Song of Songs 4:7-8 (LXX), 'come hither from Lebanon, from the beginning of faith will you pass through and pass on'. The Bridegroom quotes these words because, Ambrose says, 'renouncing the world, she passed through things temporal and passed on to Christ.'[53]

As we turn to the latter half of the quotation, we gain an insight into the character of baptismal beauty. This is the beauty that features in divine love, and not simply the derivative beauty that tempts our mundane and disordered desires. The beauty of the illumined is their likeness to the divine Holy Spirit. Ambrose's relates the Lover's comparison of His Beloved's eyes to a dove's with the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Christ's own baptism. Ambrose interweaves the love-poetry with the Trinitarian scene of Christ's baptism with a special focus on the appearance of the Holy Spirit. The beauty of the eyes of the Beloved, and so the beauty of the baptised, is grounded in its likeness to divine theophany. The

[53] Ambrose, *M* 7.39. Here Ambrose plays with the vocabulary of 'passing on'. The LXX reads 'from the beginning of faith' for the Hebrew 'from the top of Amana'.

baptizand-Bride *reminds* the Bridegroom of the Holy Spirit. The singling out of the beauty of the eyes also affirms that we have moved from the seeing and knowing capacity of the eyes, to the role of this sense in our uniting to Christ in love.

4.2 Shining stars

Chrysostom also brings together the theme of Light and participation in Christ in his treatment of the baptismal robe. Chrysostom's teaching does not engage the nuptial imagery in the way that Ambrose's does, but rather reflects on the relation of baptismal illumination to divine glory. The *neophōtistoi* shine with heavenly light. In one of his post-baptismal homilies (*Stavronikita 3*), Chrysostom addresses the newly-baptised, calling them 'stars of the morning'[54] and stars that shine with the light of consummation:

> Blessed be God! Behold, there are stars here on earth too, and they shine forth more brilliantly than those of heaven! There are stars on earth because of Him who came from heaven and was seen on earth. Not only are these stars on earth, but – a second marvel – they are stars in the full light of day. And the daytime stars shine more brilliantly than those which shine at night. For the night stars hide themselves away before the rising sun, but when the Sun of Justice shines, these stars of day gleam forth still more brightly. Did you ever see stars which shine in the light of the sun? Yes, the night stars disappear with the end of time [ἡ συντέλεια]; but these daytime stars shine forth more brightly with the coming of the consummation [ἡ συντέλεια].[55]

The first thing to note is that the *neophōtistoi* shine in imitation of, and by participation in, the brilliance of the Sun of Justice. This eschatological and heavenly light is founded in Christ's incarnation. The baptised shine here and now with eschatological divine light 'because of Him who came from heaven and was *seen* on earth'.[56] Christ's mundane, earthly, visibility – as shorthand for the concrete historical reality of His salvific life, sacrifice, and resurrection – stands at the fulcrum between earth and heaven. And He is the entrance of our nature into

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[54] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 3.3, ACW, 57. Fiery is the nature of the stars in the skies; fiery, too, is the substance of those on earth. But the fire in the skies can be seen with the eyes of the body, whereas this other fire is perceived by the eyes of the soul. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire… Among the stars in our midst there is no evening star; all of them are stars of morning.

[55] Chrysostom, *Stav*.3.1-3.2, ACW, 56. It is assumed that this homily was delivered on Easter morning after the baptismal vigil. Harkins ACW, 230.

[56] Emphasis mine.

eternal Light. Because He who now sits at the right hand of the Father *was seen on earth,* the baptised participate even now in their inclusion in His divine glory. They become, like the Sun of Justice, harbingers of the age to come. By a foot in each age, the neophytes are, and mark, the invasion of earth by heaven; both mundanely visible and spiritually gleaming.

Secondly, we must note that the shining of the baptised is not merely a provisional token of future glory; it is the thing itself. We see this when Chrysostom speaks about the difference between the 'stars of the night' and the baptizand-stars of the morning. The stars of the *cosmos,* the created order, are conditioned by the finitude and individuation of earthly things. The light of the sun and the light of stars do not 'participate' in each other (neither materially nor analogically). As it appears to our eyes, at the earthly dawn these lights compete, and the arrival of the sun displaces or obscures the visibility of the stars. Starlight is a distant echo of the sun's light during the night and the stars themselves, marking the days and seasons (Gen. 1:14), symbolise the order of temporality.[57] The *neophōtistoi,* the baptised stars, however, are not signs that fade when the reality appears. Their sharing and magnifying of the true and eternal light *is* the consummation. The *sunteleia,* the consummation, is not the advent of Christ enthroned *alone,* but His gathering of the Church into His glory and multiplying the already infinite divine light. This is why Chrysostom says that the neophyte stars behave differently, by shining with greater brilliance in the presence of the Sun of Justice; their reflection of Him only ever intensifies. Their participation and imitation of Christ's Light pierces the persisting darkness in the world and in human nature. Thus, Chrysostom speaks of the *neophōtistoi* being seen in the world, for the sake of the world:

> This light does not stop with the bodily senses but illumines the soul and understanding of those who see it; after it dispels the darkness of evil, it draws those who find it to shine with their own light and to imitate the life of virtue… Just as light for the bodily

[57] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 3.3. So, too, as long as the whole universe possesses in itself the race of men, the heavens also will have their stars, just as the vine will have its leaves. When there is no more night, there will be no need for stars.

> eyes puts the darkness to flight and keeps on the right path those who travel a material road, so the light for the mind which comes from the excellence of your conduct lights the way for those whose mental vision is so muddled by the darkness of error that they cannot see the path of virtue. This light clears away the mist from the spiritual eyes of these travellers, puts them on the right road, and makes them walk thenceforth on the path of virtue.[58]

The presence of Christ, the Sun of Justice, is the source and power of the intensification of glory. In the case of those who have put on Christ in baptism, it is *like becoming like* – or imitation participating in the reality, which is the substance of true knowledge – a Christian consummation of Aristotle's like knowing like.[59] The sacramental likeness of His Passion and resurrection which is undertaken in baptism commences in the baptizands an eschatological likeness. *For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection* (Rom. 6:5). The eschatological likeness to which the baptised are called – *theōsis* – is predicated upon the gift of the Incarnation. And the end of these likenesses, both the Paschal-salvific and the eschatological, is union. The stars of the morning, reverberating the light of the Sun of Justice, enjoy and magnify His presence.

4.3 An eschatological visage: Theodore and the baptismal garment

As we have seen, the baptismal garment calls forth especially nuptial and eschatological resonances for the mystagogues. As the nuptial featured prominently in Ambrose, so the eschatological leads in Theodore's reading. In the following text in which Theodore exegetes the baptismal robe, we find his clear assertion that through baptism the newly-illumined have moved into a space of participation in eschatological realities. And this participation manifests in the earthly plane, in part, through the visibility of the robe. The crucial contribution of

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[58] Chrysostom, *Stav.* 4.19-20, 74.

[59] Though a voice from a different century and a different theological context and aim, St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1357) puts into words, I think most appropriately, this notion of seeing, shining, and becoming: 'Man's sight, when in action, itself *becomes light, communes with the light and sees with it,* and the first thing it beholds is this light poured out on everything visible. In exactly the same way, anyone fortunate enough to attain to the divine energy, and to undergo divine transformation, himself becomes completely like the light. He is with the light, and by means of it sees clearly things which, were it not for this great and inexpressible grace, would be invisible to all.' Quoted in David Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World*: *On Mundane Liturgical Theology* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016), 74-75.

Theodore is the strength of his affirmation that the advent of the heavenly age has come, here and now, in the liturgy.

> This garment is the sign of the shining, resplendent world and the kind of life and conduct[60] into which you have passed through the types. When, however, you really receive the resurrection and are clad in immortality and incorruptibility, you will no longer need such garments. Now, since you are not yet truly there and have received those things in mysteries and types, you need garments; you don those that manifest the sweet state in which you now are by means of types and in which you will truly live when the time comes.[61]

In the first place, I must caution against the temptation to read Theodore's distinction between 'types' and 'reality' dualistically.[62] In order to avoid reading these as a contrast of competing and independent things, one must recognise that, for Theodore, the word 'symbol' (ܛܘܦܣܐ *túpsā*, a Syriacisation of τυποϛ) does not imply an absent representation.[63] Theodore does not mean, 'you have received these things in *mere, empty signs* of a future reality'. *Mere* symbols do not exist in Theodore's sacramental theology. Instead, the above quotation is a typical example of how Theodore's 'types' (*túpse)* are, rather, the entry points of eschatological realities into the here and now. We must note how Theodore says that the baptised *have passed* (ܫܢܝܬ *šānít*) into the shining and resplendent world signalled in the white garment. They have passed to that world, or 'age' (ܥܠܡܐ, *ʿālmā*), by means of types (ܒܛܘܦܣܐ, *b'túpse*). That is to say, the signs (ܐܬܐ, *ʾātā)*, mysteries (ܪܙܐ, *ʾrāze*), and types (ܛܘܦܣܐ, *túpse)* of the Church are the punctuations of that world into this. They are loci of 'passing into' the eschaton. *Túpse* are teleophanies, points of mingling between beatitude and creation.

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[60] 'Life and conduct' here is ܡܗܦܟܐ ܘܡܕܒܪܢܘܬܐ *(dúbrā* and *húpākā*), lit. word and conversation, recalling Theodore's earlier discussion of the 'order and citizenship/conversation' of heaven. See Chapter Two, section 6.

[61] In this quotation I have preferred the translation of Enrico Mazza. Mazza's choice of words best captures the subtle sense of tangibility. Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (NewYork: Pueblo Publishing, 1989), 58. See also Mingana: Theodore, *Commentary*, 68.

[62] Though, admittedly, Theodore's language can lend itself to that assumption, when not reading carefully.

[63] The same word root, ܛܘܦܣܐ, appears when 'type', 'symbol' or 'symbolically' (here ܒܛܘܦܣܐ 'by or in type') are used in Mingana's English translation. ܪܙܐ (*raze)* is the word used when Theodore speaks of the specific ecclesiastical sacraments.

It serves at this point to introduce Theodore's 'two *katastaseis'* approach to time and eschatology. Theodore's writings, so his contemporary interpreters have argued, suggest two *katastaseis*, or two 'ages'; the first is the age of mortality and the second the age of immortality. In light of the above passage, we must note immediately that the two ages are not ontologically equivalent, neither are they strictly sequential. 'Inaugurated eschatology' is an appropriate, though anachronistic, characterization of how Theodore presents the relation between the two. The mingling of the two ages manifests in the sacraments of the Church. Theodore uses the word ܥܠܡܐ *(ʿālmā)* when he speaks of the age of shining brilliance into which the candidate has 'already' passed – and I must point out that this is an emphatic already, ܡܢ ܟܕ *(men kadú)*, 'already, indeed!'. *ʿAlmā* means an age, an era, a lifetime; and it is a time-word ordinarily used to signify eternal time, or 'forever'.[64] The *ʿālmā* into which the baptised have now already passed is that of the 'way' ܕܘܒܪܐ *(dúbrā)* and the 'conduct' (or 'conversation', ܗܘܦܟܐ *húpākā*) of eternity; or, read in terms of the visual analogy, the *shining* of eternity.

This contrasts with the 'time' that appears in the final sentence, 'when the time comes', which refers to the interval between now and the true and complete arrival of the heavenly reality. The time-word here is ܙܒܢܐ *(zabnā)*, which is a more earth-tied notion of temporality.[65] Thus, when the space of time has passed – i.e., the *zabnā,* or the age, of the garment, of sacraments – then the baptised will truly be in the eschatological age. However, returning to the question of vision, the garment *manifests* the truth of its presence, 'already, indeed', in those who don the white garment.

Secondly, we must take account of the Syriac translator's linguistic choices to express the 'reality' or 'actuality' of the heavenly end. In this text, there are three phrases used to express

[64] ܐܡܝܢ ܥܠܡܝܢ ܥܠܡ ܥܠܡܝܢ *(ʿālām ʿālmín ʾamín),* 'forever and ever Amen', for instance, concludes the Lord's Prayer in Syriac.

[65] A discrete span of time; it can refer to the seasons or months, or the present age contrasted with the age to come (and it is often contrasted precisely with *ʿālmā*).

the depth of substance of the age to come: ܒܥܘܕܐ *(bʿavdā)* appears twice, and means by deed, in action, in actuality (from the root ܥܒܕ, 'to do, to build, to bring to pass'); ܟܠ ܟܠܗ *(kul kuleh)* means wholly, completely, perfectly; and ܒܣܘܥܪܢܐ *(bʾsúʿrnā)* means by actuality, literally, or practically. All of these are used to characterize the life of immortality when that age arrives. These modifiers affirming truth, completion, and reality are paralleled with the modifiers 'by the types' and 'by the sacraments' which apply to the earthly, temporal age.[66] Types, symbols, and sacraments are 'tokens' of the actuality.[67] These do not stand in for the reality, but, as Theodore says, they 'manifest' the sweet state of heavenly fulfilment: 'you don those that *manifest* the sweet state in which you now are'.[68] Thus the baptised and robed take on and participate in the manifestation and advent of eschatological shining and delight even here and now. In a sense, the baptised *also* become teleophanies, and participate in the teleophanic nature of the sacraments themselves.

In Theodore's language of 'manifestation' we find his contribution to the idea of participating in divine Light. The baptised are dressed in manifestation; they partake of, and themselves become, a manifestation of eschatological joys and union with Christ. Theodore clearly establishes the priority of the age to come in his language of 'actuality'. And yet, we must not underestimate the significance of the affirmative language he uses regarding the *real participation* that this sacrament accomplishes. The age of the garment, before the consummation, is the age of ܗܕܐ ܟܕ *(men kadú)*, 'already, indeed!'. The vision of the baptised befits both the age of the garment and the age of actuality precisely because the eyes of faith

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[66] 'by sacraments and types', ܒܣܘܥܪܢܐ ܘܒܪܘܙܐ: ܪܘܙܐ (pronounced, *roze* or *raza)* refers to the ecclesiastical sacraments, and is not used in the more general sense of 'symbolic' or 'sacramental'. T*úpsā* generally fills this latter function, though it can refer to the ecclesiastical sacraments as well. In the quotation, the semantic and aesthetic parallel between the two ages is signalled in the repetition of the preposition ܒ/*b* which prefixes the modifiers listed. It means 'in', 'with', or 'by means of'. Thus, the life of eternity is a life 'in' actuality, and the life of earth is lived 'by' participative types.

[67] ܐܬܐ *ʾatā*.

[68] ܡܬܚܕܡܝ (participle of ܚܕܡ, to show, declare, signify). See Mazza, *Mystagogy,* 58; Syriac: Theodore, *Commentary,* 202. ܒܣܘܥܪܢܐ ܕܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐ ܒܗܝܪ ܘܒܪܘܙܐ ܡ ܟܠ ܟܠܗ ܡܬܚܕܡ ܠܢ ܒܗ ܒܗܝܪ ܕܐ ܒܗ ܒܥ ܠܡ

can see, in the visibility of the robe, the reality of the 'already, indeed!'. Moreover, the newly-illumined *become a vision to behold* as they are drawn into the divine manifestation of the *end* of creation: to behold, adore, and be united to God. In a way, what we encounter in Theodore's preaching on the robe is an account of what vision is truly *for*. Vision is not first for 'objects', but for the advent of consummation; the appearance of heaven on earth. *My eyes have seen the salvation which the You have prepared before all people. A light for revelation to the nations and for glory to your people Israel* (Luke 2:30-32).

Finally, I must comment on Theodore's vocabulary of the 'sweet state' of eternal life. I offer the following, more literal (and so more awkward), translation of the final sentence of the above quotation to highlight the sensuality it means to convey: 'But you wear such (garments) as these which manifest the deliciousness which you, now, by means of types, are in; and in time you will be in these (things) in actuality'.[69] ܪܓܝܓܘܬܐ *(rgígútā)* is the word that I have rendered with 'deliciousness'; in Mazza, as quoted above, it is 'sweet state', and for Mingana 'happiness'. This word derives from ܪܓܐ (*regā,* desire, longing, appetite), and it suggests a sensory, pleasurable, bodily attraction.[70] It is not precisely clear whether the delightfulness of the life which the garment manifests should be read in sensory terms, or whether Theodore and his Syriac translator refer to delights of a more ethereal variety, but this is just as well. Indeed, it would be wise to reject the urge to curtail the meaning of *rgígútā* to the spiritual sense alone and to neglect the hint of embodied pleasure. In fact, to leave *rgígútā* hovering between the abstract and the material is the most appropriate way to do justice to the liminality of initiation, and it draws us to attend to the materiality and sensuousness of the sacraments.

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[69] Theodore, *Commentary*, 68, Syr. 202: ܠܒܫ ܐܢܬ ܕܝܢ ܕܐܝܟ ܗܠܝܢ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܡܚܘܝܢ ܥܠ ܗܝ ܪܓܝܓܘܬܐ ܕܒܗ̇ ܗܫܐ ܟܕ ܛܘܦ̈ܣܐ ܗܘܝܬ ܘܒܙܒܢܐ ܗܘܐ ܐܢܬ ܒܗܘܢ ܒܫܪܪ̈ܐ.

[70] J. Payne Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 528. ܪܓܐ: desire, longing, appetite, lust. The verb ܪܓ is similarly associated with desire. It can imply physical pleasure or visual delight, and also more incorporeal desires, such as theological longing, e.g., to 'long to enter into the courts of the Lord'. J. Payne Smith, 527. ܪܓܝܓܘܬܐ can also be translated as 'appetite', 'desire' and 'savouriness'.

I propose ‘deliciousness’, then, not to advise any primacy of the sensory, but to encourage the broadening of our sense of eternal delight to include the fulfilment of our rudimentary experience with earthly desire, and to affirm the mundane echoes of heavenly sweetness in the sensory delight of materiality. This also highlights the material pedagogy of the sacraments; their leading through attraction and our participation in eternal delight by means of the *delightful types* of the sacraments. It leads us to consider the garment not merely in terms of didactic analogy, but in terms of a pedagogy of pleasure. Those who don the shining garment and process immediately toward the altar taste and see the sweetness of the immortal life and union with Christ and they are enlisted in its manifestation.

5. The oil of anointing

The final aspect of participating in the Light that we must attend to is the strength and character of its sacramental tie to the here and now. In the following section I turn to Theodore and Cyril’s teachings on the postbaptismal anointing. While today our understanding of baptismal anointing focuses on the idea of being ‘sealed’ with the Holy Spirit, for ancient Christians chrismation equally carried the imagery of light, as oil served as fuel for lamps, and symbolised the power to bring light into darkness.[71] In both Theodore and Cyril’s homilies on the chrism we can take note of a subtle and abiding emphasis upon the physicality of the oil of anointing, and how it bears a pedagogical power and mediates the participative truth of the sacrament.

[71] Peppard, ‘Photisterion’, 475. Peppard notes the intimate relation between oil and light: ‘Whether encased in an earthenware lamp or poured on the tip of a torch, oil was, apart from the sun, the ancient world’s primary source of light… And though our modern sensibilities, subconsciously formed by the ubiquity of electricity, might fail to appreciate the symbolism at first, this narrative and others make plain the connection between oil/anointing and light/illumination.’

5.1 Theodore and the 'durable effect' of oil

Theodore suggests that the natural properties of the oil communicate and mediate to the neophyte the presence of the Holy Spirit with them and the truth of their communion with divinity.

> After you have received the grace of baptism and worn a white garment that shines, the priest draws nigh unto you and signs you on the forehead and says: "So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." When Jesus came out of the water He received the grace of the Holy Spirit who descended like a dove and lighted on Him, and this is the reason why He is said to have been anointed… the Holy Spirit is never separated from Him, like the anointment with oil which has a durable effect on those who are anointed, and is not separated from them.[72]

Here in Theodore's reading of the oil, and specifically in his attention to its sensory phenomenology, it's 'durable effect' upon the foreheads of the neophytes, we find again the mystagogical appeal to the natural pedagogy of creation. Yarnold translates this similarly: 'just as the anointing *attaches* to those who are anointed by men with oil and never leaves them'.[73] Theodore draws his hearers to attend to the physicality of the oil, particularly its viscous, hydrophobic, and immiscible properties. He suggests that the 'durable effect' of oil, ܢܩܦܐ ܠܗܘܢ *(nāqfā lehon),* more literally translated as 'it clings to them', bears a kind of *instructive similitude* to the intimate closeness of Trinitarian communion.[74] The Trinitarian inference appears both in Theodore's reference to Christ's baptism and also, more subtly, in the Syriac vocabulary. When the text reads ܘܠܐ ܡܬܦܪܫܐ ܡܢܗܘܢ *(wlā metparšā menhon),* 'and it is not separated from them', the translator is utilizing vocabulary that uniquely features in Trinitarian theological discourse. In the Ethpeal (the form in which the verb appears here), ܦܪܫ *(praš)* is

[72] Theodore, *Commentary,* 68. Emphasis mine.
[73] 'like the anointment with oil which has a durable effect on those who are anointed, and is not separated from them.' Theodore, *Commentary,* Syr. 202. ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܦ ܠܐܠܝܢ ܕܡܬܡܫܚܝܢ ܡܢ ܒܢܝ̈ܢܫܐ ܡܫܝܚܘܬܐ ܕܡܫܚܐ ܢܩܦܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܦܪܫܐ ܡܢܗܘܢ. 'Durable effect' here is ܢܩܦܐ ܠܗܘܢ. The verb ܢܩܦ means to cleave, to stick to, to follow, to accompany, and can be used also to refer to the bond of marriage. See J. Payne Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 351.
[74] Theodore is keen to deposit anchors of Nicene orthodoxy throughout. Here, the nearness of the Holy Spirit to Christ affirms the divinity of all three Persons of the Trinity (esp. the Spirit and the Son), and it simultaneously rejects Arian and Apollinarian Christologies, which, of particular concern in Theodore's context, would deny the full divinity of the Son.

used in doctrinal affirmations of the 'inseparability' of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The divine persons are 'inseparable', ܠܐ ܡܬܦܪܫܝܢ (*lā metparšín),* or, as we are more familiar with in English, 'indivisible'.[75] The inseparability of the oil from the skin (or, at least, the sensory experience of its 'clinginess') must confer to the initiate a confidence in the reality of their own reception of the Holy Spirit as well, and even suggest their being drawn into a divine closeness.

Theodore invites the candidates to tarry with the oil in contemplation; to practice a precise and delicate attention. And in doing so he proposes a cosmos suffused with theological resonances. By the baptizand's encounter with the oiliness of oil, in which dwells a mundane shadow of divine 'inseparability', the anointed participate in the Light of divine life. Likeness sits at the heart of this participation. The baptismal candidates have undertaken a likeness of Christ's baptism, His Passion, and His resurrection in their own baptism; and here at the anointing, they are *made oily* which signifies the beginnings of participation in the communion of God. This participation is made possible by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

5.2 Let the oil teach you

Cyril similarly focuses on mundane sacramental mediation in his homily on the holy chrism. His final exhortation to the neophytes in this homily is, 'Keep This unspotted: *for It shall teach you all things* if It abides in you'.[76] Here we encounter the idea of the oil of chrism as 'teacher'. In this passage Cyril quotes from 1 John 2:20 and 2:24: 'But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things… Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning'.[77] He weaves his teaching on chrismation alongside the epistle's themes of anointing and knowledge. Cyril's language subtly suggests a level of agency belonging to the oil of anointing. We observe, if not a full-fledged subjecthood, then at least a certain degree

[75] J. Payne Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary,* 465.
[76] Cyril, *MC* 3.7, 66.
[77] Translators of the NT are divided whether 1 Jn. 2:20 should read 'and you know all things' or 'and you all know'. Cyril clearly prefers the former.

of subjecthood about the oil; one that presents the oil of chrism as more than a mere inert object of consideration, or simply an instrument of symbol-making.

Cyril's oil-as-teacher contains a notable directive about what a mystagogical stance toward the world looks like. The neophyte is encouraged to sit at the feet of the oil as student, or, perhaps, as apprentice. The oil, we can imagine, is teacher in a classical sense – resembling the early Christian model of *paideia*.[78] Here, the teacher instructs and leads in order to conform the student to what he/she *is*. And yet, both teacher and student submit themselves beneath the Truth and Beauty which stand as the end of knowledge and learning (be they the Platonic transcendentals, or Christ Himself). Here, learning is a practice of perception, attention, and imitation. The author of the *Panegyric to Origen,* for instance, speaks of his teacher as

> one who vehemently desires to imitate the perfect pattern, and strives after it with zeal and earnestness, even beyond the capacity of men… and who labours, moreover, also to make us, who are so different, of like character with himself.[79]

The teacher is a fellow pilgrim who is distinguished from the student only insofar as they possess a keener sense of the telos and sharpened faculties of discerning the 'perfect pattern'. The teacher leads the student in the ways of imitative fulfilment. And we see this in Cyril's description of the consecrated oil:

> But beware of supposing this to be plain ointment [μύρον ψιλὸν]. For as the Bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation [ἐπίκλησιν] of the Holy Ghost, is mere bread [ἄρτος λιτός] no longer, but the Body of Christ, so also this holy ointment is no more simple ointment, nor (so to say) common, after the invocation, but the gift of Christ; and by the presence of His Godhead, it causes in us the Holy Ghost. It is symbolically applied to your forehead and your other senses; and while the body is anointed with visible ointment [τῳ μεν

[78] See Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture,* 3 vols., trans. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, revised ed. 1986) and Frances Young, 'Towards a Christian *paideia',* in Mitchell, M., & Young, F. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity* vol.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[79] Gregory of Thaumaturgus, *Oration and Panegyric to Origen* [224-226]. Frances Young concludes that for Origin this 'pattern' is, in the end, Christ: 'The ultimate object is to become like God, so as to draw near to the divine and abide within it.' Young, 'Christian paideia', 489.

φαινομένῳ μύρῳ], the soul is sanctified by the Holy and invisible Spirit [τῷ δὲ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἀοράτῳ πνεύματι ἡ ψυχὴ ἁγιάζεται].[80]

It is not surprising that the Holy Spirit is closely associated with the ritual of anointing, as this is clearly established in the gospels, in Jesus' application of Isa. 61:1 to Himself, and in the Johannine epistle (1. Jn. 2:20). We should also notice how the Holy Spirit's presence is highlighted in the mystagogies particularly when the ideas of likeness to Christ and conforming to heavenly realities appear. As Cyril says above, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, things are no longer 'common' (κοινός). In a sense, the oil has gone before the chrismated to be filled and fulfilled – in the order and capacity of its oily nature – with divine presence. It has become *chōrētikos*, filled with God; as Cyril says, the oil is 'the gift of Christ' and bears 'the presence of His Godhead'. It is a *practiced pilgrim.* When the anointed become oily, they become more pilgrim-like; following after this material teacher along the course of likeness and indwelling.[81]

The oil's instruction is not simply information-delivery, it is an earthly manifestation of the end of union with Christ. The oil is thus not only pedagogical, it is *mystagogical* to the one with illumined sight and delicate attention. And I suggest that this is what Cyril means by *teacher.* As teacher, the oil is handmaid not merely of education, but of divinization. The oil has changed from *mere* oil to Christ's gift (χάρισμα) of the Holy Spirit by the presence of the Godhead (παρουσίᾳ τῆς θεότητος). It has been fulfilled in its creaturely manner to be a dwelling place of divinity, and it is used ritually as a site of the firstfruits of the same for the baptised. Acknowledging the robust affirmation of true earthly mediation of the initiates' being drawn into God, we must also notice that this firstfruit appears, and is recognized, not merely conceptually, but in the ritual act and the experience of the bodily senses of the initiate meeting

[80] Cyril, *MC,* 3.3, 65. I have altered Church's translation here slightly, as he ends this section with 'life-giving Spirit', which curiously neglects the poetic parallel between the visible ointment and the invisible ἀοράτῳ Spirit. See Chapter Four for my discussion on the application of the oil to the organs of sense.

[81] Cyril, *MC* 3.1, 63-64. Similarly, in his baptismal homily, Cyril says that those anointed with the oil of exorcism 'were made to share in the fatness of the true olive tree' and that this oil symbolizes their 'participation in the fatness of Christ', κοινωνίας τῆς πιότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; or, His richness and abundance. *MC* 2.3, 60.

the body of oil. And by this tutelage of sensation and likeness, the chrismated receive the beginnings of participation in divine life. In the mystagogical homilies, these beginnings are tended and nourished in the mystagogue's leading to the contemplation of the mundane elements of the rites.

5.3 Shining Faces

Finally, the oil plays its part in our being-seen by Christ and being drawn into His Light. Cyril moves in this direction when he quotes from Psalm 104 at the close of his fourth mystagogical homily:

> *…And bread which strengthens man's heart, and oil to make his face to shine…* make the face of your soul to shine. And so having it unveiled by a pure conscience, may you *behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord,* and *proceed from glory to glory,* in Christ Jesus our Lord: To whom be honour, and might, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.[82]

The pre-baptismal stripping brought us to an honest anthropology, baptism 'unveils' by washing our nature of the obtrusion and condemnation of sin, our self-knowledge and knowledge of the world is unbent, and the bright robe enlists us in the shining of the eternal Sun and serves as wedding raiment. But the luminosity of the oil, 'making the face to shine', has a special relation to vision and intimacy. Oil serves visibility by reflecting light – and so, we might say, by *serving* the light. The face of the baptised, illuminated by the oil, shines along the contours of their *prosōpon* – and here the dual meaning of 'person' and 'face' is most fitting. The shininess of the face is clearly not for our benefit (as we do not experience it ourselves); it is for the sight of the other. And the other, the beholder, is Christ. For, as we gaze at Him 'as in a glass', He gazes upon us.

As Chrysostom noted, even the Seraphim must cover their faces. But the gift of 'looking fixedly' in the face of Christ, of which even the angelic natures are incapable, is Christ's gift

[82] Cyril, *MC* 4.9, 71.

to the baptised. By its natural properties of clarity, reflectivity, and durability, the oil alights upon and calls delicate attention to the details of the face; the visibility of personhood. The relationship of oil to light can be read metaphorically as Christ seeing *us* with delicate sensitivity, with *akribeia.* The natural features and details of the face are highlighted and adorned; and the Light of the Sun of Righteousness, reflects our faces to the eyes of the Redeemer, bringing the visual delight of togetherness and presence.[83]

The oil is like grace perfecting nature. Adorning the face *exteriorly* by illuminating the shape, the indigenous personhood of the *prosōpon,* and yet, teleologically *interior*, in the context of being beheld by the Lord. It illumines our createdness, our visibility, as the site of His knowing as love. If initiation inaugurates in us the way by which we will see Him face to face, it makes us also seen by Him, magnified in true visibility. We can conclude, in a sense, that the capacitation of sight is actually the capacitation of love. It is a fortification of the perceiving and recognizing parts of the movement of desire. The clarification of our shining, symbolized in the oil which 'makes the face to shine', is the mingling of human particularity with the Light of Christ's own face to show forth the love of belonging.

6. The priestly calling of the *neophōtistoi*

6.1 Figures of Christ

The final aspect of *choretik-ized* sight that I wish to address concerns the empowerment of sight to fulfil its vocation of similitude. The vocation of sight is to be joined to Christ's revelation of divinity and established in the truth of the Son's manifestation of the Father in the Spirit. For Cyril, chrismation is the culmination of the baptismal project of likeness-making.

[83] Chrysostom reads the anointed face as a sight which blinds the devil: "Therefore, the priest anoints you on the forehead and puts on you the sign [of the cross], in order that the enemy may turn away his eyes. For he does not dare to look you in the face when he sees the lightning flash which leaps forth from it and blinds his eyes. Henceforth from that day there is strife and counterstrife with him, and on this account the priest leads you into the spiritual arena as athletes of Christ by virtue of this anointing." Chrysostom, *Stav*.2.23, ACW, 52.

And likeness-making is one of the ends of visibility. Likeness-making is the origin of human nature (Gen. 1:27); it is the *way* of our nature's participation in the divine and being-made-like Christ is our *end.* Entering into the space and logic of likeness has two poles: a divinity-ward pole in which humanity participates in divine life by likeness to Christ, made so by the Holy Spirit, and a creation-ward pole wherein the baptised reveal God as icons of Christ and administer the figurehood of their fellow creatures. In Cyril's homily on the chrism, the mystagogue suggests these as the ends of vision and visibility when he speaks of the baptismal sacrament in terms of figurehood. The homily begins with the following:

> Having been *baptised into Christ,* and *put on Christ,* you have been made conformable [σύμμορφοι] to the Son of God; for God having *predestined us to the adoption of sons,* made us *share the fashion [συμμόρφους] of Christ's glorious body.* Being therefore made *partakers [μέτοχοι] of Christ,* you are properly called christs [anointed]… Now you were made christs, by receiving the emblem [ἀντίτυπον] of the Holy Ghost; and all things were in a figure [εἰκονικῶς] wrought in you, because you are figures [εἰκόνες] of Christ.[84]

The first piece to consider here is the significance of likeness-making in terms of 'conformity'; being made *summorphos*. Cyril says that in baptism the initiates 'were made conformable to' the Son of God: σύμμορφοι γεγόνατε τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. *Morphē,* 'form', reappears here when Cyril describes our manner of participation.[85] In its Hellenistic and Christian usage, *morphē* refers to the sensible appearance of a thing; something received by the senses, or 'the form proper to a nature'.[86] Clearly neither Cyril, nor Paul whom he quotes, mean to say that the baptised imitate Christ's concrete physical appearance, but rather the 'form' of His person and the acts which, as Behm puts it, '[reveal] the inner nature of the

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[84] Cyril, *MC* 3.1, 63; Greek, 22. Scripture references in italics: Gal.3:27, Eph. 1:5, Phil. 3:21, Heb.3:14.
Εἰς Χριστὸν βεβαπτισμένοι καὶ Χριστὸν ἐνδυσάμενοι σύμμορφοι γεγόνατε τοῦ ὑιοῦ θεοῦ. προορίσας γάρ ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς υἱοθεσίαν, συμμόρφους ἐποίησε τοῦ σώματος τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ. μέτοχοι οὖν τοῦ Χριστοῦ γενόμενοι χριστοὶ εἰκότως καλεῖσθε... Χριστοὶ δὲ γεγόνατε τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος τὸ ἀντίτυπον δεξάμενοι, καὶ πάντα εἰκονικῶς ἐφ'ὑμῶν γεγένηται, ἐπειδὴ εἰκόνες ἐστὲ Χριστοῦ.

[85] I highlighted earlier how Chrysostom spoke of the beauty *(eumorphos)* of virtue and the deformity *(amorphos)* of vice. While the insights of Chrysostom pertained more to transcendence and truth, and also to morality, here with Cyril's use of *morphē,* the 'form' of Christ and the baptismal imitation of it cling closely to Christ's visibility, to the particularity of His Incarnation and Passion.

[86] Johannes Behm, s.v. μορφή, TDNT IV, 743-752.

Redeemer'.[87] To render it crudely, to undertake baptism is 'to make the *shape* of Christ'. Regarding its physicality, this recalls Chrysostom's explanation of the kneeling of adoration; in which, by posture, one 'says the same thing as', *ὁμολογέω,* the eschatological adoration wherein 'every knee will bow' before Christ. Here, the baptismal sacrament 'makes the same shape' with Christ in the imitative and symbolic drama of baptismal immersion, imaging His death and resurrection.

In a beautiful convergence of similitude, the sacrament of baptism makes the icon of Christ making the icon of us: *[He] emptied himself, by taking the form (μορφὴν) of a servant, being born in the likeness (ἐν ὁμοιώματι) of men. And being found in appearance (σχήματι) as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross* [Phil.2:7-8]. We can think of the Incarnation as Christ's seeing and knowing of us with *akribeia,* with intimate precision. His acquaintance with humanity is not at a distance, it is precise through nearness; and not only the ontological nearness of Creator and Logos, but also in the nearness of *His con-formity* and submission to the human condition - *summorphos* with humanity all the way down even to death. Christ submitted to the form of our death and consumed it, and now the 'figures of Christ' image *His* death to consummate human visibility.

When men and women, who by their ordinary existence manifest the *morphē* of human nature *(anthrōpos),* manifest the *morphē* of Christ in baptism they are drawn into a different kind of visibility: they become *iconic.* Here I draw upon a subtle distinction between the concepts of μορφή and εἰκῶν. Both trade in visibility and manifestation. However, while *morphē* or 'form' can be thought of as revealing an inner reality, *eikōn* carries more of a sense

[87] Behm, s.v. μορφή, TDNT IV, 743-752. 'Christ came down from the height of power and splendour to the abyss of weakness and lowliness proper to a slave, and herein is revealed for the apostle the inner nature of the Redeemer who is both above history and yet also in history.'

of similitude, relation, and, crucially, presence. As Kleinknecht explains it, 'image' is intimately wrapped up in participation:

> …in terms of an emanation, of a revelation of the being with a substantial participation (μετοχή) in the object. Image is not to be understood as a magnitude which is alien to the reality and present only in the consciousness. It has a share in the reality. Indeed, it is the reality. Thus εἰκών does not imply a weakening or a feeble copy of something. it implies the illumination of its inner core and essence.[88]

And so, building on Cyril's passage on the chrism, which itself moves from *morphē* to *eikōn,* I suggest that the capacitation of vision is made complete in the move from epiphany to theophany. That is, the illumination of sight includes and traverses from the capacitation to 'see' truth and to disclose truth – what I have explored as subjective and objective illumination – through to the *neophōtistoi* being drawn into the luminosity of Christ which reveals the divine. Here we attend to the Light of Christ as *manifestation*. Christ's incarnation, 'taking the form of a slave', becoming *summorphos* with humanity, is simultaneously the Son's revelation of the Father: 'I have manifested [ἐφανέρωσα] your Name to the people whom you have given me out of the world' (Jn. 17:6). By the sacraments of initiation, humanity travels along the track of Christ's incarnate and salvific, paschal 'form' back up into the divinity of which He is the *icon*.

> He is the image *(εἰκὼν)* of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (*Colossians 1:15-17)*

The baptismal likeness, 'being conformed to Christ', joins the initiates to Christ's saving acts, and makes them participants in Him (partakers, μέτοχοι, of His glorious body). But this Paschal likeness is also the entry into a deeper reality; into Christ Who is theophany. Christ's 'form', His earthly existence and Passion, manifests the Father; but beneath this lies

[88] Hermann Kleinknecht, s.v. *εἰκών*, 'C. The Greek Use of εικών,' TDNT II, 389.

His identity as the eternal and only-begotten Son. The initiated participate in Christ by means of 'figures'; that is, through sacraments and symbols – or, in Cyril's Greek, 'iconically' εἰκονικῶς. And so, by icons they become icons of Christ who is the true icon of God. Here I turn to Cyril's enigmatic phrase at the end of the quotation:

> All things were in a figure wrought in you, because you are figures of Christ.
> Καὶ πάντα εἰκονικῶς ἐφ΄ὑμῶν γεγένηται, ἐπειδὴ εἰκόνες ἐστὲ Χριστοῦ.

There are three levels of figurehood or iconicity operative in Cyril's teaching. First, there is the figural nature of the sacraments: 'all [these] things were in a figure wrought in you'. Secondly, the initiates in the Christian mysteries become icons of Christ: 'because you are figures of Christ'. And the third level of figurehood, though implicit, is the underlying invitation into the divine reality of figurehood itself. I suggest that Cyril means to say something more than simply that the baptizands engage, temporarily, in image-making. The third iconicity that obtains in Cyril's teaching is that of the Son as image, *εἰκὼν,* of the Father. The iconicity of the Son undergirds, and suffuses the other two, as their originating and final cause.

This is expressed beautifully in Simon Oliver's reading of the hymnic passage from Colossians 1 that calls Christ the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ. Oliver reads the eternal generation of the Son, and creation's participation in Him, in terms of *claritas* – the brilliance, splendour, and beauty of the Godhead. The beauty of the Son relates to His identity as the perfect image of the invisible God.[89] Creation, whose being arises *in, through,* and *for* the Son participates analogously in His radiance as the Only-Begotten.

[89] 'To the Son is appropriated beauty which includes three conditions or aspects of beauty: integrity or perfection; proportion or harmony; and brightness or clarity. The Son has integrity or perfection as fully actual, possessing perfectly the nature of the Father. This leads to the second condition, namely proportion or harmony which the Son possesses perfectly in relation to the Father, for he is the perfect image of the invisible God. The Son also has a proportion or harmony with creatures, not in the sense of a relation of quantity, but in the sense that all creatures find in the begetting of the Son their supreme exemplar cause… Finally, Aquinas concludes: The third [brightness and clarity] agrees with the property of the Son, as the Word, which is the light and splendour of the intellect, as Damascene says [*ST* 1a.39.8.c.].' Simon Oliver, 'The Beauty of the Son and the Metaphysics of Creation', paper

> The eternal radiant beauty – the proceeding forth from the Father – is the ground of the emanation of all things from the first principle which is creation… The radiant quality of creatures which make themselves known or communicate their being in the emanation of themselves – everything from the emitting of a seed by a plant to the emanation of an interior word in the human intellect – is… a participation in the radiant beauty of the Word which proceeds from the Father who is 'principle without principle'.[90]

With Oliver's elegant association of creaturely emanation and divine emanation, we can see why Cyril highlights the relation between the 'figural' mode of the sacraments and the initiated who become 'figures of Christ'. The mundane radiance of creatures, the manifestation of their inner natures, is already a participation in the Word by Whom and in Whom they come to be. As such, they are poised to be engaged with in the mode of symbol, to be sacraments, drawing forth the participative heart of their creaturely features to enable humanity to do the same: the 'durable effect' of oil, for instance, or the sepulchral and natal associations of water.[91] In other words, the iconicity of the sacraments (things being 'wrought in figure', εἰκονικῶς) draws upon, and only makes sense in terms of, creation's analogical *claritas* and *akribeia.* And so, those being illumined, becoming icons of Christ, administer and ride the brightness of creation to participate in the brightness of Christ. The manifestational reality of the baptismal candidates and of the creaturely elements used in the sacraments are arranged in a Christophanic choreography that consummates this very capacity of creation. The subtle, latent, and fundamental disclosure of Christ within humanity and within creatures becomes brilliantly clarified in the sacraments of baptism and chrismation as the initiates make the 'shape of Christ' with the help of their fellow creatures.

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given at the D Society, Cambridge Faculty of Divinity, 20/05/2020. Private copy provided by the author and quoted with permission.

[90] Oliver, 'The Beauty of the Son'.

[91] Ambrose highlights the death imagery of baptismal water, and Theodore the natal. Ambrose *Sac.* 2.19, Yarnold, 117: 'I said that water comes from the earth; the conditions of human life did not permit us to be covered by the earth and then rise again from it. Besides, it is not earth which washes, but water. So it is that the font is a kind of grave.' Theodore, *Commentary*, 4, 55: The priest praying over the water asks God 'that the grace of the Holy Spirit might come on the water and impart to it the power both of conceiving that awe-inspiring child and becoming a womb to the sacramental birth.'

By the presence of the Holy Spirit, likeness-making becomes image-making, and the baptised are drawn into Christ, the object of their figural imitation. Being made to share in the radiance of the Son is, I suggest, the true end of initiation as *illumination.* Christian initiation inaugurates the neophyte into figurehood as the substrate of creaturely reality, because it is first and foremost the character of the Son, the hypostatic *claritas* of God. For the *neophōtistoi,* this is a consummation of the causal word of our nature: 'Let us make Man in our own image and likeness'.[92] Baptismal con-formation leads on to being made icons of Christ, the image of God.

6.2 Image and likeness

The pattern of the creative word, 'let us make Man in our own image and likeness', which moves from *eikōn* to *homoiōsis,* does not align seamlessly with Cyril's movement from *summorphos* to *eikōn.* However, it serves to draw in the early Christian tradition of reading Genesis 1:26 as the calling upon humanity to move from 'image' to 'likeness': the idea that humanity is created in God's image ([LXX] *κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν, 'according to our image'),* and is enabled in Christ to come fully into that image by being transformed into the divine likeness *(καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν, 'and according to [our] likeness')* through the transfiguration of *theōsis*.[93] Chrysostom suggests something along these lines when he employs the analogy of a painter to express the fulfilment of the imago Dei through baptism. In a characteristically moral exhortation regarding the rooting out of bad habits before baptism – the candidate must 'rub out' immoral habits like the painter preparing his sketch – Chrysostom says that the artist's sketch or 'image' is then, in the sacrament, filled in with the 'true colour of the Spirit' so that the royal image will 'shine forth'.

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[92] Genesis 1:26, LXX: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ᾽ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ᾽ ὁμοίωσιν.

[93] Reading a theological, and subsequently a teleological, distinction between 'image' and 'likeness' was a common hermeneutic practice in the early church, e.g. in Irenaeus and Tertullian. Its relation to the doctrine of *theosis* can be seen in the writings of John of Damascus: 'The expression according to the image indicates rationality and freedom, while the expression according to the likeness indicates assimilation to God through virtue' *On the Orthodox Faith,* 2.12 (*PG* 94, 920B).

> Let the same thing happen now which occurs in the case of painters. They set forth their wooden tablets, draw white lines around them, and trace in outline the royal images [τὰς βασιλικὰς ὑπογράφοντες εἰκόνας] before they daub on the true colours… You do the same thing. Consider that your soul is an image [εἰκόνα]. Before daubing on the true colour of the Spirit [τὴν ἀληθῆ τοῦ Πνεύματος βαφὴν], erase the bad habits which have become implanted in you… The bath takes away the sins, but you must correct the habit, so that after the pigments [χρωμάτων] have been daubed on and the royal image shines forth [καὶ λαμψάσης τῆς βασιλικῆς εἰκόνος], you may never thereafter blot it out or cause wounds or scars on the beauty [κάλλει] which God has given you.[94]

Recalling that *akribeia* can refer to the faithfulness of an artistic image to its original, we could say that the *akribeia* of the Son, the 'precision' of His icon of the Father, is absolute, *homoousios*: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn. 10:30), 'anyone who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn. 14:9). Through illumination, the baptised are capacitated to participate, in an analogous and derived way, in Christ's imaging and revealing of the Father. Moreover, Christ who is 'true God' is also 'true Man'. He reveals *precisely* the fulfilment of humanity's origin and vocation to be God's image and likeness. In baptism and chrismation, which daub on the true colour of the Spirit, the initiates begin to fulfil the sketch of the divine which lies at the heart of their nature.

The baptismal paschal imitation of Christ is the entry into something deeper than simple representation. Becoming figures of Christ is the entry into the final cause of creaturely visibility; to exist as icon – a *beautiful* icon. In his analogy, Chrysostom intermingles the artistic and ecclesiastical meanings of the word βάπτω, 'to dip'. The 'bath' which takes away sins, τὸ λουτρὸν, and τὸ βάπτισμα appear alongside the related word, βαφή, which refers to the processes and products of craftsmanship and artistry: the temper or edge of a blade, dye, enamelling, or gilding. The outline of the royal image within the baptismal candidate is filled in and completed with the βαφή, the 'true colour' or, we could say, the 'dye' or 'gilding' of the Spirit. Through his play on the βάπτω word family, Chrysostom suggests that the baptised are not only 'dipped' in the sense of being cleansed, but are also *adorned* and fashioned as a work

[94] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.22-23, ACW 179-180. Greek: Migne, *PG* 49.235.

of art. Human visibility is made *chōrētikos theou* through the beautifying colour of the Holy Spirit that fulfils the divine artist's 'sketch', making us into icons of divine beauty (κάλλει).

6.3 Firstfruits and semeiotics

The piece I have not yet dealt with sufficiently in my reading of both Cyril and Chrysostom's texts above is the role of the Holy Spirit, who features in Cyril's teaching as 'emblem', *antitupos,* and in Chrysostom's analogy as the 'true colour' with which the royal image shines forth. In the mystagogies, the Holy Spirit is consistently mentioned in connection with the notion of likeness-making, and specifically in relation to the truth of the *eikōn* and our communion with the divine reality that we image. The Spirit is the power and guarantor of humanity's movement into iconicity, to our being filled with Christ's true presence and likeness. The divine power and work of the Spirit draws the Christian from the *Christo-phanic* into the *Christo-phoric.* The Spirit capacitates humanity to become Christ-bearers *(chōrētikos)*. Here I return to Theodore, whose discussion of the oil's 'durable effect' continues with the following:

> When (the priest) signs you he says: "So-and-so is signed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," so that it may be an indication and a sign to you that it is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit descended on you also, and you were anointed and received grace; and He will be and remain with you, as it is through Him that you possess now the firstfruits.[95]

The crucial point in this quotation is Theodore's affirmation that the Holy Spirit 'will be and remain with you, as it is *through Him* that you possess now the firstfruits':

ܘܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܠܟ ܘܡܩܘܐ ܒܟ ܕܒܝܕܗ ܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܗܪܟܐ ܪܫܝܬܐ.[96]

The Holy Spirit, by whom the true possession of the firstfruits of divine communion and eternal life are secured, is the reason the sacraments 'work'. It is His presence which makes the liturgy

[95] Theodore, *Commentary,* 68.
[96] Theodore, *Commentary,* 202.

more than mimetic pantomime. Having identified this role of the Holy Spirit, we must consider what this implies for the vocation of the anointed Christian who lives in the age (*zabnā)* of firstfruits, the time in-between. Here is where the notion of priesthood enters. When Cyril says, 'you are figures of Christ', though he does not expand on this phrase, I argue that it provides a paradigm for the priestly calling of the *neophōtistoi:* 'You are figures', so go and be a figure, even a minister of figures, participating in and administering the perfection of all things according to their diverse modes of figurehood.[97] The illumined have been capacitated to recognize, name, make, and tend the iconicity of the creaturely natures inhabiting the spheres in which they find themselves; all with an eye to their *Christo-phanic* manifestation made complete in the end.

Theodore's presentation of the Spirit as the guarantor of 'firstfruits' also offers a pattern of the priestly calling of the *neophōtistoi.* Building on Theodore's 'through Him you possess now the firstfruits', I suggest that the eschatological pole, the 'firstfruits' won by Christ and secured to us by and in the divine Person of the Spirit, reaches back through the sacramental-signifying of liturgy to *guarantee semeiosis itself.* This is because semeiosis, or sign-making, is fundamentally a species of teleology and eschatology: a *this* leading to *that,* a now unveiling a yet to come. The semeiosis of creaturehood is part of the economy of providence, the way in which God by the Holy Spirit guides and moves all thing to their end. Christ is (as Creator and as God incarnate), and has done (as Saviour), the 'work' of uniting humanity to God and

[97] This argument is influenced by David Fagerberg's notion of the 'hybrid royal priest'. See David Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism,* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013) 12-13, and 61: 'No other creature is enrolled as citizen in both realms, and it is this dual citizenship that is humanity's ontological potential for priesthood. Men and women possess full corporeality and full spirituality by their very ontological makeup, participating in both the visible and invisible realms of the cosmos. There is a material world to be celebrated: the angels know it, but cannot experience it; the animals experience it, but cannot know its *logoi* (signs of the *Logos* in created things)… Being created in the image of the *Logos*, human beings are capable of knowing the *logoi* in material things (which is why Adam could name things – he could call things as they really are).'

creation to Creator. And it seems that Theodore places the Holy Spirit at the heart of this coming together.

God draws His creatures, who *are* signs, *by* signs back to Himself; not despite the material but in a through it. I propose, then, that the inner *akribeia* of earthly figurehood, that is, its truth and coherence, and its inherent movement toward the divine archetype, is not simply a neutral law or principle. It is personal – a divine Person. It is God Himself, the Holy Spirit.[98] In the Spirit, the relation between the Son begotten of the Father before all worlds – we could say, the absolute *iconicity* of the Son – is not alien, and neither is it extrinsic or arbitrary. It is substantial. Therefore, as creation participates in and reflects the Son, we can conclude that the iconicity or figurehood of the creaturely order is also secured and corroborated in the Spirit by its analogical participation in the true figurehood of the Trinity. Creation's iconicity is drawn forth in clarity and *precision* in the church's liturgy, and it is the calling of the illumined to exercise, in their ordinary lives, a priestly orientation and sensitivity toward the epiphanic heart of their fellow creatures and neighbours, and to participate in the Spirit's drawing of creaturely light into divine radiance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set forth an account of the capacitation of sight which ultimately sees vision and visuality as a 'way' of *theosis*, as the transfiguration of this particular faculty toward the end of participation in God through being made like Christ. We have seen how this transfiguration extends beyond the mundane capacities of seeing and knowing. The making of sight *chōrētikos theou* involves and envelops visuality as a principle of being – what I have called its epiphanic character. Illumination is the name for the perceiving of, colluding with,

[98] I am indebted to my colleague, Joshua Mobley, and to our discussions as he formulated his Trinitarian account of symbolism, for the development of this insight in my own work linking the Holy Spirit and the figurehood of creation. See Joshua Kendall Mobley, *Symbolism: A Systematic Theology of the Symbol,* (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2020).

and being drawn into the appearance of the consummation of creation in Christ. As the first aspect of capacitation, I proposed the illumination of the subject, by which the baptised begin to see truly, or to apprehend 'with precision' the world, the beauty of the good and the deformity of evil, and the truth of our human nature in the frailty of fallenness and in our indigenous longing for beatitude.

Chrysostom's vocabulary of accurate sight, *akribeia*, has served as a way to speak about this kind of seeing. The 'accuracy' of this seeing and knowing, however, conceives of truth not as abstraction or conceptual mastery, but rather as attunement to the world's, and to our own, ontological figurehood and inner motion towards consummation. The *akribeia* of creation's epiphany is the loving, attractive, and effective precision of God's self-revelation and His call to beatitude in the creaturely order. The 'light of the sacraments' attunes our nature to this wavelength.

The second aspect of capacitation that I presented was the illumination of the object. I argued that the disclosure of creation, and especially the originative and teleological truth of human nature, is enabled to shine forth. This is embodied symbolically in the disrobing of the *phōtizomenoi* and their postbaptismal robing in white. The unfettering and magnifying of epiphanic, in both the subjective and objective senses, serves the final aspect of the capacitation of sight: the drawing of the baptised into the Light itself – into Christ who underwrites the very principle of visuality. This final third suggests that capacitation is not only a gift of power and receptivity; it is also the gratuitous invitation to go-beneath, to be made capable of touching and entering the stream of Christ who is the image of the invisible God and the radiant wellspring of epiphany itself. In the mystagogies, this invitation to union and participation appears in Ambrose and Cyril's nuptial readings of the baptismal garment, and in Theodore and Chrysostom's effusive celebrations of the in-breaking of eschatological light and delight.

I have also suggested that the 'way' of participation, as it concerns visuality, is the imitation of Christ, and that this imitation, made substantial and *iconic* by the Holy Spirit, is the end of human visibility. In initiation, humanity is conformed to Christ, which entails both a heaven-ward participation and a creation-ward priestly calling. The anointed are called and enabled to become *icons* of Christ, and also imitators of the Spirit's manner of being as semeiotic bond. It is no coincidence that oil, emblem of the Holy Spirit, is used to set apart the priesthood in the Scriptures.[99] The administration of the world's figurehood, it's sacramentality, is the priestly calling of the Christian. Here we can draw again upon the ancient extramission theory of vision, with its mingling of inner and outer lights, to express how the illumined live out their priestly calling: by living liturgically outside the liturgy, the illumined fulfil their semeiotic priesthood by bearing and manifesting Christ's resurrection as the 'inner fire' of the soul and allowing this light to cast upon the world in waiting. This Light, the Φως of Christ in which they have been capacitated to share, by its attractive luminosity, calls forth the kindred lights of creation, like falling upon like. The newly-illumined, as the mundane priestly class, administer the *mingling* of the light, tracing its beauty and traversing along its brilliance into the heart of divine communion. At their appearance even the Son, in Whom the way was made, cries with joy, 'behold, you are fair, my love!', and that is what it means *to see.*

> May our Lord God preserve in you the grace which he has given you, and may he deign to illuminate more fully the eyes he has opened through his only begotten Son, our king and saviour, our Lord God by whom and with whom he has praise, honour, glory, magnificence and power, with the Holy Spirit now and for ever into endless ages. Amen.
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> Ambrose, *de Sacramentis*, 4.29.

[99] Cf. Ambrose, *M* 6.30: Consider now why this is done, for 'the eyes of a wise man are in his head;' [Ecc. 2:14] therefore the ointment flows down to the beard, that is to say, to the beauty of youth; and therefore, Aaron's beard, that we, too, may become a chosen race, priestly and precious, for we are all anointed with spiritual grace for a share in the kingdom of God and in the priesthood.

Chapter Four

The Eucharist and Touch

Introduction

We have now, along with the neophytes, been led by the mystagogues through the rites of baptism and have arrived at the conclusion and culmination of the initiation liturgy: the eucharist. Here we encounter the *end* of initiation in two senses. The eucharistic rite is, of course, the sequential end of the initiation process; and as such the eucharist is also the final component of the mystagogical education.[1] But it is the *end*, as in meaning or purpose, of initiation that I am concerned with here. In the mystagogues' closing homilies we observe with a particular clarity what initiation is *for.* And indeed, as I have argued throughout that initiation concerns the fulfilling of our nature through union with God, we can discern in the mystagogues' teachings an implicit account of the *end* of human nature. 'Capacitation', or becoming *chōrētikos theou*, is the language I have used to characterize both the end and the effect of initiation. Through the rites and liturgy, the prevenient sensitivity that humanity possesses by our creaturely capacities of body and intellect, and the knowledge we acquire therefrom, are drawn out and made intelligible. They are teleologically illuminated, and the Christological heart of learning and becoming is unveiled. The natural capacities of creation are drawn into the ritual choreography of the liturgy where the Holy Spirit fulfils the shadowy icons of our human faculties by capacitating them to receive God truly.

Here we can introduce our final sensory theme: touch. To explain how the sense of touch is made *chōrētikos theou* I will draw upon a phrase from Theodore's mystagogy by which he describes how the initiates are to approach and receive Christ in the eucharist. Theodore

[1] Cyril's final mystagogical homily deals with both the eucharist and the Lord's Prayer. Theodore has a separate homily dedicated to the Lord's prayer which appears at the beginning of his mystagogical series.

says, 'we joyfully embrace Him with all our power'. This 'embrace' of Christ will serve as the overarching notion around which I will structure my argument. Theodore says:

> And we joyfully embrace Him with all our power as we see him risen from the tomb, and we trust also that we will participate (with Him) in the resurrection, because He also rose from the tomb of the holy communion-table as from the dead… and He comes near to us by His apparition and announces resurrection to us through our communion with Him… and [He] gives Himself to each one of us, in order that we may hold Him and embrace Him with all our might, and make manifest our love to Him, according to the pleasure of each one of us.[2]

In his evocative language of holding and 'embracing' Christ – the Syriac ܢܥܡ *(nšaq)* can also mean 'to kiss'[3] – Theodore commends to us the adorative character of eucharistic participation. Indeed, the measure according to which one embraces Christ is expressed not in terms of bare knowledge, nor even in terms of reverence, but in terms of joy and delight: 'according to the pleasure of each one of us'.[4] I suggest that Theodore's language hints at something deeper concerning the ends for which humanity was given 'all our power' in the first place. In my reading of the eucharistic mystagogies, I will show how, in the eucharist, we discover and consummate the *end*, or final cause, of human nature and all our 'powers', and how this is imaged through touch. That end is the joyous and pleasurable embrace of Christ.

Touch is a fitting sense to end with for a number of reasons. First, the eucharist is the sacrament whose domain is the nearness of touch and the intimacy of eating. Secondly, the theme of touch serves to highlight the mystagogical and sacramental esteem for creation – it keeps us close to our bodies. Finally, the theme of touch completes my thematizing of the senses with the *sensus communis*. In the antique Aristotelian account of *aisthesis* (sensation),

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[2] Theodore, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, trans. Alphonse Mingana. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 112. Syr. 253: And we joyfully embrace him with all our power – ܘܢܚܒܩ ܗܘ ܒܟܠ ܚܝܠ ܕܢܚܙܝܗ ܩܝܡ ܡܢ ܩܒܪܐ ܘܡܗܝܡܢܝܢ ܕܢܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܒܩܝܡܬܐ [ܚܒܩ rt. ܚܦ embrace, cling,]… that we may hold him and embrace him with all our might – ܘܢܐܚܙ ܗܘ ܘܢܬܠ ܒܗ ܒܟܠ ܚܝܠ ܕܢܫܠ ܘܢܢܥܡ ܘܢܬܠܚܡ [ܬܠܚܡ rt. ܠܚܡ = to lay hold, take possession, seize, grasp, hold fast; ܢܢܥܡ rt. ܢܥܡ = to kiss].

[3] Mingana repeats the word 'embrace' twice in this section, but there are two Syriac words used, the first is ܚܦ, to embrace or cling, and the second is ܢܥܡ, which means to kiss. See footnote above.

[4] 'according to the pleasure of each one of us' ܒܗ ܕܐܬܪܥܝ ܠܗ ܟܚܕ ܟܚܕ ܡܢ ܚܕ. Note the reappearance of ܪܥܝ *(regā')*: delight, pleasure, savouriness.

all of the senses of perception are, in the end, forms of touch.[5] That is, our faculties *touch* and *are touched by* the world through various media: air, sound, light, etc. Said another way, humanity is a creature of contact. The soul receives the forms of earthly realities by, as Catherine Pickstock puts it, 'touching the touching'.[6]

And this, I suggest, is also the heart of our learning. Humanity meets the world in the rudiments of materiality and sensation – in the embraces of matter – and we have, by the intellect, a measured capacity to discern the truth of our fellow creatures. As I have shown throughout, this is read in a mystagogical sense as the discerning of the *Logos* underlying the creaturely *logoi.* As the *sensus communis,* touch reveals the common heart of *aisthesis;* what unites the diverse modes of sensation and the symbolic associations that accompany them. Sitting as it does, then, at the heart of all our (embodied) power, touch helps us to consider the meaning of *aisthesis* itself. This, in turn, serves to reveal the logic of the apparent priority given to sensation and matter in the mystagogue's pedagogies. Touch reminds us that our elementary education in the things of heaven begins with the things of earth.

My argument will be developed in four movements: First, I will highlight how our human power of touch, as both a physical and a pedagogical power, is gathered, made sense of, and transfigured in the liturgy of the eucharist. What are our earthly 'powers', and what of the 'powers' of our fellow creatures? Here I will introduce Theodore's notion of 'fittingness': where the logic of creation trains us for the order of heaven. Secondly, I will outline the divine work of capacitation that enables humanity to embrace Christ by a power that fulfils and yet exceeds the capacities of our nature. In this section I will discuss the question of being

[5] Aristotle, *On the Soul,* trans. W.S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd 1957), III.xii, and III.xiii, 201. According to Aristotle, the other senses are, in the end, forms of touch; the difference being that they sense the world by means of intermediate substances – air, light, etc. Touch, on the other hand, seems immediate, and so intimate, because its medium is 'imperceptible', II.xi, 133.

[6] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* (London: Routledge 2001), 81: 'And this circumstance brings about the rebound of touch: without the interval of a palpable medium, what we touch in touch is the touching, not simply the other, held at a distance.'

capacitated to touch heavenly realities. This capacity must be given to us by Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is a question of being *made capable* in the sense of being *made fitting* for heavenly and eschatological things. Thirdly, I will explore the nature of the embrace itself. Here I will focus on the mystagogues' preference for nuptial imagery in their interpretations of the eucharist to express both the assurance of Christ's presence and the sense of consummatory joy. Lastly, as in previous chapters, I will consider the calling of the initiated in light of the eucharistic consummation of the senses. How does the Christian touch the world of which they are a part in a new way after touching and embracing Christ in the eucharist? The end of the eucharist is the end of the human creature: union with God in Christ. Through the unfolding of these arguments, I will present the embrace of God 'with all our power' as that for which humanity was made, and for which, in initiation, we are capacitated. This embrace is the deepest meaning of *chōrētikos theou.* The powers to touch, to receive, to know, to feel, are ordered to, and fulfilled in, the passionate embrace of Christ.

1. 'All our power': fittingness and food

I must begin by establishing what 'all our power', in a creaturely sense, might mean. In speaking of earthly or creaturely 'powers' of embrace, I am referring particularly to the capacities of our nature, both those of embodiment and the intellect, by which we get along in this life. They range from the physical and biological powers that we possess to, for instance, feed ourselves and procreate (and, of course, we find these intimately drawn upon in the eucharistic mystagogies), to the intellective powers of contemplation whereby we reflect upon the ordinary and familiar and discern its depth and relation to Christ. We find Theodore's homilies especially rich in discussions that suggest that the liturgy gathers and consummates the powers of our nature to perceive, to desire, and to know – that is, the liturgy consummates our power to learn. Theodore's teachings on the eucharist assume and affirm that the eschatological embrace of Christ has been echoed and mediated in the ordinary and mundane

features of creaturely life. We can think of this natural instruction as the *touch of truth* to the senses by means of our everyday mingling with matter; making us amenable and susceptible to the gospel of Christ.

As I have highlighted throughout, the tutelage of the mundane images to the human soul impressions of eternal truth; not as clarified and abstracted concepts, but rather in the slow and repetitive training of our intuitions through the intimacy of sensation. Indeed, 'touch' is, in this sense, a much better analogy for learning than 'sight' for this very reason. We *know* by multitudinous embraces with creation. Eating, as we shall see, is one such embrace. And in these 'touches' our souls and bodies are educated and formed. In the selections from Theodore's eucharistic teaching that I will discuss below, we find that he speaks of the way we receive truth (or learn) through the order of creation in terms of 'fittingness'.

We turn, then, to Theodore's mystagogy and a play on words that can only appear in Syriac. Theodore (or, rather, here we encounter the Syriac translator's poetic genius) furnishes his eucharistic lesson with a notable repetition of the words ܠܰܚܡܳܐ *(laḥmā)* and ܠܳܚܡܳܐ *(lāḥmā)*. Un-pointed (without vowels, as they appear in the manuscript), these words look identical and their pronunciation is similar. The first is a noun meaning 'bread' (the emphatic state of ܠܶܚܡ *leḥem*) and the second is an adjective that means 'fitting' or 'suitable'.[7] The artful deliberateness of the wordplay, littered throughout Theodore's exegesis of the eucharistic food, is, I suggest, intended to draw the hearer's/reader's attention to an aesthetic relationship

[7] For the adjective 'fitting': J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Claredon Press 1903), 240. ܠܶܚܡ: II. to suit with, fit, agree; used chiefly in the act. part. impers., it is fitting, suitable, convenient; R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus,* 1879, 1901. ܠܶܚܡ: 2. *concordavit, congruit, consensit.* R. Payne Smith notes some Theodorean attestations as corresponding with Greek ἐφαρμόζω (to fit, be adapted, coincide, befit, suit, etc.), ἀκολουθέω (to follow, be guided by, be consequent upon, be consistent with), and Latin *dignus qui* (worthy, deserving, suitable, fitting, becoming, proper)*;* Carl Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacus,* Second Edition (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1928) 364, ܠܰܚܡܳܐ: *aptus* (suited, suitable, proper, ready, fit, appropriate, adapted, conformable), and *idoneus* (fit, meet, proper, becoming, suitable, apt, capable, convenient, sufficient); abstract noun ܠܰܫܬܰܚܡܽܘܬܳܐ: *conjunctio, convenientia.*

between embodiment and eschatology – between the rudiments of creation and the destination of blessedness; a relationship that poetics is uniquely poised to capture.

As such, it is a textual flourish which invites careful consideration.[8] There are three intertwined *fittingnesses* that Theodore engages with in his two eucharistic homilies (catecheses five and six): the first is the fittingness of bread as nourishment for 'this present life'; the second is the fittingness of the eucharistic food as the sacramental nourishment of the 'life to come'; and the third is the fittingness of the eucharistic food as the sacrament of the Paschal mystery.

1.1 The first fittingness: this present life

'(Our Lord) chose, therefore, very fittingly bread as food.'[9]

Theodore appeals first to our embodied familiarity with biological nutrition as a lesson in the appropriateness and trustworthiness of the eucharistic food as nourishment for the immortal life born in baptism. Theodore's fifth homily begins with the following:

> It is the habit of men to wrap the newborn babes in swaddling clothes so that a freshly constituted and still soft body may not receive any injury, but that it should remain firm in its composition. They first stretch and place them restfully in swaddling clothes, and then bring to them a natural food that is fitting and suitable [ܥܗܢܐ ܘܠܚܡܐ, *ʿāhnā w'lāḥmā*] to them. In this same way we have also tightly wrapped in our teaching… those who were newly born of baptism so that the memory of the grace vouchsafed unto them might be firmly established in them… Today, however, I am contemplating to draw you, by the grace of God, to a nourishment of a bread [or, 'to a food suitable to you', ܠܣܝܒܪܬܐ ܕܠܚܡܐ ܠܟܘܢ, *l'saybarthā d'lāḥmā l'kon*], the nature of which you must know and the greatness of which you must learn with accuracy.[10]

Theodore suggests that there is an appropriate and natural order of birth, care, and nourishment which is present in biology, and also in initiation. There is a coming into existence and a

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[8] Here we are exposed to a uniquely Semitic attention to the poetics of theology.
[9] Theodore, *Commentary*, 77.
[10] Theodore, *Commentary*, 71, Syr. 205-206. Devreese and Tonneau's translation of ܠܣܝܒܪܬܐ ܕܠܚܡܐ ܠܟܘܢ, inserted in parentheses above, is preferable: 'a vous presenter la nourriture qui vous convient'. *Les Catechetiques de Théodore de Mopsueste*, trad. Raymond Tonneau, O.P. and Robert Devreesse (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1949), 465.

sustenance that fits the creature who has come to be. In this first appearance of eucharistic 'fittingness', Theodore seems to associate the sacramental food with breastmilk. And, indeed, elsewhere he capitalizes on the maternal imagery of creatures who 'feed on the body of the animal that brings it forth', as the life of the baptised is sustained and grows by feeding upon Christ's Body.[11] We must also notice Theodore's portrayal of the mystagogue catechist as the *swaddler* of the new life, defender of its 'fresh constitution', and minister of the sustenance fitting to this new life.

Theodore moves swiftly from breastmilk to bread, and he constructs an argument from nutrition to persuade his hearers of the necessity of the eucharist to the sacramental creature. Theodore suggests that the fittingness of bread to earthly life is pedagogical. God, he argues, 'wished to convince us, from things belonging to this world, that we shall receive also without doubt the benefits that are high above words.'[12] It is instructive at this point to consider what Theodore means by 'things belonging to this world', especially as it regards the pedagogy of bread. As we continue in the homily, Theodore presents a unique theory of nature, nutrition, and necessity in which he argues that the nutritive quality of bread does not merely *happen to be*, but is rather God-ordained and a divinely-bestowed capacity:

> The fact that in order to sustain ourselves in this life we eat bread, and the fact that bread cannot fulfil this function by its nature, but has been enabled to do so by order of God who imparted this power to it, should by necessity convince us not to doubt that we shall receive immortality by eating the sacramental bread. Indeed, although bread does not possess such a nature, yet when it receives the Holy Spirit and His grace it is enabled to impart to those who eat it the happiness of immortality. If it is capable of sustaining us in this life by a decree of God, although not possessing this power by nature, how much more will it not be capable, after it has received the descent of the Holy Spirit, of helping us to assume immortality.[13]

[11] Theodore, *Commentary*, 73.
[12] Theodore, *Commentary*, 76.
[13] Theodore, *Commentary*, 76-77. Syr. 212.

Theodore argues that bread is not 'naturally' (ܒܟܝܢܐ, *b'kyāneh,* 'by its nature') capable[14] of nourishing physical human life, but that this relationship of need, fittingness, and nourishment arises out of the designs and commands of God: 'it is capable of sustaining us in this life *by a decree of God*', ,ܒܬܩܕܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ, *(d'alāhā b'púqdānaw)*. Theodore's catechetical tactic is first to direct his hearers to consider the rudimentary truth of biological life – the absolute necessity of nutrition.[15] He draws upon the communicants' awareness that they are poised precariously against non-being and are dependent upon relations with exterior creatures (bread, and bread-makers) for their continued existence.[16] And he goes further to suggest that this power of nutrition in the biological order is divinely ordained, set forth to educate the human creature, to 'convince us' through the intimate familiarity of mundane eating. The epicletic transformation of the eucharistic elements into a food that feeds the immortal life is echoed and intimated in the rudimentary needs of 'this present life'.[17]

We must also note how the earthly fittingness of biological necessity – the bread that is 'fitting' to human life (the *laḥmā* that is *lāḥmā*) – is assigned a certain pedagogical subjectivity as its natural order is transfigured by the power of the Holy Spirit. Theodore says that the eucharistic bread is enabled by the epiclesis to 'impart to the eaters of it the happiness of immortality', and that it is made capable of 'helping us to assume immortality'.[18] More literally, the Syriac reads that the eucharistic bread *'leads'* (ܢܕܢܚ *nedrʿan*) the communicants to the assumption of immortality. Like the word 'fitting', the aesthetics of 'leading' also invites our

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[14] The Syriac of this section uses three words for 'capable' and 'enabled': ܡܫܐ *(mṣā)* to be able, allowed, to have the power; ܝܠܐ *(ḥaylā)* power; and ܣܦܩ *(spaq)* to suffice, be sufficient, be capable.

[15] 'This power of self-nutrition ... This is the originative power the possession of which leads us to speak of things as living at all.' Aristotle, *On the Soul,* II.2.413b, trans. J.A. Smith (1931) epub: http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.html

[16] Theodore, *Commentary*, 72: '…in this world we exist by two acts: birth and food – in birth we receive our existence and in feeding ourselves we are enabled to maintain our existence, as those who are born will surely die if they are short of food'.

[17] Lit. 'from these of here', ܡܢܗܝ ܠܗܠܝܢ ܗܟܐ.

[18] ܠܡܬܠ ,ܡܠܝܟܝܢ ܠܡܙܪܥ ܠܗ ܠܡܢ ܕܢܣܒ ܠܗ ܚܕܘܬܐ ܕܠܥܠܡܐ ܕܐܬܝ, (lit.) 'to sow to the eaters of it the delight of immortality', Theodore *Commentary,* 212. ܡܗܝܡܢܝܢ ܠܐ ܢܬܒ ܗܝ ܕܢܚ ܕܢܥܒܕ ܢܦܫ ܠܡܚܠ, Theodore, *Commentary,* 212.

attention. The verb ܕܪܥ *(dara ʿ)* derives of the noun ܕܪܥܐ *(drāʿāʾ)*, which means arm, shoulder, or sleeve; and it means to 'steer' or 'lead by the arm'.[19] This phrase is poetically poised to emphasize – again, in a way that the Syriac language is uniquely suited to communicate – the intimate education by mundane touch which is enveloped into and transfigured by the eucharistic liturgy.

While cognizant of the risk of constructing a theological edifice upon etymology, I suggest that the language of 'leading by the arm' in connection with the eucharistic bread highlights and honours the embodied education of the senses by touch, emblematized here in the mundane 'suitability' of bread to our material need for sustenance. This is a tactile education, and it echoes the *mathesis* that I discussed in Chapter Two: the earthy, hands-on knowledge of the *autourgos* and the *rusticus*. In a way, we could say that the earthly pedagogical relationship between humanity and bread – the emblem of food as such[20] – brings to light the order of creation whereby humble matter can *lead* the body and the soul, to a certain extent, along the way to God – an education by earthly shadows of heavenly realities. The epiclesis calls upon the Holy Spirit who empowers this mundane leading to move beyond the propaedeutic into the consummatory, to the 'assuming of immortality'.

What we find in Theodore, then, is the suggestion that the things we learn from earthly bread about earthly life – in the deep, intuitive familiarity with our ceaseless biological dependence upon the touch and taste of bread – instruct us concerning the life of heaven where immortal life is an eternal and immediate participation in God. We should note that in the

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[19] J. Payne Smith, C*ompendious Syriac Dictionary,* 98. In addition to 'steer' and 'lead', ܕܪܥ is also used metaphorically for 'rule'.

[20] See Edward Ullendorf on the Semitic root *lḥm*: 'The Contribution of South Semitics to Hebrew Lexicography', *Vetus Testamentum* vol. 6 iss. 1, (Leiden: Brill, 1956). Ullendorf argues, 'Hebrew *leḥem* 'bread', Arabic *laḥm* 'meat', should be placed together with Ethiopic *lahm* 'cow'. Thus the root *lhm* expressed in Semitic simply the staple-diet and would, therefore, vary in the different regions. In Ugaritic the verb *lḥm* is 'to eat' and the noun may possibly signify nothing more definite than 'food' in general. In the South Arabian language of the island of Soqotra *leḥem* means 'fish'.' Ullendorf helps us consider that *lḥm* can draw the hearer to the fundamentals of life and the fundamentals of reality.

quotation from Theodore introduced at the beginning of this section, in which he proposes to 'draw' his hearers to the nourishment of a fitting food, the verb that is used is ܩܪܒ *(qareb),* which, in the *Pael* form (as it is in this quotation), means to bring near.[21] Thus, the mystagogue draws the neophyte near to the food of immortality by his teaching; but the bread, as pedagogue in its own way, *manuducts* (leads by the hand) the neophytes to the assumption of eternal life.[22]

This is a lesson learned in the trenches of biological necessity, but which bears the seeds of continuity with beatitude. The eucharistic bread's epicletic capacity to 'lead us to assume immortality', is reminiscent of Cyril's language of the oil as teacher, and of the subtle degree of agency that I suggested was present in his teaching. The bread, like the oil, is a classical teacher who walks alongside and leads the disciple through a *mathesis* of touch (as eating); an education by materiality. The 'fittingness' of bread is the lesson learned in the itinerary traced through nutritive necessity.[23] But Theodore's mention of the Holy Spirit and the epiclesis which capacitates the bread beyond its nature reflects a beautiful convergence of the bread's indigenous (though divinely ordained) material suitability to physical life, and its transfigured empowerment. The first is not thrown away to make space for the second but is enfolded and fulfilled in it.

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[21] Theodore, *Commentary,* 202. 'I am contemplating to draw you…', ܚܫܒ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܩܪܒܟܘܢ. In the Peal, ܩܪܒ can also mean to touch. Interestingly, ܩܪܒ is also strongly associated with worship and ritual, as its verbal use can also mean 'to offer' as a sacrifice, or to offer the eucharistic oblation. The noun form, ܩܘܪܒܢܐ *qúrbānā,* means 'offering' and is the Syriac word for the Mass.

[22] My argument here has been significantly formed by Peter Candler's presentation of rhetoric as 'manuduction' in his *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or reading Scripture together on the path to God,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). I think Candler's recovery of a medieval account of theology, reading, and education in terms of 'leading by the hand' (manuduction), and the formation of the soul along an 'itinerary' toward participation in the divine, can also be fruitfully applied to the mystagogical sense of the pedagogy of nature and the pedagogy of mystagogical catechesis. I think that the Syriac translator's use of ܕܪܥ *(dara')* is beautifully commensurate with Candler's thesis, even though Theodore is discussing the eucharist's 'leading' and Candler medieval theology's 'manuduction' of the soul toward God.

[23] Candler argues that Christian texts, such as Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, in their very form and sequence, draw the listener or reader along an 'itinerary' of return: 'texts are organized as structures for the manuduction ("leading-by-the-hand") of readers along an itinerary of exit and return from creation to eschatological beatitude.' Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction,* 5. I argue that nature also, in a shadowy way, draws our nature to 'traverse a certain itinerary' (as Candler quotes from Pierre Hadot), and that mystagogy intuits and adverts to this manuduction.

1.2 The second: fitting the true birth

From this first nutritive fittingness, Theodore says that the eucharistic bread is also fitting, *lāḥmā*, to the 'next world' (ܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܬܝܕ *ʿālmā d'ʿātíd*), or 'the age to come':

> When we shall have received the true birth through the resurrection, you will receive another food that cannot be described by words, and you will then be clearly fed by the grace of the Spirit whereby you will remain immortal in your bodies and immutable in your souls. It is a food such as this that is suitable [ܠܐܚܡܐ, *lāḥmā*] to that birth.[24]

Here we find two seemingly separate birth-food structures: the earthly pattern of birth and food, and now the heavenly pattern of 'true birth' and the 'other' (ܐܚܪܬܐ, *aḥrātā*) food of the grace of the Holy Spirit. It appears, at first glance, that the grace of the Holy Spirit *alone* is the nourishment which 'fits' the life of immortality and immutability, as Theodore says distinctly that it is the grace of the Spirit 'whereby' (ܕܡܢܗ *d'meneh,* lit. 'that from it') 'you will remain immortal'. But, as I argued in Chapter Three, the interpenetration of the first and the second 'age' (the two katastaseis) is ever-present in Theodore's sacramental theology. And this interpenetration appears in the space of symbol, or *ṭúpsāʾ*.[25] Thus Theodore continues:

> And because we are born now symbolically [ܒܛܘܦܣܐ *b' ṭúpsā*] through baptism, in the hope of that other birth which we are expecting, we receive at present, in form of an earnest, the firstfruits of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which will then be given to us, as we expect to receive it fully in the next world through the resurrection. It is only after its reception that we hope to become immortal and immutable, and it behoves us now to eat symbolically [ܕܒܛܘܦܣܐ *dab' ṭúpseʾ*, lit. 'that by symbols'], by the grace of the Holy Spirit, a food suitable [ܕܠܐܚܡܐ, *d'lāḥmā*] to the present life.[26]

Thus, we see that to eat 'by symbol' is to partake of 'firstfruits'. The earthly fittingnesses still obtain: we eat a 'food suitable to the present life', yet the heavenly things appear clothed in these very features. Engaging with the world in the space of symbol is to participate in the coincidence of earthly and heavenly fittingnesses.

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[24] Theodore, *Commentary*, 71, 206. 'a food suitable to that birth': ܣܝܒܪܬܐ ܠܐܚܡܐ ܠܗܘ ܡܘܠܕܐ, *saybarthā laḥmā l'hú mawlādā.*

[25] The Syriac transliteration of τυπος.

[26] Theodore, *Commentary,* 72, Syr. 206. 'a food suitable to the present life': ܕܒܣܝܒܪܬܐ ܕܠܐܚܡܐ ܠܗܠܝܢ ܚܝܐ, *dab'saybarthā d'laḥmā l'hālén ḥaye*.

Here, David Fagerberg's notion of 'eschatological estuary' is helpful to explain what we observe in Theodore:

> I propose that Christians live in an eschatological estuary. Actually, all human beings live under this ecology, not only Christians, because all humanity is being carried along the river of history toward the Divine Sea, but I single out the Church now because Christians are the people who are aware of what is causing the turbulence.[27]

Fagerberg's metaphor of an 'eschatological estuary', and later his metaphor of the 'sacramental eddy' to describe the character of the Church and her liturgy, aptly reflect what we find in Theodore's understanding of the sacraments – or, doing things 'by types' *b'ṭúpsā.* The sacraments appear as the eddies of the flow between 'this present life' and the 'next world'. What interests me here is what Theodore says 'it behoves us' to do *now* in the space of estuary and firstfruits: he says above that we are to eat the food suitable, *lāḥmā,* to *this life*. In the bread that fits *this* natural life, imbued with the grace of the Holy Spirit, one eats of and communes with that very meeting, or touch, between the two ages.

1.3 The third: Paschal and sacramental fittingness

As we continue in Theodore's eucharistic homily, we come to the Christological hinge between the two ages. For Theodore, the fittingnesses of this life participate in the advent of heavenly realities when they are engaged with sacramentally, (*b'ṭúpsā'*). The 'types' and sacraments only function as meeting and mingling places between earth and heaven because they are also types of Christ's passion. That is, when they are aligned to Christ's death – the Paschal aperture of the eschatological into the temporal – the logic of nature settles into the flow toward its *super*natural end. Theodore expresses this using the maternal and natal image of birth and food:

> God has so arranged it at the beginning, with the creatures, that every animal that brings forth possesses food suitable [ܨܒܬܐ ܕܠܚܡܐ *saybarthā d'lāḥmā'*] to those that are born of it… Indeed, it behoves us who have received a sacramental birth in the death of

[27] David Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World*: *On Mundane Liturgical Theology* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016), 30.

> Christ our Lord, to receive the sacramental food of immortality in this same death, and to feed ourselves in the future from where we had also received our birth… As we are sufficiently enabled to maintain ourselves in this life, and to remain in it by necessity through the suitable symbols [ܛܘܦܣܐ ܕܠܣܚܡܝܢ, *ṭúpseʾ d'laḥmín*] of that spiritual food which shall be ours, let us think in our mind that it is from this food that we are expecting to become immortal and remain forever.[28]

Theodore links baptism and eucharist together as participations in the generativity or fecundity of Christ's death: those who received a sacramental birth in His death are also nourished in His death. Theodore reads this by a maternal analogy; the body which gave us life, also feeds us. By 'this same death' resurrection comes to touch our nature, and upon it the immortal life is also nourished. Christ's Passion is the way by which immortality, and the order to which it belongs, is attached to and enters the order of finitude and mortality. It is the way by which the whole human nature comes to *belong* to the supernatural order: 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life' (John 6:54). Theodore goes on to say that the birth and food of resurrection are partaken of in the 'suitable symbols', literally the 'fitting types', of the sacraments. These 'suitable symbols' fit 'the spiritual food which shall be ours' and they also, as we saw above, fit 'this present life'. Thus, I argue that what Theodore means by 'suitable symbols' are those things whose indigenous mundane fittingness has been wedded to the eschatological, by means of the Christological, in the liturgy.

Theodore's discussion has moved from fitting food, *saybarthā d'lāḥmāʾ,* to fitting sacraments, *ṭúpseʾ d'laḥmín.* I suggest that the fittingness of the sacraments is also predicated upon their Christological conformity. The sacraments serve Christ's gift of uniting the orders of heaven and earth through both their mundane belonging and their imaging of His sacrifice. Theodore writes that, 'the death of Christ our Lord, when abolished by His resurrection, *showed us* the birth that will come to us in the next world'.[29] And the eucharist, by its typological

[28] Theodore, *Commentary,* 73-74. Syr. 208.
[29] Theodore, *Commentary,* 73, Syr. 208. Emphasis mine. 'showed to us': ܐܚܘ, from ܚܘܐ, to show, make manifest, declare, appear.

conformity to His death, participates in Christ's 'showing' or manifesting (ܚܘܐ, *ḥwaʾ*) of the 'next world' in the natural imaging of body and blood in the bread and wine and through the liturgical narration of the Passion in the anaphora. A sacrament becomes this locus of intersection between 'this present life' and the 'age to come' because it *fits* by liturgical likeness the image of the aperture, the death of Christ, while also fitting the basic material contingencies of the created order.

1.4 The aesthetics of fittingness

For Theodore, the Paschal mystery is the fulcrum of union between the two *ʿālmín* (ages), the earthly and eschatological; and a helpful way to understand this is in terms of aesthetics. The Christological heart of creation on the one hand, and the end of eschatological blessedness and union with God on the other, create what we can think of as a chiastic structure within which the fittingnesses that pertain to each realm flow. And, at their shared meeting in Christ, they mingle and pass into each other. And this is true only because of Christ's place as Lord of both orders, victor over their estrangement, and bond of their teleological communion. The crucial line in Theodore's eucharistic teaching that signals toward this Christological fulcrum is this: Theodore says, 'in His death He gave us the next world'.[30] And, in light of Theodore's teaching, I argue that in the eucharist we eat of Christ as Saviour *and* as this meeting place.

The eucharist, as 'suitable symbol' (*ṭúpsāʾ d'lāḥmāʾ*) of Christ's Body and Blood, fits by likeness in distinction, in a non-identical yet true participatory representation of Christ's sacrifice. For the eastern bishops, who place the consecratory emphasis upon the epiclesis, this effectual likeness is secured in the Holy Spirit's transfiguring descent upon the elements. The

[30] Theodore, *Commentary,* 74.

eucharist is attached by sacramental likeness to Christ the anchor, Who bears and underwrites the streams of fittingness between 'this present life' and 'the birth that will come to us'.

It is appropriate, I think, to speak of this Christological fulcrum in terms of poetry because the 'fittingnesses' we encounter in the mystagogies are not expressed in terms of instrumentality (convenience), but in a measure of aesthetics *(convenientia)*.[31] This is because the conveniences of nature, the rudimentary, earthly fittingnesses, are ordained at their heart toward union with God who is Beauty Itself. To 'need' food for continued existence, for instance, is a rudimentary form of love – of attraction to the goodness of being a 'living thing' (a *nephesh ḥayyah*)[32], of the attraction of existence because it is nothing other than participation in God the ground of being.[33] And when that need is read in light of the *end* of eternally subsisting on divine grace its beauty is unveiled and magnified.

The attractiveness of things 'fitting' – even things needful – can be spoken of in terms of aesthetics because they are met by the human creature in the sensible; and beauty pertains to the recognition of goodness in its apparition. Salvation is in this sense to be *beautified*, and not merely beatified, by tracks laid deep within creation and which pass through the door of Christ into eternal joy. God allures us by the attractions of earthly beauty, even the humble beauty of nutrition. The task of the mystagogue lies in the training of the attention and

[31] See Milbank and Pickstock's discussion of *convenientia* in Chapter three of *Truth in Aquinas,* 'Truth and Touch'. p. 61: 'This sense of *convenientia* hovers, therefore, between the necessitate and the arbitrary and as such… it is clearly an *aesthetic* notion, closely allied, for Aquinas, to terms like *proportio, harmonia, ordinatio…'*; p. 64: 'Because, for Aquinas, all our knowing is first in our sense, this means that we first encounter Christ in reported word and image concerning his physical manifestation, and yet more directly in our partaking of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. It is in this fashion that there is realized, for Aquinas, that aspect of *convenientia*, already mentioned, which is the instruction of our intellect in divine matters by our senses, to correct the turning of the intellect to sensory ends rather than divine ends after Adam.'

[32] Gen. 2:7.

[33] Eph. 5:29 'For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church'. See also Hans Jonas' description of life as 'a tendency in the depth of being' toward freedom, and freedom as the 'laying hold' of existence in the face of generalized and inevitable non-being. Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: toward a philosophical biology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, paperback ed. 2001), 4.

affections of our nature; in shepherding the senses and desires of his hearers, through the pedagogical and transfiguring touch of the liturgy which reveals their underlying logic and end.

1.5 The beauty and fittingness of liturgy

Theodore speaks not only of earthly, heavenly, and sacramental fittingness, but of liturgical fittingness as well. We find this in the repeated appearance of aesthetic vocabulary each time Theodore concludes what, given the greatness of the gift and the fittingness of the symbol, the worshiper must do – specifically in his constant refrain: 'it behoves us'.[34] He means by this: it is fitting, meet, becoming, or even beautiful, to participate in the sacraments. The idea of the beautiful fittingness of the liturgy, of course, appears explicitly in the anaphora itself in the response, 'it is meet and right so to do'. The Syriac of this phrase uses the words ܝܐ *(yāʾe)* and ܙܕܩ *(zādeq)* – it is fitting and right. *Yāʾe* is a term that refers to suitability, but not in cold utility. The fittingness implied in *yāʾe* is related to and expressed as beauty.[35] And when Theodore says of various parts of the liturgy, 'it behoves us', or 'rightly we do such and such', the vocabulary is similarly related to beauty: repeating ܝܐ *(yāʾe,* fitting, fair*)*, and also employing ܦܐ *(pāʾe,* proper, becoming*)*. I suggest that Theodore understands the liturgy as a discipline of beautification.

Liturgy is a mode of doing a thing – eating, for instance – that is *congruous* (another meaning of *lāḥmāʾ*) with the ontological and soteriological reality of the communion of creation and divinity in Christ. The fittingness and beauty of the sacrament, then, and the reason it 'behoves us' to partake in it, lies in its bearing of this convergence and its collusion with the

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[34] The phrase 'it behoves us' appears by three Syriac words: ܐܠܨ *(ālṣāʾ)*, 'necessary'; ܝܐ *(yāʾe),* 'meet' or 'fair'; and ܦܐ *(pāʾe),* 'proper' or 'becoming'. The occurrences of 'it behoves us' in Mingana's eucharistic homily are as follows – ܐܠܨ: pp. 72, 73, Syr. 206, 208. ܝܐ: p. 73, Syr. 209 ܝܐ is also the word for 'meet' in the liturgical response 'it is meet and right' which follows the Sursum Corda and Thanksgiving. ܦܐ: rt. ܦܐ, p. 74, Syr. 209. In intensive or causative conjugations (*Pael* and *Aphel*) ܦܐ means 'to adorn' and 'to beautify', and it often appears as a synonym for *laḥmā.*

[35] J. Payne Smith, *Compendious Syriac Lexicon,* 184. ܝܐ: fair, comely, becoming, seemly, suitable, meet, virtuous, noble, honourable.

Christological advent of consummation. This consummation and union is the object of deepest attraction for the creaturely order. In other words, it is the teleology of the liturgy that is beautiful. A sacrament is the *fitting* point of contact in 'this present life' with the mysterious reality of creation being wedded to God in Christ. Christians collude with the teleological force of beauty when they partake of the beautiful acts of liturgical celebration. And they profess their allegiance to the course of beauty when they say of these very acts of 'giving thanks' – for that is what eucharist means – it is 'meet and right so to do'.

2. The Anaphora: Touching Christ and Touching Heaven

I turn now to the divine capacitation of touch, to the transfiguring and empowering of our human capacities to embrace divinity and participate, as Theodore says 'sometime beforehand' in eschatological realities. This introduces the question of humanity being made into a thing that *can touch* and *be touched by* heaven, of our creaturely nature being capacitated *(chōrētikos)* or 'suited' *(lāḥmā)* to heavenly life and communion. Since immortality and partaking of the divine nature (2 Pe. 1:4) are outside of the humanity's 'proper' nature, this gift, therefore, comes by grace. I will speak of this transformation in terms of *being made fitting*. This section will focus on the mystagogues' teachings on the Sanctus and the Epiclesis and will explore two fitting-makings that emerge. The first appears in the relationship between the Eucharist and the Sanctus, and in the way that the Eucharist fits one to sing the heavenly song. The second fitting-making arises in relation to the epiclesis, and the way in which the epicletic *metabolē* (μεταβολή, μεταβάλλειν) of the elements, to use Cyril's language, is mirrored in the Holy Spirit's transfiguring touch upon the initiate.

2.1 Sanctus: The Seraphic Hymn

Both Cyril and Theodore tell the neophytes that when they sing the Sanctus they are joining the eternal heavenly liturgy of praise. As Cyril says:

> After this we make mention of heaven, and earth, and sea; of sun and moon; of the stars and all the creation, rational and irrational, visible and invisible; of Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Dominions, Principalities, Powers, Thrones; of the Cherubim with many faces: in effect repeating that call of David's, *Magnify the Lord with me.* We make mention also of the Seraphim, whom Esaias by the Holy Ghost beheld encircling the throne of God… who cried, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. For, for this cause rehearse we this confession of God, delivered down to us from the Seraphim, that we may join in Hymns with the hosts of the world above.[36]

We must note that the liturgical preface of the Anaphora, which Cyril merely summarizes with 'we make mention of…', includes a litany of creation, visible and invisible. Cyril's teaching on the Sanctus begins with his affirmation that all created natures are gathered in 'communion' *(koinonia)* in the 'super-cosmic' hymn: ὅπως κοινωνοὶ τῆς ὑμνῳδίας ταῖς ὑπερκοσμίος γενώμεθα στρατιαῖς.[37] This sense of an all-encompassing heavenly praise, into which all created natures are enveloped is also found in Theodore:

> It is necessary, therefore, that the priest also should, after having mentioned in this service the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, say: "Praise and adoration are offered by all creatures to Divine nature." He makes also mention of the Seraphim, as they are found in the Divine Book singing the praise which all of us who are present sing loudly in the Divine song which we recite, along with the invisible hosts, in order to serve God. We ought to think of them and to offer a thanksgiving that is equal to theirs.[38]

As both Cyril and Theodore say, at this point in the Anaphora, the worshippers, initiates and faithful together, sing the thrice-holy hymn here on earth, reproducing by mortal creaturely capacities the heavenly song of the Seraphim recorded in Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6:3). If we consider the Sanctus as heavenly participation, however, or as Cyril says 'joining the hymns of the hosts above', then the question of fitting-making presents itself. There is a mystery here. How *can* we sing this song? How can the song, in the mouths of creatures who are, in Theodore's language, mutable and mortal, be *congruous* or 'equal to' the song of the invisible hosts, or, for that matter, adequate to the divine object of praise? When Theodore says above

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[36] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments,* ed. F.L. Cross., trans. R.W Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1951), Mystagogical Catechesis 5.6, 73-74. Theodore similarly says that the priest makes mention of the Seraphim and 'other creatures', Theodore, *Commentary,* 100.
[37] Cyril, *MC* 5.6, 32.
[38] Theodore, *Commentary,* 101. Syr. 240.

that we ought to offer a thanksgiving that is 'equal to theirs', equal to the divine song sung by the invisible hosts, the vocabulary again relates to fittingness. The word here is ܫܘܝܐ *(šawyā),* which means to be even or equal, to agree with, to be worthy; it also appears in an alternate version of the liturgical response 'it is meet and right', ܫܘܐ ܘܙܕܩ (though not the one used by Theodore).[39] Thus, the question of being made-capable of a fitting or congruous praise arises.

In his discussion of the Sanctus, Theodore says that praise is due to the Lord God of Hosts by *all creatures* and that 'right praise consists in professing that all praises and glorifications are due to Him.'[40] He goes on to says that to name (*šmā*) the Lord 'Holy, Holy, Holy', and 'Lord God of Hosts', '*befits'* the nature of the Trinity: here *lāḥmā* is used to express the fittingness of the song and the appellation.[41] However, Theodore continues, the praise which fits the divine Godhead is beyond the capacities of creatures: 'and of all other services the present one, which consists in the commemoration of the grace which came to us and *which cannot be described by the creatures,* takes precedence'.[42] And yet the liturgy consists in this very commemoration and praise.

Here we are introduced to the paradoxical pair of ineffability and doxology which appears frequently throughout Theodore's mystagogy. His description of the anaphora above provides a prime example: the grace of salvation 'cannot be described by the creatures' and yet the commemoration of that very grace is the service which is called for (it 'takes precedence'). Theodore follows this with the assurance that, though it is of unspeakable greatness, 'we are supposed to perform this this fearful and ineffable service on earth'.[43] The entrance into, and

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[39] ܫܘܝܐ rt. ܫܘܐ, means to be even, equal, sufficient, to agree, to be worth, to deserve, to be deemed worthy; 'it is meet and right', ܫܘܐ ܘܙܕܩ, replaces *yāʾe* but retains *zādeq.*

[40] Theodore, *Commentary,* 100.

[41] Theodore, *Commentary,* Syr. 240. ܫܡܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܨ̈ܒܐܘܬ ܘܠܚܡ ܠܟܝܢܐ ܕܬܠܝܬܝܘܬܐ, *lit.* 'the name (ܫܡܐ) Lord of Sabaoth is fitting (ܠܚܡ) to the nature of the Trinity'. The thrice-holy part of the song reveals God as three Persons but one 'Lord', and *Sabaoth* reveals God as omnipotent, says Theodore, *Commentary,* 101.

[42] Theodore, *Commentary,* 100. Emphasis mine.

[43] Theodore, *Commentary,* 99. Mingana uses the word 'awe-inspiring', but 'fearful' renders the word ܕܚܝܠܬܐ more accurately.

capacity for, an impossible doxology is Paschal. This entrance takes the form of a sacramental representation of the 'grace which came to us' in Jesus Christ. By words, the liturgy recounts the story of redemption, and the body contributes its own 'fitting' or 'congruous' adoration with the bowing of the head:

> And we use the same song as the invisible hosts, in order to make manifest the great mercifulness which has been so unexpectedly poured out on us… on account of the greatness of the things that are taking place… we bow our heads both before and after we recite loudly the *Sanctus [qadiš]*, and make manifest this fear in a congruous way.'[44]

2.2 The flaming coal

The Christo-centric and Paschal shape and content of the eucharistic liturgy is what enables true participation in the heavenly praises that 'fit' the Godhead. Theodore suggests that receiving the eucharist, which is to receive Christ Himself, gives the capacity to sing the heavenly doxology. Said another way, the eucharist *fits us* to join the song that fits the divine nature. On this eucharistic capacitation for heavenly liturgy, Theodore dedicates two portions of his sixth homily to exegeting the vision from Isaiah 6 where the *Sanctus* originates. Theodore's first reference to the Isaianic vision appears when he introduces the Sanctus, and here he highlights Isaiah's acute perception of his *incongruity* with the scene and the song he encounters in the heavenly throne room.

> He fell upon his face and said: "Woe is me! I am wretched, and sorrowful, and a man, and have unclean lips and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Sabaoth," as if he were sorrowing in his heart for all human nature, for what we are and what we receive.[45]

Isaiah's lament concerning the unfitness of his own mouth is mapped onto the paradox of the liturgical invitation to join the Seraphic hymn. This paradox is gestured towards in Theodore's pair of 'what we are' and 'what we receive'. For Theodore, the mystery of salvation, or the

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[44] Theodore, *Commentary*, 102, Syr. 241. I have adjusted Mingana's translation slightly. ܒܒܪ̈ܬ ܩܠܐ ܕܝܢ ܕܚܝ̈ܠܘܬܐ ܠܐ ܡܬܚܙ̈ܝܢܝܬܐ ܡܫܬܡܫܝܢ ܠܡܫܘܕܥܘܬܐ ܕܪܒܘܬܐ ܕܪܚܡܢܘܬܐ ܗܕܐ ܕܠܐ ܣܒܪ ܠܗ ܐܫܬܦܥܬ ܥܠܝܢ. This sentence begins with a Syriac idiom, 'by the daughter of the call (pl.)', which I have translated as 'by the same song'. A 'congruous' awe or fear: ܘܠܐ, meet, fit, right, ought, due, proper.

[45] Theodore, *Commentary*, 101.

making-fitting of creatures to things inestimably beyond their nature, occupies a place of fundamental significance in his teaching.

Theodore's second appeal to the Isaiah vision comes after his discussion of the physical posture which is appropriate for receiving the eucharist and his warnings against receiving 'unworthily' (1 Cor. 11:29) through careless sinning.[46] And here we find the link between the eucharist and the Sanctus more explicitly expressed. At the end of his comments on worthiness, Theodore resumes his interpretation of Isaiah's vision, an interpretation which is unabashedly Christological.[47] Theodore turns to consider the fiery coal which the Seraph brings to cleanse Isaiah's lips (Isa. 6:6). He says that the coal corresponds to the eucharist. Just as the coal cleansed Isaiah's mouth, the neophytes' reception of the eucharist removes sin and guilt and fortifies the unworthy human nature: 'As the Seraph drew nigh, purified, and forgave all the sins of the prophet, so also we ought to believe that by participation in the holy Sacrament our trespasses will be completely wiped out'.[48] Theodore presents the eucharist as that which endows the communicants with the purity that underlies the capacity to sing of the divinely ineffable and the confidence to join the song that fits the Trinity.

In his presentation of the eucharist-Sanctus relationship, it seems that Theodore's sixth homily is, among other things, an exploration of the mystery of the fitting of human nature – inadequate by ontological quality and incapacitated by sin – to the gift of heavenly participation. This gift is not 'proper' to us, just as the song cannot be sung by mortal voices. *And yet*, as Theodore constantly repeats, 'it behoves us to do so'. Perhaps we can say that Theodore's final homily especially concerns itself with the eucharistic mystery of this '*and*

[46] Theodore, *Commentary,* 113-118. p.113 'By his looking downward he signifies that he is offering a congruous *[ܦܥܐ, po'e']* thing (to God) through adoration… and in the fact that both his hands are stretched out, he confesses the greatness of the gift which he is about to receive'.
[47] Theodore, *Commentary,* 118: 'the vision which he saw was a sign of the Economy of Christ our Lord, from which all the earth was about to be filled with Divine glory'.
[48] Theodore, *Commentary,* 119.

yet': the Paschal gift of communion with Christ and the super-natural capacity to sing the thrice-holy hymn. The eucharistic fitting-making that we find in Theodore presents the eucharist not only as a sacramental participation in Christ's sacrifice, but also as an entry into the life and unending praise of heaven.

For Theodore, Christ's place as 'firstborn from among the dead' (Col. 1:18) and giver of 'firstfruits' to humanity makes Him that very entry.[49] In the eucharist, we attach ourselves to Him. Thus, taking to the mouth the Body of the One who ascended into heaven transfigures the earthly human mouth, allowing it to begin to sing, even now, the eternal song. As such, the eucharist and its anaphoric liturgy are as eschatological as they are Christological – and eschatological *because* they are Christological.

2.3 An intelligence consonant with these sublime things

The mystagogue's aim, then, is to lead the neophyte to recognize and submit to the divine gift of being made-fitting to the eschatological *koinonia*. I return now to the quotation from Theodore that I highlighted in the Introduction regarding the 'sublime intelligence' that initiation commences. Theodore calls the neophytes to contemplate the gift of salvation by 'an intelligence consonant with these sublime things':

> Indeed, what can mortal words say that is worthy of immortal, heavenly and unspeakable things? It was necessary, however, to speak of them to your hearing, so that you might not remain completely ignorant of the greatness of the gift. It behoves you now to make use of an intelligence consonant with these sublime things of which you have been rendered worthy, and to think well, according to the measure of the greatness of a gift such as this, what we were and into what we have been transformed.[50]

The Syriac, rendered more literally, reads: 'it belongs to you, therefore, to employ a right mind (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܙܕܝܩ *reʿyānā d'zādeq*) which is equal to (ܫܘܝܐ rt. ܫܘܝ *šawyā*) these sublime things,

[49] Theodore, *Commentary,* 30: '[we] are now hastening to go to our firstfruits which were picked on our behalf and through which the Maker and the Lord of all gave us immortal life and a heavenly abode and conversation'; 82: 'These things, however, we expect to receive in reality through the resurrection at the time decreed by God, and now it is only by faith we draw nigh unto the firstfruits of these good things: to Christ our Lord and the high priest of things that belong to us'.
[50] Theodore, *Commentary,* 114-115.

and to think fittingly (ܬܬܚܫܒܘܢ ܠܐܗܡܝܬ *tetḥašbon lāḥmāʾít*) in proportion to the greatness of a gift such as this'.[51] It is this sublime intelligence that mystagogy seeks to educate; not by reason, but by conformation to Christ and embrace of Christ in the sacraments. In light of the liturgy and in service to it, the mystagogue shepherds the mind and body to 'think well' (here *lāḥmā* appears again, lit. 'to think fittingly') in accordance with the gift of being 'transformed' (ܫܢܐ, *šnā, to change*). For Theodore, any 'consonance' to the heavenly things, either in intelligence or sanctification, comes by Christ's victorious Passion, which humanity touches and joins herself to through partaking of His body and blood in the eucharist.

> We have acquired this hope from the Economy of Christ our Lord… [who] became the usherer of our participation in these great things. We strive, therefore, to partake of the Sacrament because we believe that through symbols, as through unspeakable signs, we possess, sometime beforehand, the realities themselves.[52]

The Syriac reads more literally 'we strive to mingle', or 'be kneaded up', with the Sacrament. Our tangible communion with the physicality of the eucharist is to commune with Christ Himself, the 'usherer' of divine ends. Sacraments then, are apertures of eschatological realities and by them the partaker is made capable of the advent of beatitude. The humble things of 'this present life' (the bread and wine) become 'unspeakable signs', Christ-shaped doors through which the partaker touches heaven and possesses 'sometime beforehand, the realities themselves'.

2.4 Epiclesis: The Spirit as Fitting-Maker

The mystagogues do not focus on an isolated 'moment' of consecration, though there are certainly portions of the Anaphora that are emphasized as intimately tied to the *metabolē-*

[51] Theodore, *Commentary,* Syr. 255.

[52] The elided text here offers a typical example of the Theodorean Christology that would become a source of controversy in the century after Theodore's death and which contributed to his posthumous anathematization as the ostensible 'father of Nestorianism': '… from the Economy of Christ our Lord, who was assumed from us. He was the first to receive this change, from Divine nature, and in this way He became to us the usherer…' Theodore, *Commentary,* 115.

sis of the elements into the Body and Blood of Christ.[53] The differences among our four mystagogues on the question of consecration, unsurprisingly, align along regional divisions. Ambrose in the west emphasizes the words of institution, while Chrysostom, Theodore, and Cyril focus on the epiclesis. What I am more concerned with in this discussion, however, is to explore the implicit analogical relationship between the transformation of the eucharistic elements and the transformation of those receiving the sacrament.[54] This is particularly present in Cyril's mystagogy. Cyril's discussion of the epiclesis and the power of the Holy Spirit to 'change' (μεταβάλλω) and 'make-holy' (ἁγιάζω) contains some of the most fruitful evidence of this parallel between eucharistic consecration and human sanctification, or *theōsis*.[55]

> Then having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual Hymns [the Sanctus], we call upon the merciful God to send forth His Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before Him; that He may make the Bread the Body of Christ, and the Wine the Blood of Christ; for whatsoever the Holy Ghost has touched, is sanctified and changed.[56]

In these lines, Cyril's immediate aim is simply that the neophyte communicants should have faith that the epicletic consecration has made Christ's Body and Blood truly present because the Holy Spirit has the power to sanctify and to change. But the final line hangs,

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[53] The question is of decidedly peripheral concern, though not irrelevant, within the mystagogue's overall project of sacramental pedagogy. A pedantry regarding the timing of consecration is not found in the fourth century in the same measure as in later centuries. Even Ambrose, who exhibits the most precision relative to the other three, is concerned over the truth of the consecration rather than its mechanics. For Ambrose, the bread and wine become Body and Blood by the *words* of Christ, that is, the institution narrative. He places the change here because, as he says, Christ's word is the power of creation. See Ambroise de Milan, *de Sacramentis.* 4.14, *SC* 25bis (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 108-110.

[54] Ambrose, for instance, placing the transformative emphasis upon the words of Christ, also reflects on the power of Christ's word to create, and *recreate*; that is, to make the communicant a 'new creation'. Ambrose, 'Sermons on the Sacraments', in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 4.14-4.16, 133: '[W]hen the moment comes for bringing the most holy sacrament into being, the priest does not use his own words any longer: he uses the words of Christ… What is this word of Christ? It is the word by which all things were made… He spoke and it was made, he commanded and it was created. You yourself were in existence, but you were a creature of the old order; after your consecration, you began to exist as a new creature'.

[55] Donna Hawk-Reinhard's examination of Cyril's notion of *koinōnia* throughout his catechetical (prebaptismal) lectures and the mystagogical homilies establishes the importance of *theōsis* in Cyril's sacramental pedagogy and also makes explicit the intimate link between the work (or touch) of the Holy Spirit and divinization. She points to a similar line in Cyril's *Catechesis* 4.16 concerning the Holy Spirit, where Cyril calls the Spirit 'the sanctifier and deifier of all'. Donna R. Hawk-Reinhard, 'Cyril of Jerusalem's Sacramental *Theōsis', Studia Patristica* LXVI: 2011, vol. 14, (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 254.

[56] Cyril, *MC* 5.7, 74. Gk., 32-33: Εἶτα ἁγιάσαντες ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τῶν πνευματικῶν τούτων ὕμνων παρακαλοῦμεν τὸν φιλάνθρωπον θεὸν τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἐξαποστεῖλαι ἐπὶ τὰ προκείμενα, ἵνα ποιήσῃ τὸν μὲν ἄρτον σῶμα Χριστοῦ, τὸν δέ οἶνον αἷμα Χριστοῦ. πάντως γάρ, οὗ ἂν ἐφάψηται τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, τοῦτο ἡγίασται καὶ μεταβέβληται.

rhetorically pregnant, and seems to press its implication: 'for *whatsoever* [πάντως] the Holy Ghost has touched, is sanctified and changed'.[57] I suggest that Cyril is inviting the initiates to consider that they, too, have been (and are) receiving the touch, ἔφαψις, of the Holy Spirit, and that this touch results in their own change, μεταβολή, and sanctification, ἁγιασμός.

Cyril implies that the touch of the Holy Spirit upon the communicants – and I suggest that this includes not only the baptismal anointings, but also the touch, as formation, effected in initiation as a whole – is analogous to the epicletic touch of eucharistic consecration. I suggest, also, that the way to understand the touch of the Holy Spirit, who changes and sanctifies, is to consider it in terms of *fittingness.* We see this especially when Cyril refers again to the Holy Spirit in his explanation of the presentation of the eucharistic elements and the priest's declaration, 'holy things to holy men' – or, 'holy things for the holies', τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις:

> After this the Priest says, *holy things to holy men*. Holy are the gifts presented, since they have been visited by the Holy Ghost; holy are you also, having been vouchsafed by the Holy Ghost; the holy things therefore correspond to the holy persons. Then you say, *one is holy, one is the Lord, Jesus Christ*. For truly One is holy, by nature holy; we, too, are holy, not by nature, but by participation, and discipline and prayer.[58]

Here, the Holy Spirit is the 'worthy-maker' of the Christian: the initiates are καταξιωθέντες – the 'having been made worthy', from ἄξιος, 'worthy' – which R.W. Church has here rendered with 'vouchsafed'. Made worthy by the Holy Spirit, the initiates also become creatures *to whom*

[57] This is especially so since Cyril ends his short comment on the epiclesis here. He does not explain further what he means, and simply proceeds in his explanation of the parts of the eucharistic prayer that follow – the intercessions and the Lord's Prayer.

[58] Cyril, *MC* 5.19, 78. Gk., 37: Μετὰ ταῦτα λέγει ὁ ἱερεύς τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις. ἅγια τὰ προκείμενα, ἐπιφοίτησιν δεξάμενα ἁγίου πνεύματος. ἅγιοι καὶ ὑμεῖς, πνεύματος ἁγίου καταξιωθέντες. Τὰ ἅγια οὖν τοῖς ἁγίοις κατάλληλα. Εἶτα ὑμεῖς λέγετε εἷς ἅγιος, εἷς κύριος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. ἀληθῶς γὰρ ἅγιος, φύσει ἅγιος. ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ ἅγιοι, ἀλλ'οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ μετοχῇ καὶ ἀσκήσει καὶ εὐχῇ. I have altered Church's translation of the final sentence (He added 'only' – 'only by participation, etc.').

the holy things of the eucharist 'correspond', κατάλληλα. It must be noted that both ἄξιος and κατάλληλος are terms of fittingness.[59]

The congregation's response to the priest's 'holy things to the holies' is part of a liturgical dialectic that finesses the logic of Christian fittingness; one which is fundamentally Christo-centric. The congregation has just sung the Seraphic hymn, naming God (fittingly, as Theodore has said) 'holy'. After the consecration, the elements, by the touch of the Holy Spirit, become the Body and Blood of Christ – who is Himself the Holy One of God. And so these gifts mediate His presence and appropriately share His name, becoming the 'holy things', *ta hagia*. The priest presents the elements to the Faithful and informs them that they, similarly, are now the 'holy ones', *hagioi*. In other words, they have a relation of belonging and fitting-together – as Cyril says, 'correspondence' – by their shared (though not identical) conformity to Christ. The *hagioi*, however, call back to the priest, acknowledging immediately the One to whom this name properly belongs: 'One is holy, one is the Lord, Jesus Christ'. It is a Christological confession, certainly, but it is also a semantic refusal; an anthropological confession of the seeming incongruity or un-fittingness of the human subject to this predicate. But, in his explanation of this liturgical dialogue, Cyril shepherds the laity back toward the impossible and audacious association. He proceeds to explain the mysterious gift of inclusion in the divine appellation of 'holy'; or, better, the being *made fitting to it*, and the gift of becoming the ones to whom Christ Himself fits or 'corresponds' in the eucharist. As Cyril says: Christ is truly (ἀληθῶς) holy, by nature holy (φύσει ἅγιος); but He gives by the Holy Spirit the capacity to be made what He is by nature through participation, discipline, and prayer: μετοχῇ καὶ ἀσκήσει καὶ εὐχῇ.

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[59] See LSJ, s.v. "ἄξιος," 1. (lit.) *weighing as much as, of the same value;* 3. *worthy, goodly*; 4. *deserved, meet, due, fit.* See also Lampe, s.v. "ἄξιος," 1. *meet, proper;* ['it is meet and right'] liturg., cf. Hipp.*ap.trad.*4.3; Seraph.*euch.*13.1; *Lit.*ap.*Const.App.*8.12.5; ἄξιος και δίκαιον... *Lit.Jac.*(p.198.18). LSJ, s.v. "κατάλληλ-ος," 1. *correspondent*; 2. *appropriate;* 3. Gramm., *rightly constructed, congruent, well-arranged, in good order.* Also, Lampe, s.v. "κατάλληλος," 1. c*o-related,* of Trin.

I will consider these three instrumental datives – Cyril's list of three means of sharing in divine holiness – in turn.

Metochē, participation

It will take us too far off course to offer an exhaustive account of participation, but I will offer the following reflection on the appearance of *metochē* here. *Metochē* is one of three Greek words for participation that feature in patristic works (especially in those drawing from Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions); the other two being *methexis* and *metousia*.[60] *Metochē's* literal and ordinary meaning is 'to share' or 'hold in common'.[61] In Platonic and Plotinian sources it is used in a metaphysical sense to express the relationship between things and Ideas, and how the lower hierarchies participate in higher realities.[62] In the New Testament, it appears prominently in Hebrews, where its philosophical undertones come to the surface to a greater extent than elsewhere, in the language of 'participation in Christ'.[63] It also appears in 2 Cor. 6:14, "what have righteousness and lawlessness in common?". Said another way, what likeness or association do they share? Do they share any resemblance, any similitude that marks a relation or logic of belonging? Thus, in Cyril, those made worthy, made into the holy ones by the Spirit, have the holiness that belongs properly to Christ *shared* with them. They are brought to communion *and* commonality with Christ. *Metochē* refers to an order of belonging, almost familial, and it implies a kind of likeness or common logic that betokens that belonging. The

[60] Chrysostom, similarly, employs μετοχή: e.g., Jean Chrysostome, *Huit Catecheses Baptismales, SC* 50 ed. A. Wenger, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1957), 6.15, 222. Theodore's Syriac uses ܫܘܬܦܘܬܐ *(šawtāpútā)*; J. Payne Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*: ܫܘܬܦܘܬܐ, participation, partnership, fellowship, communion… intercourse, familiarity, conjugal intercourse, marriage. I include these latter meanings to highlight how the notions of participation employed in the mystagogies contain, if only of slight and etymological measure, a nuptial resonance.

[61] BDAG, 4th ed., s.v. "μετοχή," 570. Lampe notes that the patristic consensus settled on the opinion that *metochē* was inappropriate when speaking of the consubstantiality of the Trinity, but appropriate for speaking of human 'sharing' in the divine life. Lampe *Patristic Lexicon,* 866.

[62] ἔχειν, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. II, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1964) 830-832.

[63] e.g., Heb. 3:14 μέτοχοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, also 3:1, 6:4, 12:8.

witness of the participation, or *metochē,* between two things is the manifestation of the *logic* of their union. In Cyril, the name for the logic of our participation in Christ is *holiness.*

We see above that participation in Christ is made possible through the Spirit's work as worthy-maker: 'holy are you also, having been made worthy by the Holy Ghost'. Indeed, *axios* (worthy) is also a term of likeness, correspondence, and measure. In its economic usage, *axios* refers to a thing being of equal or proportional value to something else. To be made worthy is to be made-like according to some measure. And so, we could say that the Holy Spirit's touch, which brings participation in Christ, involves the Spirit's *fitting* of humanity to share in Christ's dignity and name. Turning to Cyril's language, I suggest that the Spirit's role in initiation is to make human nature *correspondable* to the divine.

Askēsis, discipline

The a*skēsis* that Cyril speaks of, through which the neophyte participates in sanctification, is the creaturely, human side of the Holy Spirit's gift of fitting-making. We must consider that the latter two instrumental datives, *askēsei* and *euchē,* involve human agency; and so, indeed, what we are talking about is the theological notion of *synergy.* The proportional creaturely conformity to Christ is not simply an extrinsic work of transfiguration by the Holy Spirit (to be acted *upon*); it must also be appropriated and *instantiated* in discipline and prayer (though these, in the end, are derived powers themselves, finding their origin in God). Chrysostom highlights the synergistic aspect of *askēsis* when he speaks of the discipline of the baptised:

> He has commanded you, too, to do this as far as you can in the things which have been entrusted to you – to increase the sanctity which you have received, to render more shining your justice after the bath, and to make your grace more lustrous.[64]

[64] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions,* trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), homily 12, *Montfaucon* 2.8, 175.

The 'increase' of sanctity does not suggest that the first gift was incomplete or partial – but reflects that God is infinite. To ever grow in His likeness, to become 'the holy ones' in name and also in time, space, and act are part of the baptismal calling of *askesis* – a discipline, a way of life. We do not of ourselves *add* to God's gift, or increase in an arithmetic way; but the human creature, who partakes of matter, intelligence, and will, must receive, enact, and incarnate the gift of fitting-making 'in the things entrusted' to them.

In addition to this, *askēsis* can be understood as a participation in cosmic consummation. Our participation in the course of restoration and transfiguration, by the powers 'entrusted' to our nature, is done as emblem and emissary of all rungs of created hierarchy. Theodore discusses the notion of humanity as 'bond' of the universe. That is, the idea that humanity stands uniquely as the microcosmic creature in whom all creatures are represented and 'gathered'. In his commentary on the I*mago Dei,* Theodore argues that God's design in creating Man was to gather all diverse created natures in 'one bond': 'For God willed to gather the whole of creation into one so that, although constituted of diverse natures, it might be joined together by one bond. He created this living being which is related by its nature to the whole of creation.'[65] I suggest that in the a*skēsis* of the baptised, in their incarnating of the Holy Spirit's fitting-making, all of creation is gathered into the adoration of the 'One Holy, one Lord, Jesus Christ'.[66]

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[65] 'For [God] fashioned Adam with an invisible, rational, and immortal soul and a visible and mortal body. By the former, he is like unto invisible natures; and by the latter, he is akin to visible beings. For God willed to gather the whole of creation into one (*Nam quum Deus vellet totam creationem colligere in unum quoddam ita ut quanquam e diversis naturis constituta uno vinculo contineatur,* ܟܕ ܓܝܪ ܨܒܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܠܟܠܗ ܒܪܝܬܐ ܢܟܢܫ ܠܚܕ ܐܝܟ ܡܕܡ) so that, although constituted of diverse natures, it might be joined together by one bond (ܚܕ ܐܣܘܪܐ ܢܬܬܚܒܫ). He [then] created this living being which is related by its nature to the whole of creation *(quod natura sua cum tota creatione cognatum)* (ܕܒܟܝܢܗ ܚܝܢܐ ܠܟܠܗ ܒܪܝܬܐ). He created Adam to be this bond.' Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Fragmenta Commentarii in Genesim* in *Theodori Mopsuesteni Fragmenta Syriaca,* ed. E. Sachau (Leipzig: G. Engelmann, 1869) Latin, 5; Syriac, 7. English: Frederick G. McLeod, S.J., "Theodore of Mopsuestia Revisited", *Theological Studies.* Vol. 61. Issue 3, (Sept. 2000), 457.

[66] McLeod also comments on the 'quasi-cultic' role of humanity found in Theodore's commentary on Genesis, in which Theodore claims that 'it is in him that all beings are gathered together, so that they might draw near to God through him as an image'. McLeod, op. cit. Sachau, *Fragmenta Syriaca*, Latin, 15; Syriac, 24-25.

Returning to the parallel consecrations of the eucharist and the communicant, we could say that *askesis* parallels the eucharistic epiclesis. The bread and wine become full of Christ (*chōrētikos theou* in a eucharistic sense) within an epicletic instant because they are not volitional creatures. But humans, uniquely occupying the space of, as Theodore calls it, the 'one bond', composed of spirit and dust, being creatures endowed with free will, we come to communion with God through the mysterious mixture of gift and growth. The coming together of gift and growth is the space of a*skēsis.* We are creatures who must ingrain in our bodies, minds, and souls the salvific pattern of eucharistic consecration by a process of apprehension and submission to the repeated and inter-echoing similitudes of divine truth, in creation and in the liturgy. This ingraining is the education of the soul, the body, and the will. We learn a familiarity with salvation and ascent in the liturgy, and this arms us for the work of discipline that further softens our nature to the influence of grace. By this grace and the a*skēsis* which softens to Christo-conformity, we submit to the Holy Spirit's transfiguring touch in the precious particularity of the time, space, and being entrusted to us.

Euchē, prayer

While the word *euchē* has a number of meanings surrounding 'prayer' in general, the foremost explicit meaning in Cyril's quotation is the Lord's Prayer, as that is the topic of the intervening sections between the two sections of his homily cited above.[67] Cyril interprets the Prayer line by line, but for the present discussion I will simply comment on his explanation of 'Our Father, which art in heaven', as his interpretation contributes to the present question of participating in Christ's holiness by the third instrumental dative, prayer. Cyril says,

[67] Cyril speaks in this section of the prayers for the Church, for the world, and for the departed as *προσευχή* (cf. *MC* 5.10), which is the common New Testament term for prayer, and he follows by referring to the Lord's Prayer as *ἐυχή* (*MC* 5.11). As such, a focus on Cyril's comments on the Lord's prayer to guide our question concerning prayer is warranted.

> O most surpassing loving-kindness of God! On them who revolted from Him and were in the very extreme of misery He has bestowed such complete forgiveness of their evil deeds, and so great participation of grace, as that they should even call Him Father. 'Our Father, which art in heaven'; they also are a heaven who bear the image of the heavenly, in whom God is, dwelling and walking in them [Rom. 2:24].[68]

There are two points I wish highlight here. The first is how Cyril says that God has bestowed upon us miserable rebels the forgiveness of sin (lit. *amnēstia,* forgetting or amnesty) and participation in grace (καὶ χάριτος μετουσίαν), and that these graces have capacitated humanity to address God with familial intimacy, addressing Him as 'Father'. The 'participation' here is *metousia,* one of the three 'participation' words noted above. The second point of interest is Cyril's comments on '…which art in heaven'. Cyril draws a parallel between 'heaven' as the dwelling place of God, as in the Lord's Prayer, and the initiated who *are* a heaven, as they become 'image-bearers' (rather, 'icon' bearers) of heavenly things: ὁι τὴν τοῦ ἐπουρανίου φοροῦντες εἰκόνα. Their iconicity, shorthand for a kind of likeness and presence, is both cause and result of their becoming those in whom God dwells and walks.

The phrases *charitos metousia* (participation in grace) and *forountes eikona* (icon-bearing), place us again in the register of *likeness* and *fittingness.* The initiated, who have been made worthy and permitted to take part in the things reserved for the Faithful, conform to the substance of grace by partaking of it. *Met-ousia* can be rendered literally as 'with-substance' or 'after the substance' of grace; and so we can think of prayer in this case as being fitted by the Holy Spirit *after the pattern of divine grace*.[69] These conformations are undeniably Christological. Conforming to Christ is the substance of heavenly image-bearing. And by Christ's salvific work to remove sin, and their own a*skēsis* of prayer, the baptised have their nature transfigured along the contours of grace. Thus the one praying, and praying the Lord's

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[68] Cyril, *MC* 5.11, 75.

[69] We should take note that the initiated have *met-ousia* with grace, *charitos*, and not with Godhead. Perhaps this reflects the patristic distinction between divine essence and divine energies, and the assertion that divinized humanity participates only in God's energies. Of course, there is too little to construct more than a vague inference in Cyril's text here.

Prayer with the Faithful, moves in ascending likeness to Christ, the One who is Holy. By prayer we also become a place *fitting*, or capacious, capable, of being indwelt by God.

In his own way, through what I have explored concerning these three instrumental datives, Cyril has also answered the question implied by Theodore: how can mortals sing the eternal praise of God? Cyril's answer is epicletic. He has called the Holy Spirit the worthy-maker and the toucher and changer of natures. And he has said, in his explanation of the presentation of the 'holy things to the holies', that the baptised are joined to the holiness which belongs to Christ by nature through sharing in likeness, *askesis*, and prayer. Theodore also, like Cyril, is drawn to speak of the work and power of the Holy Spirit in relation to the liturgical call of 'the holy thing to the holies'. Echoing the 'right and fit' from the opening of the Anaphora, he suggests that the communicants are themselves being made right and fit 'from the grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit':

> In this way it is right and fit also for you, who were born in baptism of the grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit, and who have received holiness therefrom, to partake of a food similar to it, from the grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit, in order to confirm and increase the holiness which has been vouchsafed unto you, and perfect the expected benefits which will come to us in the next world and through which all of us will be wholly holy. It is in this meaning that we must understand the sentence "the holy thing to the holies"; and it is with these things that we draw nigh unto the greatness of this communion.[70]

I suggest that Theodore and Cyril share a similar sense of the Holy Spirit as fitting-maker, and as the One who accompanies and capacitates the divine work of holy-making, incarnating the fullness of the gift of *theosis,* in the ordinary lives of the baptised. As Theodore says, through partaking of the eucharist, which bears 'the grace and coming of the Holy Spirit', the communicants are 'confirmed' and 'increase' in holiness, and are moved along the way of

[70] Theodore, *Commentary,* 109.

'perfection' toward eschatological beatitude. The Holy Spirit touches humanity to make us, like the praises of the Godhead, 'meet and right'.

3. The embrace of Christ: nuptiality and nearness

> Come, then, let me talk to you as I would speak to a bride about to be led into the holy nuptial chamber. Let me give to you, too, a glimpse of the Bridegroom's exceeding wealth and of the ineffable kindness which He shows to His bride.[71]
> Chrysostom, *Baptismal Homily* 1.3

I turn now to consider the eucharistic 'embrace of Christ' for which we are made capable. In the mystagogues' homilies on the eucharist, and in Ambrose's in particular, nuptiality features as a privileged source of interpretive imagery. Rhetorical and pedagogical appeals to images of wedding processions, the bridal chamber, and the wedding feast are employed by Cyril, Ambrose, and Chrysostom. The immediate, catechetical purpose of their nuptial interpretations of the eucharist is simply to convey a joyous assurance of the true presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the sacrament.[72] Weddings, after all, are about union. And, for the mystagogues who engage in nuptial exegesis, the eucharist is the nuptials of the soul as Bride to Christ the Bridegroom. Nuptiality is used to express a doctrinal and an affective confidence in Christ's true presence and also in the advent of and participation in eschatological consummation.[73]

The imagery commends to the neophytes this confidence in Christ's arrival and the joy of consummation; but it is more than that. I suggest that beneath these nuptial readings, the mystagogies also imply a sense of a more fundamental, ontological consummation. Being wedded to Christ the Bridegroom is the end of the human creature. The nuptiality of the

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[71] Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, homily 1, *Stavronikita* 1.3, 23-24.

[72] The mystagogues engage in no discussion of the metaphysical mechanics of real presence, and the four mystagogues differ among themselves as to whether a 'transformation' *(metaballein*, Cyril, *MC* 5.7, Gk.,33) of the elements occurs at the point of the institution narrative or at the epiclesis. The neophyte's acquisition of conceptual precision on this point seems to be of significantly less importance to the mystagogues than their entrance into the celebration of consummation, eschatological participation, and joy.

[73] Not locality, but presence nonetheless. It is not 'fetishizable *arrival'* as Pickstock warns of in *Truth in Aquinas,* 92: 'according to patristic negotiations of the word *musterion*, [it] implies a positive but not fetishizable *arrival,* in which signs essentially participate, but which they cannot exhaust'.

eucharist images the true and transfigured end of humanity and the road of rightly ordered and baptised desire that leads us there, to intimacy and utter joy. Thus, in the following sections, I will propose the nuptial eucharist, sitting as it does at the culmination of initiation, as the sacramental consummation of 'all our power' – powers of touching, perceiving, knowing, and loving. In this I will focus primarily on Ambrose's homilies, as he offers the most sustained nuptial exegesis, weaving his explanation of the eucharist closely with a mystical reading of Song of Songs. Interestingly, his reading of Song of Songs in *de mysteriis* occurs between the conclusion of his baptismal teachings (*de myst.* 6) and his more sequential explanation of components of the eucharistic rite (*de myst.* 8), in what NPNF sections together as 'chapter 7'. In a sense, then, in this transitional chapter of his homily Ambrose takes the time to *theologize the interval* between font and altar, such that the procession of the baptised toward the eucharist occasions what is ostensibly a theology of desire.

3.1 Children of the bridechamber

Before turning to Ambrose, however, I begin with Cyril's brief employment of nuptial exegesis, as his use of the phrase 'children of the bridechamber' clearly signals the relation between the eucharist and consummation. Cyril displays an unabashed confidence in, and expectation of, Christ's self-gifted presence at the 'wedding' of the eucharist:

> He once turned water into wine, in Cana of Galilee, at His own will, and is it incredible that He should have turned wine into blood? That wonderful work He miraculously wrought, when called to an earthly marriage; and shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of His Body and Blood on the children of the bridechamber?[74]

The newly baptised progress from the font to partake of the eucharist for the first time, and Cyril calls these new communicants the 'sons' or 'children of the bridechamber', τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ νυμφῶνος. This is the same Greek idiom that appears in the synoptic gospels when Jesus is

[74] Cyril, *MC* 4.2, 68. 'and shall he not much rather be acknowledged…' Greek, 26-27: Καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ νυμφῶνος οὐ πολλῷ μᾶλλον τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ και τοῦ αἵματος δωρησάμενος ὁμολογηθήται.

questioned about fasting (Matt. 9:15, Mark 2:19, Luke 5:34). In all three accounts, Jesus replies that there is no sense in the 'guests' or 'friends' of the bridegroom (lit. *sons of the bridechamber, οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος*) fasting when He is present with them. Cyril's use of this term alludes to Christ's answer and the affirmation that He is the consummation of human hope and longing. The bridechamber is the emblem, not simply of presence, but of consummation. All creaturely searching, anticipating, and reaching for the truly good and truly beautiful come to rest here, alighting on Him. In its nuptiality, the eucharist rehearses the resolution of creaturehood. The Church at liturgy becomes this chamber. And, though Cyril may have intended in his employment of the phrase only to anchor his eucharistic teaching to the Scriptures, I suggest that we can extend the imagery and say that the partakers of the eucharist indeed become the *children* of the bridechamber. That is, they become heirs and emissaries of the true and fundamental consummation given by and flowing to Christ; heirs and emissaries of consummation as such. Their family mark is the sweetness of the *nymphōnos*.

Cyril says above that the gift to these children of the bridechamber is not merely or inertly Christ's notional presence in the elements, but it is the 'fruition' – ἀπόλαυσις, the act of enjoyment and pleasure – of His Body.[75] The nuptial analogy is neither incidental nor an arbitrary, instrumental convenience. The argument is, in fact, flipped around: Christ's presence is assured *because* the Eucharist is nuptial. 'Earthly marriage', which Christ honoured and adorned with the magnification of its sweetness and celebration through the miracle of water into wine, derives of the eternal form of nuptiality. The communicants meet Christ as Bridegroom, yes, but they also engage in the sacraments as the resting place of all desire. All generations of believers are the 'children' of this fundamental union. The difference between

[75] LSJ, s.v. "ἀπό-λαυσις, εως," Note that ἀπόλαυσις tends to refer to bodily or earthly pleasure. In *Nic. Eth.*, for instance, Aristotle speaks of the σωματικὰς ἀπολαύσεις, pleasures of the body. Similarly, in *Politics*, he warns against 'bodily pleasures', pursued as public debauchery, as an ethical, and thus political, weakness in the figure of the tyrant.

this reading of Cyril and one which reads his analogy in terms of rhetorical instrumentality is the difference between saying, 'we believe in Christ's presence, and nuptiality is one way we can speak of it' and 'this *is* a wedding, *the antitupos* of weddings, so we acknowledge that Christ is, by definition, present and enjoyed'.

Chrysostom, similarly, speaks plainly of joy and fruition: 'This is a time for joy and gladness of the spirit. Behold, the days of our longing and love, the days of your spiritual marriage, are close at hand' (*Stav.*1.1), and 'Beloved, you are invited to a marriage' (*Montf.* 2.18). The typological rehearsals of divine presence and communion, imaged and acted out in earthly marriage, culminate and derive their shape and logic from the *antitupos* of nuptiality in the eucharist. Here we can begin to see that the eucharistic enjoyment of Christ's body (ἀπόλαυσις τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ), which appears in the mystagogies as nuptial love and festal eating, is the 'point' of initiation. The joy of His presence is joy at being wedded to unconquerable Life itself. Aidan Kavanagh captures beautifully the theme of 'festal' joy and consummation when he writes:

> Due to its festive nature… liturgy is not ordinary, utilitarian, or for something. Christians do not engage in liturgical worship to get grace or inspiration, to indulge in creativity, to become educated in matters ecclesiastical. Nor do they elaborate rite as a style of life to house nostalgia, to provide rest, to proffer moral uplift, or to supply aesthetic experience. While any or all of these results may accrue to an individual or an assembly as by-products of the liturgical engagement, they constitute neither in whole nor in part the engagement's motive. *The feast remains its own end.* The business Christians transact in liturgy is festal business because, simply, Christ has conquered death by his death.[76]

3.2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips

In both *de Sacramentis* and *de Mysteriis* Ambrose gives lengthy interpretive readings of the eucharist alongside the love poetry of Song of Songs. In the following excerpt from *de Sacramentis*, Ambrose plays with the poetic voices of Lover and Beloved, conventionally

[76] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*,(Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984), 151-2. Emphasis mine.

ascribed to Christ and the Church respectively, giving the Beloved's desire to be 'kissed with the kisses of his lips' to both the communicant and to Christ.

> You have come to the altar, the Lord Jesus calls you, or your soul, or the Church, when he says: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips'. Do you wish to attribute them to Christ? Nothing could be more pleasing? Do you wish to attribute them to your soul? Nothing could be sweeter… He sees that you are cleansed of all sin, because your faults have been washed away. So he judges you worthy to receive the heavenly sacraments, and so he invites you to the heavenly feast: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips'. Now because of what follows, it is your soul or human nature or the Church that speaks; it sees that it is cleansed of all sin, and worthy to approach the altar of Christ: for what is the altar except an image of Christ's body? It sees the marvellous sacraments, and says: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips': that is: 'Let Christ give *me* a kiss'… 'The King has brought me into his chamber'. The Greek reads: 'into his store-room' or 'his cellar': the place where the best vintages, the best perfumes, the sweetest honey are stored, the choicest fruits and dainties, so that your meal may be garnished with dainties in abundance.[77]

Ambrose invites the hearer to attribute the Beloved's expression of desire, 'let him kiss me', first to Christ and then to themselves (both the individual neophyte and the Church). And, while he does not appear to blur the traditional allegorical connections of Bride to the Church and Bridegroom to Christ, by placing the opening words belonging to the Beloved in the mouth of Christ as well, Ambrose suggests a mutuality of desire between Christ and the soul. This is the desire to *be approached* and to be touched*;* to be the recipient of coming-near.[78] While the active aspect is placed predominantly with Christ both in the liturgy and in catechetical instruction, this flash of Christ's invitation to be *acted-upon* in Ambrose's homily is striking.[79]

We may reflect on the fact that the 'active' voice or position is seldom given to the candidate in the ritual and liturgical sequences of initiation. In short, a lot is done *to* them. Here, at the Eucharist, they are invited to act, to come and eat, to be the embrace-*er*. Though the

[77] Ambrose, *Sac.* 5.5, 5.7, 5.11; Yarnold, 141-143. I have edited Yarnold's translation of 5.5, as he has omitted a phrase present in *SC* 25bis, 122-123.
[78] For the remainder of Ambrose's use of the Canticle, he retains the attribution of the Lover's words to Christ and the Beloved's to the baptised.
[79] Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Nature and Grace,* trans. Cyril Vollert, SJ (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 307: 'The supreme goodness wills to communicate itself to all things; therefore it wills to be desired by them'.

predominant presentation of agency is that it belongs to Christ – He, as Chrysostom says 'hastens to His bride'[80] – there is, however, a space for human agency that I do not want to overlook. Christ's activity is not total in such a way that it overtakes the integrity of the human soul or nature. And here is why nuptiality, as union without conflation, serves so beautifully with regard to the eucharist. While exegeting the eucharist nuptially joyously highlights the true presence of Christ and the true advent of eschatological grace, the appearance of few yet poignant calls for the initiate to take up the active position serves to express the joyous confidence that union with Christ and His gift of eternal life are truly *there* to be grasped, and it affirms the liturgical embrace and fulfilment of the integrity of our human nature.

The only other occasion where the initiate is notably in the active mode (barring perhaps also Enrolment) is at the renunciation and adherence, the *apotassomai-syntassomai.* As I showed in Chapter Two, the 'I adhere to Christ' is undertaken by speech and by body. Looking back to it from the eucharistic space of wedding chamber, we can imagine the *syntassomai* as a betrothal; as a pledge of union that follows the repudiation of all that seeks to sunder the pair of lovers.[81] And indeed, the entire initiation liturgy maps loosely on to a wedding ceremony, with washing, anointing, vesting and adorning, declarations of fidelity, all leading to the cult of union.[82]

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[80] Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions,* homily 11, *Papadopoulos-Kerameus* 3.2, ACW, 161-162. 'He did not command human nature to come to Him, but he came to us; for it is the custom in marriage that the bridegroom come to the bride, even if he be extremely wealthy and she be a worthless outcast… But in the case of Christ and the Church the marvel is that, being God and possessed of that blessed and undefiled nature – and you know how great is the distance between God and men – He deigned to come to our nature… according to a plan whereby He took to Himself a body, He has hastened to His bride'.

[81] Chrysostom says it is fitting to call initiation, and the adherence, both a marriage and a military enlistment. *Stav.* 1.1.

[82] Claude Chavasse, *The Bride of Christ: an enquiry into the nuptial element in early Christianity,* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), 238-39. 'Baptism, unction with chrism, white robes, crowning, communion, seems modelled almost exactly on the mystic wedding preparations and ceremonies in Ezek. xvi. 9-13, and that the bridal garland in Isa. Lxi.10 was the idea underlying the crowning of the newly baptized in Syria and in the Christian Church in Jerusalem'.

3.3 The store-room and the secret chamber

Ambrose also reflects on how nuptial consummation relates to eating – or, rather, to feasting. In the above quotation, the feast and the nuptial chamber intertwine each other. Ambrose mingles eating and spousal consummation when he interprets the line from Song of Songs, 'The King has brought me into his chamber.'[83] Ambrose elaborates his interpretation of the Greek ταμιεῖον, 'chamber' or 'store-room', with 'the place where the best vintages, the best perfumes, the sweetest honey are stored, the choicest fruits and dainties, so that your meal may be garnished with dainties in abundance.'

What unites the bridal chamber and the brimming store-room is celebration and delight. Ambrose is not concerned here with the precise correspondence of his analogies, which is why he intermingles the storeroom and bridal chamber analogies, as the transmission of information is not his primary purpose. Here the mingling of feast and wedding chamber appears because we are reaching the *antitype* of creaturely desire, in which both eating and wedding participate. The consuming of Christ nuptially and festally includes the communicants not only in the prize of salvation, union with God, but also in the end, the *telos* or logic, of desire itself. And so we begin to see the convergence between knowledge, love, and being. Desire touches right to the bottom of ontology. It is the attraction and the stretching out toward things necessary and things admirable, the recognition of the 'good' and 'beautiful', and the pull to come near and to commune with these; to know, to embrace, and take it in. I also suggest, building on Ambrose's choice of language, that desire has more to do with delight than it does with bare acquisition. And this contains an important insight regarding our creaturely ontology. As Ambrose says, the 'store-room' is not filled with mere necessities, but with the best wines, perfumes, honey, fruits and 'dainties in abundance'.

[83] LXX *Cant.* 1:4.

Perhaps with Ambrose's rhetorical dance between feast and bridechamber we can also suggest that the eucharistic feast heals the eating of the Fall – though Ambrose does not directly suggest this reading.[84] In Genesis 3, Eve 'saw that the fruit was good for food and pleasing to the eye' and she grasped what was not (yet) to be grasped, or, not to be grasped as an end in itself. Thus the Edenic pair consummated a desire in incongruity with God's command.[85] But a wedding celebration, on the other hand, builds precisely to consummation – the desirable One *is* to be taken in. And so, in the mystagogues' nuptial reading of the eucharist, the consummating of desire, born from the recognition of the real and essential goodness and beauty of Christ, is entered into rightly. Taking, eating, and consummating is its proper end. In the liturgical Institution, Christ invites those gathered to 'take, eat'; and the mystagogues take this further, as we shall see shortly, instructing the communicants even to kiss and embrace the bread, because the Spouse who is to be desired for His own sake is the One offered. The eucharistic wedding feast heals the eating of the Fall because the 'holy things for holy people' are rightly grasped for their own sake. Their 'enjoyment', or 'fruition', reveals Christ to be the homeland of desire itself.

While, in *de Sacramentis*, Ambrose speaks of the King's chamber from Song of Songs 1, in *de Mysteriis* he refers to a different chamber.[86] Here, Ambrose aligns his Eucharistic exegesis with Song of Songs 8, in which the Church answers Christ's cry of 'Behold, you are all fair, my love' with:

> Who will give You to me, my Brother, that nursed at the breasts of my mother? If I find You without, I will kiss You, and indeed they will not despise me. I will take You, and

[84] The notion of the Eucharist as antidote for the fruit of the fall appears strongly in certain medieval traditions, see Ann W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), chapter two 'the Apple and the Eucharist'.
[85] On the idea of grasping the fruit of the tree of knowledge at a proper time, see Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 45, NPNF* 7, VII.
[86] In *Sac.* 5.11 Ambrose speaks of the King's chamber *(cubibulum)* as the store-room *(promptuarium)* and cellar *(cellarium)*. In *de Myst.* he exegetes the mother's 'house' *(domum)* from Song of Songs 8:2; in LXX ταμιεῖον.

> bring You into the house of my mother; and into the secret chamber of her that conceived me. You shall teach me.'[87] (Song of Songs 8:1-2)

Ambrose interprets the 'secret chamber' (*domum*, ταμιεῖον in the LXX) where the Bride is taught by the Bridegroom as the place of encounter and union where she 'longs to attain to the innermost mysteries and to consecrate all her affections to Christ'.[88] With this language of mysteries and affections, Ambrose again gestures toward a sense of the greater consummation of desire itself. The mystery of desire – all looking externally, longing, and coming near – which is the state of all living creatures, plays out its end in the eucharist. Moreover, the mystery of nuptial desire, as given in Song of Songs, becomes entangled with the mystery of intellectual desire, as Ambrose ends his quotation with the image of the Lover as teacher: *Docebis me*. Ambrose suggests that the 'attainment', or arrival, *peruenire,* of the 'innermost mysteries', *mysteria anteriora,* is what is being offered in the eucharistic sanctuary, styled as the 'secret chamber' in which the Beloved is 'taught' by the Lover.

In *The Sacrament of Love*, Paul Evdokimov explores how nuptiality sits at the heart of the pursuit of truth, which is itself a form of desire. He writes, 'love is the deepest thirst for the truth, the very voice of a being'.[89] In light of Ambrose's mystical reading of the love poem, we can suggest that *learning* can be understood as a eucharistic and nuptial affair at its core. It serves to note, furthermore, that this 'chamber' or 'store-room', where the delights of intimacy

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[87] Ambroise de Milan, *de mysteriis,* 7.40. *SC* 25bis, 178. Ambrose quotes Song 8:2 as 'Adsumam te et inducan te in domum matris meae et in secretum eius quae concepit me. Docebis me.' The phrases 'secret chamber' and 'you shall teach me' arise out of the syntactical ambiguity of the verb 'teach' in Hebrew and the diversity among translations of the Song. The LXX reads 'into my mother's house and into the chamber where she conceived me', the Hebrew 'into my mother's house, who instructed me/you will instruct me', and the Vulgate 'into my mother's house, and you will instruct me'. By and large, Ambrose's scriptural quotations follow the LXX and occasionally pre-Vulgate Latin, though he does also occasionally paraphrase and combine texts. Ambrose's quotation of the Song may evidence a textual variant, or it is simply that Ambrose paraphrased and combined texts as he desired to avail himself of the analogical richness of both the 'inner chamber' (in the LXX Greek, ταμιεῖον again) and the idea of the Lover as teacher.

[88] Ambrose, *de myst.* 7.40. *SC* 25bis, 178. Vides quemadmodum delectate munere gratiarum ad anteriora cupit mysteria peruenire et omnes sensus suos consecrare Christo. English translation: Ambrose, *On the mysteries,* H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth. *NPNF,* Second Series, Vol. 10. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896).

[89] Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love: the nuptial mystery in the light of the Orthodox Tradition,* trans. Anthony P. Gythiel and Victoria Steadman, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 31.

with God are found, where Christ is Lover and Teacher, is also the space of prayer. In Matthew's account of Jesus' teaching on the Lord's prayer, Jesus says, 'when you pray, go into your inner room [τὸ ταμεῖόν], close your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.'[90] There is both an ecclesial and an inner, personal place that becomes by grace the *tamieion* where the Christian cultivates the joy of union with God and *learns* truly.

We would do well, at the same time, to notice that the nature of 'all the affections' which the Bride, or the communicant, wishes to consecrate to Christ in this intimate space is delightfully ambiguous. *Et omnes sensus suos consecrare Christo.* These 'affections' are not necessarily immaterial abstract longings alone, to the exclusion of the material, as *sensus* can refer both to the physical senses and to emotion or thought. Thus, the line could equally be translated 'she longs to consecrate all her senses to Christ'.[91] Ambrose's intermingled pair of eating and wedding advise us not to separate the spiritual from the bodily, and neither to neglect the latter, in our understanding of the eucharistic union.

3.4 The Mother's House: the mystery of creation and incarnation

Building upon Ambrose's reading, I suggest that when Christ is embraced and consumed in the eucharist, when desire comes to rest in the divine Lover, all desire, from the rudimentary and metabolic, through the erotic and intellective, is made intelligible. We must attend to the fact that this 'consecration' of the senses and affections is irrevocably founded upon the Incarnation. The communicants embrace Christ who gives participation in heavenly and eternal life; but the unfolding of 'inner mysteries' takes place in the mother's house, in the 'chamber of she who conceived me'. I propose that we read the maternal element here as the

[90] Matt. 6:6. ταμεῖόν is an alternate spelling of ταμιεῖόν.
[91] As Thompson translates it. St Ambrose, *On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries*, trans. T. Thompson, ed. J. H. Srawley, (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), 7.40, 140.

order of creation. The 'mother's house' is the earthly order that, elsewhere, I have called pedagogical and propaedeutic. Earthly, creaturely existence has reared and educated our 'powers', our *sensus* and faculties, in the maternal embrace of materiality. In His incarnation, Christ the Lover, exceeding our deepest, unseemly hope that the divine might come near, became our brother and also shared our mother's breast. That is, He partook completely of human nature. And He makes the natal chamber of humble matter into the very place where we embrace Him. As Chrysostom says, beautifully, in his commentary on John 6, Christ 'kneaded up his body with ours' with us so that we could be 'commingled with Him':

> Let the initiated follow what I say. In order then that we may become [members of His flesh and His blood] not by love only, but in very deed. Let us become commingled with that body. This takes place by means of the food which he has given us as a gift, because he desired to prove the love which he has for us. It is for this reason that he has mixed up himself with us and has kneaded up his body with ours, namely, that we might be one with him as the body is joined with the head… And to show the love he has for us he has made it possible for those who desire, not merely to look upon him, but even to touch him and to consume him and to fix their teeth in his flesh and to be commingled with him; in short, to fulfil all their love.[92]

3.5 Consummating sensation

The mystagogues' consistent recourse to nuptial language suggests its *aptness* to the eucharistic presence of Christ. The encounter with Christ mediated in initiation began with the other senses – hearing, sight, and smell – but the destination is touch. At the altar, the sight of the washed and illumined, and the speech or cry of joy, move to touching. Embrace is the fitting movement of the joy elicited in us at our sight of the Bridegroom in His eucharistic apparition and in Christ at His sight of the Bride purified and adorned. The lovers who see and hear each other, who delight in the 'Beauty that is mine', move naturally and fittingly to the touch and embrace of that beloved beauty. And this touch, just as the cry of joy, is characterized by

[92] John Chrysostom, *On the Gospel of John,* Homily 46, Trans. Charles Marriott. In *NPNF*1 vol 14. Ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889.) Also, Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and Preaching,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), Oxford Scholarship Online, 245. *In Jo*. 46, PG 59.258–60. I have combined the translations of both Marriott and Rylaarsdam in order to emphasize the physicality in Chrysostom's language. 'commingled', ἀνακερασθῶμεν; 'mixed up' himself, ἀνέμιξεν; 'kneaded up' his body ἀνέφυρε.

belonging; it is consummation rather than possession: 'I am my Beloved's and He is mine' (Song. 6:3). The movement of attraction toward Christ, who is truly present in the eucharist, builds upon and gathers up the sense-scapes of initiation, as also the sense-scapes of embodiment itself, bringing them to fruition by a physical union – the eating and drinking of the Eucharist. And this consummatory movement is aptly portrayed as the progress of desire towards the bridal chamber.

We must also note carefully how there is no building towards a transcending of carnality at the culmination of initiation. Here, at what is ostensibly the apex of the ritual experience, we find in the operative mystagogical imagery and the physicality of the rite itself what appears *most carnal*: eating, drinking, and sex. And while I have adverted to the pronounced eschatological aspect of the eucharistic rite, especially in Theodore, we must appreciate the delicious paradox that even this eschatological pole manifests and is entered into by means of our rudimentary necessities of creaturehood.

4. Touch after the eucharist

This chapter has focussed on humanity's capacitation for heavenly things, the consummation of human desire and powers to Christ, eschatological participation, being made-fitting to beatitude, and so on. However, the fact remains that the baptised live on earth, in time, this side of the eschaton. And so, as I discussed in previous chapters, capacitation also concerns the unique vocation of the Christian in the here and now. The divinizing track of initiation is more of a moving circle than a linear progression of *exitus-reditus*: it comprises of a salvific divine *exitus*, a sacramental and deifying *reditus*, and, finally, a consecrating, missional, and reconciling *exitus* again back into the world. If we consider this circle in terms of our theme of touch, in the first movement divinity touches humanity in Christ and in His saving work, in the second human nature touches heaven by liturgy and the work of the Holy Spirit, and in the third the baptised are commissioned to *touch the earth* in a new way, as 'new men' and

creatures of the order of consummation. This third movement of return is a liturgical commission – and it is a commission *into liturgy,* as I will explain. The textual material that I will draw upon here comes from the concluding sections of Cyril's and Theodore's eucharistic homilies and also from the moral exhortations that Chrysostom gives following his eucharistic teachings. What we find in these is a call for the initiated to return to the world as agents of cosmic consummation.

4.1 Joyfully embracing

The first clue as to how the Christian must 'touch the earth' after initiation can be drawn from Cyril's and Theodore's instructions regarding the physical reception of the Body of Christ in the eucharistic bread. I suggest that the manner of reception that Cyril and Theodore instruct the neophytes to take should serve as a model for our embrace of creation. The disposition of the communicant toward the matter that bears Christ's true presence is the exemplary instance of how we must embrace all matter. The mystagogues' instructions for how to approach and receive the bread have the character of love, adoration, and worship of Christ. Both Cyril and Theodore express the tension between austere reverence and overwhelming passion. Cyril speaks more formally than Theodore, saying that after one hollows the palm, making a throne in the hands to receive the King, 'then after you have with carefulness hallowed your eyes by the touch of the Holy Body, partake thereof.'[93]

Theodore's language is more crudely affectionate when he, like Cyril, instructs the communicants to touch the bread to their eyes before eating it. Theodore tells the neophytes to 'offer adoration as a confession of the power placed in your hands… You press it with great and true love to your eyes and kiss it'.[94] He continues to say that the communicants should also direct prayer and confession to the host 'as to Christ our Lord, who is at present so near to

[93] Cyril, *MC* 5.21, 79.
[94] Theodore, *Commentary,*113-114.

you'.[95] In these commendations of affection, I argue, we encounter the meaning and purpose of *aisthesis,* sensation: it is the recognition of Christ as 'so near' to us which leads to the adoration and embrace of Him. The true end of the capacities of our nature to touch and be touched is the adorative embrace of Christ. Theodore says, 'We draw nigh unto [the sacrament] in the measure of the power of the human nature.'[96] Though Theodore may mean this simply as an exhortation to extend our human effort of will and body to participate in the liturgy and receive the eucharist with all sincerity, faith, and worthiness, I suggest that we can read this 'measure' of the power of human nature also in terms of the inner logic and pedagogical orientation of our senses.

Aristotle's insight concerning the senses and their essential relation to touch is fitting here. As Aristotle tells us, all sensation is, in the end, a form of touch, and the human sensory touch upon the world, and their being touched by it, is the nursery of our knowing. *Aisthesis,* the capacity for the 'touch' of sensation, is the power of our bodies. Our *aisthesis* of the created world is the embrace upon which learning is founded. But our embrace of creation is always secondary and *subservient to* the embrace of Christ for which creation was made; though, sequentially, according to God's pedagogical wisdom, we are acquainted with the second in order to move to the first. The earth is poised sacramentally to serve this one sensation – the touch of God.

Thus, the eucharistic embrace should infiltrate and order the mundane embrace. The Christian initiate is capacitated to discern the inner truth of their fellow creatures, the blessed variety of creaturely participation in God. Christ is 'so near' to us, analogically, in all of creation; in an echo of His nearness in the eucharist, His nearness in the Incarnation, and in the eschaton. Our physical reception of the eucharist is the sacramental gift of the true,

[95] Theodore, *Commentary,* 114.
[96] Theodore, *Commentary,* 112.

eschatological embrace of Christ here and now, and it also instantiates the exemplary embrace of matter. Our mundane, contextual embraces of creation should be modelled after this pressing of the eucharist to our eyes, and the adorative kiss upon humble bread, because of the honour creation bears by virtue of its ontological bearing of Christ. In the middle of Theodore's discussion of the fittingness of bread, he comments on Jesus' words 'I am the bread of life' with the following:

> Because as we would be receiving the promise given us here of the immortality which we expect in sacramental symbols through bread and cup, we had to honour also the symbol which became worthy of this appellation.[97]

This has implications for all of the ordinary, non-eucharistic touching that we do in this world – both the literal and metaphorical. The call to 'honour' the symbol can also be translated with 'we stand in awe'.[98] This is the priestly calling to *liturgize* the world. The fitting earthly order finds its inner logic revealed and consummated in the eucharistic embrace of Christ, and that very embrace must become in turn the inner logic of the Christian's life. We recognize all of creation, at its heart, as *symbol.* We must stand in awe of our fellow creatures, pressing their participative natures to our eyes, kissing and touching the created according to the pattern of our eucharistic embrace with the One in Whom and for Whom they came to be.

The 'hallowing' of the eyes, as Cyril calls it, is not explained further by either mystagogue. However, if we bear in mind the mystagogical (and wider patristic) association of sight with knowledge – recalling Chrysostom's claim that 'to look fixedly is to know' – we can suggest that if this pattern of adorative eucharistic embrace should apply to our practical embrace of the world around us, it should equally inform and transfigure the 'touch' of the human intellect upon the world as well. The pattern of pressing the host to the eyes recommends

[97] Theodore, *Commentary,* 76.
[98] Theodore, *Commentary,* Syr. 212. ܢܬܚܕ is the Ethpael imperfect form of ܚܕ *(kḥad)*, and in this form means 'to reverence', 'to stand in awe'. J. Payne Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary,* 212.

to us a mode of knowing that is other than that of the distanced and abstracting gaze.[99] This embrace is the raw material of contemplation. The 'hallowing of the eyes' commends intimacy and devotion as the fitting end and mode for our knowing of the world. It commends touch in the pursuit of truth over the registering gaze. Just as the bringing of an object too close to the eyes obscures the precision of our vision, when we bring Christ's body to touch the eyes, we trade the accuracy of distance for true knowledge. Do we not know Him better in the tight embrace of love that brings Him too close for scrutiny, but close enough to feel? And this suggests that to choose the clumsier, yet more intimate, path of embrace is to truly 'honour the symbol'. The pattern for our contact with the world around us, all awaiting alongside us this nearer-than-near, face-to-face encounter with Christ, has its beginning here, in the affectionate touch of the elements. The Christian's touch upon their fellow creatures must draw its character from the true, Christological and adorative end of *aisthesis* itself.

4.2 While the moisture is still upon your lips

Cyril contributes further to this notion of touching the earth in light of the eucharist in a similarly enigmatic and intimately physical instruction concerning the wine:

> Then after having partaken of the Body of Christ, approach also the Cup of His Blood; not stretching forth your hands, but bending and saying in the way of worship and reverence, Amen, be hallowed [ἁγιάζου] by partaking also of the Blood of Christ. And while the moisture is still upon your lips, touching it with your hands, hallow both your eyes and brow and the other senses.[100]

Cyril offers no explanation for this instruction to apply the wine left on the lips to the organs of sense. This is, in fact, the final instruction of his mystagogical series, followed only by a

[99] A move away from abstraction is not to deny the participative and attractive beauty of form. Thematics, too, has a fitting place in transfigured intellection. As Aristotle says, the forms, or *logoi*, of creaturely natures impress themselves upon the soul through the common touch of sensation. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, ii.12.424a, J.A. Smith's translation: 'By a 'sense' is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms (εἶδος) of things without the matter. This must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold… [it] receives the impression… not in the sense in which each of them is so called, but in the sense that its character is of this kind, and in virtue of its form (καὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον).' Greek: Aristotle, *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, trans. W.S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann Ltd 1957), 136.

[100] Cyril, *MC* 5.22, 79.

summative exhortation that the neophytes must 'hold fast these traditions unspotted' and a closing blessing and doxology. I propose to read this detail in relation to the neophytes' calling to touch the world in a new way after receiving Christ in the eucharist. Cyril's instruction bears a similarity to his description of the anointing in which, there too, the oil is applied to the forehead 'and the other senses'.[101] And so we can suggest a degree of theological similarity in the meaning of this ritual detail as well. In my discussion of the anointing (Chapter Three), I argued that the capacity of sight given to the illumined is to see by intimate communion with creation and to discern the course of consummation. I also argued that a calling to 'semeiotic priesthood' is laid upon the *neophōtistoi* to serve that course of consummation in the world. The touching of wine to the organs of sense at the very close of the eucharistic rite suggests something similar: that some power, presence, or meaning of the eucharistic wine is meant to accompany the communicant in their ordinary life as they depart from the liturgy, shaping the character of their engagement with the world.

I suggest that Cyril's anointing of the senses with the wine left on the lips acknowledges humanity as a creature of contact and honours the significance of our materiality. The creature of contact is not merely receptive – *acted upon* as Aristotle says[102] – we also act upon the world as well. The wine applied to the senses and the brow is intended to inform the touch of the world upon the Christian as much as, in turn, their touch upon the world. The initiated must touch the world as priestly ordinary people, gathering in humble and mundane ways the creatures around them and consecrating them; that is, bringing them into the course of transfiguration and worship. This is what I mean by the Christian's commission *into liturgy*, into the advent of the eschatological consummation of all things to Christ, right in the mundane things of earthly life. Sensing *through* the Blood of Christ is to perceive the world as created

[101] Cyril, *MC* 3.3-4, 65. *Cf.* Georgia Frank, '"Taste and See": The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century', *Church History.* Volume 70. Issue 4. Dec. 2001, 626.
[102] Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: the archaeology of a sensation,* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 25

for this consummation. And His Blood, then, as the very doorway of reconciliation, consummation, and beatitude, must also be what is touched *upon* the world by the tips of the fingers, and from the eyes, ears, hands, and lips of the baptised.

I will note here that it is important in our reading of this touch upon the senses that we avoid the notion of 'acquiring a disposition' – as if the neophyte has been initiated merely into the constructed thought-world or symbolic grammar of a particular community. It would not cohere with the account of the relation between creation, pedagogy and *theōsis* that I have traced throughout the mystagogies to suggest that the wine which covers the senses signals merely the hermeneutic power of culture. It is, for the mystagogues, rather that the communicants have been inducted into the very real divine power of salvation and cosmic reconciliation bought at the cost of Christ's own Blood through which they must now think, see, taste, hear, and touch. Their faculties, the 'powers' of our human nature, have been reconfigured Paschally and restored to harmony with reality as it truly is *(akribeia)*. They have received this *through liturgy* and are now called, by hands that have touched His Body and been anointed with His Blood, to bring the world around them into that divinizing liturgical choreography which draws towards heaven.

4.3 Think of what you receive in your hand

For Chrysostom the character of the initiate's engagement with the world in light of their partaking of the eucharist is expressed in terms of morality. Here Chrysostom also appeals to the notion of fittingness. In line with the rigorist tone of his writings, Chrysostom argues that the gravity of the eucharist, the gift of intimacy with divinity, demands a life which is morally upright. But, interestingly, Chrysostom figures the duty to 'make answer to the Benefactor' through moral living in terms of physicality. He warns his hearers that the various body parts which have touched Christ in the eucharist cannot now participate in the immorality and violence of the world. Though a rigorous moral discipline is demanded of the catechumen and

the Faithful, there is a much more pronounced concern over what is *fitting*, or what *becomes*, those who receive the eucharist.[103] I include a large section of text below to show how Chrysostom moves through the body, naming the organs of sense along with the heart's intentions, and calls the communicants to consider each in light of their having received the 'ineffable and awesome mysteries'.

> Since you know all these things, beloved, make answer [ἄμειψαί] to your Benefactor by the excellence of your conduct. After you have considered how great was His sacrifice, beautify the members of your body [καλλώπισον σου τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος]. Think of what you receive in your hand, and never lift it to strike another and never disgrace with the sin of assault the hand which has been honoured with so great a gift.[104]
>
> For it is a deed fraught with destruction to take the tongue which serves such awesome mysteries, which has become purpled with blood so precious, and which has become a sword of gold, and to change its course to abuse.[105]
>
> When you have considered that, after the hand and the tongue, the heart receives this awesome mystery [φρικτὸν ἐκεῖνο μυστήριον], plot no treachery against your neighbour, but keep your mind free from all wickedness… For is it not absurd, after hearing that mystic voice which comes down from on high – I mean the voice of the Cherubim – to sully your ears with songs for harlots and with degenerate melodies?[106]
>
> Do you not deserve the most extreme punishment if you use the same eyes with which you behold the ineffable and awesome mysteries [τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, οἷς ὁρᾷς τὰ ἀπόῤῥητα καὶ φρικτὰ μυστήρια] to look upon harlots and to commit adultery in your heart? Beloved, you are invited to a marriage; do not come to it wearing a garment covered with filth, but take a garment which is suitable [κατὰλληλον] for the wedding feast.[107]

The 'answer' demanded of the senses, fulfilled and ennobled through touching Christ, contains for Chrysostom an ethical and a doxological imperative. Indeed, for Chrysostom, it appears that ethics and doxology are intimately entangled (though he is often read as a bare moralist) and are made intelligible precisely in their relation to each other. The tongue 'serves' the awesome (literally fearful, φρικωδεστάτος) mysteries through its receptive capacity in the eating of the eucharist. But it also, in its active capacity of speech – and here Chrysostom

[103] The prebaptismal interrogations of the candidates pore deeply into their personal conduct.
[104] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.15, ACW 177. Greek: John Chrysostom, *Ad Illuminandos Catechesis: Κατηχησις Δευτερα*, in Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus - Series Graeca*, Volume 49, 233.
[105] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.16, ACW 177. *Cat. Deut.*, 233-234.
[106] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.17, ACW 178. *Cat. Deut.*, 234.
[107] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.18, ACW 178. *Cat. Deut.*, 234.

utilizes the Scriptural imagery of the sword – must 'make answer' (ἀμείβω, repay, reply) in a manner of that corresponds to the honour of the gift it has tasted. In the close of Chrysostom's exhortations to the body and the heart, he returns to the image of the wedding feast. The conduct of the neophyte corresponds to the wedding garment, and on the one hand the neophyte must, by the use of their body and intentions, exhibit the beauty that *befits* the gift: 'beautify the members of your body'. Here the word κατάλληλος appears again, 'take a garment which is *suitable'*. On the other hand, Chrysostom pairs the extreme demand for ethical rigor with an equally robust confidence that Christ's gift of Himself, and so *His* holiness, is the root and substance of human holiness: 'He who has invited you gives you the garment as a gift'.[108]

In Chrysostom's exhortation to the faculties that have received Christ's glorious Body and Blood, along with the ears which have heard the song of the Cherubim, the whole body is touched, trained, and irreparably impacted by the liturgy. Yet we still abide in a world which is, as we are ourselves, at dissonance with that glory. I suggest that what we observe in Chrysostom is a presentation of the liturgy as the entrance of an eschatological convergence of earth and heaven into time and, at the same time, as a commission to the initiated to touch creation with that very union; to puncture the dissonance of here and now with beauty – clothing not only ourselves, but the world in a garment that fits the wedding feast. This punctuating and adorning beauty appears in the earthly correspondence to heaven in the liturgy and it advances through participation in God's transfiguration of the cosmos at the hands of ruddy ordinary human persons and humble ordinary creatures.[109]

[108] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.19, ACW 178.

[109] The calling of the senses to serve the transfiguration of all things also includes an exorcistic aspect, as we see in *Stavronikita* 3, where Chrysostom also speaks of the 'empurpled tongue'. He says that the devil is especially frightened of the mouth coloured by the Saviour's Blood: 'If you show him a tongue stained with the precious blood, he will not be able to make a stand; if you show him your mouth all crimsoned and ruddy, cowardly beast that he is, he will run away.' Chrysostom, *Stav.* 3.12, ACW 60.

Conclusion

The eucharistic end of initiation is the same as the pedagogical end of mystagogy and the ontological end of creation: union with Christ. In this chapter I have traced the capacitation of touch as intimately related to this end and I have presented our participation in that end under the thematic structure of Theodore's phrase: 'and we joyfully embrace Him with all our power'. I have taken touch as emblematic of 'all our power'. Humanity is the creature of contact; and by this contact, which begins in the necessities of biology and is recapitulated in the complex powers of knowing and loving, we are trained to reach for the true touch, the embrace of Christ. I have argued that the sacramental appearance of the end of union – coming as it does in the entangled mix of feast and wedding, of sensation, necessity, and desire – reaches down through all the 'powers' of our nature, from the intellective, through the appetitive and affective, to the humblest rudiments of our materiality, and rehearses their holy integration into the receptivity to God for which we are made.

Joyfully embracing Christ with all our power is the consummation of human creaturehood. In a sense, to become *chōrētikos* in terms of touch is to become *infinitely sensitive*. The capacitation of our sensitivity co-extends between creation and heaven. It is to be capacitated earth-ward such that we participate deeply in our createdness and our *koinonia* with fellow creatures. Humanity is educated and capacitated for the touch of Christ in the eucharist by the touchings of our earthliness. I have argued that in the liturgy the inherent pedagogy of nature – or, as I traced it in Theodore, the inherent fittingnesses of creation – are gathered into the transfiguring flow of the sacraments.

The congruence of earthly fittingness with the movement of consummation is richly endorsed in the mystagogies and thus I have argued that the role of the mystagogue lies in the shepherding of our sensitivity to the nearness of Christ. In this earth-ward sensitivity we are made capable of intuiting in the integrity of the creaturely order the echo of the heavenly; and

by this we travel through *and with* matter into the arms of Christ. The mystagogue's task is to foster in the neophyte the capacity to partake of the eucharist as a manifestation of the fulfilment of creaturehood. In this his aim is not merely didactic. The end of mystagogy is not 'grasping' the liturgy in terms of ritual mechanics or theological commitments. Mystagogy is an eschatological, pedagogical, and transfiguring endeavour. The mystagogue is a servant of the grace, both natural (the 'already') and supernatural (the descent of the Holy Spirit), that makes the initiate capable of union.

The capacitation of our sensitivity heaven-ward is given through the touch of the Holy Spirit, Who makes us fitting, suited, correspondable to divine communion. In the liturgy, the Holy Spirit 'touches and changes' our nature into the compatible and capable icon of Christ. We become 'the holies' to whom 'the holy things' correspond. The literal meaning of *chōrētikos,* as I have said, is 'able to contain'. But, as the reality which fills the human vessel in initiation is God Himself, the capaciousness which we acquire is not simply to become 'big enough' to bear God's presence. It is not a question of the quantity of the space, but the quality of the space. The initiated become the *kind* of vessel that can have God dwell in them. As I have argued throughout my reading of the mystagogies, the 'quality' of capacity obtains by sacramental likeness. This is the logic of the sacraments. To *fit*, or to be *suited* to God's indwelling is not simply to have amenable properties. The qualities of the *chōrētikoi theou*, are simply diverse and global conformities to Christ; in every contour of the individual nature, likenesses to Him. The *chōrētikoi*, as Cyril has said, become a heaven as they are bearers of the divine image.

In my reading of the mystagogues' nuptial interpretations of the eucharist, capacitation for union with God is not absorption or obliteration, and it is also more than mere admittance into heavenly life; it is a union of love. It is to be drawn into the eschatological mystery of desire. In other words, the fitting-making of the liturgy *makes us spousal*. The making of

humanity *chōrētikos theou* fulfils the original sacrament of betrothal, the Edenic story written into our mundane matrimonies: God makes out of the flesh of the first Adam a bride 'suitable for him'.[110] Partaking of Christ's Body and Blood, becoming 'members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones' (Eph. 5:30), we become also the Bride *suited* to the New Adam, the true Bridegroom – 'At last! This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!'.

Finally, I argued that the eucharistic pattern of adoring embrace of Christ must refract itself through all mundane knowing and touching. Our knowing becomes loving God in and through creation. Our nature and its attendant faculties are for the end of love. This is the mode of being to which the Christian, the partaker of sacraments, is called to: 'And we joyfully embrace him with all our power'. This embrace is founded in Christ's Passion, it beckons to humanity even in the humble mystery of the sensory, it includes us in the gifts of heaven here and now as firstfruits of their perfection, and we 'make answer to our Benefactor' when our embrace of the earthly order is conformed to the logic of love and adoration of Christ, who touched death so that we may touch eternal life.

[110] Gen. 2:18: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper *fit* for him.' כנגדו *fit, opposite, facing, corresponding to.* Here I draw more on the English vocabulary of 'fit for him' or 'suited to him' than the Hebrew. The Hebrew phrase עזר כנגדו *(ezer kenegdo)* is a source of great debate among Biblical scholars – a debate I have no intention to enter here. My appeal to the עזר כנגדו *(ezer kenegdo)*, the 'help meet' (KJV), is simply to highlight the notion of spousal fittingness intimately tied to the body of the Bridegroom in the poetic anthropology of the creation story.

Chapter Five

Excursus: A Cure of Pagan Maladies

> But I must believe my senses, as he cannot believe beyond his, which give him no intimations of this kind. I think he could spend the whole of Midsummer-eve in the wood and come back with the report that he saw nothing worse than himself. Indeed, good man, he would hardly find anything better than himself, if he had seven more senses given him.
>
> George MacDonald, *Phantastes.*

Introduction

In previous chapters, I have articulated a mystagogical theology of learning not merely for the sake of reconstructing the peculiarities of an antique Christian pedagogy, but also for the sake of engaging critically with the landscape of contemporary thought. This final chapter arises from the conviction that the sacramental and theological tradition to which the mystagogies belong preserves, and continues to offer, a robust and integrated account of the meaning of creation and human learning which can be constructively recovered to address some apparent malaises of modern thought. Mystagogical pedagogy is *integrated* in the sense that it grounds earthly learning, and the whole created order, within the transcendent, providential reality of salvation – in the *integrity* of one divine act which traverses and gathers the creaturely and the heavenly, the particular and the universal, in the comprehensive grace of creation, salvation, and divinization.

The advent of modernity, particularly in the Anglophone tradition, is also the advent of empiricism. The modern empirical turn, wrested from any 'polluting' connection to the metaphysical, brought about a fundamentally *disintegrated* appreciation of matter, sensation, and knowledge.[1] That is, while empirical knowledge – knowledge by the senses and experimentation – was prized as authoritative, the vision of what that knowledge was capable

[1] See, Peter Harrison's *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Harrison traces the emerge of 'natural history' in the late middle-ages, which increasingly became disengaged from the 'hieroglyphic' conception of nature that obtained throughout premodern and medieval sciences.

of grasping was strictly curtailed to the contingencies of matter. As a result, the world was reduced to the phenomenologically given, the senses became intelligible only in terms of biological survival, and human learning was reduced to the dispassionate accumulation of immanent 'facts'.[2] Within this impoverished horizon, evacuated of transcendence, modern thought inherits a situation where matter is dis-integrated from a holistic account of being, and knowledge is dis-integrated from salvation and *theōsis*.

At the same time, in the throes of the empirical revolution, questions remained concerning our ability to perceive and interpret the world truthfully (or 'accurately', by an empirical or rationalistic measure) and deeply (or, past the appearances). The modern empirical turn was thus accompanied by a subjective turn that considered the 'problem' of epistemology: of what knowledge is and how, or *if*, it relates to the real. The overwhelming tendency of modern epistemologies, in light of the metaphysical vacuity of the world, was to conclude that knowledge is an anthropological curiosity, and that the fruits of thought reveal and connect with nothing more than the structures of the mind or the contingencies of social order. Consequently, just as the empirical turn dis-integrated the world from a metaphysical or theological whole, so modernity's subjective turn dis-integrated the purposive and intelligible harmony between humanity and creation, reducing knowledge to an arbitrary imposition of meaning structures upon an indifferent order of nature. And thus, a further dis-integration obtains, fracturing the communion, or *koinonia,* between humanity and the world – a communion that, in the mystagogical understanding, learning enters into, builds upon, and consummates in worship.

[2] It is striking how 'fitness' reappears in the modern era in a new vein, in the Darwinian vision of fitness for survival and propagation – a far cry from the theological and aesthetic notion of fittingness of the patristic tradition.

We can think about these problems another way by reading them through the notion of *capacity*. We could say that modernity brought about certain *incapacitations* through the ontological and epistemological commitments it proffered. The world, evacuated of intrinsic meaning and a transcendent end, is incapacitated in the sense that this account of creation denies that it is *capable of containing (chōrētikos)* anything beyond its immanent phenomenology. Knowledge and learning are similarly incapacitated under the prevailing suspicion that thought, ultimately, has no real connection to the world or to truth – our epistemology does not envision a *capacity to receive* truth, but rather the capacity to construct truth. In this chapter, I propose that mystagogy can help us to understand more clearly some of the incapacitations and dis-integrations of modernity and to recognize their impoverishments in contemporary discourse.

Mystagogy offers an alternative understanding of creation, sensation, and knowledge. Recovering a mystagogical sense of capacity can reintegrate creation, anthropology, and epistemology within a holistic and comprehensive doctrine of salvation. The discussion I will present here is an exercise in constructive retrieval, which aims to articulate the salutary challenge that mystagogy's vision of *chōrētikos* can bring to the modern context. I will utilize the account of capacitation that I have drawn from the mystagogies in order to diagnose certain pathologies within modern discourse and offer a tentative 'cure'. In this, my recovery of patristic sensibilities relates not only to the content of my argument, but also to its form. I model this chapter after the work of a slightly younger contemporary of the mystagogues, Theodoret of Cyrus (392-457), and his apologetic treatise *A Cure of Pagan Maladies.*[3]

[3] Or: A Cure of Greek Maladies, *Hellēnikōn therapeutikē pathēmatōn*, *Graecarum affectionum curatio.* Theodoret, 'A Cure of Greek Maladies', trans. Istvan Pasztori-Kupan, in *Theodoret of Cyrus*, (Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2006).

Following in the tradition of the early apologists, Theodoret wrote his *curatio* to give answer to the prevailing philosophies of his day and to defend the superiority of the Christian faith. He presents faith in Christ as the antidote for the 'maladies' of thought and soul that accompany the pathology of pagan worship. Like Justin Martyr before him, Theodoret argued that, while echoes of truth could indeed be found in the philosophies and religious intuitions of his contemporary detractors, these found their true end in the faith of the Christians.[4] Worship of Jesus Christ is the consummation of the human search for what is truly worthy of contemplation and adoration, and faith in Him cures the wounds of paganism. The medical-therapeutic theme weaves throughout the opening paragraphs of the text.

> I have undertaken this labour for the sake of curing the ill and doing service to the healthy… If there is a medical treatment for the body, there is also for the soul, and it is also evident that each of them are subject to many sufferings… God knew this well, since he is clearly all-wise and creator of souls, bodies, and of the universe, and assigned suitable remedies for each nature.[5]

Like a physician, Theodoret thus seeks to 'wash the head', 'to cast out the malady', and to 'restore harmony' to the members of the body.[6] As he says: 'let us dilate the furrows of their ears, so that no obstacle placed in its course would hinder the flow of irrigation; moreover, let us wash them like the sick and supply delivering and healing medicines'.[7] In this chapter, I propose likewise to offer a 'cure of pagan maladies'; but, in this case, with an eye to addressing some particularly *modern* afflictions. Like Theodoret, I aim to 'wash the head' – and here the baptismal inference is certainly intentional in Theodoret's work as well as my own.[8] That is, I

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[4] Theodoret, *Cure*, 88: 'I thought that it would also be proper to confront the most famous lawgivers of Greece with our own – I mean the fishermen, the cobbler and the tax collectors – and to show again the difference by comparison just how those laws [i.e. of the Greeks] have been consigned with their authors to the darkness of oblivion, yet those of the fishermen are flourishing not only among the Greeks and Romans, but also among the Scythians, the Sarmates, the Persians and other barbarians.'

[5] Theodoret, *Cure*, 88-89.

[6] Theodoret, *Cure*, 89: 'The doctors are not impatient in these situations, but they bind the [patient], they wash the head forcibly and conceive all kinds of procedures to cast out the malady and to restore the former harmony of its members to the whole [body]'.

[7] Theodoret, *Cure*, 90.

[8] As Ambrose says, 'the faculties of the wise man are in the head.' Ambrose, 'Sermons on the Sacraments', in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*, ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 3.1, 120.

propose to identify some of our inherited disorders of thought, and to challenge those philosophical or theological 'maladies' through which the salvific harmony of our faculties is encumbered. I offer a constructive *curatio* in light of the divine capacitation for union with Christ that I have traced throughout the mystagogies. In this, I do not attempt a comprehensive genealogy or critique of modern thought.[9] I simply seek to engage in a preliminary application of *ressourcement:* to draw forth from the salutary well of Christian mystagogy the beginnings of a remedial salve for the incapacitations of modernity. I have read the mystagogical homilies not merely as artefacts of Christian history, but rather as catecheses which preserve and impart a set of *fundamentally Christian intuitions* about human nature, creation, knowledge, and salvation. These intuitions are relevant for us today in ways that our fourth century homilists could never have anticipated. It is my aim to draw forth a few of these un-anticipated benefits.

I suggest that the incapacitations that obtain in the present context can be understood as *anaesthetic* maladies. That is, we have inherited certain metaphysical commitments which impede the sensing and knowing of the world, *and of God through the world*, for which our physical and intellective capacities were given us. The anaesthesia of modernity frustrates precisely those faculties of receptivity and response that the mystagogues so confidently embraced and honoured as means of perceiving and being drawn toward our end in Christ. In the following argument, I will highlight four modes of modern *incapacitation*, each affecting a different faculty. This progressive diagnosis will follow the same four themes as Chapters One through Four – hearing, speech, sight, and touch – identifying a 'malady' that afflicts each

[9] Undeniably superior genealogies of modernity are already well established in the work of, among others, Louis Dupre, *Passage to Modernity,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, revised ed., 2012); George Grant, *Philosophy in the Mass Age,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: the weaving of a sacramental tapestry,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), and *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology,* (Oxford: OUP, 2009); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: beyond secular reason,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed., 2006); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,* (London: Belknap Press, 2018).

sense and offering a mystagogical 'cure'. Thus, what I undertake here is a rehabilitation of sensation and learning in light of the capacitation for union that mystagogy boldly affirms.

Beginning with hearing, I will survey and illustrate each malady with reference to concrete examples from contemporary scholarship. My exploration is not limited to theology and philosophy, as the anaesthetic impact of modern metaphysics appears no less frequently in other disciplines, albeit expressed in different language. Thus, I begin by exploring the modern incapacitation of hearing with reference to the discipline of anthropology and in conversation with the work of Anne Meneley. It may appear somewhat incongruous, and even unfair, to compare modern anthropology and fourth century mystagogy. However, the two discourses share an important similarity. Both reflect upon and make claims about the nature of the world, the human impulse toward the symbolic, and the mingling and mutual formation of these two 'realities' in human behaviour – namely, in ritual. In a sense, the social science of anthropology is the modern mystagogy. It purports to *explain the mystery* of our ritual navigation of the sensible world and the nature of its supposed connection to the transcendent. Anthropology sits uniquely in the liminal space between the experiential and the thematic (the space of meaning-making); and, among the modern sciences, it takes most seriously the human intuition that the mundane is meaningful. However, due to the philosophical provenance of the discipline, modern anthropology ultimately cannot treat this fundamental human intuition as anything more than a fiction. It operates within and propagates an ontology of neutrality, or what I will call the silencing of creation. In response, I will argue that in the mystagogies we encounter an ontology that can more truly account for the depth of creation, the appeal of sensory experience, and the human impulse toward ritual.

When I come to address the modern malady of speech, I return to theology. Here, I identify a contemporary form of *aparrhesia,* being 'unable to speak freely'. I will argue that

modern theology has become enamoured with the apophatic in a disordered way and to an excessive degree. I suggest that this excessive apophaticism runs the risk of proposing a *fundamental* and *perpetual* incapacitation of the faculty of speech. For an example of this I turn to Katherine Sonderegger's *Systematic Theology* (vol. 1), where, within her evocative defence of founding theology in the mystery of God, I suggest that she neglects the liturgical capacitation of human *logos* which reveals a more positive estimation of its earthly calling and its eschatological end.

The modern incapacitation of sight that I will address relates to the fracture between the phenomenal and the thematic, and the resulting thesis of superfluity. That is, in the wake of Descartes' seemingly impenetrable dualism between the body and the mind, and Kant's notion of the inaccessibility of things-in-themselves, knowledge is reduced to an arbitrary clothing of the world with superfluous meaning. In this frame, the knower cannot 'see' past surface appearances into the depths of creaturely truth, and thus 'knowledge' reduces to the construction of meaning-regimes which condition our apprehension of the world. These regimes are 'superfluous' in the sense that they have no connection to an indigenous truth of earthly realities. To illustrate this, I engage with the work of patristic historian, Georgia Frank. Frank offers a reading of the mystagogical homilies through the interpretive framework of ritual studies. She proposes that the mystagogues' rhetoric and their attentiveness to sensation serve the cultivation of 'mental images' which condition the neophytes' perceptions. I will argue that, in the mystagogical notion of 'illumination', we find an alternative to this thesis; one that capacitates seeing and knowing toward the depth of creation and toward an eschatological brightness.

Lastly, I will consider the modern incapacitation of touch. Here I engage with philosopher and phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas, and particularly with his notion of 'the

caress'. In this discussion, I endeavour to make explicit the nihilistic streak which almost invariably attends modern epistemology. I will argue that the modern commitment to deferral, of which Levinas' caress is an emblematic example, incapacitates touch by categorically eschewing the notion of consummation. I will argue that in the mystagogues' nuptial interpretations of the eucharist we can find a salutary challenge to the parching thesis of perpetual betrothal. In the doctrine of the real presence of Christ, which the mystagogues heartily maintain, and in the form of their joyous and erotic expression of it, we discover a blessed rebuttal to nihilism in a mystagogical, nuptial epistemology grounded in eschatology and ordered toward consummation.

1. Hearing

1.1 The silencing of creation

The modern malady of hearing afflicts our capacity to hear the speechfulness of creation, or, as I called it, the *logocity* of being. This incapacitation lies in the modern thesis of neutrality, which reduces creation to the empirically discoverable, denying any concept of a common song of creation that communicates our ontological origin and end in God the Creator. The anaesthetic effect of the ontological commitments of late modernity casts doubt upon the communicativeness of the cosmos, the transcendent and theological heart of that communication, and the *koinonia* between creatures. This fractures the pedagogical relationship between humanity and nature. It casts doubt upon the possibility of hearing the sacramental *mathesis* of creation which echoes an anticipation of beatitude. The incapacitation of hearing enters the modern thought-world by means of a metaphysical commitment: the denial of the indigeneity of *logos* within creatures, rendering the world essentially silent.

To illustrate the modern commitment to a silent cosmos, I will introduce a discussion offered by anthropologist, Anne Meneley. In her 2008 article, 'Oleo-Signs and Quali-Signs:

The Qualities of Olive Oil', Meneley considers the cultural significance of olive oil.[10] Her discussion of olive oil manifests, albeit implicitly, a surprisingly clear account of the modern metaphysics of nature and sensation. Meneley's discussion of the 'qualisigns'[11] of olive oil – the symbolic potential of its physical properties – promulgates a modern doctrine of creation, whereby earthly phenomena lay neutrally and blankly as the material substrate of cultural meaning-making. Meneley's attentiveness to physicality in 'Oleo-Signs' provides an instructive point of contrast with Theodore's mystagogical call to consider the 'durable effect' of oil and Cyril's instruction to 'let the oil teach you'. All three reflect patiently on the significance of sensation and the encounter between human bodies and oil, yet the mystagogues represent a very different ontology.

In 'Oleo-signs', Meneley critiques the state of play within the discipline of anthropology; in particular, prevailing approaches to materiality, sensation, and meaning. Meneley attempts from within the methodologies of the discipline to challenge its propensity to focus upon thematics and meaning-generation, while giving only a cursory treatment to the materiality of 'ritual objects'.[12] Meneley examines the 'qualisigns' of oil (a term she appropriates from Charles Sanders Peirce); these are the material aspects, or 'qualities', of a substance.[13] Meneley proposes to treat these material qualities as the natural instantiations of

[10] Anne Meneley, 'Oleo-Signs and Quali-Signs: The Qualities of Olive Oil', *Ethnos*, 73:3, 2008, 303-326.
[11] *Qualisign* is a term coined by Charles Sanders Peirce, along with *sinsign* and *legisign*, to categorize the modes by which symbols function as sign-vehicles. Qualisigns convey meaning by virtue of a particular (material) 'quality'. The notion is further developed in Keane, who proposed the idea of qualisign 'bundling': see Webb Keane, 'Semiotics and the social analysis of material things', *Language & Communication* 23 (2003), 409-425.
[12] She highlights, for instance, the legacy of Victor Turner's semeiotic theory; Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 308: '[Turner's] formulation suggests that the primary function of the materiality of the sign is to make the social or ideological meaning more persuasive to human participants… Whereas in earlier studies of symbolism, the ritual object was discussed primarily as a vehicle for carrying meaning, this study focuses directly on the 'qualisigns' of the object, the sensuous qualities of olive oil itself, which lend themselves to participate in larger schemas of value.'
[13] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 306. Meneley discusses, as she calls them, the 'oleo-signs' of oil: its luminosity, liquidity, spreadibility, durability, capacity to cleanse, capacity to act as a sealant or preservative, capacity to insulate, and its lack of miscibility in water.

olive oil's 'synaesthetic potential'.[14] According to this approach, objects possess properties which gather in certain configurations, or 'bundles', that, to a certain extent, condition and guide the uses and symbolic meanings of the object. In employing and promoting attention to 'qualisigns', Meneley aims to rectify the apparent neglect of materiality in anthropological approaches to the symbolic. Meneley argues that olive oil possesses a 'persuasive' arrangement of 'synaesthetic bundling'.[15] She writes,

> Rather than skipping past the carnal material world of creation to get to the transcendent meaning, I argue that it is more useful to look at the discrete sense of potentialities which arise out of the materiality of the object. Olive oil's persuasive qualisigns are the source of its longevity not only as a food, but as a source of spiritual succour.[16]

Thus, recognizing the tendency in contemporary anthropology to conceive of creation as a blank, or *silent,* canvas upon which humanity overlays a random, and wholly *arbitrary,* symbolic order, Meneley seeks to challenge the notion of *mere* arbitrariness in her presentation of the relationship between matter and meaning. She seeks to recall her confrères to acknowledge that signs have a 'rooting in the sensory'.[17] This insight is surely laudable, and, in the context of modern science (including the social sciences), it is surprisingly revolutionary. Lamentably, however, Meneley does not go on to explain *why* signs must be, or are, rooted in the sensory. She goes no further than to say, 'after all, one cannot make a potent symbol out of just anything.'[18]

The mystagogues would certainly agree. By a wholly different route, they too wish to inspire an attentiveness to the material. As Theodore says, God 'wished to convince us from

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[14] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 308. Meneley, drawing on Keane, argues that olive oil possesses a uniquely advantageous arrangement of qualisign-bundling: 'I am arguing that the particular qualisigns, and olive oil's synaesthetic potential by which it can appeal to many or all of the senses at once, allow it to have remained such a viable element in the lives of so many people over time and space.'

[15] Meneley uses the term 'synaesthetic-bundling' to emphasize the sensory, experiential aspects of the materiality of signs.

[16] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 321.

[17] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 308.

[18] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 308.

things belonging to this world'.[19] As far as the field of anthropology is concerned, Meneley's proposal *is* daring. Meneley herself admits that her approach could be accused of treading dangerously near the 'unfashionable' pitfall of 'suggesting a kind of universality or "naturalness" of the symbol.'[20] She assures the guild, however, that she suggests nothing of the sort: 'What I want to stress is that these qualities offer a series of potentialities for signs, rather than arguing that there is a universal, unchanging actuality of the meaning of olive oil.'[21] A bold move in the landscape of modern methodologies, but it offers, I argue, a rather unsatisfying ontology.

We can begin with a commendation. What Meneley intuits is that there is something stable, and even alluring, about the natural properties of olive oil. She, perhaps unconsciously, uses the language of attraction. As she says, olive oil 'appeals' to the senses; it possesses 'persuasive' qualities.[22] And, if my argument in previous chapters concerning God's allurement and education of the senses is to be accepted, then we could say that Meneley's intuition touches upon a fundamental feature of reality. The mystagogues were no strangers to 'synaesthatic bundling' – as we have seen, especially in Theodore's call to contemplate the 'durability' of oil, or the 'fittingness' of bread – though they would never speak of it in those terms, nor would they promote the ontology which gave rise to this grammar. If Meneley's argument were translated into a theological register, we could say that her intuition – that creatures possess symbolically-potent qualities that are 'rooted in the material' and which guide our engagement with the world – comes an appreciable way toward the idea that creation is *speaking*, and that we are being shaped or *instructed* by its song. What Meneley is unable to

[19] Theodore, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist,* trans. Alphonse Mingana. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 76.
[20] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 305.
[21] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 305-306.
[22] Meneley, 'Oleo-signs', 308, 321.

claim in ‘Oleo-signs’ is that the ‘speech’ of olive oil is anything more than a random, arbitrary, albeit ‘persuasive’, arrangement of features.

Here is where the anaesthesia of modernity exerts itself upon hearing. The aversion to ‘universals’ and ‘actuality’ within the modern paradigm – what we observe in Meneley’s compulsion to caveat her positive appraisal of olive oil’s symbolic potential, and her near-apology for appealing to a notion of ‘nature’ – proposes an account of creation as essentially *silent.* Creation simply manifests, passively, a random arrangement of matter, which bears no purposive logic or *logos;* no order toward an end, nor toward the human subject. In this metaphysic, the natural communicates nothing more than an arbitrary amalgamation of quali-signs, which affect the sensing and symbol-making subject by chance. Humanity is not subject to an *address* by creation; we are subject only to the meaningless, albeit stimulating, convergence of material properties with the physical senses. Olive oil enjoys perhaps a felicitous ‘bundling’ of features, but its *logos*, as it were, does not participate in a providential pedagogy. Read through the analogy of hearing, we could say that creation makes a recognizable sound – that is, it communicates a phenomenological character – but it does not have a voice or a *logos*. Meneley cannot say that the ‘appealing’ arrangement of oleo-signs belongs to a greater logic, a greater address; what the mystagogues are able to recognize as the divine address, carried in the humble tones of the creaturely order.

This set of commitments not only alleges a silent cosmos, it also frustrates the *koinonia* (and so the eschatological *symphonia*) of creaturehood. In the metaphysical and semeiotic paradigm undergirding modern anthropology, human meaning-making becomes a fiction which is practiced, or exerted, upon an autonomous and indifferent cosmos. Without a theological grounding of the whole created order in God, humanity is isolated and buffered from our fellow creatures, and therefore the activities of culture and religion reduce to *humanity talking to itself.* And this is the loneliness of *homo incurvatus in se,* which modern empiricism

proffers as the truth of nature and knowledge.[23] The crucial difference between the modern and the mystagogical approach to creation lies in the fact that the modern empiricist ontology denies creation's speechfulness. It denies the referential heart of creaturely *logoi;* that is, the intimate tie between earthly natures and the divine *Logos* from Whom they derive their very character, and *to Whom* their unique and communicative existences point.

1.2 Curatio: The longing to learn

To be sure, the mystagogical account of creation – of the creaturely address that echoes the voice of God and bears a divine and alluring pedagogy – is not the same as the naïve 'universality' and 'naturalness' that Meneley rejects. The remedy is richer. The mystagogues exhort the neophytes to take this very leap into a 'universal' or 'natural' account of the symbol – but it is one in which matter and sensation are *naturally symbolic*. That is, 'natures' exist as divine speech and creaturehood derives of divine intelligence and participates in God's calling in the humble earthly utterances of being. As such, they find their place in the divine and transfiguring pedagogy, mediating an instruction which leads to union in the rudiments of creation and in the liturgy. They are *symbolic* because they participate in the *symballein* of salvation – the 'throwing together' of Man and God.[24] Creaturely voices are utilized by the mystagogical pedagogue, but, in the end, they serve Christ the Teacher. It is the sacramentality of creation that explains its alluring persuasiveness. Meneley flirts with something bearing a resemblance to a sacramental ontology, but the commitments of her craft constrain and ultimately block her embrace of it.

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[23] See Chapter One, section 1. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment of speech.

[24] David Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World,* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016), 85. 'Claiming that the world is sacramental is not merely a cosmological comment, it is a soteriological one, as well, which means that a complete theology of cosmic sacrament must attend not only to the symbol thrown, but to the symbolizer who throws it and the recipient who is required to catch it… Similarly, the sacrament does not exist in the world or in my mind, the sacrament happens when a cosmos successfully throws God and man together.'

As I argued in Chapter One, creatures, humanity included, share the kinship of their common origin in divine speech. And this is the prevenient grace which makes learning possible. The mystagogues heartily embrace the capacity of earthly natures to instruct humanity in divine truths. Cyril said of the oil of anointing, 'it shall teach you all things if it abides in you'.[25] As I argued in Chapter Three, in the mystagogies a sense which comes close to agency is attributed to the creaturely order, wherein the inherent characteristics of earthly natures are drawn up and fulfilled in the liturgy and the epicletic advent of God's presence. And, by their natural qualities, which are made intelligible in our worship, our fellow creatures *teach us,* even in the ordinary, to recognize and long for God's presence. They also mediate, in humble earthly ways, God's divinizing fashioning of Christ's likeness in us. As I showed in my reading of Theodore, and the Syriac translation of the 'inseparability' of oil from the foreheads of the anointed, a likeness of Trinitarian intimacy is communicated to us through the senses. I suggest that Meneley's language of attraction, of 'appeal' and 'persuasion', reveals the yet-abiding human longing to truly *learn*; to *hear* our fellow creatures and to have our desires for the heights of heaven, for the beauty of God and for salvation, educated under the tutelage of 'cloddish earth'.[26]

When we arrest the salvific entailment of the senses by silencing the earthly *logoi,* and if we deny creation's indigenous voice that invites humanity to Christ, we stymie our calling to consummate knowledge through praise. In the account of creation that I have drawn from the mystagogies, the ears of the initiated are opened and trained in the liturgy to hear the inner depth (the βάθος) of creation; the *mystery* of creation. And the mysteriousness of creation is not that of sublime alterity or blank indifference; it is the echo deep in the depths of nature of creation's profound relation to Christ, through Whom and for Whom all things were made. The

[25] St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments,* ed. F.L. Cross, (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press: 1977), Mystagogical Catechesis (*MC)* 3.7, 66.
[26] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* (London: Routledge, 2001), 14.

mystery of creaturehood is called out in creaturely *voices* that invite humanity to join, and take in hand through liturgy, the praises of God. Hearing ordered towards God is the condition of true knowledge and creaturely communion. The restoration of the intimate fraternity of creaturehood lies in the creaturely communion of praise. In this, epistemology is fulfilled in doxology. The eschatological *symphonia* of creaturely *logoi* is the glorious end from which the modern paradigm of silence has barred itself. Mystagogy reminds us that our calling is not to arbitrary meaning-making, but rather to the music-making of creation rolling toward blessedness.

2. Speaking

2.1 A modern aparrhesia

The incapacitation of speech that I seek to address here is the particular form of *aparrhesia*, being 'unable to speak', which exerts itself within certain modes of modern theology. Here I use *aparrhesia* as an analogy for the metaphysical encumbrance that accompanies the modern 'problem' of epistemology. Within an immanentized vision of the world, and a sublimated account of the divine, human speech and knowledge can only be, at best, hopelessly inadequate and incongruous, and, at worst, presumptuous and violent, towards its object. In Chapters One and Two, I drew on Lactantius' notion of the 'office' of the tongue: 'For when the tongue has begun to speak truth – that is, to set forth the excellency and majesty of the one God – then only does it discharge the office of its nature.'[27] The presumed difficulty of speech in modern thought arises out of a misapprehension of the *office* of the tongue; in the assumption that the power and vocation of this faculty, and the intellective capacity it symbolises, lies in predication and domestication rather than in the office of truth-telling, confession, and praise.

[27] Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, Bk.4.xxvi, ANF VII, 127.

Particularly under the auspices of a nominalist account of language and the subjective turn of idealism, there prevails a relationship of distrust, and a suspicion of arbitrariness, in our understanding of speech and thought. Speech is deemed unsuited to both divine *and* created realities. And this can be observed in modern theology's fascination with apophasis.[28] The modern account of the 'difficulty' of language – and here I draw on the deaf-mute's affliction of *mogilalos* in Mark 7, 'speaking with difficulty' – results in a fundamental difficulty *with* language. Theologically, this 'difficulty' arises out of the desire to take seriously the prohibition of idolatry, and, philosophically, as a response to the modern sensitivity to depth and alterity. However, these commitments and sensitivities can take on an excess that becomes disorder; a hesitance and censure which is at counter purposes to the baptismal gift of *parrhesia.*

We observe this particularly in the modern theological impulse to prioritize a thematic of silence. Here I turn to Katherine Sonderegger's *Systematic Theology,* volume One, which is dedicated to the doctrine of God.[29] In this volume, Sonderegger proposes an ordering disposition for the task of theology; and she finds it in the *shema:* 'hear O Israel the Lord our God is One'. Sonderegger positions the *shema* as the place to root and commence a systematic theology; and, indeed, any contemplation of God. Thus, she reads in the *shema's* command a normative posture: silence at the foot of the holy mountain. She writes beautifully of how thought about God must be approached in light of the *shema's* predication of divine Oneness:

> We pray that God's entire Goodness may shield us and in that shielding, pass by so that we may know the mystery of God…The relationship between Divine Oneness and our intellect is itself a Mode of the Divine Being, in mission to us, raising in us created words for that which is ineffable. We hunger to know the Oneness of God, to rest in it, and that hunger is the Spirit's gift to us quickening our appetite for divine things, our search into the Mystery of God, the pilgrimage of the Christian life. There is, then, no fully proper or exhaustively third-personal knowledge of the Lord's Oneness… We do not stand and look at this

[28] A relevant example in contemporary theology can be found in Rachel Muers, *Keeping God's Silence: towards a theological ethics of communication,* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).
[29] Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: vol.1 The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2015). Part I: The One God.

> predicate: always, Divine Oneness is contemplated on bended knee. It is an encounter between the One Lord of heaven and earth and His creature at the foot of the holy mountain, and in the cleft of a rock.[30]

The mystical potential in Sonderegger's opening is profound. In many ways, it expresses a sensibility that resembles the erotic, affective aspect of *chōrētikos theou;* especially when she speaks of the Holy Spirit's 'quickening' of the appetite. Sonderegger herself quickens her readers' appetite from the beginning in her language of the 'search into the Mystery of God' and the mission of Divine Being, 'raising in us created words for that which is ineffable'. However, instead of leaning into this divine 'mission' that capacitates human speech beyond its nature, the remainder of her discussion concerning 'The One God' turns instead to silence. The key to understanding the character of the rest of this volume of the *Systematics* is the image at the end of the quotation, humanity's prostration before the mystery of God as 'an encounter between the One Lord… and His creature at the foot of the holy mountain.'

For Sonderegger, the Oneness of God is 'a foundational predicate' which refers to the 'surpassing Divine Uniqueness and Freedom' beneath which all doctrine submits.[31] Her intuition that all theology, and, in the end, all human knowing, must begin not with speaking, but with hearing and prostration before the divine address, is admirable. And the strength of this intuition as she proceeds through the work is palpable. Though Sonderegger nods toward avenues that could suggest a more participatory theology of Oneness – e.g., 'God's entire goodness' as the foundation of relationship and knowing, and the eliciting of 'created words' for the ineffable – she moves immediately into an apophatic vein.[32] This is because she reads the theological meaning of *eḥad,* 'One', in terms of what she calls Unicity. Of course, the radical uniqueness of God is not an object of quarrel. The issue with Sonderegger's presentation of Unicity is, I suggest, rather that it is conceived primarily in terms of God's absolute and

[30] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 23-24.
[31] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 25.
[32] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1*, 27. 'The foundational predicate of God's Oneness makes any doctrine of apophaticism, of knowledge through denial, or "negative way" a close ally.'

insulated distinction from creation. And this sense of radical autonomy produces an account of creation, and 'created words', as categorically and *permanently* inept. This is where the incapacitation of speech occurs. As Sonderegger says, Oneness is 'a predicate of deepest mystery and negation'.[33] God's Unicity is regarded as prior to, and separate from, creation's participation in God – rather than inclusive of it. Oneness, for Sonderegger, is contrastive: 'The Lord's radical Uniqueness frees Him from all comparisons, all genus and likeness. The One God is free from His creatures; more, He in his Unicity is Himself freedom.'[34]

This leads to Sonderegger's second foundational principle. She proposes that the, equally foundational, corollary to the predicate of Oneness lies in the First Commandment – in the prohibition of idolatry.[35] These two, she argues, must be carried together as the guiding measure for all subsequent theological endeavours. The prohibition of idolatry becomes for Sonderegger the vantage point from which she understands 'created words'. And this brings a particular implied estimation of the human capacity for knowledge, and the pedagogical and doxological vocation (*vox*) of creation. As God's Oneness is a predicate of 'annihilating concreteness', it is, as Sonderegger says, 'a positivity more direct and affirmative than any creaturely definition'.[36] And in the contrastive pair of Unicity and idolatry, idolatry is the purview of 'creaturely definition'. Sonderegger draws on Aquinas, Karl Barth, and Karl Rahner to establish an account of God's Oneness as coterminous with His freedom from creatureliness.

> [T]he negative correlate to Oneness is the idol, the similitude fashioned out of the likeness of creatures… There can be no affirmation of God that is not controlled by the radical negation of form, image, and likeness… the negation of all creatureliness must come first in our praise and speech about God… It is His freedom that is spoken of in the prohibition of idolatry, the freedom of God's unique Oneness.[37]

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[33] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 24.
[34] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 27.
[35] Sonderegger describes her discussion as a 'conceptual and systematic reflection on the conjoining of Oneness with the prohibition on idolatry'. *Systematic Theology 1,* 25.
[36] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 24.
[37] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 24, 29-30. Sonderegger aligns her discussion of Oneness with Rahner's 'Absolute Mystery'.

Although this admirably affirms the incomprehensibility and ineffability of God in His essence, I suggest that there is an inherent metaphysical bend in Sonderegger's approach which leads to disorder, and, in the end, to the affliction of muteness. Indeed, reflecting on Aquinas's *quaestio 3 (Prima Pars)* on the simplicity of God, Sonderegger reprises the image of prostration and commends, long before analogy, 'first bringing all speech to stunned silence… before the God of Horeb.'[38] The metaphysics implied in Sonderegger's Unicity is one of an insurmountable gulf between creatureliness and Creator. We hear Oneness as radical alterity. Here, muteness is not only called for, but required as the *truer* fulfilment of the office of the tongue.[39] A theological disposition of humility in the face of divine alterity is a privileged rule in modern theology; no less than it was in patristic theology.[40] Lamentably, however, in certain modern iterations right humility is applied as a principle of intransigent and perpetual abasement of the creaturely before the Holy Mountain; in devotion and in thought. The case is easily and convincingly made as regards divine ineffability. However, as I argued in Chapter Two, initiation is the entrance into a divinely-bestowed *confidence of speech* and a Christologically-secured *truth* of speech, the gift of *parrhesia,* which answers the silence.

Moreover, because it is a common inference (and one in which I, also, have heavily engaged) to draw out the analogical relation between knowledge of creatures and knowledge of God, a second and related silence afflicts epistemology in general. That is, radical apophaticism becomes the measure not only of theology, but of all knowing. The apophaticism which has a proper place in the contemplation of God, is promulgated *in excess* upon the possibility of knowledge altogether.[41] There is, what I will call, an iconoclastic tendency in

[38] Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology 1,* 32-33.
[39] Sonderegger does not discount speech wholesale; with Aquinas, she affirms that any account of the Divine Attributes must engage with analogy. It is the *priority* of silence in Sonderegger that I seek to question.
[40] Though, I suggest that patristic theology enjoyed a more harmonious relation between the apophatic and the kataphatic.
[41] See, for instance, Rachel Muers' critique of what she sees as the tendency toward domination implicit within 'logocentric' culture, *Keeping God's Silence*, 55: 'The "powerful" and "productive" discourse [of speech] seeks

modern thought, represented in this impulse toward silence, that relates uneasily to the iconic nature of creation. This modern iconoclasm casts doubt upon the capacity of creation to communicate divine pedagogy with *akribeia* (precision), and upon the human vocation to read, *aloud*, the icon of creation in a doxology beyond our nature. The modern malady of *aparrhesia*, having no freedom or power to speak, afflicts our prevailing ontologies and epistemologies when there arises a disordered commitment to negation and when the fastidious avoidance of idolatry becomes iconoclasm.

2.2 Curatio: Healing iconoclasm and diabolical servitude

In Sonderegger's prescription of the 'radical negation of form, image, likeness', she fails to recognize that form, image, and likeness *are our way in*. Those avenues of *kataphasis* and analogy which are flirted with and immediately eschewed in Sonderegger are the very avenues along which the mystagogues lead the neophyte – 'by things belonging to this world' as Theodore said. As I argued in Chapter Two, there is a true speech for which the *vox humana* is capacitated to utter. I offered this argument under the theme of *parrhesia* – freedom and frankness of speech. In light of Chrysostom's thematic of the bold and truthful speech grounded in belonging, which is given to the baptised, I argued that in initiation speech is divinely capacitated for the utterance of truth, for eschatological participation, and for words of union.

As we have seen, Sonderegger gives priority to negation for the sake of avoiding idolatry in our praise and speech about God. I suggest, however, that the idolatry which ought to be rejected lies not in creatureliness or similitude, but rather in the *passions*. The passions are disorders of human love and will, and they afflict especially our knowledge and use of creation. Creatureliness apprehended and loved wrongly becomes an idol. Similitude embraced as its own end, embraced as predication rather than invitation, becomes an idol. But the

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to expand its territory through the silencing of others and the ever-closer determination and definition of objects of knowledge. "It is… a language rooted in a delusion of omnipotence."' 55.

opposite of the idol is not Unicity, it is *icon.* As David Fagerberg says, 'the world has not caused our idolatry, rather our idolatry has wronged the world'.[42] It is not that we should not love creation, or 'created words', it is that we should not love them wrongly. In this sense, I suggest that the prohibition of idolatry relates much more fundamentally to the preservation of union – to the guarding of the iconographic routes of love that track *through* creation – than it does to the preservation of divine alterity.

The idolator suffers from impaired hearing and confused speech. The idolator mis-hears the *logoi* of fellow creatures, their alluring invitation to doxology, and seeks the satisfaction of their call in the immanent earthly plane. The idolatry of ending where we are meant to be led on is to have our knowledge and love *held captive* by perceptions and desires severed from their iconic relation to Christ. That is to say, the idolater is a slave. Thus, to love creation in a disordered degree and manner is the space of servitude; and, as such, it is the dominion of the *Tyrannos*. As Chrysostom taught regarding the tyranny of Satan, those in servitude cannot speak. They suffer the bonds of *aparrhesia*. We could say that those who approach the world as an end in itself are afflicted with the captivity of idolatry and the *aparrhesia* that derives thereof. The cure, however, lies not in silence, but in a different sort of word. The speech that heals *aparrhesia* lies in the *logos* of renunciation and the *logos* of adherence to Christ; and this refers to both the renunciation of the devil and the ascetic renunciation that restores our relationship with creation as icon.[43]

Idolatry is a religious temptation, just as it is also an epistemological and theological temptation; and it is the risk of the latter to which Sonderegger seeks to be attentive, the risk of imagining we can 'pin God down'. The solution, however, is not the rejection of the faculty of

[42] David W. Fagerberg: *Consecrating the World,* 79.
[43] David W. Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism,* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2013),72, 77: 'the asceticism of spiritual attention learns the inestimable art of seeing everything as an image of God… Asceticism is the process of making the icon more accurate to the prototype.'

speech (or knowledge), but its emancipation. Speech must be capacitated for its noble contribution to our union with Christ. The negation called for is not a humility unto silence, but the bold rejection of that which sunders or 'throws apart' *(diaballō)*. In the liturgy, speech is precisely what removes us from the *schema* of diabolical servitude. In the speech of words *and* in the speech of the body, the baptismal candidates exercise the boldness to abjure Satan *in os putaris*, 'as it were to his face'.[44] This speech is grounded in ontology. We see this in Theodore's explanation of the pre-baptismal exorcisms, which he portrayed as a trial of ownership over the human race. The exorcists speak boldly and truly against the devil's claim through their proclamation of our *origin* in God and Christ's defeat of death and evil through His Passion. They *speak truly* of creaturehood (our creaturehood) when they speak a word that reflects and enacts the return of humanity to God.

In Chapter Two I argued that speech is capacitated for the ends of union and praise, and that in the liturgy those ends of speech and knowledge are made present. The office of the tongue is not to be found in definitive or exhaustive speech about God or our fellow creatures. The vocation of human speech is to be capacitated to boldly address God as Father, to name creatures by their origins in Him, and to *liturgize* – to employ our *logos,* and to gather fellow *logoi,* in the doxological return to God.[45] While there is no presumption that by our speech we do justice to the fullness of God, the capacitated speech of and about the 'adopted as sons' does justice to the speechfulness of creation and the speechfulness of our nature. In these the tongue discharges its office rightly: it sets forth the true praises of the One God *by means of,* not in spite of, creatureliness. Alongside our fellow creatures, gathered in liturgical chorus, the *logos*

[44] Ambrose, *de Myst.* 2.7, *SC* 25 bis, 158.

[45] I am not suggesting the recovery of a naïve account of speech as predication, or of truth as epistemological 'correspondence'. As Catherine Pickstock argues in *Truth in Aquinas,* truth and knowledge are not about representational *adequation,* as conceived of in the modern sense, but rather a capacity for 'catching [a fellow creature] on its way back to God' (12). 'Aquinas' fundamental theory of truth is as theological as it is philosophical, and is only a correspondence theory in the sense which depends entirely upon the metaphysical notion of participation in the divine Being… any truth whatsoever is a participation in the eternally uttered Logos' (4).

kosmou is fulfilled in words of union. Turning to the east you say, *Syntassomai soi, Christe.*[46] I turn to you, O Christ.

2.3 Curatio: The bent knee and the thrice-holy hymn

Though Sonderegger makes a compelling case for approaching the task of theology (and, by extension, the possibility of knowledge itself) from the vantage point of the foot of the holy mountain,[47] I propose that mystagogy commends to us an alternative thematic image. Theology is done, rather, at the foot of the Throne. I argue that a Christian account of truth, knowledge, and speech must be informed, at its heart, by the liturgy of the Sanctus and the prostration of eschatological adoration. Building upon the mystagogical hope of *parrhesia*, I offer as the normative biblical scene by which we understand the nature and end of theology the Isaianic vision of the heavenly throne room filled with praise. I affirm Sonderegger's beautiful, guiding image of humanity hearing and contemplating 'on bended knee', while seeking to challenge her priority of silence with the humble, yet powerful, speechfulness of that very bent knee. I suggest that the remedy for the modern discomfort with language lies in the *logos* of that same genuflection; in the *parrhesia* of prostration.

As I argued in Chapter Two, the body-at-liturgy speaks a true word. This was especially evident in the mystagogues' discussions of the '*schema* of captivity' – namely, the kneeling which is held throughout the renunciation and adherence. In the Antiochene reading, the bent knee makes manifest humanity's 'ancient fall', as Theodore says; or, as Chrysostom says, it

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[46] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.60; Chrysostom, *Ad Illuminandos Cat. Deut.* 2.60, Migne, *PG* 49, 240.

[47] In the Preface, Sonderegger acknowledges that she has made distinctive methodological choices in commencing with God's Oneness. She admonishes the reader to hold their impulse toward Christology, which she assures will certainly be 'fitly honoured' (xix) in her volume on the Doctrine of Christ. 'In one way we must acknowledge that this dogmatic volume cuts against the grain of modern Protestant dogmatics: … this theology is neither Christomorphic nor Christocentric. A repeated refrain in this work must be that not all is Christology!' (xvii). Her approach by no means reduces to an aggressive silence of deferral, and she gives a delicate account of what she calls a 'compatibilist' relation between God and creation (xix-xx). Sonderegger identifies two primary options for orienting a systematic theology: the theocentric (e.g. beginning with Divine Unicity, as Sonderegger has done), and the Christocentric (she points to the Barthian turn to Incarnation and 'narrative'). I, on the other hand, suggest a third orientation: the liturgical, or mystagogical. This third option approaches our knowledge of God and of creation from the vantage point of the sacraments, which commend a profound sensitivity to creation's participative ontology, and wherein the metaphysical and the 'narrative' are joined in harmony.

'reminds' the baptismal candidates 'from what evil you are delivered and to what good you will dedicate yourselves'.[48] In both Theodore and Chrysostom, the bent knee that speaks the true confession of sin and servitude is transfigured into the true confession of Christ's Lordship. In the Adherence, the language of the body becomes a speech of adoration. As Chrysostom says, the bent knee 'acknowledges', or 'says the same thing' *(homologeō)* in unison with the voice: 'I adhere to Christ'. The body performs a *parrhesia* of posture that tells the story of the Fall and redemption in Christ.

The creaturely word of humanity-at-liturgy is so much more than a predicative word. It is a participative word, and an eschatological word. As both Theodore and Chrysostom have shown, the bent knee speaks not only confession and adoration; it also instantiates, in every kneeling, the eschatological prostration: 'that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth' (Philippians 2:10). This is not *merely* or emptily referential. The transfiguration of the bent knee of servitude into the genuflection of eschatological adoration imparts to us the confidence that, in the liturgy, God takes the humility – the humiliation even – of creaturely words, which by all accounts should lead us to an abased silence, and fills them with the power of Truth, His own self.[49]

In Chapter Four, I reflected on the paradox of the impossible doxology of the Sanctus – the holy song of the Seraphim, sung ceaselessly around the divine throne, that humanity is called to join. As Theodore taught, to name God 'holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts' is to give *fitting* praise to the Holy Trinity; praise that we are not fit to utter. And yet, as Theodore

[48] Theodore, *Commentary*, 45. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions*, Ancient Christian Writers, no. 31, ed., trans. Paul. W. Harkins (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), *Stavronikita* 2.18, 50.

[49] Chrysostom similarly speaks of angels bearing the mere words of the candidates in the renunciation and adherence to the heavenly realm where they are written in the books of heaven. *Stav.* 2.20, ACW 51: 'The words are few but their power is great. The angels who are standing by and the invisible powers rejoice at your conversion, receive the words from your tongues, and carry them up to the common Master of all things. There they are inscribed in the books of heaven… Receiving only these words from you, He entrusts to you [realities, a great treasure/such a store of treasures].'

says, ‘it behoves us’ to sing these praises. Theodore and Cyril’s mystagogies contain the theme of humanity being made-fitting for heavenly participation, made capable of the fitting praise of the divine. In Theodore, our entrance into the impossible doxology is Paschal and eucharistic. The eucharist, which makes present Christ’s sacrifice, is like the flaming coal that touched Isaiah’s unclean lips, fitting him to offer his speech to God’s service: ‘Here I am, send me’ (Isa. 6:8). For Cyril, it is epicletic: the Holy Spirit ‘touches’ and ‘makes-holy’, ‘makes-worthy’, not only the elements of bread and wine, but also our human nature, making us ‘the holy ones’ *(hagioi)* to whom the ‘holy things’ (*ta hagia)* correspond.[50]

We find in mystagogy the salutary, liturgical patterns that can restore a hopeful and liberated vision of the human *logos.* In liturgy, God frees us from the *aparrhesia* of idolatry and empowers us to participate, even now, in ‘heavenly conversation’.[51] The impulse toward muteness comes nobly enough; the First Commandment to have no other Gods, to repent of idolatry, *befit* the absolute Uniqueness, Goodness, Beauty, and Perfection of God. But a disordered application of this law arises when it is accompanied by a dualist or autonomous doctrine of creation. In such an account, created words, and creation itself, can never be more than categorically inept, categorically unsuited; they can never be graciously lifted above their insufficiency. The liturgy rebuts the silencing of creation and the chronic suspicion of created words – replacing fear with confidence, *aparrhesia* with *parrhesia*. Thus, we can recognize how liturgy heals the mistaken understanding of speech as ordered toward predicative containment. Pressing the implications of my argument, we can say that Christ heals the pathologies of idealism, scepticism, and nominalism. Idealism places ‘things in themselves’ impenetrably out of reach such that a true word could never be spoken of, or with, our fellow

[50] Cyril, *MC* 5.7, 74. ‘for whatsoever the Holy Ghost has touched, is sanctified and changed.’
[51] As I argued in Chapter Two, Theodore’s translator’s use of ‘heavenly conversation’ (*húpākā šmayānāo*) can imply something deeper than citizenship or belonging. It can imply that the sacramental capacitation of speech entails humanity in divine discourse; the divine speech which underlies reality, and the ‘conversation’ of the heavenly order.

creatures. Nominalism claims that our speech is nothing more than an arbitrary or utilitarian appellation, and scepticism despairs of the power of *logos* or knowledge altogether. By the Holy Spirit, Christ capacitates us to 'speak clearly' *(laleō orthōs)* and to praise, and 'name', fittingly *(šmā w'lāḥmāʾít)*.

In the mystagogies, we find a scarcely-contained jubilance over the promise of communion with the divine; the promise of a knowledge that is not colonizing, but which is radically intimate, and radically confident *(parrhesia)* because it is doxological and nuptial. Mystagogy heals the excesses of hesitance and negation with the remedy of joy; the joy of initiation which the mystagogues so liberally commend. This is not to say that silence does not have a fitting place within a truly ordered *apophaticism* but it is to attune and align our theology and epistemology toward the joyous and confident speech of those who belong to God. This joy is more than merely circumstantial; it is more than a rosy quirk of ceremony. It sits at the heart of the life of the baptised, who have been made worthy of the sight, knowledge, and conversation of heaven.[52] Mystagogy walks, in its unique space of catechesis and mysticism, a track toward worship of the God who is One – and Who, by all accounts, should be acknowledged as an 'annihilating concreteness'. And yet, by His Incarnation and His drawing of the creaturely into the divine through the humble mundanity of the liturgy, Christ traverses and consummates that ontological distinction such that the divine Oneness meets us *in His oneness with us*.

3. Sight

3.1 The thesis of superfluity

The pathology of sight that I intend to address here is the modern thesis of superfluity; that is, the thesis that meaning is overlaid, superfluously, upon an indifferent cosmos, having

[52] Theodore, *Commentary*, 34: 'we become worthy to enter His house and enjoy its sight, its knowledge and its habitation, and to be also enrolled in the city and its [conversation/citizenship]. We then become the owners of a great confidence.'

no connection with the inner truth of creation. The affliction belongs to the same ontological approach that I challenged in my discussion of hearing – the commitment to an autonomous and neutral creation. Here, I will address the concomitant problem of epistemology, where meaning and knowledge are conceived as fundamentally arbitrary and imposed upon the world as a vestment of superfluity. This pathology undermines the orientation of sight toward its end of illumination. Within late-modern approaches to knowledge, which, diversely though reliably, embrace the Cartesian sundering of mind and matter and the subjective turn of Kantian idealism, knowledge comes to be understood as a cognitive practice of meaning-making and meaning-imposing. Under these philosophical commitments, knowledge, or 'truth', is reduced to an anthropological idiosyncrasy. Hermeneutics occurs in a self-referential stratum, dis-integrated from the world, where meaning is suspended between an unreachable empirical order (things-in-themselves) and a sublimated or relativized transcendent order. Knowledge, according to this modern metaphysic, is thus curtailed to an insulated middle space, a loft of interpretive fiction.

'Sight' features in all of this in the analogies employed to articulate these commitments philosophically. Both long before and long after the patristic period, sight has served as a metaphor for knowledge; for the beholding of truth.[53] In the modern period, the thematic of sight has been reconfigured to express the thesis of superfluity. We can see this in the rise of theories of 'the gaze' and in the subsequent interest in 'scopic regimes'.[54] Here, the theme of sight is appropriated and employed to convey the thesis that contextual matrices of power

[53] As Chrysostom says, 'to look fixedly means to know'. John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensibility of God,* trans. Paul W. Harkins, The Fathers of the Church (FOTC) vol.72, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1984), hom.4.23, p.124.

[54] For instance, Maurice Merleau-Ponty reflects on the relation between the subject and the world through the analogy of sight: 'that which exists is something to which we could not be closer than by palpating it with our look, things we could not dream of seeing "all naked" because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh.' Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: followed by working notes,* trans. Alphonso Lingis, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press,1968), 131. Ola Sigurdson promotes a similar sensibility in his book, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology,* trans. Carl Olsen, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

express and maintain themselves through systems of meaning and practice which are transmitted through culture.[55] That is, the social order of a given group develops and maintains itself through the cultivation of a (wholly arbitrary) way of seeing, experiencing, and making sense of the world.[56] The peculiarities of culture, so the theory goes, lend themselves to the cultivation of a set of perceptive and interpretive dispositions.[57] Within this account of meaning, the beliefs and practices of the church serve simply as a superfluous vesture of an essentially meaningless order.

Sight, thus conceived as a 'regime' of power and meaning, refers to that which mediates between the subject and the world. The thesis of superfluity arises when the mediation of sight is assumed to be an arbitrary veil of conditioning forces. And here is where the modern incapacitation of sight exerts itself: in the suggestion that this mediation – the 'sight' of human discernment – *is ultimately a process of occlusion rather than illumination.* Because meaning has no real relation to the world, and because it is superimposed arbitrarily upon the world, 'the gaze' or 'scopic regime' becomes the terminus of our vision.[58] In the thesis of superfluity, the capacity of sight is the power to *obscure* and *overshadow* the order of nature. The gaze does

[55] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies,* 280: 'meanings are the product of a complex social interaction among image, viewers, and context.'

[56] See Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies,* Part II The Gaze, 'The Liturgical Gaze' and 'The Scopic Regime of Christianity', pp. 274-294. Here, Sigurdson relies heavily on anthropologist Clifford Geertz's idea of culture as the process whereby meaning is transmitted and developed through embodied symbols. Geertz defined 'culture' as 'an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life', Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, (1973), cited in Sigurdson, 276.

[57] The church is one such 'culture'. Sigurdson argues that the church constructs and is constructed by the 'liturgical gaze'. As he says, 'its liturgy is the symbolic form through which the Christian faith is handed down, both as knowledge and as a way of orienting oneself in life. The one who participates in the liturgy of the church will thereby cultivate certain distinct dispositions for experiencing the world.' *Heavenly Bodies,* 276.

[58] It is particularly striking how reliably this modern thesis elevates as the visionary or the 'seer', the one with purportedly clear apprehension of truth, the philosopher or social scientist who illuminates with great erudition the contingency of these scopic regimes. Clifford Geertz, perhaps unknowingly, promotes 'the outside theorist' to this position of privileged apprehension: 'insofar as he or she can perceive in ritual the true basis of its meaningfulness for the ritual actors… the theorist can go beyond mere thought about activity to grasp the meaningfulness of the ritual. By recognizing the ritual mechanism of meaningfulness for participants, the theorist in turn can grasp its meaningfulness as a cultural phenomenon.' Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 28, quoting from Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973).

not illumine any indigenous meaning, and neither does it enter into a missional vocation of clarity and light.

The modern commitment to superfluity manifests not only in philosophical theories of knowledge, but it has also, more recently, appeared in the contemporary landscape of patristic studies. Though by no means embracing an explicitly nominalist understanding of the liturgies and theology of the early church, some recent forays in interdisciplinary readings of the mystagogies have, perhaps unwittingly, imbibed and deployed the thesis of superfluity. This is especially evident when patristic scholars attempt to incorporate analytical frameworks belonging to the social sciences. A relevant example appears in the work of patristic historian, Georgia Frank. Frank is a notable representative of the move to diversify the methodological horizons of patristic studies, her work exhibiting the cross-pollination between patristics and anthropology. Frank has written extensively on the role of the senses, embodiment, and emotion in the thought and practice of the patristic period. She incorporates analytical methods from the social sciences and psychology in her reconstructions of the lives of early Christians. What I mean to highlight in Frank is principally the grammar that she inherits from these disciplines and what this grammar implies as she uses it to explain the effects of initiation and the aims of mystagogical catechesis.

In *"Taste and See": The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century* (2001), Frank appeals to the sub-discipline of ritual studies in her account of the mystagogues' strategies for cultivating the 'eyes of faith' in the neophytes. That is, how the mystagogues move their hearers to 'see' the spiritual realities of the eucharist, or, more generally, how the neophytes' perceptions of the world could be trained and curated through liturgy and instruction. Frank reads the mystagogical homilies as repositories of perception-conditioning strategies. She thus suggests,

> The "eyes of faith" stood for a variety of mental images and visual processes taught to new Christians as a way to prepare them to receive the eucharistic bread and wine. Without erasing the evidence of the physical senses, these visual strategies generated a host of mental images that would reframe the physical perception of the Eucharist.[59]

Frank interprets the mystagogical homilies in terms of their shaping of the initiate's perceptions, how they 'see', and so experience, the worship of the Church and the wider world. And it is in her explanations of the *mechanisms* for building and infusing these 'visual strategies' where Frank has recourse to the grammar of ritual studies. What is crucial to notice in Frank's reading of the mystagogies is that, even in her explicit attentiveness to physicality, her explanation of what is happening in initiation orients around cognition. That is, her focus remains the subject, and the shaping of perceptions *within the subject.* Though she does not draw forth this conclusion explicitly, Frank's analysis (at least where it draws upon anthropological tools of interpretation) suggests, again, a fundamentally autonomous and indifferent world of matter and experience, and it implies that the divine realities that the mystagogues are concerned to lead their hearers to participate in are, in the end, 'situated' in the loft of hermeneutics. As she says,

> Accompanied by prescribed postures and gestures, such as looking up, looking down, or nesting hands, the mental images invoked by preachers constructed and thereby situated divine presence in eucharistic space… By this steady layering of imaginal bodies over physical perceptions, the initiate was prepared to perceive and receive the Eucharist.[60]

In one poignant example, Frank illustrates her argument through a reading of Chrysostom's analogy of the painter. We recall from Chapter Three that Chrysostom expresses the divinizing transfiguration of baptism with the image of an artist, who first sketches the royal figure and then, as he says, 'daub[s] on the true colours'.[61] Chrysostom then likens this to the human soul. 'Consider that your soul is an image [εἰκόνα]', he says, which in baptism is

[59] Georgia Frank, '"Taste and See": The Eucharist and the Eyes of Faith in the Fourth Century,' *Church History* Vol. 70. Issue 4., (Dec. 2001), 621.
[60] Frank, "Taste and See", 642.
[61] See Chapter Three, section 6.2 Image and Likeness.

'[daubed with] the true colour of the Spirit,' and through this the 'royal image shines forth'.[62] Frank uses Chrysostom's analogy *as an analogy* for how she understands the cognitive effects of mystagogical instruction:

> The mind's ability to generate the needed mental images was critical for the eyes of faith… the neophyte had to make (and preserve) for herself a new image… Until the colour was applied, the artist [read: mystagogue] was free to erase, correct, or substitute the image… Like the wine-stained mouth of the communicant, the entire moral self was tinctured through mental imagery… In addition to brilliance, Chrysostom added colour and space to the imaginal bodies he conjured, giving chromatic depth to the baptismal robes and the taste of eucharistic wine still fresh on the lips.[63]

Frank's alluring turns of phrase and her sensitivity to the mystagogues' rhetorical sophistication and their appreciation for the persuasive pedagogy of matter, I heartily affirm. However, what must be challenged is the suggestion that what is occurring in the liturgy, and the reality that mystagogy serves, is merely, or even primarily, the conditioning of cognition. The thesis of superfluity abides and rules in the grammar that Frank has acquired from ritual studies. This is the language of 'generating', 'constructing', and 'layering' of mental images.[64] I have no quarrel with Frank's sensitivity to the aesthetic and emotional persuasiveness of expert homiletics, nor with her attentiveness to the way physicality lends itself to the training of our understanding. The question is, rather, whether the baptised have received, through their participation in the rites of initiation and the teachings of the mystagogues, true, salvific, and eschatological, participation in the Light of Christ, or whether they have received merely the peculiar hermeneutic-overlay of their worshipping community. Frank may not intend to suggest solely the latter; but, in an exercise that gives methodological primacy to the modern grammar of ritual studies, the 'illumination' of the initiate can never be more than the

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[62] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions, Montfaucon* 2.22-23, ACW 179-180.
[63] Frank, "Taste and See", 637.
[64] Frank also comments on the mystagogues' use of the tools of rhetoric: 'This power of language to generate visibility is critical… for understanding the fourth-century worshiper's sensory involvement in the Eucharist.' Frank, "Taste and See", 641.

cultivation of an arbitrary scopic regime. And thus, we cannot hope for participation in anything more than a contrived and superfluous 'truth'.

3.2 Curatio: Illumination and anointing

As a movement toward the healing of the modern pathology of sight, the thesis of superfluity and occlusion, I offer the mystagogical account of baptismal illumination. In Chapter Three, I argued that the mystagogues' homilies on baptism reveal a healing and empowerment of sight which fulfils the ends of our visual and intellective capacities in four ways: the illumination of the subject, that is, the enabling of our sight and knowledge to perceive divine and mundane truths, and the relation between them, with precision *(akribeia);* the illumination of the object, that is, the unveiling of creaturely epiphany and iconicity; the drawing of the baptised into the Light of Christ which undergirds the reality and mystery of visuality itself; and, finally, the priestly calling upon the illumined.

In the first instance, we must reaffirm the *epiphanic* as a constituent part of the ontology and teleology of creation. As I have already defended this commitment, namely in terms of the speechfulness of creation, I need not repeat the argument here. But it serves to note the pervasiveness and pluriformity of the assertion that the world is neutral, silent, opaque, and that it resists human knowledge and communion.[65] In a sense, the creation-ward aspect of modern incapacitation lies in a fundamental pessimism regarding creation's availability to our perception – in the denial of the longing and *logos* of the creaturely order to have its luminescence entailed in the universal telos of creation wherein all natures are illumined in and by Christ. It is to deny the bend of creaturely light toward an eschatological communion of worship alongside humanity. In the mystagogical perspective, creation shines with the

[65] Phillip Blond, 'God and Phenomenology', in *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology,* ed. Phillip Blond (London: Routledge, 1998), 203: 'Theology cannot accept that there is any aspect of the created world that is essentially more manifest apart from God than with Him, yet is it exactly this assumption that appears to have governed the accounts of the phenomenal world that both Heidegger and Husserl [and their inheritors] have given.'

epiphanic light of creaturely participation in the divine, creative, Logos.[66] As Chrysostom argued, creation's theophany is 'precise': creaturely natures reveal the Creator with *akribea.* This radiance is ordered not only towards worship of the Creator; it is also suited and ordered toward the illumined eyes of the baptised.[67]

This is not to say that there are not grave and persistent difficulties which afflict the faculty of sight. The mystagogues were not ignorant of this. As Chrysostom explored and analogized in his writings, humanity is beset by the darkness of death, which obscures our vision and distorts our knowledge. The paradigm of death, of sin and finitude, *does* cause us to read the world wrongly. The mist, or 'eye gum', of disordered passions *does* impede our capacity to see things 'as they really are'. But these originate in the problem of sin; they are not, fundamentally, a *constitutive* fault in the logos of sight. The impediments of sin, I am convinced, are precisely what modern scepticism intuits. But, as the sceptic has internalized the modern dualism between thought and matter, the blind leap of hermeneutics (knowledge) can only ever be conceived of as the arbitrary shrouding of an indifferent, or infinitely receding, world with a veil of contingent structures of cognition.

The 'problem' of epistemology necessarily follows when we reduce creation to blank indifference and knowledge to representation; and it is exacerbated when we posit a fundamental and insurmountable distance between our perceptive and intellective faculties and the world. The true incapacitation arises when we misunderstand the proper function of sight and assume that its logic orients toward a panoptic colonising of the world. The true end of vision and knowledge lies instead in the apprehension of mystery, iconicity, and the advent of

[66] To repeat Simon Oliver's beautiful articulation, 'The radiant quality of creatures which make themselves known or communicate their being in the emanation of themselves… is… a participation in the radiant beauty of the Word which proceeds from the Father who is 'principle without principle'. Oliver, 'The Beauty of the Son', unpublished seminar lecture, private copy provided by the author and quoted with permission.

[67] As I suggested in Chapter Three, in my repurposing of Plato's extramission theory, true knowledge arises in the mingling of kindred fires: the light of Christ within and the christophanic radiance of creation, 'like falls upon like'.

eschatological realities *in* and *through* mundane realities. The problem is not that the world is opaque, the problem is that we have become desensitized and impervious to truth's light.

The salutary rebuttal to the thesis of superfluity, or sight as obfuscation, that I offer here lies primarily in the fourth aspect of illumination: in the priestly calling of the baptised. This is a remedial re-affirmation of the true and noble vocation of our powers of sight and knowledge – a vocation to which these powers are restored when they are opened and healed by Christ in baptism and filled by the Holy Spirit with the luminous eye-beam of the resurrection. Mystagogy offers us a *sacerdotal epistemology* that heals the anaesthetic pessimism of superfluity. The sacerdotal epistemology implied in mystagogy is grounded in a sacramental ontology, and it is confidently expectant of the possibility of true vision.

As I argued in Chapter Three, humanity is called and capacitated to conform our powers of sight to the binding energies of the Holy Spirit. I drew this argument particularly in light of Cyril and Theodore's teachings on the anointing: in Cyril's use of the language of figurehood – 'all things were in a figure wrought in you, because you are figures of Christ' – and in Theodore's characterization of the Holy Spirit as guarantor of firstfruits, 'He will be and remain with you, as it is through Him that you possess now the firstfruits.'[68] Building upon Cyril's teaching, I argued that the priestly vocation of the 'figures of Christ' entails the administering of the figurehood of creation. That is, humanity is called and capacitated to fulfil our office of apprehending and magnifying the Christo-phanic radiance of creation. This is a calling not only to be illumined, but to *illuminate* the world. Our sight and knowledge can be called 'precise' when we illuminate the eschatological end of creaturely brilliance. And our sight and knowledge can be called 'priestly' when we administer the world as icon.

[68] Cyril, *MC* 3.1, 63; Theodore, *Commentary,* 68.

This reading of the world is not the imposition of a superfluous hermeneutic overlay; it is the priestly imposition of consecration. The first obscures; and it only does so when it is *inaccurate,* when it lacks the *akribeia* of attunement to Christ. Consecration, on the other hand, sharpens the image-hood of creation. The salve to soften the wound of modern epistemology lies especially in the oil of anointing – in the literal anointing of the Church, *and* in the oil as analogy.[69] As Theodore says, the Holy Spirit, of whose 'durable' presence the oil is a sign, gives the baptised possession of the firstfruits of consummation. I suggested that the Spirit's power as guarantor of firstfruits, His divine corroboration of sacramental symbolism, relates to His place in the divine and substantial semeiosis of the Trinity. Just as the real and con-substantial, iconic relation between the Father and the Son is not a neutral principle, but is the divine Person of the Spirit, so the inner, analogical *akribeia* of earthly figurehood (its truth and faithfulness) is also grounded in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit sits at the heart of *symballein* – the throwing together of signs and realities. And so, a humble, derived, imitation of the Spirit's symbolic work is the noble calling of our sight and our understanding.

Instead of the overlay of hopelessly dissonant and superfluous scopic regimes, our sight can *illuminate* creation like the oil which 'makes the face to shine'. The oil of anointing flows over the contours of the face, magnifying the truth and particularity of personhood. And, by means of its transparency and reflectivity, the oil serves to fan the flame of love between Christ and humanity through the illumination of beauty. We are called not to shroud the world, but to anoint the world in our priestly beholding of it. We participate in this vocation when our seeing and knowing imitate the oil's transparency and reflectivity. The imposition of consecration does not obscure; it lets the indigenous, theophanic radiance of creatureliness shine through, and it reflects and magnifies the Christological beauty of creaturely particularity. In seeing as

[69] Isaiah 1:6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.

anointing, creatureliness and sight are drawn together toward their mutual consummation in heavenly brilliance. The *true gaze* of the Christian runs over the face of creation like the oil of their own anointing, making every curve of the earthly figure into a mirror of Christ's beauty.

4. Touch

4.1 The caress of absence

The modern 'pagan maladies' that I have identified here all exhibit features of a shared metaphysic which trades in distance and estrangement– that is to say, in a common denial of the originative and teleological *koinonia* between humanity (in both our embodied and intellective capacities) and the sensible world; a *koinonia* which grounds us in, and draws us toward, our Creator. What truly suffers in the modern anaesthetic affliction is the possibility of embrace, and, in the end, the possibility of touching and being touched by the proleptic reverberations of our nuptial union with Christ in and through His creation. The (post)modern commitment to absence and deferral, which arise in light of the theses of neutrality and superfluity that I have surveyed – robs us first of earthly 'capacity'. In a sense, the thesis of deferral attacks the notion of *chōrētikos theou* altogether by denying its possibility at the level of earthly encounter. In my repeated return to Cyril's phrase – 'already is there on you the savour of blessedness' – through which I presented the pedagogy of nature, I have shown how to be human is, in a sense, to be 'already' *chōrētikos kosmou*: capable of receiving the world. I have argued that, according to the implicit theology of learning which suffuses the mystagogies, human nature is marked by our capacity for mundane communion. Our faculties of learning, of communing with the *cosmos* by sensation and intellection, are poised to be divinely capacitated for communion with God; to be graciously transfigured from the prophetic and pedagogical space of *chōrētikos kosmou* to become *chōrētikos theou.* And this transfiguration does not come by throwing off the former. It comes in the providential fulfilment of the 'already' of the created order; when our mundane capacities for embrace are

transformed by the Holy Spirit into the capacity to embrace the divine in Christ. At the heart of the modern affliction lies the suggestion that we do not possess the first gift, the grace of being *chōrētikos kosmou.* And, as such, we are robbed of the earthly embraces that constitute our learning – the embraces of creaturehood that train and fit us for the embrace of God. If, according to the commitments of modernity, which sublimate the object and subjectivize encounters of mundane knowing, there is nothing to be truly touched, sensed, or known, then we also cease to be human.[70]

The anti-*chōrētik*-izing pathology is particularly discernible in the theological and philosophical impulse toward deferral. The anaesthesia of modernity lies in the explicit denial of the earthly rehearsals of consummation that prepare us for the eschatological nuptials of heaven. And, in the end, this denial also contains the *implicit* denial of the incarnational and sacramental advent of the *telos* of union. The analogy of nuptiality, or rather its absence, often appears in modern thought where the thesis of deferral is offered. For instance, in Ola Sigurdson's *Heavenly Bodies*, we find an attempt to promote a theological account of embodiment and knowledge which equates love with deferral. He seeks a mode of knowing that is free from all compulsion toward abstraction and domination which, in his mind, irrevocably attends all attempts to speak of a thing's 'essence'.[71] He thus promotes approaching the world in terms of what he calls the 'generous' erotic gaze.[72] For Sigurdson, the generous *epithymia* (longing) is contrasted with the covetous gaze of lust. Sigurdson seeks to identify 'an *eros*-love that does not deny that it loves something that is worthy of love… but which nevertheless is not a calculating love… an *eros*-love which is not strictly possessive'.[73] In his

[70] 'Numbness does not hurt like torture, but in a quite parallel way, numbness robs us of our capability for humanity.' Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination,* second edition, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), xx.
[71] Sigurdson thus programmatically opposes (what he sees as) the theological tendency toward claims of universality and normativity, and any kind of concomitant ethics, 'whose self-assurance and abstraction oppress rather than transform the person's desire by essentializing her identity', Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies,* 435.
[72] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies,* 'The Erotic Gaze' 245-258.
[73] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies,* 248-249.

construction of this generous *eros*, Sigurdson leans heavily (though not uncritically) upon Emmanuel Levinas; drawing especially on his notion of *the caress.*

In *Totality and Infinity* (1961/69), Levinas proposed the caress as a disposition, a way of being in the world and relating to it, which, he hoped, would counteract the totalizing impulse that plagues philosophy. Levinas' caress carries with it a particular ontology. To approach the world in terms of the caress is to seek to affirm the indeterminacy of being, the absolute plenitude and mystery of the other, and to accommodate the impossibility of consummation. Levinas writes:

> The caress aims at the tender which has no longer the status of an "existent," which having taken leave of "numbers and beings" is not even a quality of an existent. The tender designates *a way*, the way of remaining in the *no man's land* between being and not-yet-being.[74]

It is clear that for both Sigurdson and Levinas the human longing for knowledge is intimately related to desire, but one which suffers from an almost irredeemable temptation toward control. The suspicion is that any notion of consummation can be nothing other than the avidity of appetite. This notion of avidity is articulated through the analogy of touch. The impulse toward touch must halt in the face of a receding alterity and be transformed in the *askesis* of deferral. Sigurdson, building on Levinas, highlights the relation between desire, deferral, and touch. As he says,

> The caress does not capture the beloved in a hard grip that forces her/him into obedience, but on the contrary, the caress *can never clasp the beloved*, who in a certain sense remains "untouchable" or even "virginal." … According to Levinas, the desire that goes beyond all need is a desire that cannot be consummated and thereby quenched.[75]

Both Levinas, and Sigurdson after him, suggest that their proposals of deferral – i.e., the denial of nuptiality – befit and honour the 'eschatological' aspect of being and knowing.

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[74] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 259.
[75] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 250-251. Emphasis mine.

This eschatology clings tightly to the notion of absence. Levinas, for instance, posits the other (and the world) as 'clandestine' and 'essentially hidden'.[76]

> The essentially hidden throws itself toward the light, without becoming signification. Not nothingness – but what is not yet. This unreality at the threshold of the real does not offer itself as a possible to be grasped; the clandestinity does not describe a gnoseological accident that occurs to a being. "Being not yet" is not a this or a that; clandestinity exhausts the essence of this non-essence.

For Levinas, only the caress can appropriately encounter the 'not yet' (the eschatological).[77] Any notion of 'grasping', of 'the possible', or 'anticipation' are to be eschewed as futile and violent.[78] The caress, on the other hand, 'seeks what is not yet, a "less than nothing,"… [what is] quite otherwise than the possible, which would be open to anticipation.'[79] Here is where, I argue, the undermining of the human calling to be and become *chōrētikos* appears. This is particularly clear when Levinas expresses his (negative) estimation of the 'powers' of human knowing and desire:

> But precisely in the evanescence and swoon of the tender the subject does not project itself toward the future of the possible. The not-yet being is not to be ranked in the same future in which everything I can realize already crowds, scintillating in the light, offering itself to my anticipations and soliciting my powers.[80]

In the implicit ontology of Levinas' caress, namely in his commitment to the world's perpetual evasion of human 'powers', we can recognize the anaesthetic malady. It is this thesis that atrophies our faculties and mocks both the grace of being *chōrētikos kosmou* – of entering into the nuptial pedagogy of creation's embrace – and the true eschatological hope of becoming, through the capacitating embrace of God in the sacraments, *in* and *through* His creation, *chōrētikos theou*. The eschatology of Levinas is one of perpetual evanescence, or, as

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[76] Levinas, *Totality,* 256.
[77] Levinas writes that the other is constantly 'relieving itself of its own weight of being, already evanescence and swoon, flight into self in the very midst of its manifestation… a "non-signifying" and raw density, an exorbitant ultramateriality.' *Totality,* 256. As such, he argues, '[t]he profanation which insinuates itself in caressing responds adequately to the originality of this dimension of absence.' *Totality,* 257.
[78] Anticipation and grasping, for Levinas, represent the attempt 'to dominate a hostile freedom, to make of it its object or extort from it a consent.' Levinas, *Totality,* 257.
[79] Levinas, *Totality,* 257.
[80] Levinas, *Totality,* 259.

he says, of a 'future never future enough'.[81] And this kind of eschatology, which maintains absence as its only surety, is what necessitates deferral. The problem is that, for all his caveats assuring us that this is not nihilism, the *last-ness* of Levinas' 'absolute future' can never admit or serve the gift of eternal, joyous consummation because it refuses the gift of mundane, sacramental consummation.[82]

As I argued in Chapter Four, 'all our power' – that is, our powers of sense and intellect, and the power of touch which sits at the heart – originate and end in the divine embrace. *To be* as a creature is to rehearse that embrace through the participative embraces of creaturehood. The thesis claiming that we cannot embrace the world or each other needlessly and painfully encumbers our journey through the gift of embodiment toward the embrace of God. And that is the true errand of the *diabolos:* to 'throw apart' *(diaballō)* Man and God, and to beset the road of union. All of the infirmities that I have identified in the present discussion trade in this diabolical frustration of knowledge, encounter, and love. And, for that reason, the final 'cure' is nuptial: the real and true nuptiality of Christ and the Church. The joy and true substance of that end of union, which breaks through in the sacraments, overturns the 'throwing apart' of sin and devil and heals the wound of distance with the Lover's kiss: as Ambrose says, 'he judges you worthy to receive the heavenly sacraments, and so he invites you to the heavenly feast: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his lips'.[83]

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[81] Levinas, *Totality,* 257-258: 'The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it were not yet.'

[82] Levinas, *Totality,* 256: 'Not nothingness – but what is not yet.'; 257: 'an absence other than the void of an abstract nothingness, an absence referring to being, but referring to it in its own way'; 271: 'Its future [that of 'erotic subjectivity'] does not fall back upon the past it ought to renew; it remains an absolute future by virtue of this subjectivity which consists not in bearing representations or powers but in transcending absolutely in fecundity.'

[83] Ambrose, 'Sermons on the Sacraments', in *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation,* ed. Edward Yarnold, S.J., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 5.5, 141.

4.2 Curatio: The cure of love

As Cyril says in his opening homily, we have 'been made capable of the most sacred mysteries'; and I have suggested, in so many words, that this means we have been made capable, also, of mundane mysteries. In contrast with Levinas and Sigurdson's denial of consummation, I offer the nuptial epistemology of mystagogy, which affirms that we can be made capable of truly encountering the world; not in the caress of a ghostly, virginal alterity veiled in context, but in the sacramental embrace of Christ in matter. Here I am suggesting that the unique joy of nuptiality that the mystagogues express in their eucharistic homilies directly challenges the modern thesis of deferral. Our mundane knowing can be an embrace that is a consummation – not a 'calculation' or a 'circumscription' (which Sigurdson is at such pains to avoid that he undermines knowledge altogether). Our knowing can be a consummation when we touch and know the world as 'children of the bridechamber'.[84] In this way, our knowing is eschatological in a very different sense than that of Levinas. The eschatology present in mystagogy is not one of 'absolute future'; it is rather an eschatology of advent, of the 'firstfruits' of the wedding feast.

As I argued in Chapter Four, our mundane, earthly capacities of sense and intellect are made sense of and transfigured in light of the true touch of Christ in the eucharist. Our eucharistic participation in consummation ennobles and empowers our earthly faculties. And here I refer not only to our particular touching, embracing, and knowing of matter in the ecclesial sacraments, but to all our knowing of the world when we embrace it *as sacrament.* The language that the mystagogues use to speak of Christ's presence, their joyful sense of consummation, can inform and suffuse our life and knowing here and now. This is the language of nuptial 'enjoyment' or 'fruition', *apolausis* – as Cyril says 'shall He not… be acknowledged

[84] Cyril, *MC* 4.2, 68. '[A]nd shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of His Body and Blood on the children of the bridechamber?'.

to have bestowed the *fruition* of His Body and Blood on the children of the bridechamber?'[85] – and, similarly, in Ambrose, the language of decadent feasting in the king's chamber, or the royal store-room brimming with 'the best vintages, the best perfumes, the sweetest honey'.[86] Drawing on Theodore's adorative and confident phrase regarding the eucharist, that 'we joyfully embrace Him with all our power', I argued that the joyous confidence in the eucharistic embrace of Christ reaches back through all knowing, such that all earthly touches can be consummations of sorts when they participate in the embrace of Christ; gathering up and fulfilling all earthly 'powers' in their eschatological end. As Chrysostom says, even in the humility of earthly matter, Christ 'has made it possible for those who desire, not merely to look upon him, but even to touch him and to consume him and to fix their teeth in his flesh and to be commingled with him; in short, to fulfil all their love.'[87]

The eschatological knowing that those who partake of the wedding feast are made capable can spread abroad the sweetness of the bridal chamber: that space where knowledge and love intertwine and collapse into each other. And in this way the 'other' or the world *can be touched*, truly. Our union with creation is true and real insofar as it serves our union with Christ. The knowledge of which the children of the bridechamber are capable is consummatory not in the sense of grasping, dominating, or defining, but in the sense that their embrace of the earth is ordered toward the embrace of Christ and, in this, their knowing of the cosmos, and the cosmos itself, is fulfilled. I propose that the image which can answer and heal the atrophy of love in the face of modernity's 'vertiginous depth'[88] is that of Ambrose's *tamieion:* the 'secret

[85] Cyril, *MC* 4.2, 68.
[86] Ambrose, *On the Sacraments* 5.11, 141-143.
[87] John Chrysostom, *On the Gospel of John,* Homily 46, Trans. Charles Marriott, NPNF, First Series, Vol. 14. Ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889).
[88] Levinas, *Totality,* 259: 'The caress aims at… [the] vertiginous depth of what *is not yet,* which *is not'.*

chamber' where the affections and senses of human desire are consecrated to Christ, where the Bridegroom is Teacher (*Docebis me*), and where the 'innermost mysteries' are attained.[89]

In *de Mysteriis,* Ambrose interpreted the eucharist alongside Song of Songs 8:1-2: 'Who will give You to me, my Brother, that nursed at the breasts of my mother? If I find You without, I will kiss You, and indeed they will not despise me. I will take You, and bring You into the house of my mother; and into the secret chamber of her that conceived me. You shall teach me.' I suggested that we read the mother's house as an analogy for the order of creation – as the maternal nursery of our knowledge. It is the place where we are touched and trained in the embraces of creaturely kinship. In contrast with Levinas, who seeks to maintain an alterity at odds with kinship,[90] the *tamieion* affords a family bond that is ordered toward knowledge. In a sense, there *is* a creaturely kinship that dimly echoes the nuptial kinship with Christ to which we are called; where fellow creatures can be embraced as brothers and our knowledge of them, when entered into in service of the embrace of the Bridegroom, consummates that creaturely fraternity. In the mother's house we are instructed by the ordinary, in the rudiments of mundanity, to recognize in these the beckoning of divine love and allurement.

Theodore spoke of this in terms of 'fittingness' – the fittingness of earthly bread to earthly life (the *laḥmā* that is *lāḥmā*) by which God 'convinces us,' or gives us an intimation of the 'life to come'.[91] Because the intimacy of the nuptial order is real and substantial, so the intimacy of *the order of rearing* is real and substantial – provided that the mystery of creation

[89] In *On the Mysteries* 7.40, Ambrose interprets the 'secret chamber' (*domum,* or ταμιεῖον in the LXX) of Song of Songs 8:1-2, where the Bride is taught by the Bridegroom as the place of encounter where she 'longs to attain to the innermost mysteries and to consecrate all her affections to Christ'. Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*, trans. H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth. NPNF, Second Series, Vol. 10. Eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896).

[90] Levinas, *Totality*, 259: 'a nonexistence not even having with being the kinship that an idea or a project maintains, with a nonexistence that does not claim, in any of these ways, to be an avatar of what is'.

[91] Theodore, *Commentary*, 76: 'He 'wished to convince us, from things belonging to this world, that we shall receive also without doubt the benefits that are high above words'; p. 71: 'you will receive another food that cannot be described by words, and you will then be clearly fed by the grace of the Spirit whereby you will remain immortal in your bodies and immutable in your souls.'

was ordered to this end from the beginning. The mystagogues are convinced that it was. Just as the mysteries of the sacraments bear an irrevocable nuptial aspect because they communicate the gift of union with Christ and a foretaste of the eschatological union, so the mysteriousness of creation also participates in that underlying end. Thus, in a way, the mysteries of the Church and the mystery of knowledge all belong to a deeper reality – to the grace of the 'great mystery' of marriage (Eph. 5:32). It is to this fundamental nuptiality, as the end of being and knowing, that the *logos* of creation and all our creaturely powers are ordered.

Paradoxically, it is precisely when the things of earth are *not* embraced for their own sake, when our knowledge of them is ordered toward the embrace of Christ, that our earthly knowledge can be consummatory and true. If created things are embraced as the maidens that awaken love, then they are truly known in their essence as *signs*.[92] Modern and post-modern epistemologies have an aversion to this move, assuming that all appeals to transcendence commit the violence of abstraction and projection. But, on the contrary, when we embrace creation as the *tamieion* – as the maternal house of learning which becomes in the sacraments the nuptial *nyphōnos* – *that* is when we truly know. This is what our 'powers' are for. In the earthly embraces which are received as anticipations and reverberations of that true, eschatological embrace with Christ, the deep, gratuitous substance of our real union with Him spills back and corroborates and consecrates our mundane knowing. As Ambrose said, the Bride longs 'to consecrates all her senses to Christ'.[93] This is not to embrace the world in search of an exhausting or, as Sigurdson says, a 'calculating' or 'covetous' knowing;[94] but it is to order our knowledge and love to their end in Christ, and *in this* to receive the world by addition. In this way we could read Christ's instruction to 'seek first the kingdom of God' (Matt. 6:33)

[92] Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 8:4. Though the Song contains the warning 'do not awaken love until it pleases' or 'until the time is right', I suggest that, in light of the eschatological reality of Christ's presence in the sacraments, the time is indeed right, and the 'friends of the Bridegroom' are no longer called to fasting.
[93] Ambrose, *On the mysteries,* 7.40.
[94] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies,* 248.

as a picture of knowing the world nuptially. Only in light of heavenly consummation do we truly meet or 'gain' the things of earth.[95]

Christians who live in a world wounded by the anesthetizing pathologies of modernity, who live among those suffering under the numbing narcotic of absence, have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to pierce the loneliness of deferral, and to take up their calling as the 'children of the bridechamber'. We are capacitated to preach the resurrection of the body, the *whole* body, and the consecration of all our senses to Christ. The opening, healing, and unbending of our faculties, and the ordering of these toward their true end has come, and is touching our nature in the rugged and humble liturgy of the Church on earth. We can and must speak to dead ears, shut lips, blind eyes, and atrophied limbs, and say with Chrysostom: 'Beloved, you are invited to a marriage'.[96]

Conclusion

In my exploration of the anaesthetic maladies of modernity, and my attempt to 'wash the head' – that is, to articulate and challenge the inherited metaphysical commitments which undermine our capacities for sensation, knowledge, and union – I am not proposing that, by an act of critical genealogy, we can *think our way out* of the sundering and incapacitating tendencies of modernity. Discourse, to be sure, takes us a valuable distance; but it is only fruitful when it functions in service *(diakonia)* to the work of God, Who is drawing creation into glorious union with Himself. Articulation and discussion, as with preaching, serve to clear and tend the road of union, to 'make straight the path in the wilderness'. Just as the mystagogues do not preach for the sake of information acquisition, so I offer my argument not

[95] Chrysostom, *Stavronikita* 7.16, ACW 110: 'Let us listen, therefore, to this blessed and wondrous teacher of the whole world, this goodly school master, the gardener of our souls, and let us ponder the counsel he has given. In this way we shall be able both to enjoy the present goods and to win those of the life hereafter. For if we seek first the goods of heaven, we shall have those of this life by way of an addition, for Christ says: *Seek the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given you besides.'*
[96] Chrysostom, *Montf.* 2.18, ACW 178.

for the satisfaction of assent, but to call the members of our bodies and the capacities of our nature back to themselves, and, in this, back to Christ. I endeavour to remind our ears, and mouths, eyes, and hands, and all the 'powers' of our nature, of their honourable vocation to be filled with God, to become *chōrētikos theou*. It is a call for the senses and the intellect to submit to Christ's healing and to receive the Holy Spirit's transfiguring touch in the sacraments – to receive the gift of *sensitivity* to the mingling of heaven and earth. In this, our learning may be fulfilled in our being fitted to the truth that we were made to partake, here in the ruddy and awkward humility of matter, in the beginnings of the end. The kingdom of God. But this grace of transfiguration goes further. And here learning and *theōsis* blend into one. In the sacraments, we are doubly capacitated: we are restored to the gift of capacity for the world, becoming again *chōrētikos kosmou*, and we receive the grace of becoming 'capable of God', *chōrētikos theou*. But these capacities belong perfectly to One alone, in Whose *capaciousness* we are invited to share. God, Who in wisdom contains all things, and in perfection of love and knowledge dwells in true communion, is *capacity* itself. To become *chōrētikos*, or 'fit to receive' is, in the end, to be made like God.

Conclusion

The mystery of learning

> Already is there on you the savour of blessedness, O you who are soon to be enlightened; already are you gathering spiritual flowers, to weave heavenly crowns withal; already hath the fragrance of the Holy Ghost refreshed you; already are you at the entrance-hall of the King's house, may you be brought into it by the King!
>
> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 1.

In this thesis, I have offered a reading of the mystagogical catecheses of the fourth century that seeks to articulate and recover a patristic theology of learning. I have argued that the meaning and character of learning are truly intelligible within their relation to salvation in Christ. I set out to reflect upon learning in terms of the mundane and sacramental movements of humanity toward the knowledge of God that Jesus prayed for: 'and this is eternal life, that they may know you the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3).

I have shown how, in the explicit, catechetical journey through the sacraments of initiation by which one enters into the 'knowledge' that is eternal life – that is, into a divinizing union with Christ – the mystagogues also journey, implicitly, through the gracious diffusion of the calling to that knowledge in the order of creation. I argued that these two journeys reveal one grace of providence, and one inner logic and end of creaturehood. This one grace and inner logic is the gift of capacitation for union with God. Creation exists to *know,* or *bear,* the Creator according to the capacities bestowed to its diverse natures. For humanity, the mystery of learning appears in our journey toward the knowledge of God that is intimacy with Christ – in mundane echoes and sacramental realities. And it is measured not in an accumulation of data, but in the capacitation of our nature for union with Him. The fullness of the gift of learning is to know Christ with a knowledge that becomes indistinguishable from love, to know by union. I have argued that this entails a gracious completeness whereby even mundane knowing and learning belong *in some manner* to the grace of salvation and *theōsis;* to the divine transfiguration of our nature that enables us to participate in divine life.

A theology of learning lies in how one defines the *manner in which* mundane learning belongs to *theōsis*. Throughout this thesis, I have used the phrase 'the mystery of learning'. My reading of the mystagogies sought to give an account of the theology of learning that underlies these texts and which makes sense of, especially, the physicality of the sacraments and the predilection for analogy in the mystagogues' pedagogy. And we can now say that the theology of learning present in the mystagogies is a *sacramental* theology. Learning is a mystery in that it is a symbol, an image or imitation, of a higher, spiritual reality – the reality of salvation. What we are really discovering is the *sacramentality* of learning: that is, how the order of learning echoes and participates in that of which it is a sign. We could say that earthly learning comprises the humble, creaturely foothills of knowing Christ.[1]

This diverges markedly from the vision of learning and knowledge that developed over the course of modernity and informs the prevailing epistemologies we encounter today. An amnesia toward the patristic confidence in the soteriological entailment of creatureliness in the gift of *theōsis* is bound up in modernity's sojourn through empiricism and idealism. The result for the heirs of this patrimony is an immanentized vision of learning in which *to know* is to accumulate information about an inert cosmos, *or* to foist vestures of value regimes upon the indifference of alterity. In both senses, this is to instrumentalize knowledge, making it a tool of conquest or a contrivance in the face of the *nihil*. This is to woefully miss the truth that learning is about the salvation of our souls – and our bodies.

Salvation: May you be brought in by the King

Before elaborating on the sacramentality of learning, we must revisit the soteriology that the mystagogies profess, as this vision of salvation is that of which learning is a sign. The

[1] One hasn't summited the peaks of *theōsis* by merely contemplating the Christological heart of the sunrise or earthly bread. And yet, these foothills are not cast aside. The grace of the journey into those divine cliffs – which are only climbed in the power of the Holy Spirit – is the same power that shapes the face of the earth, echoing the ascents down through the clefts and contours of the creaturely.

mystagogues' teachings on the rites of initiation reflect a doctrine of salvation that, while robustly affirming the absolute centrality of Christ's passion and the grace of forgiveness of sins, is profoundly oriented toward the eschatological. The deeper end of the paschal, participatory imitation of Christ in the sacraments is to be transformed by the Holy Spirit through this likeness into a creature who partakes in divine life. That is, the salvific end of the sacraments is to receive and submit to the firstfruits of *theōsis*.

The eschatological orientation of the mystagogues' teachings, as I have shown, is always paired with a profoundly holistic vision of salvation where this divine union and transformation embraces and touches the whole of our constitution. The physicality of the initiation rites and the analogical pedagogy of the mystagogues encourage an understanding of salvation and *theōsis* as a holistic grace, a capacitation for union with God that excludes no part of our nature. I sought to emphasize this all-embracing aspect by orienting my argument around the themes of sensation and the 'capacitation' of human faculties for the divine. The mystagogies dissuade us from a gnostic vision of salvation. Knowing God is an embodied affair; a communion with Christ that touches the entire order of our humanity, and the capacitation of our faculties is part of the salvation of our nature. The ears, the tongue, the eyes, and the whole body are 'saved' when they are healed by Christ, sensitised to the divine, and empowered to embrace God.

In Chapter One, I argued that the capacitation of hearing is a consummation of the divine summons that echoes through Scripture's narrative and throughout the cosmos. It is an attunement toward the divine origin and end of creatureliness. The capacitation of hearing is to have our relational receptivity fulfilled in the hearing of divine speech – like the deaf man whose ears were healed at the voice of Christ saying *'Ephphatha'*, be opened. I sought to establish the profundity of the 'openness' to God *(chōrētikos theou)* that is our beatific end. In Chapter Two, I explored how the faculty of speech is drawn into salvation and *theōsis* when

the tongue, as a symbol of our capacity for communication, 'discharges its office' of true speech through confession and adoration and exercises the *parrhesia* of those who belong to God. Capacitated speech echoes God's creative speech when it gives voice to the truth, stating the 'actuality of things', concerning our own nature and that our fellow creatures. Capacitated speech joins and administers a catholic (cosmic) song of return – both in the liturgy, and in our ordinary knowing of creation – and it boldly repudiates the diabolical sundering of signs. In Chapter Three, I argued that the power of sight is drawn into *theōsis* through being divinely capacitated to apprehend the precision *(akribeia)* of creaturely epiphany, to manifest the eschatological meaning of our nature, and to participate in the *claritas,* or radiance, of the divine Son. Lastly, in Chapter Four I argued that touch reveals the root and order of all the senses, and, by extension, the root and order of creation, matter, and embodiment. We are made for the embrace of God. Touch, read mystagogically, reveals how salvation and *theōsis* are fundamentally tied to intimacy and union – a union that shapes our being, beautifying and beatifying us, *fitting us* for heavenly nuptials.

Salvation is properly conceived when this depth and scope are accounted for. The knowledge of God that is eternal life lies in the grace of union pouring down and penetrating every sense and every power of our nature. The 'sublime intelligence' Theodore spoke of lies in a divinely empowered, complete human nature receiving God with every faculty in the overflowing gratuitous excess of His self-giving.[2] In this mystagogical vision, salvation is to be united to and filled with God, and *theōsis* is the divine work making us (continually) capacious toward the divine: *chōrētikos theou.*

[2] Theodore, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, trans. Alphonse Mingana. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 115: 'It behoves you now to make use of an intelligence consonant with these sublime things of which you have been rendered worthy, and to think well, according to the measure of the greatness of a gift such as this, what we were and into what we have been transformed: that we were mortal by nature and we expect to receive immortality, that from being corruptible we shall become incorruptible, from passible impassible, from mutable, forever immutable… and that we shall enjoy all the good and delightful things found in heaven.'

But this is not only a capacity *for*, it is a capacity *like*. *Chōrētikos theou* means becoming 'capable of God', but it also means becoming 'divinely-capable' – acquiring a 'capacity' that imitates and participates in the capaciousness of the Godhead in which all of creation has its being and through which the communion of the Trinity subsists in its perfection. Since the capacity for divine communion belongs perfectly to the divine nature alone, what it means for any faculty or aspect of *our* nature to be made *chōrētikos theou* is to be conformed to Christ and made-capable of participating in the communion of God by the 'touch' of the Holy Spirit.[3] And since God, as Creator, 'contains' all things, sustained as they are within the one divine will, intelligence, and goodness, our capacity for God *through the world* is a knowledge that partakes, however modestly, in divine knowledge.

Earthly learning: Already is there on you the savour of blessedness

The end of knowing God in this way, of becoming *chōrētikos theou* or 'embracing Him with all our power' as Theodore said, echoes through the whole of creation and through our human faculties even in their ordinary operations and rhythms. And thus, earthly learning is a 'mystery', insofar as it images the salvific and eschatological knowing of Christ and the gift of being made-capable of that knowledge. Just as the mystagogies dissuade us from a gnostic vision of salvation, so they dissuade us from a gnostic vision of knowledge, including its mundane forms. The theology of learning that is maintained throughout the mystagogies envisions earthly knowing as a creaturely communion which consummates the prevenient kinship, or 'fittingness', between creatures and brings about a theologically-informed likeness in the knower and a teleological harmony oriented toward God between the knower and the known.

[3] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Lectures on the Christian Sacraments,* ed. F.L. Cross., trans. R.W Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1951), Mystagogical Catechesis 5.7, 74. 'for whatsoever the Holy Ghost has touched, is sanctified and changed.'

I articulated this account of knowledge as communion and change through a constructive appeal to Aristotle's theory of sensory perception. For Aristotle, sensation, as a rudiment of knowledge, involves the *form* of the object being 'impressed' upon the soul and a likeness of the form being reproduced in the faculty itself. Knowledge, as this encounter of likeness-making mediated by the senses, is also a consummation of the *suitedness* and *potential* of the knower to receive the change of learning.[4] I argued that a similar notion of knowledge lies behind the mystagogical approach to learning, especially in the mystagogues' appeals to natural analogies. Humanity is instructed and *formed* by our relations with creation, even in the humblest rhythms of creatureliness. We encounter and are 'moved' and 'changed' – or rather *instructed* – by truth in creation. What Aristotle understood as 'form', the inner truth doing the 'moving' and 'changing' of the knower, Christian metaphysics recognizes as *analogia entis*. The analogical *mathesis* of the created order echoes and impresses heavenly truth upon the soul through the faculties of the body and the intellect. Creation is, in one sense, already *chōrētikos theou* in that creaturely particularities and creaturely relations bear or *contain* an anticipation of the end of union with God. This is what creation is *for* and what creation *says* by varied tones. The intelligibility of creation, and the kinship that underwrites that intelligibility exist because we are destined for divine communion.

Cyril said to the *phōtizomenoi*, 'already is there on you the savour of blessedness'; and I read this as an expression of the Christologically-oriented and pedagogical *logic* of creation. We come to the liturgy *already* formed and *informed* by the pedagogy of nature, the whiff of heaven encircling us, trained by the echoes of our end in God that we encounter in our simple

[4] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J.A. Smith. 2.12 (424a.27-28): 'By a 'sense' is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things (424a.18 τὸ δεκτικὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν εἰδῶν) without the matter… [what it is to be perceptive] will be a formula *(λόγος)* and capacity (δύναμις*)* of what perceives', and 2.5.417A: 'It is clear that what is sensitive is only potentially, not actually' (τὸ αἰσθητικὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐνεργείᾳ, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει μόνον).

intimacy with 'cloddish earth'.[5] The 'form' or inner truth of creatures – bread, wine, oil, water, sunrise and sunset, sackcloth – is, in the end, an evangelical instruction, a divine pedagogy and anticipation, a sweet aroma, proceeding from and coming to rest in Christ.

Learning can be called a 'mystery', a sacrament or, at least, *sacramental,* because our knowledge of creatures is an analogy of the true knowledge of and union with Christ that is offered in the sacraments – or it can be, in the clarity of grace. Just as our knowing of Christ in the sacraments, by the power of the Holy Spirit, 'fits' us for eschatological union and is a true participation in that union even now, so our earthly knowing rehearses in a shadowy, yet participative, way the end of knowing God. In the *capacities* that already belong to our nature for sensing, feeling, and learning through the order of creaturehood, we partake in an imitation of the sacramental union; the gift of being *capacitated* by the Holy Spirit for knowledge, transfiguration, and divine communion.[6] I have called creation pedagogical; and now we can say that what 'pedagogical' means is something more than merely 'instructive'. Pedagogy pertains to the ways in which creation belongs to the reverberations of *theōsis*.

Our end is to be endlessly capacitated for union with God. Even ordinary, earthly knowledge participates in a modest way in the knowledge of God and of His Son because all of creation proceeds from and returns to divine intelligence and love. In the everyday and mundane, a shadow of salvific likeness-making and communion is rehearsed. The imprint pressed upon our souls as we know creation is the signet of Christ, and our love is awakened in tiny but noble ways in our knowing of creatures. Earthly knowledge echoes our sacramental

[5] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas,* (London: Routledge, 2001), 14: 'God is much more of a country bumpkin *(rusticus)* capable of a brutal direct unreflective intuition of cloddish earth, bleared and smeared with toil. For God's mind, although immaterial, is (in a mysterious way) commensurate with matter, since God creates matter.'

[6] In Chapter Five, section 5.2 *Firstfruits and semeiotics,* I argued that a pneumatology that understands the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son also underlies the figurehood of creation. The truth and intimacy of the Trinitarian union secures the transformative potential, and so the sacramentality, of earthly knowing.

communion with Christ, and that echo is not merely referential. The subtle education of our longing that we pass through in bodily life, and the capacitation toward truth that is possible in earthly learning, are drawn into God's gracious gathering of His creation. Said another way, we are 'already' *chōrētikos kosmou* because we are called to become *chōrētikos theou.* In the liturgy of the Church, the symbol of learning is enveloped into the reality of union.

Mystagogy as curatio

I sought to express how profoundly positive the mystagogical estimation of earthly knowing really is. The implicit doctrines of creation and salvation that underlie the sacraments, the liturgy, and the mystagogies assume and lean deeply into the creaturely kinship of ontology and into the intelligibility that originates in Christ and curves toward the end of union. Mystagogy counts on the fact that those coming to initiation have truly been formed by the 'savour of blessedness' that 'already' permeates the mundane. This is a vision for what earthly learning *is* at its heart, but we still face the incapacitations of sin and of thought. And thus, I argued that the mystagogues' joyous confidence in our true union with Christ, and the extension of that joyous confidence in their understanding of earthly knowing, must be recovered to heal the wounds of modern metaphysics and to re-illuminate the pedagogy of creation that anticipates our end in Christ.

I offered an application of this mystagogical *curatio* in Chapter Five, where I outlined certain malaises of modern thought that cast an anaesthetizing doubt upon the earthly foothills of *chōrētikos*. Modernity's metaphysical flirtations with nihilism within the patrimonies of empiricism, nominalism, and idealism have resulted in an impoverished vision of knowledge which has dislodged epistemology from ontology and eschatology, and from its grounding in the grace of salvation. I proposed as a remedy and alternative the sacramental vision of learning that mystagogy maintains.

Mystagogy recalls us to the *koinonia* of creaturehood and to the intelligibility of creation's logos. It affirms the divine empowerment and corroboration of our language when we speak forth confession and adoration. It renews the priestly vocation of the baptised to illuminate the world by apprehending and magnifying the alluring, Christo-phanic radiance of creation. And it recalls us to the hope of consummation, even in our earthly knowing, because the firstfruits of consummation are truly given to the 'children of the bridechamber' in the eucharist. All of these together propose and restore a vision of the earthly order and of earthly knowledge as the *tamieion:* the maternal house of rearing that becomes the secret chamber of love and knowledge. Mystagogy leads us to esteem the cosmos and the order of learning as the site of betrothal, and to say to Christ, 'I will take You, and bring You into the house of my mother; and into the secret chamber of her that conceived me. You shall teach me' (Song of songs 8:2).

Not curiosity but consummation

Reading salvation and *theōsis* in terms of being made *chōrētikos theou,* and reading earthly learning as a sacrament of this process, carries an unmistakably nuptial flavour. The sacraments of the Church, and earthly learning in an analogous way, are about being prepared for, or made receptive to, union with God. And this calls out an exhortation upon our epistemology. Immediately after his 'already is there on you the savour of blessedness' and 'may you be brought in by the King', Cyril appeals to Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14. Cyril warns those preparing for baptism not to be like the man in the parable who came with an 'unbecoming garment', lest they should be deemed 'unworthy of the wedding torches'.[7] Cyril admonishes his hearers against coming likewise to initiation with an unworthy disposition: to come with a purpose other than union with Christ.[8] One of the

[7] Cyril, *Procatechesis,* 2-3, 41.
[8] Cyril warns against pursuing initiation out of mere curiosity, coming without care being given to ammendment of life, coming for the purpose of courting a member of the church, or to please and impress a master. Nevertheless,

dispositions that Cyril warns against is that of curiosity, or bare inquisitiveness; a pursuit of knowledge severed from the festal nature of the object of inquiry, severed from the union that is its end.[9] He says:

> Let not any of you enter, saying, Come let us see what the faithful do: I will go in and see, that I may learn what is done. Do you expect to see, and not to be seen? And do you think to busy yourself with what is happening, and God not to be busy with your heart all the while? A certain man in the Gospels busily pried into the marriage feast: he took an unbecoming garment […].[10]

I suggest that Cyril's warning obtains for all forms of knowledge. All knowing, ordered rightly, runs the blessed risk of God busying Himself with our hearts. And the contrary risk of being cast into 'outer darkness', as befell the man who came to *take* but not *partake* in the wedding feast, is the fate of all epistemologies that fail to embrace the *mysterium* – in other words, the *nuptiality* – of learning. To put on a 'becoming' garment, that is, to acquire a fitting epistemology, is not an arbitrary disposition; it is to encounter the world's light as the torches of the bridal train.[11] This is to sense and to know the world *through* and *for the sake of* Christ. As Chrysostom says, 'He has thrown Himself around us as a garment'.[12] Knowing is truly knowing when it tends toward our nuptial end in Christ. In light of the festal nature of the sacrament we can recover the festal calling of earthly knowledge.

The mystagogue offers a catechesis that illuminates the festivity of the sacraments – as Cyril said of his teaching, 'it remains therefore to dress for you a board of more perfect

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the bishop says, 'I avail myself of this angler's bait, and receive you, as one who has come indeed with an unsound purpose, but art to be saved by a good hope.' Cyril, *Procat.* 2-5, 41-43.

[9] Cyril's argument, and my use of it here, bears similarities to, but does not explicitly engage with, Augustine's critique of *curiositas* in Confessions, book x.

[10] Cyril, *Procatechesis,* 2-3, 41, Greek: 2, my translation. The verb Cyril uses translated here as 'busily', 'busy oneself', or God 'busying' Himself with the human heart, is πολυπραγμονέω: to be inquisitive, curious, meddlesome, a busybody, or to inquire closely after.

[11] Cyril, *Procatechesis* 1, 40. 'Thus far, your names have been given in, and the roll-call made for service; there are the torches of the bridal train, and the longings after heavenly citizenship.'

[12] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions,* trans. Paul W. Harkins, Ancient Christian Writers 31 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), homily 11, *Papapdopoulos-Kerameus* 3.6-7, ACW 162-3: 'He came to her who was about to become His bride and found her naked and disgracing herself. He threw around her a clean robe, whose brightness and glory no word or mind will be able to describe. How shall I say it? He has thrown Himself around us as a garment: *For all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.'*

instruction'.[13] And I have argued that mystagogy's 'table' (τράπεζα) of perfect instruction also points us to the torches of the bridal train that shine in the trenches of the ordinary and process toward that same wedding feast. The sublime intelligence that mystagogy cultivates is measured in our capacity to feast upon this perfect instruction at the table of the cosmos, at the table of the altar, and at the table of the King. And this sublime intelligence, as I have shown, is the measure of all intelligence; it is the end of learning, as it is the end of creation itself. And so, a mystagogical theology of learning calls us to embrace the *mystery* of learning in light of the *mysteries* of the Church: as, in its own way, a banquet of more perfect instruction, an echo of the secret chamber filled with delicacies where the Bridegroom is Teacher, because it belongs to the one grace that draws us and vests us for the banquet of the Lamb.

[13] Cyril, Mystagogical Catechesis 1.1, 53.

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