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Zeno of Verona
Time and Cosmology in Late Antique Christianity

By

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The thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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January 2023

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Statement of Original Authorship

I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and that I have not obtained a degree elsewhere based on the research presented in this submitted work.

Abstract

Zeno of Verona: Time and Cosmology in Late Antique Christianity

Key words: Zeno, Verona, time, eternity, Late Antiquity, Christianity, Church, Arianism, philosophy of religion, zodiac

In the 4th century, Milan and Aquileia were powerful civil and religious centres in northern Italy. Each had an Imperial residence, and each was a metropolitan see. They had influential bishops, notably Ambrose in Milan and Chromatius in Aquileia. Verona lies roughly halfway between the two. As a diocese, it was at first part of the see of Milan and was transferred to Aquileia before the end of the century.[1] Emperor Gallienus spent some time there, but that was in the previous century. The sermons of Zeno bishop of Verona have survived and that is why he is still remembered. He did not feature in the Church histories of Jerome and others, nor did he attend any of the Councils of Bishops. Scholarship on Zeno has focused on his 93 sermons, in particular on topics such as the biblical references, patristic influences, language and rhetoric, and the sermon on the Zodiac. The research agenda has largely ignored the rationale behind the sermons, and the bishop's intellectual and philosophical mindset. In this thesis, I have analysed the sermons and their context within a developing liturgy, moving beyond the exegetic and homiletic functions of the sermon. My research analyses three distinct meanings of time – cyclical, linear, and eternity - and how Zeno described and used them in his sermons.

Cyclical time, according to the bishop, reflects the nature of the universe, as created and maintained by God. It was comprehensible to the Christian converts in Verona through the cycles of growth and cultivation in its agricultural hinterland, famous for olives, viticulture, and cereal crops. This makes it an ideal metaphor for the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Zeno reinforced this narrative by explaining the life of Christ in the Gospels, endorsed by prophecies from the Old Testament. He underlined his message by citing examples from nature of birth, death, and

[1] In the introduction to Banterle's edition of Zeno's sermons, Giorgio Fedalto says that the transfer of Verona from the see of Milan to that of Aquileia took place in 381 or soon thereafter. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 15).

regeneration. In Chapter 1, I will show that while cyclical time may have been an *idée fixe* for Zeno, he used it effectively for the purposes of his Christian mission.

The zodiac represents the cycle of the Sun's movement through the constellations in a year. Then as now there was widespread belief that one's fate was determined by the sign or "house" of the zodiac in which the Sun was at the time of one's birth. This was at variance with the Christian doctrine of free will. Zeno's sermon is the first instance in text of a Christian interpretation of the zodiac. In Chapter 2, this thesis argues that he combines repudiation with accommodation in confronting this pagan tradition. Further, I argue that Zeno offered a Christian reinterpretation of the zodiac, based on baptism rather than on births; his idea gave rise in later centuries to name-days, still celebrated in several countries today.

In Chapter 3, the concept of linear time is identified in the sermons. Zeno referred to the epochs of time, just as the new Christian historiography tabulated events from the Bible and from other civilisations in separate columns. The epochs are constructed by the Almighty, yet they allow for human free will and moral responsibility, and for natural events. Within the epoch of biblical time, Zeno uses the contingency and direction of time to mark out the righteous from the damned. Only the righteous can, with God's help, see into the future or alter the flow of time, while the damned have no agency in an afterlife of eternal suffering. The causation and the unidirectional progress of linear time distinguish it from the predictable rhythms of cyclical time. This thesis identifies the defining characteristics of linear time, according to the bishop, and shows how he used these as part of a clear religious agenda.

For Christians, deep time was set out in the Bible, starting with the Creation and ending at Armageddon. Constructions on passages from Scripture were used to determine the current age of the world and its allotted time span, giving a terminal date in the not-too-distant future. There is also the reward of eternal bliss promised to the faithful followers of Christ. In the final chapter, I will show how the framework of Christian teaching, in the form of Zeno's sermons, embraced both concepts of time, biblical and eternal. Zeno's imperative was not limited to scriptural exegesis, for he was concerned with the Arian controversy and the threat it posed to the

Church's message of eternal salvation. He argued consistently that God and his son Christ were co-eternal. From his sermons there unfolds, in dialogue with scripture and with his own intuition and originality, the concept of infinite time as almost equivalent to timelessness. The qualification, I argue, is because Zeno said that the faithful in heaven would be active and would grow in knowledge and fulfilment. Finally, Zeno brought ineffable eternity itself within the ambit of human imagination. In his sermons, he inverted the standard frame of describing time within eternity and invited his congregation to think of the eternal within the natural cycles of the day and the year. His religious philosophy on eternity is both elegant and rigorous. This thesis affirms that Zeno's work on time and eternity merits evaluation along with that of Plotinus, Augustine, and Boethius, and prefigures the philosophy of Schiller, the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth, the mathematics of Cantor, and the religious philosophy of Barth.

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Mike Norris
January 2023

“Generally speaking, the errors in religion are dangerous, those in philosophy only ridiculous.” David Hume, 1739[2]

[2] Hume, Green, and Grose (1882, 1.4 7.13: 272)

Abbreviations

Throughout, the thesis uses the Abbreviations List in the Oxford classical dictionary (4th edition), with the following exceptions or additions:[3]

Athan.	Athanasius	
	Hist. Arian.	*Historia Arianorum*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, Turnhout	
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*	
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna	
Euseb.	Eusebius of Caesarea	
	Hist. Eccl.	*Historia Ecclesiastica*
Firm. Mat.	Firmicus Maternus	
	Math.	*Matheseos*
	Err. Prof. rel.	*De errore profanarum religionum*

[3] Hornblower, Spawforth, and Eidinow (2012).

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Sources of Figures

Figure	Source
1	Vita Veronese
2	Radboud University
3	WordPress
4	New Liturgical Movement

Introduction

The life (and afterlife) of Zeno of Verona

The Basilica of San Zeno Maggiore in Verona is a magnificent building, a tribute to the city's 8th bishop. First built in the 9th century to house the bishop's remains, it was rebuilt between the 11th and 14th centuries.[4] The crypt contains a mausoleum in which Zeno is interred. A statue of the bishop, with his crozier doubling as a fishing rod – his artistic attribute, as he is patron saint of fishermen – graces the altar.[5] Another feature of the statue is the smile on the bishop's face, which explains why the locals refer to it as "*San Zeno che ride*" (St Zeno is laughing). Behind it is a triptych altarpiece by Andrea Mantegna. At the far end of the nave, the main entrance is a rectangular doorway with two massive, hinged portals. Each is covered on the interior side with 24 bronze panels. These contain high relief images and are pinned to the portals with large nails. Of a total of 48 panels, 42 are vignettes from the Old and New Testaments, two are doorhandles (one on each portal), and four depict scenes from the life of Zeno.[6] These four were carved in the 12th century.[7] Mark Humphries reminds us that the scenes correspond to episodes in the hagiography of Zeno, written by Coronatus Notarius in the 8th century.[8] He also points to patent anachronisms in both representations of the saint's life.[9] Both the book and the carvings tell of Zeno being honoured by Gallienus after exorcising demons from the emperor's daughter, and of his feat of rescuing people from the

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[4] An earthquake in 1117 caused major damage to Verona. In the years after this catastrophe, many churches were rebuilt or extended. The outer ring or facade of the Roman arena was almost completely destroyed, providing a quarry for rebuilding of churches and other structures, including many private homes. The beneficiaries of the earthquake in this sense include the basilica of San Zeno Maggiore, the Duomo di Verona, and the church of Santa Maria in Organo. Borelli (1980).

[5] The motif of the fish in the story of Zeno is described by Kain. It is also mentioned by Humphries and by Hobhouse and Malins. Kain (1981, 367), Humphries (1997b, 67), Hobhouse and Malins (1977, 17).

[6] Heginbotham shows that many of the Biblical scenes are to be found in Zeno's sermons. The panels reflect the lectionaries of sermons used in the 12th century, and to a lesser extent lectionaries of the 4th century. Heginbotham (2016, 55-63).

[7] Raffaele Fasanari describes each of the panels and discusses their provenance. His illustrations include the four panels featuring Zeno. Fasanari (1956).

[8] The *Vita San Zenonis* can be found in Bigelmair (1904, 38ff).

[9] Humphries (1997b, 70-71).

flooding of Verona by the river Adige.[10] But Zeno lived in the 4th century, Gallienus in the 3rd, and the major inundation of Verona was in the 6th century, in 589 to be precise.

Zeno's *vita* is not unique in this regard. The early written lives of saints often spanned more than any one person's actual lifetime. In the bishop's case, his story spans four centuries. In doing so, it anchors him firmly to Verona and its history; his hagiographer wanted readers to identify Zeno with Verona. The first link between saint and city is Gallienus, who fortified Verona while he fought campaigns in the region in 265; a record of his deeds can still be seen inscribed on the Porta Borsari on the Corso Porta Borsari.[11] The second event was the flood of 589. The river Adige occasionally overflows its banks and floods the city, but the event of 589 exceeded all previous recorded floods in its severity. Lurid accounts were written about it by contemporaries including Gregory the Great and Gregory of Tours, and later by Paul the Deacon. This has recently been associated with climate change, although Squatriti suggests that its greatest effect may have been literary rather than physical.[12] In any event, the flood, and the emperor before that, became indelibly associated with Verona. Both featured in the legend of Zeno for centuries, certainly at the time the panels in the portals of the eponymous basilica were carved.[13]

There is another token of Zeno's identity with Verona, and it survives to the present time. In the Catholic church's calendar of saints, Zeno's feast day is given as 12th April. That marks the day on which he died or was reborn unto eternal life. In Verona, however, they celebrate 21st May as the feast of San Zeno. This marks the day on which his remains were transferred to his basilica in 807.[14] It is a public holiday in the city.

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[10] This supposed episode from the life of Zeno was well-known outside Verona. It was represented by Fra Lippi, a native of Florence, in his painting *"Saint Zeno exorcising the daughter of Gallienus*", now in the National Gallery, London.

[11] CIL V 3329. See also (Buonopane 2008).

[12] Squatriti (2010, 826).

[13] By the 18th century, these hagiographic anachronisms were suspect. An almanac of churches in the diocese of Verona published in 1749 states clearly that Zeno was not alive at the time of emperor Gallienus. Biancolini (1749, 163).

[14] Biancolini (1749, 26).

The substantive legacy of Zeno is the corpus of his sermons. These can tell us about the man and the environment he worked in and influenced. They reveal a pastoral-minded bishop using the liturgy and sacraments of the Church to enhance the lives of his congregation. He preached the three virtues – faith, hope, and charity – emphasising the importance of hospitality and care for the poor:

> *Vestrae domus peregrinis omnibus patent; sub vobis vivus mortuusque diu nunquam visus est nudus. Iam pauperes nostri alimenta rogare non norunt.*[15]
>
> Your homes are open to all travellers. It is a long time since anyone, alive or dead, has been seen naked among you. Our poor no longer know what it is to beg for food.

Christianity departed from the tradition that custom was the basis of faith, and instead used theology to frame its arguments. As a universalist church, it was involved in social and cultural life: it worked to repurpose the ethical life of the community and to instil moral responsibility at the level of the individual. Prelates like Zeno were in the front line of this campaign, as can be seen from the content of their sermons. Zeno's sermons on moral themes are, on average, three times longer than the average of all his sermons.[16] They are well paced and finely constructed, with elements from everyday life and detailed illustrations from Scripture. Their setting within the weekly gathering of the faithful in prayer gave them a familiarity which reinforced their impact on the congregation. Conceptually, ideas about morality and best practice were not confined to an elite but spread throughout the faithful. Practising Christians were noted for their good behaviour and their charity, an aspect of the new religion that was conceded by one of its noteworthy opponents, emperor Julian the Apostate.[17]

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[15] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:14.5)

[16] In the Banterle edition, the moral sermons have an average length of 3.9 pages. The average length of all 93 sermons is 1.3 pages. Zeno and Banterle (2008).

[17] Julian the Apostate admired the Christian practice of remembering the dead and asked why pagan priests could not do like the Galileans in this regard. The emperor also commended the charity of Christians towards strangers and their general good behaviour as being worthy of imitation. Julian and Wright (2014, 429D-430A).

From the bishop's sermons, a picture emerges of Verona as a cosmopolitan city, with people of every origin, age, status, and religion.[18] The city lies in the region south of the Alps and north of the Apennines. Archaeological, artistic, and epigraphic sources provide evidence of a developed material culture in 4th century Verona. There was a prosperous citizenry with established patterns of living. Their clear religious beliefs can be seen in votive and funerary monuments.[19] According to Turchin, this area of Italy was not subject to the extreme forms of inequality and slavery that were prevalent in the rest of the peninsula to the south. In the north of Italy there was greater social and economic cohesion. This encouraged western emperors to move their capital to Milan by the 4th century and later to Ravenna.[20] Verona belongs to this region; its diocese was part of the archdiocese of Milan during Zeno's term, later transferring to the authority of the metropolitan of Aquileia.[21]

The cult of Zeno began in Verona in the years following his death. He was remembered as a most holy confessor by Ambrose of Milan. In the early 5th century, Bishop Petronius of Bologna recited a sermon on Christmas Day, dedicated to the North African saint.[22] Gregory the Great, in the 6th century, described him as a blessed martyr and prelate.[23] The Veronese, however, did not regard him as a martyr. The hagiography by Coronatus, despite its exaggerated claims for miracles wrought by Zeno, says that he died peacefully.[24] The Veronese have dedicated their Romanesque basilica to him, but the first bishop to call him a martyr was Lippomano in 1548.[25]

[18] Stepanich (1948, 1-18), Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1-8, 2:39).
[19] For findings from material sources of Verona in Late Antiquity, see Braito and Pilutti Namer (2017), Modonesi (1995) on epigraphy, Rinaldi, Guidobaldi, Cavalieri Manasse, and Ghedini (2005) on mosaics, Facchini (1999) on glass, and Cavalieri Manasse (1987) on economic and social life.
[20] Turchin (2007, 305-307)
[21] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 15)
[22] Morin (1897, 23).
[23] Gregory I and Moricca (1924, 3:19).
[24] "After a blessed ministry, the bishop died in peace." Coronatus, *Vita san Zeno.*
[25] Bigelmair (1904, 65).

Verona and its bishop in mid-4th century

Zeno's term as bishop was from 362 to either about 371 or 380. He was consecrated on Sunday 8th December. This could have been in 356, 362, or 373. By a process of elimination, Stepanich shows that 362 is the only possibility.[26] There is uncertainty about the year of his death. It must have been before 386, the year in which Ambrose of Milan wrote to Zeno's successor Syagrius, referring to "Zeno of blessed memory." The Ballerini brothers say that sermon 1:14 refers obliquely to the battle of Adrianople in 378. They conclude that the bishop died in around 380.[27] Bigelmair, on the other hand, uses the sequences of Easter sermons to set an upper limit on the length of Zeno's episcopacy. The longest such sequence, De Pascha, runs to nine sermons, so the bishop probably died in 371 or 372. This theory is based on the numbers of sermons, and I am inclined to agree with Stepanich that it is the most probable of the two.[28] Zeno's time at Verona was a period in which the pantheistic religious beliefs and practices of the Roman and Hellenised worlds were still in evidence, but in which Christianity was now the dominant faith. It was growing in influence throughout the empire, and since the time of Constantine and the Edict of Milan in 313 had been preferentially legalised, and was in effect the state religion[29]; in a sermon on abstinence, Zeno asks rhetorically:

> *Cur ego Christiano orbe ipso paene iam toto hominumque vivacitate mundo senescente detrita obtundam verbis palpantibus aciem veritatis ac non plene denuntiem, observantiae qua perfectione dei cultus debeat custodiri?* [30]
>
> Now that almost the whole world itself is Christian and the vitality of men in the aging world has diminished why should I blunt the truth with bland words and not fully explain how perfectly the execution of worship must be kept?[31]

[26] Stepanich (1948, 11).
[27] Zenone (1900, XVII), Lunn-Rockliffe (2018).
[28] Bigelmair (1904, 52), Stepanich (1948, 11-13).
[29] Lactant., *De mort. Pers.* 48; see also Armstrong (1964, 4) and Drake (2002, 194).
[30] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:7.4); see page 114 for details of editions of Zeno's sermons and citations used in this chapter.
[31] Translations from excerpts of Zeno's sermons are by the author, MN.

In the 4th century, Christians were in the ascendant in many Romanised urban areas. The Church was not always present in rural areas, and elite families that retained traditional beliefs and practices were still influential. Nonetheless, the eras of persecution, of missionary zeal, and of martyrdom were all but over in Romanised and in Hellenised parts of the empire; the changing legislative framework is indicative of such changes.[32] But there was no certainty of the Church's hegemony, no guarantee that the old religions would not re-assert themselves. Julian the Apostate had been a plausible champion of the old beliefs and philosophy and might have had a more lasting and detrimental effect on the Galileans, as he termed the Christians, had he reigned as emperor for longer than his brief term from 361 to 363. Within the Church, rifts which had been apparent to Constantine at the start of the century were becoming more serious and damaging. These were on doctrinal as well as on procedural and tactical matters. The Arian/Nicene controversy and the Donatist schism, respectively, are representative of these types of dissent. In this context, Zeno engaged vigorously with his congregation to make sure that they clearly understood how to worship and give thanks to God.[33] He was uncompromising in his rejection of the Arian watchword "There was a time when He was not", which denied the infinite timeline of the Son of God, but this is not to say that Arianism was rife within his diocese. The Arian variant of Christianity, because of the lack of primary sources from its founder Arius (256 – 336), was largely defined by the heresies its opponents attributed to it. The belief commonly ascribed to Arius is that Christ was different from and subsidiary to the Father. His preaching was at variance with the orthodoxy of his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, and he was exiled as a result. He won support among his fellow-alumni of the religious school at Antioch where they

[32] Salzman argues that the legislative data provide evidence of conversion to Christianity, not just of the emperors' intentions in that regard. The *Codex Theodosius* includes instances of a "carrot and stick" approach: incentives for those who converted, and punishments for those who did not. The emperors eschewed the extreme solution of Firmicus Maternus who, with all the zeal of a new believer, proposed compulsory conversion. Salzman (1993), Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 16.4-5; 28.10; 29.1-2.

[33] Zeno may have consigned the days of persecution and violent contention to the past, but that did not prevent his later admirers from including him among the ranks of revered martyrs. The unknown 9th century poet Anonymus Pipianus, in his or her *Versus de Verona* in which there is a list of the early bishops of Verona, described the eighth as "pastor and confessor, the renowned martyr Zeno." Rosada (2011, 218). He is also listed in early martyrologies, although Ambrose, who knew him, said that he died a peaceful death. Zeno's hagiographer, Coronatus, confirmed this. Butler, Thurston, and Attwater (1956, 84-85). That is not to say that he was immune to persecution from within the Church or by the state for his strong anti-homoian line.

had studied under Lucian of Antioch. As a result, Arianism was quite extensive in the Greek-speaking dioceses of the eastern empire.[34] It enjoyed a measure of support during the reign of Constantius II, from 337 to 361. The emperor oversaw the exile of Dionysius, Bishop of Milan, and his replacement by Auxentius, an Arian from Cappadocia in 355. He remained in office until his death in 374; his successor was Ambrose. Zeno never named the Arian belief, nor can it easily be found explicitly mentioned in sermons of his contemporaries in nearby Brescia and Aquileia.[35]

Founded as a Roman city in the first century BC, Verona was located at the junction of major east-west and north-south roads and on the Adige, the second longest river in Italy, in what was formerly Cisalpine Gaul but had been incorporated into Roman Italy during the time of Caesar's Civil War.[36] It was an important locus for trade and a strategic military centre. By the 4th century it had all the features of a Roman metropolis of Late Antiquity, with an arena, an amphitheatre, a triumphal arch, and a stone bridge across the river Adige. The Christian faith was beginning to feature in the built environment of the city in the form of new churches and baptistries. The process of institutionalisation of the Church was well under way in Verona, which already had its own martyrs: Firmus and Rusticus, victims of emperor Maximian, had died for their faith in the previous century (see page 57). The city and its hinterland formed a diocese within the archdiocese of Milan. It was to this see that Zeno was appointed as bishop in 362.[37] A monk from north Africa, Zeno came to Verona in about 350. Little is known about him, and his only surviving works are the sermons.[38] He does not feature in any of the numerous conclaves of bishops held in the 4th century.[39] However, his relative obscurity should not dissuade us from studying his

[34] Drake (2002, 239), Lee (2016, 114-115), Maas (2010, 124-126), Roldanus (2006, 74-80).
[35] In Zeno's time, the western church was invariably in the Nicene or orthodox camp. This was the case at the synod western bishops in Rimini in 359. Ambrose of Milan built his reputation and his career as archbishop on his anti-heretical stance, but his rationale appears more political than doctrinal. Truzzi (1985), Roldanus (2006, 99), Williams (2017).
[36] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 17).
[37] Verona was one of the oldest dioceses in northern Italy, and Zeno was its eighth bishop Allen and Armstrong (1910, 7).
[38] For a summary of the editions of the sermons, see page 13 in the Introduction.
[39] Synods or Councils of Bishops were held through the fourth century. Some were regional, involving churchmen from regions or sectors (east or west) of the empire, others were general or ecumenical, to which all bishops of the Church were summoned. Zeno, in his time at Verona, would have been eligible to attend the synods at Sirmium (351), Arles (353), Milan (355), Rimini/Seleucia (359), Constantinople (360), and Alexandria (362). Roldanus (2006, 222).

sermons. I will show that these reveal a person capable of innovation and plausible argument, one attuned to the politics – imperial and religious – of the western empire, with a keen understanding of the concerns of his congregation, and a subtle sense of humour that was invariably positive and charitable. He was, in every sense, the very person to carry out the critical tasks, religious and pastoral, of a senior churchman in a changing and problematic world.

His audience contained those who had been Christians for varying lengths of time, and often consisted largely if not entirely of those who were about to be baptised, the catechumenate. From the context and from what Zeno says, his congregation was made up of people who were reasonably prosperous, though there were also those who were poor and in need of assistance. The bishop spoke openly in his sermons about this social division and made clear what the expected Christian response was. This shows the growing reach of Christianity in the community, universal in its embrace and proactive in seeking change:

> *Sed haec non ad vos, fratres, quorum largitas provinciis omnibus nota est, quorum pia semina totius quodam modo orbis per membra iactantur. Vobis multi redempti, multi edictis feralibus liberate, multi condicionibus duris exuti, gratias agunt. Vestrae domus peregrinis omnibus patent; sub vobis vivus mortuusque diu numquam vivus est nudus.*[40]
>
> But that does not apply to you, brothers; your generosity is known to all the provinces; the worthy seed of your love is sown in all parts of the world. Many who have been redeemed through you, many who have been freed from condemnation to death, many released from harsh conditions, they give you thanks. Your homes are open to all strangers; you have never left a person, living or dead, naked without covering him.

[40] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:14.5). Zeno, in praising the generous Veronese, alludes to the relative prosperity of the city – and to his own satisfaction with this. Lizzi notes that neither Zeno nor his counterpart Gaudentius of Brescia was keen to offend the very wealthy. Large landowners were a major economic force whose taxes supported institutions such as the Church and who indulged in luxuries in cities like Verona. Lizzi (1989, 120-123), Cracco Ruggini (1961, 82-84).

As well as literary references to the Christian presence in northern Italy, there is evidence from archaeology. Lizzi notes a program of church-building in the region during the second half of the 4th century. In Verona, much of this construction was associated with Zeno himself when he was bishop there, from 362 to 371 or 380.[41] Margherita Bolla suggests that this activity coincided with violence against and damage to sculptures of the old tradition in the city. In Aquileia towards the end of the fourth century, various dedications to Cybele and Bellona were broken up and used in the foundations of the baptistery.[42] In his introduction to the Città Nuova edition of Zeno's sermons in 2008, Giorgio Fedalto points to the remains of a large basilica in Verona, dated to the first half of the fourth century, found just north of the cathedral, probably built on the site of a previous Roman structure[43]. There was some restructuring in the second half of the fourth century, including the addition of a mosaic floor. This enhancement could well coincide with the episcopate of Zeno.[44] Zeno oversaw the building of new churches and in sermon (2:5) he officially consecrated one of these. To underscore the growing need for places of worship and the decline in older beliefs, he wished that he were building a second church and he referred to the fall of pagan temples and Jewish synagogues.[45] Much and all as Zeno and other churchmen would have liked to see the progress of Christianity and the decline of the old beliefs as inexorable, the course of events rarely ran so smoothly or in the one direction. The *Theodosian Code* show contradictory laws on religion at different periods, as levels of toleration ebbed and flowed in the 4th and 5th centuries.[46]

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[41] Lizzi (1989, 56-57), Stepanich (1948, 11), Zeno and Banterle (2008, 15-17). An inscription of around 380 (CIL 5.3332) records the transfer of a statue from the Capitolium (where it had fallen from its pedestal many years previously) to the Forum. The presence in Verona of a temple dedicated to the Capitoline triad (Juno, Jupiter, and Minerva) confirms the city's importance. The inscription would seem to indicate that the Capitolium was not in good repair at the time of Zeno and that it was not restored afterwards. Christian churches rather than pagan temples were the focus of public building activity at the time. The statue is now in Verona's Museo Lapidario Maffeiano. Frothingham (1914), Humphries (2019, 63).

[42] Bolla (2017).

[43] The cathedral is located in the north of the old city, while the basilica of St Zeno, where the remains of the bishop are located in the crypt, is 1.5 km away in the west of the city. Zeno and Banterle (2008). For details of the archaeology and architecture of the basilica and its crypt, see Ederle (1962, 9-13), Lisca (1956, 10, 20, 101-102), and Patuzzo (2010, 95, 131).

[44] Zeno and Banterle (2008).

[45] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:6.1).

[46] Mirow and Kelley (2000). Writers at the time were selective. They did not always regard as worth relating attitudes and events which would have long-term effects. In a study of the *Theodosian Code*,

The Church was in the process of institutionalising. Along with a growing presence in the built environment, it had a territorial and administrative framework, based largely on the boundaries ordained by the temporal power. Northern Italy was becoming the centre of (western) imperial bureaucracy, while dioceses were growing in number and their bishops were becoming aware of their authority.[47] During Zeno's episcopacy, Verona was a subsidiary diocese of the metropolitan of Milan.[48] In the western empire of the 4th century, Rome had ceased to be the main imperial residence. Emperors undertook journeys from province to province and to the frontiers, maintaining internal order and defence against incursions. Milan was on a route often travelled and emperors spent time and held court there on several occasions.[49] This exceptionalised the Milanese see and its archbishop. In 355, the holder of the office, Dionysus, was expelled and replaced by Auxentius. He is sometimes reputed to have been a *homoian* or adherent of the Arian sect.[50] However, Michael Stuart Williams offers the main sources for this attribution as his opponent and successor Ambrose, and subsequent writers who supported Ambrose. Williams suggests that Auxentius was appointed in a fit of pique against a pro-Nicene faction by the emperor Constantius II in 355, and so was identified as anti-Nicene and, by extension, pro-Arian.[51] Despite the inauspicious circumstances of his appointment, Auxentius remained as bishop of Milan until his death in 374, to be succeeded by Ambrose, who wrote of this transition as the restoration of the Nicene tradition.[52] Although part of the archdiocese of Milan, Verona was located in the

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Salzman shows that Constantine and most of his successors tried to encourage conversion to Christianity through legislation. Yet even in the 5th century, laws were still being enacted to protect peaceful, law-abiding pagans. Laws on intermarriage varied over time but tended to favour pagans over Christians and Jews. Salzman (1993, 364, 369).

[47] Lizzi (1989, 17).

[48] Zeno, as a result, was a suffragan or assistant bishop to the bishop of Milan. A history of the diocese of Verona in the early centuries is included in Lanzoni's book. Lanzoni (1927, 919-934).

[49] Barnes lists such peregrinations and sojourns in Milan and other locations, from 284 to 337, Barnes (1982, 47-87), and from 329 to 360, Barnes (1993, 218-228).

[50] Flower (2013, 252).

[51] Williams (2017, 58-60). Hanson wrote that Auxentius, a Greek speaker from Cappadocia, had no Latin (Hanson 1988, 334). This would hardly have made for a good understanding between him and the faithful and the clergy of his diocese.

[52] Auxentius was subject to the opprobrium that often went with political appointments. He was from Cappadocia, and Greek was his mother tongue, so a contributory factor to his unpopularity may have been his poor Latin. Athan., *Hist. Arian.*, part VIII, par 75). See also Cazzani (1996).

regio decima of mainland Italy.[53] Zeno, as bishop of Verona, was suffragan or assistant bishop to the metropolitan or archbishop of Milan. Auxentius, accused of having Arian tendencies by Ambrose, by Athanasius, and by Hilary of Poitiers, was his superior but this did not prevent the bishop of Verona from publicly condemning Arius and all who subscribed to his distinction between the natures of the Father and of the Son.[54] In 381 or soon thereafter, the diocese of Verona was reassigned to the metropolitan of Aquileia, corresponding to the *regio decima*.[55]

While managing growth during this period, the Church felt obliged to enforce doctrinal uniformity, particularly when it came to the nature of the cornerstone of belief, the saviour who was both human and son of God; by the time of Zeno's accession as bishop of Verona, almost twenty Councils of Bishops had discussed the Arian issue. The emperor Constantius II convened three such councils in the years immediately before Zeno's episcopacy. Zeno himself does not feature in the records of any of these councils of the church in the latter half of the fourth century. This obscurity may have afforded him a measure of security in a period of uncertainty as to the stances of both State and Church on matters of faith. Given his vocation as a monk, he may not have been institutionalised by the hierarchy of the church nor as a bishop quite so politicised by involvement in state affairs: he had more freedom to think for himself, to operate independently and from the ground up. In addition, his sermons went unnoticed by contemporary historians; Zeno does not appear in the works *De viris illustribus* by either Gennadius Massiliensis or Jerome.[56] Fedalto ascribes this to the fact that while the sermons were read and used liturgically in Verona, they were virtually unknown outside the diocese until much later; transmission by way of written versions of the sermons probably began in the 6th century.[57] G. Bardy attributes the first collection of Zeno's written works to an editor in the fifth century.[58]

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[53] The *regio decima* (tenth region) essentially corresponds to the current Italian regions of the Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trento, and the Istrian peninsula in Croatia. Milan was in the neighbouring *regio undecima* (eleventh region) of the current regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, and Val d'Aosta. (Plin., *HN*, book 3, 18-19).

[54] See, for example, sermons 2:4, 2:5, and 2:8. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4, 2:5, 2:8).

[55] Allen says this transfer took place in the fifth century Allen and Armstrong (1910, 7), Zeno and Banterle (2008).

[56] Simonetti (1973, 160).

[57] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 23), Stepanich (1948, 18-20).

[58] Bardy (1950).

Editions of Zeno's sermons

Zeno's extant *oeuvre* is confined to his sermons. Printed editions of these began appearing in the early 16th century.[59] These were based on nine manuscripts, the oldest dating from the 8th century. The sermons had been used in Verona for centuries but were unknown outside the diocese. This helps to explain the relative obscurity of their author, Zeno. In the 18th century, the brothers Girolamo and Pietro Ballerini carried out a comparative study of several manuscripts, analysing the language and style of the sermons. This led to the removal of eleven sermons from the edition they published in 1739.[60] Their conclusion was that the remaining 93 sermons were most probably by the same author. A recent edition of this work was republished in 2012.[61] The oldest of the nine manuscripts used in this edition was a codex from the 8th century, located in the Benedictine abbey in Rheims. As well as two books of sermons, it contained many notes on the context and performance of the liturgical rites accompanying the sermons. These additions help to identify Verona as the origin of the sermons.[62] The Ballerini edition comprised 93 sermons, arranged thematically in two books, 16 in the first, 77 in the second[63]. Giovanni Battista Giuliari, canon of the cathedral and librarian of the diocesan library in Verona, found another set of manuscripts. He published a new version of the sermons in 1883.[64] In 1934, Andreas Bigelmair edited and translated the sermons, publishing them as *Des heiligen Bischofs Zeno von Verona Traktate (Predigten und Ansprachen)* with 14 sermons in the first volume and 77 in the second.[65] This version has been translated into German and is available online as part of the

[59] Bigelmair (1904, 22-23).
[60] Zeno (2012). The Ballerini brothers enjoyed the patronage of Count Maffei in Verona, who had first encouraged them, in 1732, to publish the works of Cardinal Noris, also a native of Verona but of Irish ancestry. Telfer (1943, 231).
[61] Zeno (2012).
[62] Stepanich (1948, 20).
[63] Ten other sermons featured among the available manuscripts, but were not included in the published work as they could not be authenticated; these always appeared as the last items in all relevant manuscripts (Stepanich 1948, 21).
[64] Giuliari lists, without comment, the twelve codices used. Zenone (1900, CLXI).
[65] Zeno and Bigelmair (1934).

Bibliothek der Kirchväter (BKV) series of the University of Fribourg.[66] Bigelmair's edition followed the same thematic arrangement as used by the Ballerini brothers. Bengt Löfstedt edited a new version in 1971, published as volume XXII of the CCSL (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*).[67] The sermons were arranged in chronological order, and presented in two books, with 63 in the first and 30 in the second. François Dolbeau used the opportunity presented by Löfstedt's milestone edition to review the manuscript tradition of Zeno's sermons, aiming to examine their authenticity. In his article, he details the stemma used by Löfstedt and his predecessors, as well as the language and style. He discusses echoes of Zeno's sermons to be found in those of Augustine. His findings support 4th century Verona as the time and place of the origin of the sermons.[68] The most recent new edition is Banterle's fully annotated translation of 2008, with parallel texts in Latin and Italian. As with Löfstedt's edition, this arranges the sermons chronologically, in two books of 63 and 30 sermons, with the older Ballerini/Giuliari/Bigelmair numbering given for each sermon.

In this paper, I use the numbering scheme of Löfstedt/Banterle, covering both Books 1 and 2, by default, with Bigelmair numbering included for the more frequently referenced sermons. The former scheme is used in the most recent edition of the sermons, while the latter appears in the BKV online version in German.

The *Concordance to the Sermons of Bishop Zeno of Verona* by Löfstedt and Packard is an invaluable reference for any research of the sermons. It lists alphabetically the occurrence of every word in the Latin texts, providing context, book number, and sermon number for each one.

List of modern editions of the sermons

1. Bigelmair, Andreas. 1934. *Des heiligen Bischofs Zeno von Verona Traktate (Predigten und Ansprachen)*. Munich: J. Kösel & F. Pustet
2. Löfstedt, Bengt M. 1971. *Zenonis Veronensis tractatus*. Brepols Turnhouti

[66] Zeno, Bigelmair, and Noti (2003).
[67] Zeno and Löfstedt (1971).
[68] Dolbeau (1985).

3. Löfstedt, Bengt M., and David W. Packard. 1975. *A Concordance to the sermons of Bishop Zeno of Verona*. New York: American Philological Association.
4. Bigelmair, Andreas and Noti, Daniel. 2003. *Zeno von Verona: Traktate, Predigten und Ansprachen*. University of Friborg. http://www.unifr.ch/bkv/kapitel2820.htm.
5. Banterle, Gabriele. 2008. *Zenone di Verona: Trattati*. Rome: Città Nuova.

Current scholarship

Zeno does not feature in any of the chronicles of Late Antiquity. He is not referred to in any of the Church histories, nor in Jerome's *Lives of the Saints*, and did not attend any of the Councils of Bishops during his tenure at Verona. He was held in high esteem in his adopted city, where he was commemorated as patron saint with his own basilica. The survival of 93 of his sermons has provided a resource for scholarly study. There has been a body of valuable research on the sermons. Bigelmair traces the origins of the manuscripts, as well as the sources of influence on the sermons, both classical and Judaeo-Christian. He analyses Zeno's theology from his preachings, covering a wide range of doctrines, including the Trinity, creation, Mariology, original sin, marriage, and confession.[69] Stepanich also mapped out the Christology of Zeno, using the influences of several churchmen, and of the Scriptures, as a framework for the theology expressed by the bishop.[70] These scholars produce strong evidence and make compelling arguments for the influences on Zeno and on where these were used by the bishop in preaching Christian doctrine. But Zeno was well able to think for himself and did not always agree with his teachers – see footnote 565, for example. Verona was a long way from the north Africa of his formative years, and Zeno formed his own agenda to deal with the issues he saw to be important locally. In this thesis, the sermons and their context show the mindset and the rationale of the bishop of Verona.

[69] Bigelmair (1904).
[70] Stepanich (1948).

Explicit themes within the sermons

In chapters on sermons against paganism and idolatry in northern Italy in the latter half of the 4th century, Ariano includes some of Zeno's preaching on these topics, while Dümler deals with the bishop's treatment of pagan culture and Christian education.[71] Like many preachers of the time, Zeno felt obliged to disparage the Jews, not least because they were documented by the Bible as God's chosen people. Recent research on the anti-Jewish content of his sermons has been carried out by Gabrielli and Kampling, and it shows that he maintained a strain of anti-Judaism within the Church.[72] The form and content of sermons in the Paschal season, particularly those in the Easter vigil and those used in preparing the catechumenate for baptism, have been studied by Solignac and Jeanes, while the latter has suggested that the eucharistic prayer makes its first appearance in one of Zeno's sermons.[73] Truzzi also looks at the liturgy as it is formed in Zeno's sermons, and points to underlying rituals and theology. The sermons are marked by a generous use of imagery and allegories to help explain the theology of Church rituals. He has also compared Zeno's preaching with those of his near-contemporaries, Chromatius of Aquileia and Gaudentius of Brescia.[74]

The sermons are replete with direct and implicit references to Scripture. Frede has written about instances of the New Testament, while Banterle has pointed to the importance of Abraham in the bishop's preaching.[75] Both Boccardi and Vicentini have found high levels of morality and spirituality in Zeno's sermons. The latter describes this as a positive morality, centred on the good to be done rather than the evil to be avoided. He concludes that the bishop was more populist than thinker; both are certainly part of his character, and the performative may sometimes conceal the contemplative side of Zeno.[76] Lo Menzo saw this in Zeno's sermons, which she

[71] Ariano (2017), Dumler (2013).
[72] Gabrielli (2014), Kampling (1984).
[73] Solignac (1999), Jeanes (1986).
[74] , Truzzi (1985).
[75] Frede (1981), Zeno and Banterle (2008).
[76] Boccardi (1983), Vicentini (1982).

uses to illustrate his sense of humour, particularly his use of irony, and his zest for life.[77] The sermon on the zodiac stands out as the first surviving instance of a Christian sermon on the subject. Dirani has given a thorough account of the Christian symbols used to replace the traditional signs of the zodiac.[78] Hegedus devotes a chapter to the sermon in his book *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology.* This gives historic and doctrinal context to the bishop's approach to the long-established apparatus of astrology, divination, and fortune-telling.[79] The arguments against astrology, even the precise examples used by Christian teachers, can be seen in the bishop's sermon. Chin also writes about Zeno and his zodiac sermon. She compares him with Priscillian (~340 – 385).[80] Both believed that the date of one's baptism was one's real birthday, more significant than that of one's actual birth. Priscillian, however, had unorthodox beliefs about the hierarchy of Christianity. His advocacy of extreme asceticism, celibacy, and continence won him very few friends among the religious and secular establishments. It does, however, point to the care that Zeno exercised in challenging the claims of astrology while not offending the many people who took harmless pleasure in reading their horoscopes.

Given Zeno's north African origins, scholars have studied his works for evidence of background and education. These include Barelli's analysis of the Latin used by Zeno and its links with dialect in north Africa.[81] Palanca finds figures of early Greek rhetoric in the sermons and shows that Zeno was adept at many metric forms, while Vokes looks for Roman influences on the bishop's style.[82] Boccardi looks for influences from north Africa and north Italy, as well as from Origen, and argues that these contributed to Zeno's ability to use sources independently.[83]

[77] Rapisarda Lo Menzo (2007).
[78] Dirani (2006).
[79] Hegedus (2007).
[80] Chin and Vidas (2015).
[81] Barelli (1980).
[82] Palanca (1972); Palanca (1970), Vokes (1966).
[83] Boccardi (1983).

There are several works on the cult and reception of Zeno which fall outside the scope of this study. These include works by Nicholas Everett, G. P. Marchi et al, Alberto Piazzi, and F. Segala.[84]

This is the first study of Zeno's sermons which uses time to analyse the intellectual scheme of his preaching. The sermons deal explicitly with time on several occasions. In topics such as Creation and the Nativity, the sequencing of events in time is important; God created the world from nothing, he did not form it out of pre-existing disordered material, and Christ, though incarnated as man at a well-documented point in time and space, already existed when the world was made. Eternity, as an abstraction of time without limits, was at the heart of the bishop's Christology: everlasting life in heaven was the reward awaiting all faithful Christians. To underwrite this happy prospect, Christ himself must be eternal, he had to be co-eternal with God the Father. This may not have been consistent with a normal father-son relationship, but it was key to Zeno's syllogism against Arianism. More generally, his thoughts on time permeate his sermons. I will show that Zeno had a clear and consistent intellectual structure with which to explain the created world and the divine kingdom.

While many studies of the sermons have focused on explicit topics in the content, on the form of language and the sources cited, or indeed on the character of the bishop himself, the complex framework of time as used by Zeno has been overlooked. In addressing this lacuna, I will ask why Zeno had an *idée fixe* about the natural rhythms of time, what was his purpose in preaching about the fallibility of man-made or historic time, why did he continually underline the co-eternity of Christ with God the Father, and why did he venture into the unknown by describing eternity in terms of the quotidian.

To address these questions, I have had recourse to works on time in Late Antiquity, and on the contest for control of time between state and Church. The calendar was a field of conflict as traditional pagan festivals gradually gave way to Christian

[84] See, for example, Everett (2016), Marchi, Orlandi, and Brenzoni (1972), Piazzi (1986), Segala (1982).

seasons and feast days. In the western Church, the continued naming of the weekdays after pagan gods was largely accepted, although any associated pagan rituals were rigorously suppressed by churchmen like Zeno. Bishops were the power brokers here, and their sermons were a means of communicating with a wide public.[85] Zeno was no exception in this regard. The work of Bradshaw and Johnson expands and updates the work of Talley.[86] It traces the development of the Christian liturgy in the early church. It identifies the cultural complexities of this process, and deals separately with weekly worship, Easter, Lent, Advent, and martyrology. The place of the catechumen in the early church is emphasised, as conversion was still under way on a large scale. The authors also draw attention to the importance of scriptural sources. Missing, though, are the contention and negotiation with the older traditions, as is the importance of time and how it is controlled.

The two volumes by Connell are also very useful in providing the context for Church liturgy and its development in late antiquity.[87] The attention to Lent and Easter make it very relevant to the preparation of the catechumenate, which features extensively in Zeno's sermons.

There has been extensive scholarship on Arianism in the early Church. This is despite – or maybe because of – the paucity of surviving original material on this variant of Christianity. Most of what is known about the belief is from quotations ascribed to Arius by his opponents. The progress of Arianism, its espousal by at least two emperors, and the opposition mounted by the orthodox bishops against it are documented and discussed in works by Hanson, MacMullen, McLynn, Roldanus, D. H. Williams, and Rowan Williams.[88] McLynn describes Ambrose's agenda as largely political. His family background and early career in the public service, together with his unfamiliarity with many doctrinal issues, were factors in his renown

[85] McEachnie (2014, 277).
[86] Talley (2000b), Bradshaw and Johnson (2010).
[87] Connell (2006a).
[88] Two emperors who gave support to the Arian tendency bookended Zeno's episcopate at Verona. Constantius II, emperor from 337 to 361, promoted Arian churchmen and saw to it that Athanasius, promoter of the Nicene creed, was unable to resume his position as bishop of Alexandria. Valens, emperor in the East from 364 to 381, also contended with Athanasius and supported Arians. Roldanus (2006, 96-100, 114-120).

as a power broker. More recently, Michael Stuart Williams has re-examined the part played by Ambrose of Milan. His conclusion is that the archbishop's image as a valiant opponent of Arianism and defender of Christianity against its insidious doctrine is largely a construct of Ambrose himself and his admirers. Ambrose was not alone in this regard. Other leading figures in the Church were not immune from using Arianism as a scapegoat in order to enhance their own standing.

Objectives, structure of the thesis, and research questions

My first interest in reading Zeno's sermons was cosmological. I had heard about his sermon on the zodiac (1:38) and this piqued my curiosity in the bishop's views on space, time, and the universe.[89] Going through the sermons, it soon became clear that time and its cognates were multivalent terms. Zeno spoke of time in three distinct senses: cyclical time, historic or linear time, and eternity. The difference between these three was unambiguous and consistent. The first task was to identify within the two volumes of sermons instances of these three categories and to show that each had its own significance. The next question was: what purposes were served by the bishop's choice of temporal terminology? This question addresses primarily the text of the sermons, their content, in the context of influences on Zeno and comparisons with the preaching of his contemporaries. The answers led to a second set of questions: what other strategies did the bishop use to achieve his objectives? The answers are to be found in the form of the sermons, in their context within the Christian liturgy which, in the 4th century, was being institutionalised in the Church calendar. In this thesis, I will show how the bishop treated cyclical, linear and eternal time in different ways. These were separate, even incommensurable, ways of dealing with a common quantity, whether the context was the routine of life in the community, the less regular tracts of historic time, or the limitless eons of eternity in paradise. His works show how he described different times and used them to frame his defence of the orthodox position of the Church against the Arian tendency. Zeno was innovative in his adaptation of pre-Christian traditions about time and in their use within the new liturgy; his creativity and his positivity are themes

[89] For works on Zeno's sermon on the zodiac, see, for example, Hegedus (2007), Dirani (2006), Hübner (1975)

running through this thesis. The research topic throughout this work is how to distinguish between the three types of time which Zeno used in his preaching, and between the different uses to which he put them.

Ideas about time and its applications are issues that have been researched and reported for the early Christian period, with reference to leading philosophers, historians, and church figures of the time. Zeno of Verona is one who has not been extensively studied in this sphere of interest. His ideas on time and how they were developed inform us of the thinking and the preaching of a working bishop. The influences on Zeno are identified, as well as the contributions he made to church teaching and liturgy. The work draws on existing scholarship and adds to it by showing how a conceptual framework of time, using examples of temporality, is given practical form in the teachings of a churchman. It reveals the use of Zeno's sermons within the accompanying church liturgy to counter traditional pagan practices and to withstand doctrinal attrition within the Church.

Chapter 1 – cyclical time

The first chapter focuses on cyclical time. Zeno saw a distinctly recurrent form of time as the natural way in which people's lives were regulated in fourth-century Italy. The bishop's sermons provide instances in which the rhythms of life are described, and the cycle of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection is frequently spoken of as a model for the everlasting reward for the faithful Christian. The periodicity of nature, as evinced by the regular and repeated stages of viticulture, is seen as a template for life. Even celestial phenomena must conform to this cyclical formula.

As a set of lessons delivered every week over a period of almost a decade, the sermons map out the seasons of the Church liturgy and of the rituals performed therein. The use of scripture to illustrate moral and practical lessons was also part of the Church calendar and can be seen in the repetition and development of Zeno's sermons. As appropriate, Zeno's sermons conform to the Church calendar and to the needs of the catechumenate – instruction, baptism, and confirmation. His sermon on the zodiac is unique for this period and particularises his construction of the annual cycle of lessons. He also uses the practice of commemorating martyrs as

part of the expanding liturgy and adapts it to his own intellectual formation and experience.

The Church used the solar cycle of the Julian calendar as the basis for its yearly round of major seasons and particular feast days. It still used the lunar cycle to calculate the date of Easter. The importance of the cycle, as used and explained by Zeno, will be shown in the population of the calendar with new feast days, with the replacement and adaptation of traditional pagan festivals, and with contention for naming rights over the days and months of the calendar. The centrality of cyclical time will be shown in the way the calendar could accommodate both Christian beliefs and pagan traditions in apparent harmony. When it came to religious observances, however, conflicts could break out. In the second and third centuries, Tertullian and Novation had exhorted Christians not to honour traditional festivals, nor to attend games and shows associated with them. In the fifth century, Augustine renewed this campaign against the pagan calendar and for the strict observance of Christian events.[90]

Chapter 2 – Zeno explains the zodiac

This chapter uses one of Zeno's sermons (1:38) as a case study of zodiacal beliefs within the context of the emerging doctrine of Christianity. It deals with issues of faith and of the cosmos but is also grounded in the *realpolitik* of 4th-century Italy. I will consider Zeno's substitution of Christian images for the signs of the zodiac. I will show that Zeno knew his subject very well and was confident in confronting traditional lore. That his exegesis is somewhat lacking in observational unity and cyclical relevance may have been his deliberate tactic to undermine the celestial and seasonal significance of the zodiac. My argument is that the significance of the sermon is emphasised by its delivery to catechumens during the Easter baptism ceremony. This is a ritual of re-birth, uniting all those being baptised, whatever their birth-sign. I will show that Zeno offered a new birth-sign to his congregants, one that was propitious for all, based on the conflation of baptism with confirmation (for catechumens), of both with Easter, and of the latter's guaranteed occurrence within a

[90] Augustine, *Sermon 198.2,* Markus (1990, 101-103).

favourable zodiacal sign. This happy coincidence was at the intersection of lunar and solar calendars and was invariant with the long-term precession of the equinox. Infant baptism was already practiced and would in time replace the credobaptism of the Church in its early phase of conversion.[91] Zeno's concept of re-birth is a precursor of onomastic practices that are still honoured in some Catholic and Orthodox countries in Europe.

More generally, the sermon is an object lesson in the twin-track strategy of replacement and adaptation used by the Church in the face of antithetical traditional beliefs and practices. The zodiac, a sequence of constellations that define the ecliptic, is a natural phenomenon, but the signs can be repurposed as symbols from sacred scripture. The predictive power of horoscopy conflicts with the Christian belief in free will. Conveniently, the state has its own reasons for proscribing soothsaying and fortune-telling; Zeno's satisfaction with this situation is barely concealed in the sermon.

The style of this sermon, as well as its substance, will be examined. I will show that there is no dichotomy between the two, that the style reflects and constructs the doctrinal substance. The genre of sermon is an interactive one, in which the speaker and his audience are in face-to-face rapport with each other. In his sermon, Zeno makes light of the prohibition of soothsaying without being flippant. He undermines the horoscope but is attuned to the residual faith that his congregation have in traditional lore. His use of tone, pacing, and register in equating baptism with re-birth is uniquely suited to this genre. As we have seen (on page 11 above), Zeno was not a major churchman of Late Antiquity and his works were largely unknown outside Verona until the 18th century. Nevertheless, if only for sermon 1:38, he merits scholarly attention for the Church's twin-track strategy of rejection and

[91] In the early Church, new Christians were recruited as adults. They were able to make a conscious declaration of belief and their baptism was known as credobaptism (believer's baptism). Paedobaptism (infant baptism), now the norm in Christian Churches, began in the 3rd century, although some postponed the sacrament until later in life. McKinion describes the purpose and ritual of baptism in the early Church, while Jensen writes of the verbal and visual imagery as well as the doctrinal aspects. Bradshaw & Johnson and Connell are useful on the development of the sacrament within the liturgy of the Church. McKinion (2001b); Jensen (2011); Jensen (2012); Bradshaw and Johnson (2010); Connell (2006b).

accommodation at work, for his astute positioning of re-birth in a favourable time of the year, and for using his knowledge of and belief in cyclical time to advance the Church's presence and meaning in the quotidian of the faithful.

Chapter 3 – linear time

In contrast to cyclical time, linear or historic time does not recur in cycles. As elapsed time, it is measured with the units of cyclical time, with days, months, and years. Its longevity, though, needs the definition of a starting point, and an ending point is another datum that belongs to the time period or history of a civilisation. Early Christian writers, aware that different civilisations used various means of calibrating their histories, knew that they shared a single linear progression of time, with varying degrees of synchrony and points of contact between them. Eusebius represented the contemporaneous aspect of civilisations in a tabular fashion, with parallel columns for the key historic events of each, and with simultaneous events aligned horizontally. Similar schemas were used in histories, in calendars, and in almanacs of the period.

This paratextual use of tabular representation is accompanied by conceptual frameworks for the occurrence of distinct epochs of time, independent of each other although not incapable of temporal contiguities. There was a teleological view, expressed by Church historians of the period, that histories were part of an overall progression towards perfection as prescribed by the deity. For Christians, all were contained within the biblical schedule of the world, which began as described in the Book of Genesis and would end according to the Book of Revelation. The direction of time was defined by the progress towards the goal of fulfilment of the divine will.[92] Within the single path of time there were two separate periods, or different kinds of time, documented by the two testaments of the Bible. The Old Testament told of the fall of mankind and foretold the redemption to come in the form of the Son of God. The New Testament dealt with the fulfilment of prognoses from the Old Testament.

[92] Since the early 20th century, the direction of time has been accepted as being determined by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which says that the entropy of a closed system can only increase over time.

Some saw the two as mirror images, with characters and events in one having counterparts in the other.[93]

My aim in this chapter is to develop the distinct concept of linear time as it was described and used in the 4th century. I will show that, in sermon (1:26), Zeno's construction of the epochs of history involves the dexterity of the almighty yet allows for the contingencies resulting from human free will and from the vicissitudes of natural events. Within the epoch of biblical time, Zeno uses the contingency and direction of time to mark out the righteous from the damned. These immutable features distinguish linear time from the predictable rhythms of cyclical time. In his sermons, the bishop uses linear time as a semblance of the impossible, a yardstick for the power of the almighty. God alone was able to abrogate the direction of time and to grant a prospect of the future, or he could halt the march of time altogether for as long as needed. Thus, it is only with God's blessing that Abraham could see that his progeny would be numerous in the future.[94] In another sermon, Zeno reminded his congregation how God stopped time to help the Israelites defeat their enemies.[95]

As a set of teachings, the sermons fit within the liturgical year, with iterations over a period of a decade. In Italy of the 4th and 5th centuries, sermons by Zeno, by Chromatius of Aquileia, by Philastrius of Brescia, by Maximus of Turin, and by Ambrose of Milan show the emerging shape of a liturgical year.[96] An algorithm for the date of Easter, based on both lunar and solar calendars, had been established, and this gave rise to a structured paschal season, with Lent, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost being celebrated each year. Zeno also commemorated the martyrdom of Arcadius of Mauretania within the ambit of his sermons. The process of populating the Christian calendar with such events was under way. These feast days were abstractions of linear time, condensed into singularities in the cyclical calendar. I will also show how linear time was used – and abused – in the lives of the saints. The feast days of saints and martyrs also pointed to the infinite life of the

[93] Hamilton (2022)
[94] Gen. 15,6. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:13.4).
[95] Josh. 10, 12-13. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:1.5).
[96] Connell (2006a, 111-112, 164-171).

saints in heaven. This remembrance of the dead was admired by Julian the Apostate, who asked why pagan priests could not do like the Galileans in this regard.

Chapter 4 – time and eternity

When it comes to eternity, one of the critical research questions is what stance did Zeno adopt on the nature of God and eternity: was the deity timeless, that is, outside time, or was he within time and immortal? For Christians, deep time was set out in the Bible, starting with the Creation and ending at Armageddon. Constructions on passages from Scripture were used to determine the current age of the world and its allotted time span, giving a terminal date in the not-too-distant future. There is also the reward of eternal bliss promised to the faithful followers of Christ. In this chapter, I will show how the framework of Christian teaching, in the form of Zeno's sermons, embraced both concepts of time, biblical and eternal. He first identified them with separate kingdoms, worldly and heavenly, in order to resolve an apparent contradiction in the writings of Paul.

Zeno's imperative was not simply scriptural exegesis, however. He was concerned with the Arian controversy and the threat it posed to the Church's message of eternal salvation. He argued consistently that God and his son Christ were co-eternal. From his sermons there unfolds, in dialogue with scripture and with his own intuition and originality, the concept of infinite time as equivalent to timelessness. I will show how Zeno used a *reductio* argument, and how he set bounds on any investigation of the godhead. The western Church, with doctrine decided by councils often summoned by the emperor, was concerned more about power and prestige than by the finer points of religion. Zeno was not involved in the synodical circuit. As a churchman, he was very much focused on the issue of the eternal nature of Christ, under threat from Arianism, as he saw it.

Finally, Zeno brought ineffable eternity itself within the ambit of human imagination. In his sermons, he inverted the standard frame of describing time within eternity and invited his congregation to think of the eternal within the natural cycles of the day and the year – a finite imagination of infinity. His approach is both elegant and

rigorous and is compatible with his well-argued Christology. Zeno's work on time and eternity merits evaluation along with that of Plotinus, Augustine, and Boethius, and prefigures the philosophy of Schiller, the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth, and the mathematics of Cantor. I will ask whether the bishop's stated opinions on eternity are aligned in any way with those of his contemporaries and near-contemporaries.

Research questions

To summarise, the questions addressed in the research work of this thesis are:

- What purposes were served by Zeno's choice of temporal terminology?

In particular, why did he:

  - emphasise the cyclical nature of time;
  - describe the vagaries of man-made or historic time;
  - underline the doctrine of the eternal reward of an eternal Saviour;
  - and try to make plausible the abstraction of eternity?

- What stance did Zeno adopt on the nature of God and eternity?
- What other strategies did the bishop use to further his mission?
- What contributions did he make to the Church's mission and to religious philosophy?

Methodology

The methodology is based on research of primary materials, starting with the sermons of Zeno and including other documents of the period, both literary and non-literary. The sermons are the primary sources, and this research involves a deep reading of them. As McEachnie says:

> During late antiquity, the sermon drew on the long history of oral performance in Roman culture and functioned as the primary means of communication between power brokers (bishops) and a wider society.[97]

Sermons make up a significant part of the literature of Late Antiquity. Among the most prolific preachers were Augustine of Hippo and John Chrysostom – hundreds of sermons by each of these survive. Eloquence was, according to Jaclyn Maxwell, a major factor in the career of priest; van Nuffelen said that such a talent was a prerequisite for the position of bishop. Large cities such as Antioch, Constantinople, and Milan attracted candidates for advancement, and competition was all the keener given the prospect of imperial favour. Nonetheless, congregations were willing to listen and to learn, according to Cook.[98]

In the case of concepts of time and their uses, complementary evidence from calendars and almanacs can yield information on practices of time management and their significance. The form as well as the content will be of use here. This refers to the developments of the sermons and their place in the liturgy over the decade in which they were delivered. The literary style and the manner of delivery are also key to the central messages of the sermons.

The primary sources include sermons from contemporaries in northern Italy, the works of Ambrose of Milan, histories by Eusebius, Lactantius, Jerome, Julius Africanus, and Tertullian, the philosophies of Firmicus Maternus, the sermons of Chromatius of Aquileia, Gaudentius and Philastrius of Brescia, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom, and the statutes of the Codex Justinianus and Codex Theodosianus.

[97] McEachnie (2014, 277)
[98] Maxwell (2018); Van Nuffelen (2015); Cook (2019).

Primary sources

All citations from the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version of May, Herbert G. and Bruce M. Metzger (editors). 1962. *The Oxford Annotated Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are from the versions cited below. Translations of Zeno's sermons are mine.

Ambrose	Ambrose of Milan. *Hexameron ; Paradise: and Cain and Abel.* Catholic University of America Press. Washington DC, 1961.
	Ambrose of Milan. *Letters.* Catholic University of America Press. Washington DC, 1954.
Ammianus	Ammianus Marcellinus. *Res gestae. 1, libri XIV – XXV*. Ed. Wolfgang Seyfarth. Teubner. Leipzig, 1999.
Athanasius	Athanasius of Alexandria. *Historia Arianorum*. University of California, Irvine, 1999
Augustine	Augustine of Hippo. *De haeresibus*. Ed. Liguori G. Müeller. AMS Press. New York, 1982.
	Augustine. *Select letters*. Ed. James Houston Baxter. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass., 1953.
Firmicus	Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis I*, Ed. W. Kroll and F.Stutsch. B. G. Teubner. Stuttgart, 1968.
	Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis II*, Ed. W. Kroll, F.Stutsch, and K. Begler. B. G. Teubner. Stuttgart, 1968.
	Firmicus Maternus, *L'Erreur des Religions Païennes*, Tr. Robert Turcan. Les Belles Lettres. Paris, 1982.
Hilary	Hilary of Poitiers. *Tractatus super Psalmos*. Ed. J. Doignon. Brepols. Turnhout, 1997.
Lactantius	Lactantius. *Divinae institutions*. Ed. and tr. Anthony Bowen and Peter Garnsey. Liverpool University Press. Liverpool, 2003.
	Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*,
Origen	Origen. *Contra Celsum*. Tr. Henry Chadwick. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1965.

Origen. *The Philocalie of Origen*. Tr. George Lewis. Aeterna Press. London 1911.

Ovid — Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Tr. F. I. Miller. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass., 1921.

Pliny — Pliny. *Naturalis historia*. Tr. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass., 1951.

Ptolemy — Ptolemy. *Almagest*. Tr. G. J. Toomer. Duckworth. London, 1984.

Ptolemy. *Tetrabiblos*. Tr. F. E. Robbins. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass., 1940.

Tertullian — Tertullian. *Apologeticus, De Spectaculis*. Tr. T. R. Glover. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass., 1966.

Tertullian. *De baptismo liber*. Tr. Ernest Evans. S. P. C. K. London, 1964.

Virgil — Virgil. *Aeneid*. Tr. H. Rushton Fairclough. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass., 1935.

Chapter 1: Cyclical time

"Time no longer moves forward but goes around in circles because it teems with events that go around in circles."[99]

In changing times, a change in the use of time

In this chapter I describe the cyclical nature of time, its significance in the sermons of Zeno of Verona, its use in his doctrine of Christology, and its place within the civic and religious institutions of his time. In the 4th century, changes made by Constantine and his successors opened a new era for Christianity. First recognised by the state as a religion, it soon became the religion, and its influence began to extend into political and social realms. By the early 5th century, the church in Northern Italy had effectively integrated the civic with the Christian, and the bishop had become a central figure in the community.[100] With the Bible as a back-story and a doctrine based on the evangelists' accounts of the life of Christ, the faith spread throughout the Roman empire and beyond. Church leaders were recruited from an expanding prelacy and from an educated laity, while churches and baptistries sprang up in towns and cities, all manifestations of a robust institution with an active hierarchical infrastructure.[101] More durable than any sacred buildings and more telling in their influence were the regulation of dates and the temporal structure of the Church calendar. How we now define dates derives largely from the early centuries of the common era. The Julian calendar, initiated by Julius Caesar in 45 BC, calibrated the year according to the observed annual solar cycle, while the AD (*anno domini)* scheme of Dionysius in the 6th century made it serially countable. In this period, months and days were named and renamed, and calendars show the emergence of the modern scheme of dating by ordinal position in the month. The early development of Christianity – or rather, of Christianities – involved religious

[99] Vodolazkin (2016, 307).

[100] The two events bookmarking this transition were the Edict of Toleration in 313 and the Edict of Thessalonica in 380. The trend of Christian influence, and those of other belief systems in the empire in the 4th and 5th centuries, are dealt with in Drake (2002, 72-153), Lee (2016, 77-137), and Maas (2010, 110-200), Lizzi (1989, 211).

[101] In 314, a year after the Edict of Toleration, the Church was able to convene a synod at Arles, attended by bishops from dioceses in all parts of the empire. Herrin, Whelan, and Palmer (2021).

thinking and bitter debate about concepts of time. The resultant transformation of ideas and experiences of time is evident in the daily order of prayer, the schedule of the seven-day week, and the festal seasons of the Church calendar. Notions of eternity and life after death became part of the Christian worldview.[102] Mathematical learning was shaping new cyclical and historic time measurement.[103] Old and new religions would influence the lexicon and would compete for control of the calendar.

I will show how Zeno, bishop of Verona in the latter half of the 4th century, was engaged in these processes. His sermons show him thinking out loud about the concept of periodicity in nature, of regular rhythms, and of processes returning to their starting points; these are central to the bishop's worldview. He uses this rhythm as a paradigm for the immutable course of nature, of the cosmos, and of the divine order of the Creation. Next, I will put these concepts within the praxis of time and its measurement in the 4th century. In particular, the organisation of the working year and the working week will be studied. This was of importance to the Church as it was able to systematise its teaching and its ritual in a consistent and sustainable calendar. The institutionalisation of Christianity had to be in line with the biblical back story, and to take full account of the teachings of the Church fathers. It also had to be defensible against the arguments of pagan polemicists, who said that Christianity defied the wisdom of the ancestors and tried to replace ancient rituals with crude practices.[104] The points of conflict with traditional calendars will be considered and surviving calendars from the period will be used to show a rich pattern of heritage shared between multiple traditions. These evince the struggle for hegemony over the pattern of people's lives, the way in which time was regulated. The Church was in the ascendant and over time it used its liturgical calendar to replace traditional rituals with celebrations of Christ's life and death and with feast days of saints and martyrs. Old practices co-existed with Christian events throughout the 4th and well into the 5th centuries. The very names of days and months were

[102] Goldhill (2022).

[103] On the development of ideas about time and cosmology in the early Christian era, see Connell (2006a, chapter 1), DeWitt (2018, chapters 10-13), Feeney (2007, chapter 1), Henry (2011, chapter 1).

[104] Emperor Julian said that Christian worship of saints was inconsistent with monotheism: saints were vain, he said, if they had only partial powers, and similar to gods if their powers were complete. He dismissed martyrs as "wretched men". Julian, *Against the Galileans*, Book 1.

largely immune to replacement by Christian equivalents, despite the best efforts of Zeno's fellow-bishop, Philastrius or Philaster of Brescia.[105] Finally, returning to Zeno's sermons, I will consider their cyclical form within the emerging liturgy of the Church in its annual seasons.

Scholars have studied several aspects of Zeno's works and in doing so have identified a man of considerable learning, sanctity, humility, and charity.[106] His sermon on the zodiac has attracted attention and has been treated as a metaphor for Christian unity and a lesson on scripture. In this chapter and the next, I will go further in saying that Zeno's sermons evince a political awareness of the power of the empire, and of its weaknesses. This extends to his awareness of sensitivities which he is careful not to offend, while still maintaining a clear line on Christian doctrine.

In the first section I will focus on the intrinsic significance of time and its meaning to the community, as conveyed by Zeno in his sermons. Patterns of time - days, months, seasons - regulated life in the western empire, and are used by the bishop as examples and metaphors. The sermons show a sense for the ubiquity of closed cycles in the natural world, of processes that end at their starting points. Cycles are also present in the arrangement of the sermons. They form part of the worship every Sunday. Their themes are chosen for the liturgical season and for the regulated instruction of converts, the catechumenate. The Church calendar was evolving into a pattern of ritual and commemoration arranged in the main seasons around the poles of Easter and Christmas.[107] An internalised sense of the cyclical is given expression in a developing liturgical round. This idea of cyclical time is distinct from

[105] Anderson (2019, 245); Philastrius and Marx (1898). Philaster's works are also to be found in CSEL (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum). Philaster, *Diversarum Hereseon Liber*, CSEL, 38.

[106] Zeno's extant works are limited to two volumes of sermons, but these have been analysed from a wide range of perspectives. In McEachnie (2018), Piepenbrink (2015), and Truzzi (1980), Zeno's sermons are compared with those of his contemporaries in northern Italy, Rosini (1963) and Stepanich (1948) discuss influences and the doctrinal content, Rapisarda Lo Menzo (2007) and Vicentini (1982) interpret the bishop's character and sense of morality from the sermons, while Dirani (2006), Hegedus (2007), Palanca (1972), Solignac (1999), and Truzzi (1985) focus on topics in specific sermons.

[107] For the development of Church liturgy in the early centuries, see Bradshaw and Johnson (2010), Connell (2006a, 2006b), and Talley (2000b).

longer tracts of linear time, as will be seen from the ways they are both controlled and the uses to which they are put.[108] Beginning with the Roman calendar, I ask what functions it served, how it reflected the society that used it, which features of the calendar did Christians adopt, and which did they reject. The importance of the calendar to the Church will be shown, as will the way in which it was controlled, and by whom. Ultimately, this leads to a summary of the Roman tradition that survived in the calendar, either explicitly or implicitly. Throughout, the thinking of Zeno on time, as expressed in his sermons, will be referenced and compared with contemporary views and practices. I will show that he engaged with the lexicon and the iconography of cycles in traditional beliefs. In this chapter, I will show that cyclical time was deep in the public psyche, and how the Church, through Zeno, used this to make their liturgy the new normal.

I will make use of three different types of primary source material: calendars and almanacs, contemporary histories and their historiographic methods, and Zeno's own sermons. The calendar was used to calibrate cyclical time, usually on a yearly basis and sometimes with projections several years ahead. An almanac would include factual details within the calendric period. It often provided chronicles of events from previous times, mapping out a historic past. Second, historians in Late Antiquity, like their predecessors since Classical times, knew that civilisations were not necessarily in synchrony with each other when it came to their rise and fall. So they found coincident events to map out a linear form of time across multiple cultures and epochs. Third, the sermons of Zeno – the focus of our study – shine light on a particular point in space-time, as the subject matter deals with issues of concern to people in 4th-century Verona. They draw on the oratorical tradition of Roman culture as refracted through the learning of Zeno and through his mission as bishop. In his time, the Church was still in a phase of proselytisation in Verona; this can be gauged from the considerable number of sermons devoted to the catechumenate.[109] Sermons were central to the Church's mission, serving as a communications channel between bishop and community, so preachers took pains to explain Christian doctrine and to make very clear the moral behaviour expected of converts.

[108] Chapter 3 is devoted to linear time and its treatment in Zeno's sermons.
[109] Alberto Scolari evinces pagan opposition in Verona to the Christian religion in the time of Zeno. Scolari (1955).

They used scripture selectively to endorse doctrine and homiletic messages. In the same way, contemporary issues could be given prominence, even exaggerated, to provide context for a particular point. Zeno's ideas about time – worldly and heavenly – were clearly developed and expressed, with the object of making important points of Christian teaching. The form of the sermons can shed light on the changing liturgy of the Church and its disposition in the calendar. I will use this methodology to show how the bishop had internalised cyclical time in his teachings and in the emerging form of the liturgical year. He dealt with issues of cosmic and theological time and achieved positive outcomes – at least from the Church's perspective – by combining elements from Classical, Jewish, and Christian traditions.

The sermons of Zeno, in content and form, tell us about time and its importance in 4th-century Verona. The bishop's teachings tell us about the man himself and his concept of time. The similes and metaphors that he uses give an indication of what he expected from his congregation, what he could assume was common knowledge to them. We will now look at sermons that touch on time and will find that cycles of time – cycles generally, in fact – are very much part of the public consciousness.

Zeno's worldview: cyclical time is natural

Time is invisible and intangible, it does not circulate or flow, but without it, movement of any sort, life itself, would be meaningless. Its perception can be subjective, and for a perspective on the temporal we look to forms in the spatial dimension. Such forms can be closed or open, and the simplest instances of these are the circle and the line. These have been used respectively as analogies of cyclical and linear time, a distinction embedded in lore and language. The wheel of time features in several cultures; it is expressed as the *Kalachakra* in Buddhism , which holds that the idea of time as a cycle of repeating eras was held by their founder Gautama Buddha, while Castaneda describes its use in ancient Mexican civilisations.[110] As to the straight line, our languages use spatial directions to refer to the past (behind) and the future

[110] Vesna (2001), Castaneda (2001).

(ahead) and the Roman god Janus represents the linear passage of time from one year (or age) to the next.[111] In the 1980's, the distinction was made popular by Stephen Jay Gould. He pointed to the circularity of time as encountered in everyday life, and to its close coupling with natural cycles used for calibration. As against this, the "arrow of time" defines the unidirectional flow of time, and its measurement to record deep time from the prehistory of the world and the origin of the universe.[112] The units of time are the invariant periods of cycles found in nature, be it the human heartbeat, the phases of the moon, or the seasons of the year.[113] In Zeno's time, the calendar of the year was often used, honouring both Christian and pagan festivals in close succession; the Codex Calendar of 354 (see page 62) bears witness to this.[114] The Julian calendar gave a fixed annual cycle with the ability to project diachronically. Synchrony, on the other hand, meant that histories could be compared, and gaps filled in – people could think analogically about the past.[115] Years were still dated according to the consuls, but other systems were also in use. Indiction years were numbered from the year of tax assessment, held every 15 years and starting from either 297 or 312.[116] Regnal years of certain emperors were used. In Alexandria, Christians used the start of Diocletian's reign in 284 as the origin of their "era of Martyrs." It was not until the 6th century that years were first numbered from the birth of Christ: this is the *anno domini* (AD) that is still in use.[117]

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[111] Douglas (2019).

[112] Gould (1987). The term "time's arrow" was coined by Arthur Eddington in 1927. He used it to illustrate not only the linearity of time, but also its unidirectional nature – in other words, its vector quality. This, he said, pointed to the asymmetry of time, as distinct from the symmetries of the three spatial dimensions of space-time, then much in vogue following the discoveries by Einstein in relativity and by Bohr, de Broglie, Dirac, Heisenberg, Schrödinger, and others in quantum physics. Eddington (1929).

[113] Month and day as units of time derive from observations in the sublunar zone, the orbit of the moon and the rotation of the earth about its axis. Subdiurnal units are based on successive subdivisions of the day into hours, minutes, and seconds. The units used are arbitrary and some of their earliest occurrences can be found in Babylonian/Assyrian times, around the 7th century BC. The hour may have been defined as the time taken to walk a fixed unit of distance, while the subunits of minutes and seconds relate to the Babylonian numeral system with its base of 60. Today, the basic unit of time is the second. It is defined with reference to the frequency of radiation emitted by a specific transition in the electronic configuration of the Caesium-133 atom and is measured with the atomic clock. Remijsen (2021), Aaboe (1991), McCarthy (2018).

[114] Sessa (2018, 218).

[115] Feeney (2007).

[116] Depuydt (1987).

[117] Blackburn and Holford-Strevens (1999, 767, 782).

In the Constantinian era, historiography was based on chronicles of earlier civilisations. Both pagan and Christian historians reframed the concept of an eternal Rome under "a religious and historical-political profile."[118] The realm of the divine and all attributes of the soterial deity must be free of any measure of time, even a cyclical one. This is the desired state, and it is a timeless one. It is not part of any cycle, although it must intersect with one's life sequence, with linear time. Different models of time try to accommodate man's mortal nature with his spirituality. As such, they are affective, aspirational, and distinct from scientific representations.

The worldview familiar to Zeno and his contemporaries saw the time that measured out the affairs of the mortal world to be contained within that world. Just as it is today, it was the time of natural rhythms and cycles, the periods of the sun, the moon, and the stars. The sundial captured the apparent diurnal rotation of the sun and gave the time of day. Each month, the moon went through its phases in a regular and predictable sequence. The apparent annual rotation of the stars was shown in various ways: by the movement of the sun, as it crosses the meridian each day, through the twelve signs of the zodiac; by the yearly occurrence of the winter solstice when the sun crossed the meridian at its lowest altitude above the horizon, or when it was aligned at sunrise with a purpose-built straight line. The recurring pattern of the seasons was mapped onto the rhythm of everyday life. The farmer was aware of what must be done at every stage of crop production, viticulture, and animal husbandry. The year with its four seasons was the basic cycle for growth, though multi-year periods were used for purposes of crop rotation.

In sermons to his congregation in Verona, the bishop, Zeno, drew on these natural cadences and on how they regulated the life of the community. These were familiar to his audience and so served as metaphors for cycles within the doctrine of their new Christian belief. In using the cyclical analogy, Zeno showed how pervasive and axiomatic was this concept of time by finding it inherent in all natural phenomena. In

[118] Bonamente (2003, 87 - 89). From Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus through Vico to Toynbee and Spengler, there had been those who saw history as a cycle of recurrent epochs. But the approach of Eusebius, Marcellinus, Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Jerome, Festus and others was to use different chronographies to build a single timeline. Eusebius exemplified this pattern for world history until the middle ages. Morley (2004, 573-574), Spengler and Atkinson (1970, 4), Winkelmann (2003, 18-20).

1:2, a doctrinal sermon on the resurrection in which he developed the theme of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, Zeno spoke of the sun and the moon and their courses through the heavens. He used one further astronomical example, that of "falling stars." They fall from the sky, trailing a line of white light. If you look for where they hit the ground, you will not find them; they have risen to the sky again, reborn among the bodies in the firmament, according to "the law of the resurrection of their light", a precept which Zeno cited, but neither attributed nor explained.[119] Classical writers observed phenomena in the sky, including meteors, and described them under the heading of meteorology. These included atmospheric, seismological, and geological occurrences, as well as some astronomical phenomena which were regarded as sublunary and thus under terrestrial influence. Pliny referred to occurrences at periodic intervals (including meteor showers), stars from the sky which fell upon the earth, though he gave no indication that, having fallen to earth, they returned to the sky; he said that a star could emit a burst of light if fed with a surfeit of fuel, just as oil spilling from a lamp can ignite.[120] Aristotle discussed meteors and comets as fiery natural phenomena. The terminology he used was often based on morphology, with items like "torches", "goats" and "shooting stars". The latter does seem to correspond with the phenomena observed during meteor showers. But nowhere did Aristotle make any reference to their resuming their place in the sky, having first fallen to earth. He assigned them all, incorrectly, to the sublunary sphere. He classified meteors, shooting stars, and comets along with "everything which happens naturally, but with a regularity less than that of the primary element of material things, and which takes place in the region which borders most nearly on the movements of the stars."[121] These phenomena were described by the Roman poet Marcus Manilius in his *Astronomica*:

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[119] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.8). Compare Zeno's view of imperishable shooting stars with what he preached, in the sermon on resurrection, about the souls of people. He said that after death they return to the place from which they started. The bishop cited support from philosophers, such as Plato's belief in the immortality of the soul, the views of poets such as Virgil, as well as evidence from both the Old and the New Testaments. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.11, 1:2.2, 1:2.4); Pl., *Phd.*, 69e – 84b; Verg., *Aen.*, 6, 542-543; 1, Sam 28, 13ff; Luke 16, 19ff.

[120] *Illa nimio alimento tracti umoris ignea vi abundantiam reddunt cum decidere creduntur, ut apud nos quoque luminibus accensis liquore olei notamus accidere*. "When those stars are believed to fall, what happens is that, fed with too much liquid fuel, they return the surplus as a blast of flame, just as we see this happening with a flow of oil when lamps are lit." (Plin., HN, II.6).

[121] Arist., *Mete.*, 341b.1-342a.30; 338a-b.

"For there are fires born at infrequent intervals and forthwith swept away. In times of great upheaval rare ages have seen the sudden glow of flame through the clear air and comets blaze into life and perish." Liba Taub summarises his uses of multiple causation to explain these phenomena in physical terms. Manilius expresses no preference among the options, each of which conformed to the laws of nature and the cosmos. But this misses the point that none of them has any regularity or regenerative properties.[122] According to Williams, the Pythagoreans and Seneca were among the few who said that comets were of celestial rather than sublunary provenance and were cyclical in their appearance; the position on meteors, though, is not so clear. Zeno's sermon was on resurrection, and he cited the occurrence of falling stars or meteors as evidence; there was never any sign of such stars on the ground after the event, and this was because they were reborn as stars. One might use this interpretation to explain the recurrence of certain meteor showers - the Leonids and the Perseids are common examples - which occur once a year. The picture that emerges is of a cosmos with cyclical events and apparent perturbations, but one that is remarkably stable in the long run. There are no indications of any long-term monotonic changes over time; rather, it could be described as a "steady state" universe. In the same sermon, the bishop noted that, each day, the sun was undaunted by the prospect of its end in night, as it knew that life would begin again on the following dawn. In the same way, faithful Christians should not fear death, as the new phase of eternal life awaits them after their earthly demise. The moon also followed the cycle of life, death, and regeneration, Zeno reminded his listeners, though it altered its countenance rather than its position to indicate the phase. Again, it did not falter in its progress towards old age, as it knew that life came again from death. *Etenim, fratres, facilius est reformari quod fuerit, quam institui quod ante non fuit*.[123] The message for humans from these celestial cycles is that there is life after death.

In concept and in praxis, the Christian message presented challenges for both converts and preachers. Life beyond the grave was not unknown in older traditions,

[122] Manilius, *Astronomica*, I, 812-815, Taub (2003, 139-140). Meteors and comets, according to Manilius, join other natural phenomena as portents of war, plague, and other disasters.
[123] "Because it is easier, my brothers, to restore that which already has been than to create that which did not exist before." Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.7).

but the bliss of eternity in paradise was not readily comprehensible.[124] The praxis or means to this end was belief or faith in Christ, an abstraction that was also hard to explain. In both cases, Zeno used the clarity and familiarity of fixed cycles of time to lift the obscurity. To validate the concept of life after death, he chose to show that regeneration is a theme found everywhere in nature. In doing so, he offered a somewhat fictitious explanation of meteor showers. Elsewhere, he was on firmer ground, as when he used celestial mechanics to quantify the power of the religious belief behind salvation. In his sermon on faith, the bishop used the sun and the moon, and their constant and inexorable orbits as exemplars:

> *solis cursus ac lunae ab occidui carceris receptaculo orationis freno refrena.* [125]
>
> with the reins of prayer, hold back the courses of the sun and the moon from the shelter of the prison into which they set.

Here the bishop used the cyclical mechanisms of the cosmos as a benchmark for the power of faith. Paraphrasing Joshua 10.12-13, he said that faith was strong enough to stop the sun and the moon in their time-keeping tracks.[126] Belief is so strong as to surpass the inexorable force of time itself. In this sermon, Zeno saw the natural round of day and night, of lunar months, of the seasons of the year as immutable, as paradigms for the obduracy of the natural world. Only divine faith, a force from the supernatural world, could match them. That he used this comparison in addressing his congregation indicates that the popular view was that nothing could stop the

[124] There was a variety of non-Christian religious traditions in Late Antiquity. Different gods were worshipped, both publicly and at home. It was common for people to believe that the dead joined the ranks of the *Di Manes*. Failure to honour the departed could cause them to suffer in the afterlife and could also wreak havoc on the surviving family. There was a link between temporary life on earth and the eternal survival of the household and its gods. Sallust said that it was important to pray so as to be able to join the gods in the afterlife forever. Frankfurter (2010, 551-552), Scheid (2003, 167-170), (Sallust, 31).

[125] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:3.5).

[126] "Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." Joshua 10.12-13.

movement of time in the material world. In this way Zeno conveyed the supremacy of faith, with its heavenly provenance, over any earthly power.

Cycles inhere within the material world; they do not always depend on celestial mechanics, they need not have predictable periods. In a sermon on greed (1:14), Zeno said that gold and silver are dug from the earth, and that they eventually return there:

> *Quod enim naturae est, de loco ad locum transferri potest, ei autem subtrahi non potest. Denique aurum argentumque, penitus quod eruitur magno opere terrae visceribus, iterum celandum terrae mandatur.*[127]
>
> That which belongs to nature can be moved from place to place but cannot be removed from it. Indeed, gold and silver, which are laboriously uprooted from the bowels of the earth, are again entrusted to the earth for safe keeping.

Precious things could not be taken to the afterlife. They were part of the world; their trajectory was a closed one that started and ended in the earth. The period was indeterminate, though Zeno in this sermon equated it with the order of a human lifetime. What is known is the closed, cyclical aspect of nature. The idea of the cycle is not confined to time but applies to all of Creation; it is internalised as part of the bishop's worldview and of his preaching to the Veronese.[128]

Moving on from the celestial arbiters of cyclical time, we find that the bishop continued with sublunary examples of the regular course of nature, citing the rhythms of the weather, the oceans, and the seasons. From these instances, it becomes clear that the regularity of time, as evinced by the celestial bodies, is commonly accepted as fundamental to life. On Easter Sunday, the theological apex of the church calendar, in sermon 1:33 Zeno started with the day as a circuit which

[127] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:14.2). Vicentini cites further examples of morality in the sermons of Zeno, arguing that he was both apologist and polemicist. Vicentini (1982).
[128] As a counterpoint to the cycles of nature, God and the heavenly kingdom have no life cycle, no periodicity. In sermon 1:27, during Easter vigil, Zeno quotes from scripture: "For I am the Lord, I change not." Malachi 3, 6; Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:27).

began from its end, "*proferens sibi de fine principium.*"[129] Then going through the seasons of the year, he marked each with its key agricultural activities, and linked each of these to a step along the route towards eternal life. The changes from season to season, he said, could help us to understand divine mysteries. The bishop made no reference to their origin in the rotations and orbital movements of the celestial bodies - the Sun and the planets – but he made sure to brand the cycles with Christian iconography. Zeno said that the four seasons also denoted the four Gospels. He extended this to the day which, although it was everlasting due to continuous iteration, was composed of twelve hours corresponding to the twelve apostles. Similarly, the twelve months of the year honoured the twelve prophets (see page 75). Such numerical references to Christian belief are to be found in the architecture as well as the literature of Late Antiquity. Thus, three doors in a building would indicate the Trinity.

As concepts, the rhythm of time and the fixed courses of nature were internalised in Roman society. Natural cycles were used to calibrate time, with the calendar marking out the months and days of the year.[130] Synchrony and consistent dating were important, as was the nomenclature of days and months in everyday use. We turn now to the praxis of regulating time and the issues at play in the 4th-century West. These were of concern to the Church and its bishops as they sought to inculcate Christian teaching and imagery in the form of a new liturgy into the lives of their congregations. Fully to understand Zeno's worldview, it is necessary to look into the calibration and regulation of time, its uses by the Church as it evolved into the default moral force of Late Antiquity, and the frictions with other traditions that resulted.

The systematisation of time

By the 4th century, northern Italy had been an integral part of the Roman domain for half a millennium. Turchin (see page 4) pointed to the greater social cohesion of this

[129] "revealing its beginning from its own end." Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:33.1).
[130] The term calendar is used generically here. It embraces, as well as official calendars, regional and sectoral instances such as *parapegmata* and *hemerologia*.

part of the peninsula, while Roncaglia says that the region already had a transpadine identity.[131] The built environment of Verona had, and still retains, features expected of a Roman city, including an arena, an amphitheatre, a stone bridge, and an arched gateway. In the centre, there was a capitolium and a forum, the institutions of government and justice in the Roman world.[132] The fertile hinterland and its agriculture were, as Ruggini shows, at the core of economic life.[133] This part of northern Italy supported the production of cereal crops, olives, wine, and livestock, as it does today, and still shows signs of the centuriation used in Republican and Imperial times.[134] While the rigours of agricultural cycles and the vicissitudes of climate impinged directly on those working on the land, they were not unknown to urban dwellers who relied on regular supplies of sustenance, clothing, and other goods from the countryside. Zeno and his contemporary preachers assumed such familiarity among their audiences, as they included rustic themes from the Bible in their exegeses.[135] Urban dwellers included owners of large landholdings who had tenancy contracts with those who farmed the land.[136] The Church's message was universalist, for all races and for all sectors of society, so preachers saw no incongruity in using such themes with urban audiences, who were much closer to the land than in modern times.[137] The cycles of nature, measuring out the day, the month, and the year, were shared by all as communal experience. They were

[131] Turchin (2007, 305-307), Roncaglia (2018, 55).

[132] Cavalieri Manasse, Portulano, Arzone, and Gallina (2008), Allen (1980). Because of its monuments from Roman antiquity, its urban structure showing continuous development since then, and its exemplary status as a fortified city, Verona has been classed as a UNESCO world heritage site. Stumpo (2012).

[133] Cracco Ruggini (1961, 20-21). Northern Italy was noted for the good quality of its cereal crops, due largely to its fertile soil and high proportion of cultivated land. Pliny et al. (2012, 18:13), Polybius (2013, 2:15).

[134] Caravello and Michieletto (1999); Tecchiati (2020).

[135] Rivalry between town and country is to be found in Roman literature from early imperial times. Horace notes the tension between the two in his Satires, while Pliny deplores the divisive effects of *latifundia*. Hor. *Sat.* 1.1.9-12; Plin. *HN* 18.4, 18.7; Harrison (2007).

[136] Much of the land around Verona had been settled by veteran soldiers, a process which began in late Republican times and was extended by Augustus to include land in the regions of Aquileia, Brixia (Brescia), and Patavium (Padua). In the first and second centuries, retired soldiers are recorded as taking up farmland in the region of Verona. Over time, the aggregation of smallholdings took place. From the 4th century onwards, most farms were larger than the original allotments. Smallholders sold up and either left the land or remained as tenant farmers. Mann (1956), Saggioro (2004).

[137] An exception to this universalist rule was noted by Fortunatus, bishop of Aquileia and contemporary of Zeno, when he adverts to an anti-urban sentiment among some converts. (Nazzi 2017).

determined scientifically, too. Astronomy based on observation and calculation was well documented in the works of Ptolemy. His *Tetrabiblos* explained the movements of the heavenly bodies using a model based on epicyclic trajectories. While not objectively real, it gave accurate and consistent predictions and was accepted as the theoretical and technical manual of astronomy for over a millennium.[138] It was used to confirm the stability of a universe governed by a deity, without people having to resort to further observation or to understand the principles of spherical trigonometry.[139] Local forms of almanacs, *parapegmata*, and calendars had been used throughout Greco-Roman antiquity, based on the lunar, solar, and other cycles documented by Ptolemy.[140] In Republican times, the Romans used a calendar of antique pedigree, its earliest attribution being to the legendary King Numa.[141] This recorded pagan holidays, astrological phenomena, and the names of consuls and other magistrates. Over time, dates of historical commemorations and Imperial anniversaries were added. The old calendar had been the preserve of priests and magistrates, until reforms in 304 BC brought about its monthly publication in advance. The monthly calendars became the *fasti* in 189 BC, and they designated the religious and legal significance of each day.[142] Towards the end of the republican era, the "normal" Roman year had been 355 days in length, with intercalary years of 377 and 378 days at intervals which were determined by the *pontifex*. This discretionary power could be, and was, abused. The variation in the length of the year underlined the need for reform, and it fell to Julius Caesar to oversee the change to a new calendar system.

The Julian calendar, as it came to be known, was introduced by Caesar in 45 BC. It was a paradigm shift, moving from the old model of months based on the orbit of the moon to one based on the apparent trajectory of the sun during the year. The year was fixed as 365 days, with just one intercalary month, February. This month had

[138] Ptol., *Tetr.* Whether Ptolemy and his successors believed that planets described epicyclic orbits is moot. Plausible or otherwise, the model gave accurate results. In the words of Henri Theil, "Models are to be used, not believed." Theil (1971).
[139] Cochrane (1944, 4); DeWitt (2018, 68-70).
[140] For details of origins and uses of these contrivances, see Feeney (2010); Laurence and Smith (1995); Taub (2003); Feeney (2007, 198).
[141] Plut., *Num*. 18-19.
[142] Scullard (1981).

one extra day every four years, because Caesar and those who helped him to design the calendar recognised that the solar year – the time between one summer solstice and the next – does not consist of an integral number of days – the period of one apparent rotation of the sun about the earth. The other eleven months all had the same number of days from one year to the next. Each year had exactly twelve months. The Julian calendar was unique – and uniquely successful – in that it was schematic and fixed, rather than observational and variable. In this sense, it was part of a general evolution of ancient calendars from lunar and flexible to solar and fixed.[143] It excelled by using a single cycle, that of the sun, to calibrate the year with precision, and within it to regulate the months and the days. Caesar's successor, Augustus, also recognised the importance of keeping time and date and saw this as part of the sacerdotal role of the *princeps*.[144] The continuity of a traditional role combined with a break from the past. Both were part of what Wallace-Hadrill called the cultural revolution of Augustus, in which the emperor controlled time as part of his plan to define Roman identity.[145] The new calendar continued to regulate the periods of the magistracies of Rome, maintaining the pretence of an unbroken republican tradition. It listed the consuls, the state senators, and the local magistrates, treating their periods of office as cycles as natural as that of the sun, as normal as the seasons. Throughout the empire, it imposed Roman time and Roman dates as official. Using the solar cycle was key to the success of Caesar's reform. The new calendar became the basis for a consistent measure of linear time, assuring the synchronous and uniform sequencing of years.[146] Denis Feeney

[143] Stern (2017, 31).

[144] Borst (1993, 16-17).

[145] In 8 BC, Augustus made two changes to the calendar. One was structural, a necessary recalibration of the Julian calendar. The other, an apparent conceit, was to rename Sextilis, the sixth month, as August. Both were statements of control over time and, by extension, over the lives of all Romans. To preface the correction to the calendar, in the previous year the emperor had erected an Egyptian obelisk in the Campus Martius, as either a sundial or a marker of the meridian. With its imposing height and arcane hieroglyphs, the *horologius Augusti* was a constant reminder of the emperor's power and of his knowledge of the workings of time. (Suet., *Aug.*, 31), Wallace-Hadrill (2008, 240-243), Feeney (2007, 197).

[146] The Julian solar calendar spread quite rapidly throughout the western empire, but in the east its uptake was not uniform; it was often adapted to local pre-existing lunar calendars. These had the same overall structure of the 365-day year but used different names and sequences of months. Non-Julian calendars were used by Athanasius, Eusebius, Epiphanius of Salamis, and Evagrius Ponticus in the 4th century, by Porphyrios of Gaza in the 5th, and by Theophilus of Edessa in the 8th. We know this from these writers' works and also from the *hemerologia* of early medieval times which tabulated and compared these various calendars. Bultrighini (2017), Stern (2017).

argues that it also aligned civil and natural times. By "civil" is meant the schedule of governance, the terms of the magistracies, as set out in the *fasti consulares*. These were now more clearly defined and not subject to variation. The calendar was an instrument of state power, and we now turn to see how this was important for political control.

In military matters and in affairs of state, power in the Roman empire was still centralised, but in all other areas a degree of subsidiarity obtained, and the rule of municipal law applied. The governance system had evolved with the scale of the empire and with the diversity of the nations it embraced. Beginning during the Tetrarchy at the end of the 3rd century, the number of provinces was increased. These were then reformed as larger prefectures, each with subsidiary dioceses. The state used this system to devolve the regulation and administration of a vast and growing empire.[147] Time had to be regulated and the calendar marked out with the various public religious and civil ceremonies of the year. The reformed Julian calendar was based on a year that was very close to the solar year and thus the new calendar was in harmony with the seasons and would remain so for centuries.[148] This alignment of the civil and the natural is significant, according to Feeney; it addressed the need, as expressed by Varro and Censorinus, to bring together the scientific or natural with the civil, and established the calendar as a cultural instrument:

> "In his (Ovid's) treatment, to which we now turn, the Julian calendar feels at once profoundly natural, for it tracks the seasons and cycles of the natural year with unprecedented success, and profoundly conventional, since it is up to society's interpretation to impose meaning upon these cycles and to mark them out in language and symbolic representation."[149]

[147] Later, the Church would map its organisational structure to the political and geographic layout of the empire. Each city and its hinterland would be a diocese, with a bishop in charge. Dioceses were grouped into provinces, over each of which a metropolitan or archbishop would rule. Lo Cascio (2005, 159), Madigan (2015, 21).

[148] When the Gregorian calendar was introduced in 1582, a 10-day correction had to be applied to allow for the cumulative error since the Julian calendar began.

[149] Feeney (2007, 202), Varro, *Ling.*, 6.12, Censorinus, *DN.*

The calendar underscored the year as the central period for the civil power, linking the routines of state governance with the natural cycles of the cosmos. State offices were held on an annual basis, important religious festivals and public holidays came round once a year. The Church used the form of the Julian calendar, with its four-year cycle and single intercalary month, and would populate it with its own significant days. Like the state, it attached no special meaning to the month or to the season, although later the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and ordinary time would emerge. But one other period, the week, became key to the liturgy of the Church. This set the rhythm for the life of churchmen like Zeno in their work as confessors and teachers and is still the heartbeat of the Church today. We will now look at the origins and importance of the week within the mission of the early Church.

The week was a period of civic time-keeping that provided structure for work, commerce, legal affairs, and worship. Whether it was the eight-day *nundinae* or the seven-day astrological period, the year did not comprise an integral number of either form of the week. This important measure of everyday life was not affected by the Julian reform of the calendar. Earth, moon, and sun provided cycles that were calibrated as day, month, and year. The week was a period based not on observable movements in the heavens, but grew out of patterns of trade, work, and worship.[150] The Romans used *nundinae*, market days, to set an eight-day cycle.[151] These markets became less common in the late Republic. Ovid refers to them only once, and then implicitly, and they did not feature in the Julian calendar of 45 BC.[152] Markets were more commonly held as *macella* (daily markets for provisions) and *mercati* (more general fairs).[153] The markets may not have been held according to the eight-day cycle, but the *nundinae* were still recorded in calendars well into the Christian era, a reminder of the inertia of old customs and the respect for practices from the past. A seven-day cycle, in the form of an astrological week, was widely

[150] The Creation took place over six days, with a day of rest added and so may have been a prototype week. Genesis 1-2, August., *On the catechising of the uninstructed* 22. Sears lists other septenary candidates, including the seven classical 'planets': Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Moon, Sun. Sears (2019, 38-48).

[151] Feeney (2007, 184). The term *nundina* derives from the number nine, as the Romans counted the market days at the beginning and at the end of each cycle.

[152] Ov., *Fast.*, 1.54.

[153] Salzman (1990, 12). The Italian words *macelleria* (butcher's shop) and *mercato* (market) are cognate.

used in imperial times. This was generally considered to have come from Egypt, although the Jewish week was one of several other forms that co-existed.[154] The seven days of the astrological or planetary calendar corresponded to the five (known) planets, the sun, and the moon.[155] This cycle was formalised and christianised by Constantine. In his edict of 321, he established a seven-day week, with the seventh day as a day of rest and worship. The cycle conflicted with the perpetual nature of the Julian calendar as the solar year of 365 days did not comprise an integral number of 7-day weeks.[156]

The Church also adopted the seven-day cycle of the week, already part of its Jewish heritage as well as being marked with astrological meaning. For Christians, Sunday was the first day of the week. In the legal pronouncement of July 321, Constantine marked '*diem solis*' as a day of rest for the courts, although the manumission of slaves was still permitted on that day.[157] In his biography of the emperor, Eusebius of Caesarea (263 – 339), churchman and historian, gave this edict a Christian interpretation, saying that Constantine had ordained "the Lord's Day" as a day of prayer in which all were enjoined to take part; soldiers were given time off for the purpose of Christian worship.[158] It was called the Lord's Day to mark the resurrection of Christ after his crucifixion on the Sabbath.[159] This established the Church's presence within the cycle of everyday life, synchronising its rituals with the working week, especially in the towns and cities. The Resurrection became the pivot of Christian time: the week and the year both revolved around it.[160] By tapping into this rhythm of society, the Church could establish frequent and iterative practices of worship and preaching, and its liturgy would be a quotidian part of life in Late Antiquity and medieval times. But as Cramer argues, to see liturgy solely as a means of social control is reductive and gives little credit to the cognitive abilities of churchmen and their congregations.[161] These were people who could give voice to

[154] Michels (1967, 89).
[155] Salzman (1990, 31).
[156] Cod. Iust., 3.12.3, Gonzalez (2017, 43), Achelis (1954).
[157] Cod. Theod. II,, 8.1.
[158] Euseb., *Vit*. IV, 18.
[159] Revelation 1:10, Ignatius of Antioch, *Magnesians* 9:1, Didache, XIV.1.
[160] Markus (1990, 98).
[161] Cramer (2002, 7-8).

critical opinions, and who could also express firmly held beliefs through collective ritual.

Markus describes the concerted efforts to involve people in "the rhythm of the Church's public worship." This was at its peak in the 5th century, when Pope Leo was encouraging Christians to undertake fasts, particularly on prescribed occasions. This was part of a move to Christianise time, which had begun in the mid-4th century, he says, that is, during the time Zeno was preaching in Verona.[162] Like Leo in the following century, the bishop saw fasting as an important element of Christian duty. He spoke of the Lenten fast when he addressed the newly baptised in sermon 1:24 and in sermon 1:1, he associated the virtue chastity with keeping lawful fasts.[163] Regulated Christian observances, be they fasts, weekly worship, or annual feast days, sat well with Zeno's worldview. He saw cycles of time as central to God's creation.

Thus, the Church used the week as a rhythm for frequent religious observance. It had been a unit of time as early as the 6th century BC, and its use was widespread among other eastern civilisations at the time. Early Christians kept this seven-day cycle but adapted it so that the first day became the Lord's Day – *Dominica* – while the Sabbath became the day of preparation. The week was gaining acceptance "from the ground up." Christianity did not have an array of planetary gods with which to name the weekdays, but attempts were made to put some structure on the week, some religious significance to the days. The Coptic Christian week derived from that of the Jewish faith, with six working days and the Sabbath as a day of rest, and the planetary week used in Egypt of the Ptolemys. In Thebes, they named Wednesday and Friday as the Little Fast and the Big Fast, remembering the respective days on which Christ was condemned and crucified.[164] As well as evidence from literary sources, there are indications from graffiti, inscriptions, horoscopes, and other fragments, and from all around the Mediterranean, pointing to the growing use of the

[162] Markus (1990, 127-130).

[163] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:1.7, 1:24). In both sermons, there are intimations that fasting was not confined to giving up food but also included sexual abstinence.

[164] See Boles (2009, 4-5) This practice did not survive in Egypt, but is still recalled in the Irish names for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday – respectively Dé Céadaoin (the first fast), Déardaoin (between the fasts), and Dé hAoine (day of the fast).

week among ordinary people, according to Anderson. It spread gradually as a practical unit of time and was given the seal of approval by Constantine in 321.[165] The growing use and importance of the week is evinced by the struggle between the Church and older traditions to own and control it. One of the battles was for the naming rights of the days of the week.

Apart from the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, the names of weekdays largely retained their (pagan) planetary names in the Latin west, though not without opposition from some churchmen. Mark Anderson has shown how the names of the days of the week evolved in different regions of the empire during these early Christian times.[166] Throughout the Christian empire, Saturday and Sunday were always named after the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day, respectively. In the eastern empire, Greek and Jewish influences were strongest, and there was little dissent over the names of the days of the week. They began as planetary names (day of Helios/Sol/Sun, day of Selene/Luna/moon, day of Ares/Mars, day of Hermes/ Mercury, day of Zeus/Jove, day of Aphrodite/Venus), but over time the weekdays lost their pagan etymology and were replaced by sequential or ordinal names – second day, third day,….[167] In the west or Latin-speaking part of the empire, there was contention over the names of the days. Starting with Constantine in 321, Roman emperors proclaimed the day of Sol, also called the Lord's day, to be a special day, one on which neither business nor litigation were to be conducted.[168] This was iterated and extended by subsequent emperors in the 4th century.[169] Nonetheless, churchmen felt it necessary to emphasise the significance of the Lord's day and to condemn any surviving beliefs from the old tradition that some days were more propitious than others for specific activities.[170] Contemporaries of Zeno in the western empire warned people of the pagan significance of the planetary weekday

[165] Anderson (2019), Cod. Iust. III, 12.3. Stern, citing the Catania inscription of 383, shows that a Jewish community in Sicily was not averse to combining consular names for years, Roman monthly dating formulae, Greco-Roman weekday names, and Jewish lunar days in funerary epitaphs. Stern (2017, 42-44).
[166] Anderson (2019).
[167] Today, the weekdays of Monday to Friday have ordinal names in Greek, Hebrew and in Slavic languages.
[168] Cod. Iust., 3.12.2
[169] Cod. Theod., 2.8.18
[170] Anderson (2019).

names. Ausonius from Gaul ridiculed the superstitions associated with the names, while Philaster, bishop of Brescia (a diocese adjoining Zeno's Verona) condemned as heretics those who so much as used them. In the early 6th century, Caesarius of Arles in southern France was aware of this pagan syncretism, the incorporation of older practices and beliefs into those of the newer Christian faith. He said that even priests were guilty in this regard, and appealed to his congregation not to observe Thursdays as sacred to Jove, nor to use the old names of the days as they were linked to pagan practices[171] Martin of Braga used the same reasoning but was more vehement in his excoriation of planetary names.[172] People were taking Thursday as a day to stop working, thus conflicting with the official state (and Church) day of rest – the Lord's Day. There was a preponderance of weddings on Fridays, as this was the day sacred to Venus. These practices continued well into the Christian era. It is a matter of conjecture as to whether the use of planetary weekdays sustained these practices or not. What remains is the survival through the early centuries of the Church of popular practices based on a weekly cycle of pagan significance. This underlines the importance of popular culture and shows that the Church inherited parts of pagan culture, assimilated through its Jewish origins.[173] It also shows why these names mattered so much to some churchmen, as they resonated with traditional beliefs and practices which did not correspond with the idea of the new order regulated by a Christian calendar. Others, recognising the growing presence of the Church and its rituals in people's everyday lives, were less concerned with the names of the days than with their significance in the liturgical calendar.[174]

Not as burdened with the quotidian role of priests and bishops in trying to wean their congregations off non-Christian practices, some lay writers felt that there was little or no harm in using the names of old pagan gods for the days of the week, provided one did not associate them with their traditional practices. Tertullian (155 – 240), author and theologian, and Jerome (374 – 420), author and teacher, were among

[171] Caesarius et al. (1971, 103:68, 103:90).
[172] Anderson (2019).
[173] Filotas (2005, 5).
[174] Tom Holland expresses it thus: "The victory of the new was adorned with the trophies of the old." Holland (2020, 188).

those who felt that this was not an issue worth fighting. But this was not accepted by all churchmen: Philaster of Brescia and Martin of Braga regarded the use of planetary names for weekdays as heresy. Martin's influence stood out in this regard: his native Portugal is one of the very few western European countries to depart from pagan names for weekdays.[175] The new religion conflicted with older traditions, but churchmen could not always agree among themselves where the battle should be fought.

In 321, emperor Constantine issued two edicts marking Sunday as a day of rest. All businesses were to close, as were the lawcourts. The first edict also marked Easter, the Epiphany and the birthday of Christ as venerable days.[176] This might indicate that the emperor's aim was to sacralise Sunday as a Christian day of prayer and worship. That is certainly how Eusebius portrayed it. While the edicts referred to the day solely as *dies solis* (Sunday), he wrote of it as the Lord's Day and the day of the Saviour. The day was chosen, he surmised, because it was the day on which Christ had risen from the dead.[177] Edwards notes Constantine's use of solar imagery on coins and monuments, and Stephenson describes such coins which the emperor struck in 313 and in 315-316. Yet in 321, Constantine declared Sunday as a day of prayer and of respite from work, earning praise from Eusebius for doing so. Barnes points to evidence that Constantine foreshadowed this in 312-313.[178] From that date, too, images on coins are to be found showing Constantine wearing a radiate crown. Bardill summarises the scholarly interpretation of this. He shows that this crown was a feature of imperial representations since the time of Julius Caesar. It had been used before that by Hellenistic rulers to suggest their endorsement by the sun god. It is most likely that the momentum of such a long tradition was the dominant factor in Constantine's continued use of this solar motif.[179] In the late 2nd century, Tertullian, with some irony, defended Christians against the charge of sun

[175] Anderson (2019), Tert., *Apol.* 16.9-11, Jer., *In die Domenica paschae* 49-57, Martin of Braga, *De correctione rusticorum* 7.
[176] Cod. Theo. 2.8.1, Cod. Iust. 3.12.2.
[177] Euseb., *Vit*., 4.18.
[178] Edwards (2015, 195), Stephenson (2009, 157-158), Euseb., *Laudes Constantini*, 9.10, Barnes (2011, 132).
[179] Bardill (2012, 42-57). Similarly, the upward gaze of Constantine in some coins was well-established traditional iconography and not, as Eusebius wrote, a "reaching out to God in prayer." Eusebius, Cameron, and Hall (1999, 4:15.1-2), Bardill (2012, 19-20).

worship, as they worshipped on *dies solis*, the day they marked as that of Christ's resurrection. On the other hand, in his edict of 321, Constantine exempted manumission from suspension on Sundays, but it had already been permitted, in 316, on any day of the week.[180] This replication could have been his means of signalling that he sided with the Church in raising the freeing of slaves to the level of a sacred ritual. Whether Constantine was indulging his identification with the sun god, or whether he wanted his edict to flag his conversion to Christianity is certainly of interest, but it misses the point that the emperor was being pragmatic. An edict which declared a measure of toleration to Christians did not at that same time have to cause offence to traditionalists. The wording recognised the already widespread practice of Christian worship every week and during the main seasons of the faith, but the day itself was still called *dies solis*, Sunday, as it always has been. The ambiguity that attached to the *Dies Solis* which the emperor instituted as a holiday was a point in its favour – it could be read as both a pagan and a Christian measure. The pagan calendar and its lexicon had been preserved, but they now provided the officially sanctioned framework for the developing liturgy of the Church. Constantine's edict had declared the seventh day, the day of the sun, to be a day of rest, at least in cities, with the closure of courts and workshops. By this time, Sunday was the Christians' day to commemorate Christ with the sacrament of the eucharist and so became the Lord's Day. It had the backing of Scripture as God's day of rest and the authority of the fourth commandment.[181]

Underlying all the measurements of elapsed time we have seen so far has been a belief in natural cycles and their regularity. We saw that Zeno went so far as to assert continuity in all meteoric orbits, even those of shooting stars that plunged to earth, despite observational evidence to the contrary. The calibration and naming of the phases in temporal cycles, like the months of the year and the days of the week, was problematised when church fathers took issue with traditional names and associated practices.[182] Before the Constantinian era, Christians faced intolerance and persecution. The state may have been officially indifferent to people's beliefs, it

[180] Cod. Iust. 1.13.

[181] Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 20:8-11. The fourth commandment, in pre-Augustinian ordering, was "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

[182] Feeney (2007, 169-170).

even granted immunity to priests of certain cults, but it balked at any conflict between divinity and civil order.[183] When Christians refused to take part in communal ceremonies involving sacrificial offerings, it prompted Diocletian and Galerius to issue persecutory edicts against them in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. Just before he died, Galerius ended these measures in the eastern empire with the Edict of Toleration (Edict of Serdica) of 311. Eusebius and Lactantius say his death was a painful one, so much so that he turned to the Christian god and atoned for his sins; more plausible accounts of these events can be found in the works of Barnes and Stephenson.[184] The edict itself offers a more pragmatic rationale, one based on public order and "the good of the state." This is underscored by the so-called Edict of Milan (or Edict of Toleration), issued two years later and declaring tolerance of Christians throughout the empire.[185] The result of a meeting between Constantine and Licinius, it took the form of a letter sent by the latter to governors of eastern provinces. Again, it put the good of the state as the policy objective. The prayers of Christians for this end and for the safety of the emperor were the instrument of this policy. The corollary was that the emperor saw the Church as an agency, one that at times needed direction as visibly exercised through the convocation of Councils of Bishops by Constantine and his successors. By the end of the century, however, the roles were reversed, at least in the western empire; there, it was church leaders whose counsel featured in the actions of emperors. Zeno was not just a placeholder as bishop during this period of growing status and authority for the Church, he was very much an agent of this change. As bishop of his congregation, his task was to manage the church calendar, the weekly rituals that made up the liturgy of the diocese. An unvarying cycle of ritual predicated the setting for explaining Christian doctrine.

The toleration shown to Christianity, as recognised by the so-called Edict of Milan in 313, saw the Church calibrating its rites and observances, which would become constant features in the lives of the faithful. The Church built up its liturgical year,

[183] Agnati (2018) Zanetti (2018).
[184] Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, 9.10.13-15. Lactant., *De Mort. Pers.*, 33-35, Barnes (1973), Barnes (1981), Barnes (1982), Stephenson (2009).
[185] The text, in Latin, is in Lactant., *De Mort. Pers.*, 48.2, while the Greek version is in Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, 10.5.4-11.

with seasons and special days, during the early centuries. At first, the Church year was centred on Easter, the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ. This feast, coinciding with the Jewish Passover, is documented as having been celebrated as early as the 2nd century. It was not an occasion which Christ had asked his followers to mark. Rather, according to Socrates Scholasticus, it was a result of the "change" of Judaism into Christianity. The old Mosaic laws no longer applied to those of the new faith, but the legacy of Passover and of ancient traditions in the west led to the celebration of a feast after the spring equinox. Melito's homily in the 2nd century is the earliest evidence of an Easter ceremony. In it, he look back to Passover and the old law, and forward to a faith based on the New Testament.[186] Plausible dating algorithms for the feast were in use in the 3rd century and bishops in council had adopted a working scheme in the early 4th century (see page 62). Easter became the holy week and the preceding 40-day penitential period, originally immediately following the Epiphany, became the Lenten preparation for Easter. Thus, the feast day became a liturgical season and in Zeno's time, when adults were still converting to Christianity in considerable numbers, it was freighted with the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. Easter and baptism are marked with their own distinct sermons in Zeno's liturgical cycle. The season of Advent, which was a preparation for the feasts of Christmas and the Epiphany, marking the birth and the baptism of Christ, respectively, took longer to develop. It was not until the early 5th century that this feast featured in the Church calendar and marked the start of the liturgical year.[187] Throughout the calendar year, days were dedicated to martyrs and saints, and to other signal events in the life of Christ. We will see how these seasons and feast days of the Christian liturgy featured in Zeno's sermons in the next section, "Cycles of sermons" (see page 69 et seq.).

The Nativity and Easter mark the two poles in the earthly life of Christ and two key dates in the cycle of the Church year. The former was not widely celebrated as a Church feast until the 5th century. It is marked in the Codex Calendar of 354, pointing to its being recognised in at least one church in Rome since 336. Other,

[186] Scholasticus (1979, 5.22); Melito (1989).
[187] Guéranger (1870, 23-25) See also Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 22-23), Connell (2006a, 57-64) and page 54 on Christmas.

more circumstantial, evidence from St Augustine and the Donatist schism points to an origin, at least in north Africa, of celebrations of Christmas in the early 4th century.[188] As for Zeno, his sermons seem to confirm this view, at least for the diocese of Verona during his term as bishop. None of his sermons explicitly celebrated Christmas or the Epiphany as feast days.[189] In three sermons, however, Zeno went into some detail in describing the virgin birth of Christ. He did so not to celebrate the Nativity as a fixed commemoration in the calendar, but rather to confront the Arian tendency and the belief that Christ came into being at some finite time since the Creation. Zeno was a staunch Nicaean, one who saw the Arians as a threat to Christ's core message of eternal salvation.[190] He was not afraid to take the fight to the enemy, even on territory that was more favourable to them. In three sermons on the birth of the Lord, he expatiated on Christ's timeline and on his incarnation.[191] The bishop preached that Christ had two births. The first was beyond human comprehension as it was part of the mystery of the origin of God, who existed before time began. The second was the virgin birth: Christ was born as no other man can be, of an immaculate mother and already older than Creation. While the sermons are nominally about the birth of Christ, they are not celebrations of the feast of the Nativity but are clearly anti-Arian polemics.[192] They do not prove that Christmas was unknown as a feast in the Christian calendar until the 5th century, but they do not contradict that dating, at least in the case of the diocese of Verona. As to the birthplace of Christ, this was marked by the construction of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in 333. Helena, mother of Constantine, commissioned the

[188] Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 123-130) Botte and Abbaye du Mont (1970, 92) Philocalus, Hippolytus, and Mommsen (1961, 13-148).

[189] Jeanes (1995, 115).

[190] The Nicene and Arian positions were cast respectively as orthodoxy and heresy by the Church, as if the former predated the latter as the default Christian view of the hierarchy within the Trinity. But the Nicene Creed was a response to the teachings of Arius, and it was the controversy itself that first gave serious voice to different views of this doctrine. Dubois (1993), Herrin (2001), Herrin, Whelan, and Palmer (2021).

[191] The first two sermons – 2:8 and 1:54 (2:7 and 2:8 in the earlier Ballerini classification) - are called "On the birth of the Lord", while the third – 2:12 (2:9 in the Ballerini scheme) – is called "On the birth and majesty of the Lord."

[192] Connell argued that the Nativity supported the Arian view by drawing attention to a singularity in Christ's timeline and emphasised his humanity at the expense of his divine nature. This, he said, delayed the adoption of the Nativity within the liturgy until well into the 5th century. Connell (2006a, 105-110).

work and her son financed it.[193] The celebration of Christmas in this church has had special significance for Christians since that time. Carlo Truzzi argued that Zeno did indeed celebrate Christmas but may have been interpreting the bishop's remarks on the birth of Christ as of liturgical rather than polemical intent. He found no evidence that either Gaudentius of Brescia or Chromatius of Aquileia, who were bishops in northern Italy in the decades immediately after Zeno, celebrated Christmas, though the former did deliver a sermon on Epiphany.[194] Outside of Rome and north Africa, there is no evidence for the observance of the Nativity in the West before 380.[195]

The cycle of saints' days, the *sanctorale*, developed separately from the main calendar of liturgical seasons. The veneration of martyrs and saints evolved from the ground up. It was a popular phenomenon, distinct from the more deliberate imposition of an interpreted cycle of sacred seasons. The practice was often situated outside the normal locus of worship, with the cult of martyrs assembling locally in cemeteries and family homes. These rituals were beyond ecclesiastical control and were often condemned by Church authorities. They were gradually assimilated into the formal calendar.[196] Damasus, bishop of Rome from 366 to 384, began with martyrs in his own diocese and helped to regularise the liturgy of the saints. The process was continued by his successor Siricius.[197] Martyrs who had died for their faith provided exemplars of Christianity, role models for new converts in more tolerant times. The Church named the day of his or her death (or rebirth in the next life) as the martyr's feast day. This meant that many such feast days became part of the calendar, to be repeated every year *ad infinitum*. By the time of Zeno's arrival, Christians in Verona honoured several Christians who had died there for their faith during the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. The first church in the city was named

[193] Bardill (2012)

[194] Connell's reasoning for the delay in the adoption of Christmas as a feast does not tally with the tone and the content of the bishop's sermons. Zeno did not avoid discussing Arianism, he publicly confronted it on its keynote assertion about Christ's temporality. Truzzi (1985), Talley (2000b, 86-87), Connell (2006a, 105-110).

[195] Talley (2000b, 147-155), Talley (2000a, 274), Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 124-130), Connell (2006a).

[196] Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 171-176); Kahlos (2021, 15); MacMullen (2015); Baldovin (2000, 375-380). Kahlos notes the use of sermons to distance the Church from these practices. Her material includes Maximus of Turin and Philaster of Brescia, though not Zeno, although his sermons endorse her argument.

[197] Sághy (2011, 14).

after bishop Proculus and was built near where the basilica of San Zeno now stands. He was revered as a martyr, although he survived the persecutions. Firmus and Rusticus, prominent citizens of Bergamo to the west, were executed in Verona for refusing to sacrifice to pagan gods. The church of San Fermo, originally built in the 8th century, still stands by the river Adige in Verona.[198] Thus, there were local saints, each with a feast day corresponding to the day of his martyrdom – real or imagined – which could be drawn on as the subject of a sermon and an exemplar for the faithful. Yet none of these local saints features in the sermons of Zeno. He did, however honour Saint Arcadius of Caesarea in Mauretania, whose feast day is 12th January, and he does so on the feast day of Firmus and Rusticus, 9th August, in sermon 1:39.[199] The connection is perhaps simply one between the bishop and a martyr from his native land in north Africa.[200] Zeno, according to the evidence analysed by Dekkers and Garr, Ruinart, Saxer, and Stepanich, had most likely grown up in Mauretania and as a Christian would have heard sermons and lessons expatiating on the life and martyrdom of his renowned compatriot Arcadius.[201] The sermon makes it clear that he was quite familiar with the background and details of the story. Each year, Zeno devoted a sermon to martyrdom, to inspire people towards the goal of eternity in heaven and to honour the virtues and merits of the martyrs. In sermon 1:39 he was explicit in declaring these objectives:

[198] This church is noted for its two storeys. The lower one is a chapel in Romanesque style, while the upper church is in a restrained Gothic style. For background on Verona, as city and as diocese, see Brugnoli (1987), Cervato (2004), Cipolla (1889), Piepenbrink (2015).

[199] Butler (1868, 109-111), Beutner (2020, 51-52).

[200] Similar connections are found in Rome, where the feast days of certain martyrs from north Africa were observed and recorded in the Codex Calendar of 354. Usually, the list of saints was of local people, those whose burial sites could be visited for the purposes of the devotional ritual. Baldovin (2000, 377-378), Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:39).

[201] Zeno's account of the martyrdom of Arcadius is more rhetorical and bloodthirsty than his usual style. It may be his own template for hagiography, or it could be taken from an earlier version of the martyr's *passio*. In either case, it served his stated purpose of commemorating the deeds of Arcadius, and of inspiring people towards the reward of heaven. See Dekkers and Gaar (1995), Ruinart (1869, 466), Saxer (1994, 56), Stepanich (1948, 14-15). Vokes questions some of the indicators of Zeno's African origins, including his style of Latin, knowledge of Tertullian, Greek name, doctrinal ambiguity, and affinity to Arcadius. He concedes that African saints were celebrated in Italian churches in the 4th century, and that Arcadius was sufficiently obscure for Zeno to have a particular reason to honour him. Vokes (1966, 130-134).

> *Erit geminum de religiositate commercium, cum ad coeleste praemium populus accenditur, et de martyris meritis non siletur.*[202]
>
> There will be two sacred values in this: that the people may be inspired by the reward of heaven, and that the virtues of the martyr will not go unremembered.

But another objective is contained within the title assigned by the Ballerini publishers to the sermon: "On the birth of St Arcadius, who was born on 12th January in Mauritanian Caesarea." Here "birth" refers to the next life, means "entry into heaven", and signifies the day on which the martyr Arcadius died. The early Church used this protocol to nominate a saint's feast day. Zeno followed normal practice here: he linked the saint to the annual cycle by means of a significant moment in Arcadius's career, that of his ascent into heaven. In this way, his feast day was perpetuated and his memory eternalised.

To commemorate the two local saints, he used the story of three senior Hebrew figures during the Babylonian captivity. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were condemned to death in the furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, as described in the Book of Daniel. Their survival, Zeno explained, is due to their faith in the one true god. As believers they are stronger than the fire and their God is more powerful than the "barbaric king".[203] The three men were as one in spirit, in strength, and in victory, exemplifying the three-in-one mystery of the Trinity. Martyrs, he said, are not afraid of death. Instead of suffering, they remain focused on God and on their eternal reward.[204] This story from the Bible is a fitting tribute to the local

[202] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:39).

[203] Zeno identified the sources of divine and secular power as God and the "barbaric king", their antagonism, and the supremacy of the former over the latter. The king here, Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, is described as "barbaric" in these sermons on the three martyrs. This begs the question of the attitude of a non-barbaric king. The Church is universalist, makes no distinction based on race or religion, and so cannot apply the term "barbaric" to any king or emperor. Zeno was silent here on this point, but elsewhere he conceded that church and state need not always be at odds. See sermon 1:38 and Chapter 2. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38).

[204] In two sermons from the Easter vigil, 2:27 and 1:11. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:27, 1:11), Daniel, 3.20-27. Firmus and Rusticus are celebrated as martyrs in Verona, where they died in about 290. Their feast day is 9th August. Zeno himself is now the patron saint of Verona. His feast day of 21st May is celebrated as a public holiday in the city.

martyrs Firmus and Rusticus, who were tortured and put to death during the reign of emperor Maximian. By means of this exegesis, a martyr's memory would be recalled every year, his life held up as a lesson to be learned, a model to be followed. There is a note in the Rheims manuscript of one of these sermons on martyrology – 1:11 or 2:70 in the Bigelmair edition: "*Festivitate ss. Firmi et Rustici fratribus recitanda.*" (To be read out to the brethren on the feast day of saints Firmus and Rusticus). Bigelmair says that this note can be no earlier than the 8th century.[205] The bishop may have adverted to the local martyrs elsewhere in the liturgy of the mass, but he chose the story of Arcadius as the Christian counterpart to the biblical episode. Zeno's sermons show several features developing in the annual cycle of the Church calendar. First, feast days of local saints were beginning to complement the main Christological seasons. Second, priests could celebrate the deeds of martyrs from elsewhere in Christendom. In a sermon at Caesarea in 373, Basil praised the forty martyrs of Sebaste, who died for their faith about 200 kilometres distant.[206] Usually, though, holiness was localised and martyrs were honoured at shrines in their place of death or burial. Pilgrims could be attracted to these sites to receive blessings, perhaps to witness miracles. Even Damasus, who populated the Christian calendar with the feasts of many saints, began with those whose remains were in his native Rome.[207] Finally, the theme of martyrdom itself could be developed, with suitable biblical endorsement, as a means of promoting a less violent means of achieving life everlasting; in an era of greater toleration, people could attain eternal bliss through faith and obedience rather than through the gruesome experience of martyrdom. Jefford describes the many virtues that the Church tried to associate with martyrdom, including forgiving one's enemies. However, the martyr cult continued to highlight the barbarity of self-sacrifice and the religious authorities eventually had to bring it under control.[208]

Zeno, together with Gaudentius of Brescia and Ambrose of Milan, his near contemporaries in northern Italy, were concerned that Christians were taking part in unregulated rituals (*amore luxuriandi atque bibendi* - " for the love of self-indulgence

[205] Zeno and Bigelmair (1934, 11).
[206] Cameron (2001, 7); Basil and Allen (2003).
[207] Caseau (2001, 43); Sághy (2011, 14).
[208] Jefford (2006, 251).

and drinking") at the tombs of martyrs.[209] But his sermons, given in the 360's when Damasus was just starting his hagiographic project in Rome, show that he realised the importance of popular attachment to martyrs as role models of steadfast faith. In sermon 1:39 as we have seen (see page 57), he used the local martyrs Firmus and Rusticus as proxies for Arcadius, a martyr from his own native Mauretania. By dedicating the local feast day to a martyr from a remote land, known only to himself, Zeno honoured the respective martyrs and signalled the addition of saints' days to the yearly cycle of the Christian year. The formal process of honouring martyrs and saints in this manner was under way. The Church saw the advantages of recruiting deceased members as exemplars, although some quality control was exercised in the process; the canons of Elvira ruled that death while attacking a pagan temple was not in itself sufficient grounds for being considered a martyr.[210] Nonetheless, the Church saw the potential of martyrology, with the calendar as a means of ritualising a narrative of best practice. The martyrs and, more generally, the saints populated – and in time overpopulated – the calendar, as the Church took command of the annual calendar. At the time of Constantine, there were about thirty anniversaries of martyrs in the Church calendar. By the time of Augustine, almost every day of the year marked the feast of a martyr.[211] Its rituals had a natural and secure means of repetition, a mechanism for not only getting the message across, but for reinforcing it as part of the yearly cycle.

Following the initial edict that Sunday be a day of rest, subsequent laws in the 4th century advanced the cause of Christianity at the expense of the older pantheistic tradition. In 389, Christian holy days were to be recognised in the civil calendar; this was partially anticipated by the Codex Calendar of 354.[212] Two years later, pagan holidays were explicitly removed from the calendar. The *ludi* or public games were still maintained, though renamed as *voluptates* and decoupled from rituals of

[209] Rebillard (2009, 144-151), Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:25.6). In sermon 1:25, Zeno berated landlords who allowed their tenant farmers to conduct lewd and sacrilegious rituals, including making up their own martyrs. See page 143 in Chapter 3 for details of that sermon.
[210] Drake (2002, 224).
[211] Markus reminds us of Augustine's remark: "Hardly a day can be found in the circle of the year on which martyrs were not somewhere crowned." Markus (1990, 99), Augustine, *Sermon 306C.*
[212] Cod. Theod. 2.18.19.

sacrifice. However, *ludi* that coincided with Christian holy days were forbidden.[213] From 395, pagan festivals were outlawed, but continued to be celebrated. Some of these festivals were transformed. The holidays were not associated with religious belief, but with popular custom. Thus, the vintage holiday of the *mammes vindemia* devoted to Dionysius and held on 5th September became a secular occasion.[214] In Rome and parts of north Africa, Christ's birthday was celebrated from the early 4th century, with 25th December as the chosen date, and the festival of the Nativity soon replaced the Saturnalia, the pagan celebration of midwinter.[215]

As days and longer periods were repurposed for the Christian liturgy, contention for recognition and space in the calendar arose. The form in which time was calibrated and regulated was that of the Julian calendar, almost exclusively in the west and to a large extent in the eastern empire. Within the solar year of 365¼ days, the fine structure of seasons, months, weeks, and days was laid out and the calendar was populated with the dates of feasts, festivals, and astronomical ephemerides, with the names of incumbent officials, and with other useful data. The growing presence of Christian holy days in the calendar marks the transition from the old order of an open pantheistic belief system to the doctrinally focused monotheism of Christianity. Here the change is more nuanced than the dynamics of the power struggle between church and state. The state had military power and a monopoly of violence, while the Church made clear that its domain was that of the spiritual and moral. As Christianity moved towards the position of unique recognised belief system, it could assert superiority in this domain. The empire and its inhabitants had to undertake a disengagement of the political and cultural legacy of the Greco-Roman world from its traditional accumulation of religious cults and rituals. Strategic decisions by Constantine and his successors provided a real impetus for the growth of the Church, but it is despite rather than because of such state support that the Church was able to institutionalise, to develop its doctrines, and to contend for the moral high ground. The calendar was a framework for the iteration of rituals and helped to

[213] Cod. Theod. 2.8.22.

[214] Salzman (1990, 240), Lançon (2000, 135).

[215] Hastings (2003, vol 3). See also the discussion on the origins of Advent, Christmas, and the Epiphany on page 54. Many of the features of Saturnalia, such as feasting and giving presents, were absorbed into Christmas celebrations.

embed the underlying beliefs and practices in the lives of the faithful. In this way, concepts of belief can be learned by repetition and consolidation. Routine, according to Harvey Whitehouse, can have an exegetical effect on people's sensibilities. Reiterative and intensive practices can develop and consolidate cognitive understanding of difficult notions of Christian doctrine, such as those associated with the eucharist.[216] Control of the calendar, and the development of the liturgical calendar, were at the core of this strategy.

Zeno's sermons, the earliest in Latin, provide glimpses of the early liturgy of the Church within the annual round of ritual and worship. Mostly exegetical, they include expansions on moral themes, such as the canonical virtues and some of the vices familiar to preachers. In their sequence through the year, the bishop's works indicate the early stages of an evolving liturgy. This was to play a part in the ordering of people's daily lives. There is evidence for an enhanced Christian presence in the official chronology in the form of two calendars. The contents of the first, the Codex Calendar of 354, show a balance between the meanings and uses of time by the new Christian world and the old order of Greco-Roman tradition, between the sacred and the profane, as Christians might characterise it.[217] The book records the progress made by the Church in its long-running campaign to occupy and control the calendar. This might be expected of a high-end product in the Constantinian era, as the Church emerged from centuries of obscurity and persecution and began to assert its position as the state religion.[218] While both the author and the recipient of the Calendar were Christians, the Codex is lavishly illustrated with images of pagan personifications of the months and their attributes from the old mythology, as well as of the planets and their titular gods. Also included are items from the old Roman *fasti*: the days of each month are arranged by the *kalends, nones* and *ides* of each,

[216] Whitehouse bases his findings on a study of the puja ritual among the Jains of Jaipur in India. Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994), Whitehouse (2004, 96-97).
[217] The Codex Calendar of 354 was produced for a wealthy Roman in the middle of the 4th century. As well as being a work of art, a masterpiece of draughtsmanship and calligraphy, it was a compendium of historical, political, and cultural information. Salzman (1990, 15-16). For the tradition and analysis of the manuscripts, see Burgess (2012). For the importance of knowledge of antiquity and the ancients in the formation of a young man, see Macrobius' preface to his Saturnalia, Macrobius (1969, praef. 10-11). See also Burgess (2012) and Divjak and Wischmeyer (2014) for details of the Codex Calendar.
[218] Bonner (1999).

as well as by a seven-day cycle. The hours of each day and night are classified as either good, bad, or indifferent. The Calendar gives a full list of the consuls of Rome, from the time of the early kings up to the year 354, representing the Roman formula for designating each year by the names of the consuls in that year. The birth of Christ and the martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul are among the Christian entries that feature in this list. A subsequent section of the Codex lists the dates of Easter from 312 to 411, while there are lists particular to the city of Rome, containing the names of its bishops and civic officials, and details of the regions of the metropolis.

This unique surviving calendar from the period captured a phase in the long transition of the 4th century from the predominance of the state with its traditions based on an inclusive polytheism to an increasingly confident Church taking on both religious and secular functions in communities throughout the empire. The Greco-Roman traditions had the lustre of antiquity about them, as exemplified by the calendar's consular list stretching back over a millennium. The old beliefs and their associated rituals were still deep in the cultural fabric of the age; one could not be counted as literate or cultured unless one understood the various *fasti* and their place in the calendar. That is why the Calendar of 354, commissioned by a Christian client from a Christian author, was still heavily freighted with the traditional features of a pagan almanac. The new Christian aspects appeared as additions to the traditional elements; there were significant Christian events as well as a roll-call of consuls that map out the years back almost as far as the founding of Rome. Among the new sections was a schedule of the dates of Easter, still a matter of some contention within the Church, and therefore one worthy of calendrical authority. The list began with Easter in 312, the year of Constantine's triumphal entry into Rome. The date of Easter was given for 100 years (albeit with many errors for the years after 358), terminating in the year 411. It used the 84-year cycle of Hippolytus of Rome to determine the (moveable) date of Easter each year. Burgess says that a cycle of 532 years was used. This is the lunisolar cycle, calculated as the lowest common denominator of the lunar cycle of 19 years and the yearly cycle of 4 x 7 = 28 years i.e. 19 x 28 = 532). It is sometimes called the Victorian cycle, after

Victorius of Aquitaine, who first used it in 457. It was also used by Bede in England in the 8th century.[219]

The Codex Calendar is a benchmark for the balance of power between traditional and Christian beliefs in the control of the calendar, at the start of Zeno's episcopacy in Verona. A century later, the calendar of Polemius Silvius provides a comparison, showing changes in the balance of control of timekeeping and chronology.[220] The calendar shows each month separately, with its name given in Latin, Egyptian, Greek, and Hebrew. Four columns list the ordinal number of each day, its designation according to the *kalends/nones/ides* scheme, the feast or other special significance of the day, and the weather for the day. While Polemius omitted many non-Christian festivals from his calendar, he still used the pagan names of the months, as well as identifying many pagan festivals, explicitly named for deities like Minerva and Evander. It may be that Polemius was unaware of the pagan implications. Alternatively, he might have omitted only festivals which he thought could offend Christians. He found meeting days of the Senate and days commemorating emperors to be useful and so he kept them in his calendar. Michele R. Salzman inclines to this view, saying that Polemius included in his calendar that which he thought useful or necessary.[221] In this way pagan culture, if not pagan cult,

[219] Burgess (2012, 349), Mac Carron (2015).

[220] In 449, Polemius Silvius, a contemporary and friend of Hilary of Tours and member of the imperial administration in Gaul, sent a set of documents, a *laterculus*, to Eucharius, bishop of Lyon. A summary of the contents survives, as do some of the documents, including a calendar or work of chronologic and chronographic interest. In a covering letter, Polemius summarises what he is sending, and indicates that the *laterculus* is based on pre-existing works, probably from the early decades of the 5th century. The calendar was dedicated to the bishop. Works like this had a didactic function, as well as being calendric references. Only one manuscript copy of Polemius's work survives. It includes the calendar, lists of emperors (and usurpers), the provinces of Rome, topographical features of the capital city, weights and measures, and a breviary of Roman history, although the *laterculus* refers also to a table for calculating the date of Easter, the metres of poetry, and an overview of philosophical sects. Mommsen's version of this material, published in 1853, was based on 12th century manuscripts in the Royal Belgian Library, *Bruxellensis* 10615-10729. Mommsen (1853). See also Aguilar (2007, 227).

[221] This begs the question as to what the use or necessity of the calendar within the context of the entire *laterculus* was. The other elements of the collection point to a range of practical knowledge including poetry, history, and commerce. But the inclusion of the names of the months in Egyptian, in Hebrew, and in two dialects of Greek (Attic and Macedonian), as well as in Latin, is aimed not at the speakers of these other languages, but at Latin speakers who would like to have the advantage of such recondite information. Salzman (1990, 240-246). C. W. Jones says that Bede used the calendar of Polemius to discuss the names of Hebrew, Greek and Egyptian months in the context of the

was recognised, and Christian festivals were celebrated in 5th century Gaul, though less of the former than in previous generations. Based on Christian art and architecture in the 5th and 6th centuries, Lenk argues that in their religious practices, Christians saw Roman material culture and spaces as part of Christian culture.[222] Polemius filled some of the gaps with "*dies Aegyptiaci*" (days that were inauspicious for new enterprises) and with seasonal markers. Less than half of the pagan festivals and a hundred fewer *ludi* and *circenses* appear in the calendar of 449 as against the Codex calendar of 354, described in detail on page 62. Polemius retains the traditional names for the months of the year, and the *Quirinalia*, *Parentatio tumulorum*, and the *Lavatio* are among the festivals he includes. He describes those he retains as being associated with events in Roman history. This includes festivals like *Natalis Urbis Romae* (the founding of Rome, 21st April) and *Regifugium* (the flight of the last Tarquin king, 24th February), associated with singular events in Rome's past. It also comprises days commemorating rituals and the deities identified with them, like *Carmentalia* (honouring a Janus-like goddess, 11th January) and *Lupercalia* (an ancient purification ritual, 13th – 15th February). His accommodation of many ancient festivals alongside more recent Christian ones indicates the continued observance of pagan rites into the 6th century.[223] Salzman suggests that preserving Roman cultural links may have been a social cachet, a sign of civilised cultural awareness, while Geymonat writes of a "syncretistic tolerance" by Christian culture of the classical tradition.[224] The idea that good Christians, even bishops, could pay lip service to traditional cults as a means of enhancing their social standing is in accord with other survivals of the old Greco-Roman traditions into late antiquity and beyond.[225] The *carmina* of Sidonius Apollinaris, poet and bishop of Clermont in the 5th century, praise pre-Constantinian emperors for their virtue and military prowess; they are also populated with the pre-Christian gods, muses and graces familiar to Ovid, Virgil, and their contemporaries.[226] Thus, survivals from older

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Paschal controversy of the 8th century. Mommsen compares the calendar of Polemius with that of Philocalus (see page 62), largely with reference to the inclusion of pagan festivals. A. D. Lee notes the later calendar's continued identification of traditional Roman observances together with Christian festivals. Jones (1934, 50-53), Mommsen, Henzen, and Ritschl (1863), Lee (2016, 151-152).

[222] Lenk, Elsner, and Rosser (2019).

[223] Lee (2016, 151-152).

[224] Salzman (1990, 242-244), Geymonat (2001, 303).

[225][225] Lee (2016, 138-155).

[226] Kelly and van Waarden (2020).

traditions are not always a reliable gauge of continued commitment to their belief systems and practices. One could still honour the legacy of classical Rome, including its political and cultural history, without having to engage in pagan rituals. Being a good Christian Roman was no longer problematic, and this was endorsed by both state and church.[227] Katherine Dunbabin comes to a similar conclusion when considering the pagan mythology in mosaics commissioned by Christian patrons in the 5th and 6th century. To such people, she writes, "mythological subjects in art belonged to a familiar and unproblematic realm."[228] Bishops lived and worked in this realm as men of the Church. They were not functionaries of the state as pagan priests had been, yet they were leaders of an "alternate society" (or of another city, cf. Augustine's *City of God*). As such, they were involved in and familiar with the cultural and political life of the empire.[229]

It is worth iterating what R. A. Markus had to say about the term "pagan survival". He reminded us that conversion to a new faith meant discarding the old one. A "pagan survival" into the Christian era would mean a continued recognition of pagan gods and their cults, and adherence to their rituals. Citing H. Kuhn, he said that the term should not include ordinary items and usages in everyday life – these may be survivals, but they are secular.[230] Early Christians, in using relics of old traditions while professing their new faith, were distinguishing between the secular and the sacred. They could flaunt with impunity their classical learning and their pride in pre-Christian Rome, as these belonged to the secular sphere. But when it came to sacred matters, such as the official observance of traditional festivals, then violence between Christians and pagans was all too common.[231]

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[227] There is evidence of this from a variety of sources. The status of bishops indicated a respect for rank and education, as well as for their spiritual and pragmatic qualities. Rapp (2005) The patronage of the emperor further enhanced the authority of bishops, while Christians in general wanted to integrate into the community at all levels, to show themselves as good citizens. Lim (2001, 197) There is also the imagery of Christ and the saints as leading figures of the realm. Kelly (2001, 182-183) The norms of Christian behaviour matched many of the ideals of Roman society and gained respect for the new belief system. Edwards (2015, 85-86).

[228] Dunbabin (2014, 235), Elsner (2018, 173).

[229] Wilken (2003, 203, 208).

[230] Kuhn (1966), Markus (1990, 9-11).

[231] Markus (1990, 109-116).

As we have seen, the Codex calendar of 354 showed the dates of Easter from 312 (the year of Constantine's victory over Maxentius and of his entry into Rome) for the following hundred years and including the eponymous year. The dating scheme of Hippolytus was endorsed by the bishops of Rome and was the orthodox view within the western Church (see page 63).[232] The feast of Easter celebrated the resurrection of Christ, believed to have taken place two days after Passover, a date set in the Hebrew calendar. As the Church spread beyond its Jewish roots, it had to date Easter independently of the Hebrew calendar, to set it clearly in the Julian calendar. The formula eventually accepted was that Easter fell on the Sunday following the full moon on or immediately after the vernal equinox, 21st March.[233] Thus, the Paschal feast is dated according to two independent cycles, those of the solar year and of the lunar month. In 325, the Roman scheme was adopted by all bishops at the Council of Nicaea, but agreement between East and West did not last long.[234] The Council of Serdica in 342 adopted the Roman dates for Easter, but the eastern bishops demurred and asserted their independence in the matter.[235] This was one of the early milestones in the growing East-West rift within the church.

The numbering of the days of the month was another survival from Roman into Christian times and became another issue of contention in the wider struggle for control of the calendar between the church on the one hand and the vestiges of traditional beliefs on the other; these latter were at times represented by the state or by members of the senate, but more often by the inertia of popular usage. The Romans used a backward count from each of the marker days in a month; thus, the *ides* of May is on the 15th of the month in our terms, so the 4th day before the *ides* of May is equivalent to our 11th of May. The forward count was first used in the 5th century, but the older system survived well into the Christian era, with saints' days replacing the old marker days.[236] Gregory XIII was using the backward count system when he updated the Julian calendar in 1582, and the old system was still to be

[232] Julius Firmicus Maternus introduced the term *computus* to denote "the astrological interpretation of computed and observed planetary orbits." Firmicus Maternus and Holden (2011, I, 4.5), (Borst 1993, 19-20).
[233] Morrison (2005, 88).
[234] Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 47, 59, 109-112), Talley (2000b, 214-222).
[235] Kaçar (2002), Lee (2016, 99), Stern (2017).
[236] Anderson (2019), Boles (2009), Bultrighini (2017).

found in secular documents.[237] Thus, the substitution of saints' days for the old *kalends*, *nones*, and *ides* was readily adopted in late antiquity; the practice of populating the calendar with the feast days of saints and martyrs had led to these being used instead of marker days not just in official and liturgical circles, but by people in everyday use.[238] The older backward count survived for over another millennium, a measure of its inertia in the absence of any ideological or doctrinal opposition. The fundamentals of cyclical and linear calendaring were changing in late antiquity and were doing so in different ways. Within the month, a further cycle of the week emerged and with it, different naming schemes for its days were developed from the doctrine of Christology and from the separate worlds of mankind and divinity.

We have seen how the liturgy developed within the annual cycle of the calendar (see pages 53 and 56). This cycle began to be populated with feast days, but also with seasons, the main ones being Easter and Epiphany.[239] In time, scriptural works were chosen for particular seasons, such as Job for holy week and Genesis for Lent.[240] The sermons themselves drew on biblical references to seasons and cycles in nature. In *Expositio Psalmi*, Ambrose cites Ecclesiastes as the source of knowledge on appropriate times in the cycle of human affairs:

> A time for loving and a time for hating, a time for war and a time for peace: what has Ecclesiastes to say about this?[241]

The scripture in question is the opening verses of the Book of Ecclesiastes. The narrator defines a number of cycles in nature, including the succeeding generations of mankind, the sun's daily round, and the natural water cycle.[242] Later, he begins the litany: "To every thing there is a season", describes the transience of man: "All

[237] Blackburn and Holford-Strevens (1999, 672-673).
[238] Crook (2000). For the development of the *sanctorale*, the list of saints' feast days within the Church calendar, see Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 171-195) and Brown (1981).
[239] See page 56 for Truzzi's argument that Zeno also celebrated Christmas.
[240] Fahlbusch et al. (2005, 492). This pattern of set pieces of scripture for specific liturgical seasons is at least embryonic in the sermons of Zeno.
[241] CSEL 68 338-339.
[242] Eccl. 1:4-7.

are of the dust and all turn to dust again", and makes clear the permanence of God and his works:

> I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.[243]

Ambrose uses scriptural authority to underline the bounded timespan of the individual and of the mankind. The eternal belongs to God, and it is only through God that humans can access it.[244] Distinct from the fixed cycles of nature and the infinite timespan of the divinity lay the open periods of historic or linear time. In the next section, we consider how this was construed and how it was used.

Cycles of sermons

Through his sermons, Zeno expressed his concept of the cycles of nature and their centrality to Creation. The sermons themselves make up an annual cycle in the form of the Church calendar.[245] The main seasons of this year, Easter and Advent, are already present in the church liturgy of the latter half of the fourth century (see page 41 et seq). The sermons of Zeno cited in this thesis represent a ministry of at least nine years, with iterations over various topics and occasions. Of the 93 sermons, 43 are on the Old Testament, seven are addressed to those about to be baptised (the catechumens), eight to those who have just been baptised (the neophytes), and nine are devoted to Easter.[246] In the early Christian church, these were among the main topics during the intensive liturgical activity of the Lenten period preceding Easter

[243] Eccl. 3:1, 3:20, 3:14.

[244] Even at moments of military triumph and apparent world supremacy, Romans (and Greeks) accepted the transitory nature of human affairs. Polybius says that Scipio Aemilianus wept at the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC, as he had a foreboding that a similar fate awaited Rome at some time in the future. Polyb., *Histories*, 38.21-22.

[245] The manuscripts of the sermons were annotated, providing information on the origin, titles, and purpose within the liturgy. Jeanes categorises the sermons in groups – doctrinal, exegetical, moral, baptismal, Easter, and miscellaneous. Where possible, he assigns liturgical roles to the sermons, Easter being the most common as it was then the main season of the annual cycle. Jeanes (1995).

[246] Other topics, with the number of sermons in parentheses, were virtues (7), vices (4), heresies (9), New Testament (1), Jews (1), mind and body (1), feast of Saint Arcadius (1), dedication of a new church (1), and the zodiac (1).

and Easter itself.[247] Baptism was performed on catechumens at Easter, with much of the preparatory teaching being carried out during Lent. Zeno commemorated Arcadius by explicitly linking him to the cycle of the calendar. The 12th of January, the day of the sermon, was not so much the feast day of Arcadius as his "birthday", the day on which the eternal phase of his life began. The recurrent nature of this link is intended to make the saint's memory – and his celebrated faith in Christ – last forever; see page 57.

The two main seasons of the western Church were Lent and Easter on the one hand, and (adopted slightly later in the western Church) Advent, Christmas, and the Epiphany on the other. These were recognised and observed throughout the Christian world. The periods between Easter and Advent and between the Epiphany and Lent were gradually populated with days to remember local people who had died as martyrs, more widely known figures in the story of the Church, and other significant events in the story of Christianity. We now consider two sequences of Zeno's sermons, those given after the annual sacrament of baptism and the paschal sermons delivered yearly on Easter Saturday.

While infant baptism was not unknown in the early Church, the sacrament was largely performed for adult converts, known as catechumens, and took place as part of the extended liturgy of Easter. Prior to baptism, the catechumenate was given detailed instructions and periodic testing in the tenets of their new faith, a process which could take up to a year. The induction was particularly rigorous in the 4th century as the Church defined orthodox teaching and professions of faith in the face of internal variants of doctrine and organisation. The ceremony of baptism itself involved priests, deacons, deaconesses, and bishops. It was modelled on the baptism of Christ himself, which was a ritual of purgation in the waters of the river Jordan; the ritual was also known as the bath of regeneration. Those baptised were immersed in, or washed with, water to signify the washing away of their sins. They were then anointed by the bishop as a symbol of their acceptance into the Christian community.[248] Zeno's "Invitations to the Baptismal font" mark out eight iterations of

[247] Dujarier (1962).
[248] McKinion (2001a, 5-7) Roberts et al. (1971, VII, 2-3).

the annual cycle of baptism/confirmation, all within the Easter vigil.[249] They are all very short, as they are part of a lengthy ceremony involving the individual washing and anointing of many catechumens, together with collective recitations of faith and renunciation of "the devil and all his works." They are also uniformly upbeat. In the early Church, baptism of new members of the faith was something to celebrate. By extension, this applied to the Epiphany (Christ's baptism), which was an occasion of rejoicing. Post-baptismal sermons often urged people to adopt a new perspective on life; Ambrose used images of athletes entering a contest, or people joining a new society.[250] Rather than dwelling on the sins that must be confessed and forgiven, Zeno spoke of the positive features of baptism. He looked forward with hope and optimism rather than backwards with bitterness and recrimination. Yet the sermons are diverse in the aspect of the sacrament which Zeno chose to highlight. The whole procedure was formalised – it was a ritual – with just a brief sermon at the discretion of the bishop. Stepanich says that these pieces are so brief they can hardly be called sermons – they are short talks addressed to the baptismal cohort.[251] In contrast, Ambrose's treatises and his sermons before baptism with more formal and catechetical. He explained what the ritual would involve, with Biblical references and indications of what it meant for the convert. Ambrose saw free will as an enabler of conversion. It also meant that girls could willingly commit to virginity. Gaudentius of Brescia, with whom Ambrose corresponded, also promoted virginity in his sermons, though celibacy for men was not mentioned. Brescia had an active synagogue and worship there would have been heightened at Pesach/Easter. The bishop had little or no success in converting the Jews, so he took to preaching against them in the (Easter) sermons to the Brescian catechumenate.[252]

For his part, Zeno adhered to the core subject of the ritual and underlined the importance of baptism as the beginning of a spiritual life. He formed a thesis/antithesis by contrasts between biological birth and spiritual rebirth. The

[249] The sermons are Book II, sermons 30 to 37 in the Ballerini series, sermons 1:32, 1:49, 2:28, 1:55, 2:23, 1:23, 1:12, and 2:14 in the Löfstedt/Banterle series.
[250] Van Engen (1997, 2-3, 25). Jensen shows how the textual and artistic images associated with baptism in this period are categorised as positive motifs, such as the cleansing of sins, enlightenment through the Holy Spirit, and beginning a new life. Jensen (2012).
[251] Stepanich (1948, 22).
[252] Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*, Gerzaguet (2017), Lizzi (1989, 124-126).

former is associated with cold, dampness, dirt, and pain, while the latter is all warmth, nourishment, fragrance, and fresh clothes. The cycle of baptism is regular and iterative, but there is a nuanced variation from one instance to the next. The sermons are all briskly paced and joyful in tone – *allegro* is the mood that the bishop wanted to convey. Humphries notes the 'joyful' nature of Zeno's baptismal practice, referring to contemporary sources (Petronius of Bologna) and recent scholarship. The fast pace of the sermons echoes the urgency expressed by Gregory of Nazianzus of being baptized as soon as possible. Many Christians saw the sacrament as a major event and, like Constantine, were leaving it until later in life.[253] The cohort will have been through a lengthy period of instruction and prayer, culminating in the Lenten fast leading up to Easter; they would appreciate Zeno's upbeat message telling them it was worth the effort.[254] He urged those about to be baptised to hurry, not to waste any time, but to rejoice in embracing the new faith which put them on the road to eternal salvation.[255] He equated this haste not to the speed of the feet but to that of the mind. This was because the ceremony is based not on coercion but on free will or moral liberty. It is the result of rational decisions, preached the bishop.[256] Free will was a recurrent theme in Zeno's sermons and featured in his keynote sermons on faith, chastity, fear, and body and soul.[257] The baptismal sermons emphasised the importance of the sacrament by contrasting before and after. Baptism was by immersion, so the catechumens would go naked into the cold water. Zeno referred to cold, damp, and pain as precursors to the ceremony but promised warmth and comfort afterwards, with clean white baptismal robes as metaphors for an immaculate beginning of a new life.[258] Zeno paraphrased baptism as a re-birth, with the Church as the mother of all the converts. It was a spiritual rather than an obstetric process and so much easier as a result. In his sermon on the zodiac, 1:38, the bishop returned to the concept of baptismal re-birth

[253] Humphries (1997a, 277), Van Engen (1997, 3), Gregory of Nazianzus and Haelewyck (2001).
[254] In his treatise on baptism, Tertullian describes the rigours of prayer, fasting, and nightly vigils facing the catechumenate. He also points to the gifts awaiting them after baptism. These include spiritual gifts as well as something more amenable to those who have not eaten for some time. He cites Matthew 7:7: "Ask and you shall receive." Tertullian and Evans (1964).
[255] cf. the image of the newly baptised as a runner entering a race, as used by Ambrose. Van Engen (1997, 25).
[256] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:23).
[257] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:32, 1:17, 2:2.3, 2:4.2).
[258] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:49, 1:23, 2:23).

and offered it as a universally propitious birth, a Christian alternative to the vagaries of the astral signs of the zodiac.[259] As part of the Church's dialectic, Zeno used a syllogism to demonstrate the universal nature of the new faith. Elsewhere in his preaching, the bishop said that the Church is open to all; it accepted men and women of all ages, of all races.[260] As vindication of this openness, he noted the heterogeneity of the baptismal cohort in these sermons and in others.[261]

In the first two sermons of the series, baptism is presented as a sacrament of renewal, as a re-birth.[262] Renewal and rebirth feature in Zeno's Easter sermons, delivered by the bishop every Easter Saturday, the eve of the day of Christ's resurrection. The first of these, sermon 1:33, stands out as a *tour de force* of Zeno's ideas of a world regulated by temporal cycles, or historical time as a rectilinear continuum, and of eternity as the reward of Christian faith.

Easter is the main festival of the Christian calendar. Its celebration marks the passage of another year, and it is also an instance of the daily cycle, one that starts again from its own demise, as Zeno described it:

> *Saeculorum heres, et pernici cursu procurrens atque recurrens, solenni meta rotatus in se se, proferrens sibi de fine principium, natalicia infinita de occasu dies sempiternus eluxit.*[263]
>
> The eternal day shone forth as the legacy of the times: the day that runs forwards and backwards at a rapid pace, that revolves around the final destination and turns back to itself,

[259] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:32, 2:28, 1:55, 1:38) Tim Hegedus provides extensive context for astrology in Late Antiquity, with chapter 22 devoted to Zeno's sermon 1:38, while Francesca Dirani's paper discusses the doctrinal messages of the sermon. Hegedus (2007), Dirani (2006).
[260] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:12, 1:55). Elsewhere in the sermons, Zeno draws a clear distinction between Christians and Jews. This period of the early 360's coincides with the brief reign of Julian the Apostate, who called the Christians "Galileans" to indicate that they were a localised sect of Judaism. The bishop used several opportunities to say that the Church was not a closed sect, a continuation of Judaism under another name, but that it accepted people of all nations, and to remark on the multi-racial nature of his congregations.
[261] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:55, 1:24).
[262] The Easter sermons are Book II, sermons 45 to 53 in the Ballerini series, sermons 1:33, 1:57, 1:44, 1:58, 2:19, 1:6, 1:16, 1:26 and 2:13 in the Löfstedt/Banterle series.
[263] Ibid., 1:33.1.

> with it a beginning coming from its end, from its sunset it creates another birthday in an endless succession.

Easter is also synonymous with spring as a turning point in the cycle of seasons. In the lines that follow, Zeno noted that spring signals the transition from winter sadness, through the mild winds and the variety of colours of the vernal season, to the abundance of summer which will be realised in the autumnal harvests of grain and vine. At this point, the bishop linked the earthly crop cycles with divine providence. Rhetorically he asked how such felicitous benefits could not be related to heavenly mysteries. The progression of the seasons maps to the Church's mission of leading people from the idolatry and corruption of older beliefs (winter) to the purity and light of a new faith in Christ (summer). Spring marked the seasonal transition from barren winter to fertile summer, while baptism was the turning point in the Christian liturgy.[264]

Zeno used the seasons to depict the history of the Church as a linear progression and an advancement of the Christian faith. Winter was an era of moral darkness, of idolatry, of worldly pleasures and lusts of the flesh, when eternal death was the ultimate fate. He developed the meaning of the four seasons at more length. Spring is to be understood as the holy time of baptism. The seed is sown not by the mild westerly winds but by the Holy Spirit as an agent of God. Summer is the time of the maturing crop, which is the Christian people, pure in their faith and in works of charity. Autumn is the season of martyrdom; the metaphor is that of the vine harvest - the blood is not the juice of the wine, but the blood of those who cultivate it, martyrs who died for their faith and for the rights of their brothers and sisters. The image is stark, in keeping with a time when martyrdom was highly valued, all the more so since in an era of tolerance it was becoming an unobtainable state.[265]

The sermon opens with reference to Easter itself, "the eternal day" that repeats itself indefinitely. Zeno completed the cycle of his sermon by returning to the day in question, which marks the resurrection of Christ, who is all in all – *qui in omnia omnibus est.* It is a day that lasts forever and has no night - *qui vere aeternus est ac*

[264] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:33.2).
[265] Edwards (2015, 89).

sine nocte dies.[266]. The sermon is a journey from the closed cycles of time that measure out our day and our year. To underscore this, Zeno showed that the calibration of the diurnal and annual cycles is based on familiar Christian metrics. The day has twelve hours, corresponding to Christ's twelve apostles, and the year's twelve months are a reference to the twelve prophets of the Old Testament. The four seasons represent the four gospels which proclaim the Son of God. The seasons, the product of the divine creator, correspond to phases in the life of a Christian. The clear linkages between winter and the bleak era of idolatry without salvation on the one hand, and on the other, summer and the era of tolerance in which Christians could worship in peace, mean that the cycles which regulate the human world are of divine origin. The rhythm of the working year is a validation of Christianity as the one true faith.

Next, Zeno used the same seasons of the year to describe the history of the Church as a story of progress for mankind. The early Christian authors Tertullian, Eusebius, and later Jerome wrote histories of the Church that acknowledged different periods and regions and put scriptural narrative in context with these and with their historical evidence.[267] Their historiography used and acknowledged Jewish and pagan sources. They saw historic periods as the products of cultures and individuals within them, but that Christianity's story was a universal one, with a divine mission for all humanity. Zeno's outline of Christian history is constrained by the metaphor he uses – four periods corresponding to the four seasons – but his worldview is no less teleological for that and honours the works of the great historians. Winter is the dark era of pre-Christian idolatry, and spring is the time for renewal, when baptism cleanses the sins of the past. In summer, Christianity is fruitful in preparing souls for salvation. Autumn is the age of persecution, represented by martyrs of the faith. This ordering is not a perfect fit with the sequence of events. However, the cult of martyrs was all the more important in an age of tolerance and extended to metaphorical martyrs such as monks and ascetics.[268]

[266] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:33.4).
[267] Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, I.1., Borst (1993, 19-20), Croke (1983, 120-124), Riggsby (2019, 218), Grafton and Williams (2008, 89-92), Roldanus (2006, 67).
[268] Lee (2016, 199-201).

The Jewish pre-history provided a narrative basis and scriptural backing for Christianity, but it also posed a problem. As Zeno described it, the pre-Christian era was one of many cultures practicing polytheism and worshipping abominable creations – *deos asserendo atque abominando figmenta colendo*.[269] But the Old Testament clearly documented Jews as believers in the one true god and as co-existing with pagan belief systems. This problematised Christian teleology and its message of progress from one era to the next. The prognosis as expressed by Zeno was, while acknowledging the Jewish people as chosen by God, they had been automatically de-selected by their treatment of Christ – "The exclusive character of their covenant was abrogated."[270] Guilt was attributed to the entire Jewish race for the persecution of the Son of God by some Jews and Romans. Both Jews and gentiles were tainted, said the bishop, but by different offences: paganism and the rejection of Christ, respectively.[271] Both races belong to the pre-Christian era, to the winter of Zeno's seasonal history. In sermons 1:3 and 1:61 he said that though both are tainted, they are now united as one people. He affirmed this in sermon 1:38 when he explained that the zodiacal sign of Pisces represents the two people, Jews and gentiles, united by baptism.[272]

All the cycles of nature are a hymn of praise to God. The other sermons in the Easter series also refer to time cycles and to Christ who traverses all periods of time. He is ageless and is thus able to promise eternal bliss – this is the recurrent message of Easter throughout Zeno's tenure.

The bishop internalises cyclical time

In the 4th century new meanings and uses of time emerged as the Church continued to recruit more converts and to become a moral force alongside the secular authority. Cyclical time was based on fixed rhythms in nature; it was the basis for regulating time and the framework for quotidian practices and rituals. In this chapter,

[269] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:37.1).
[270] Holland (2020, 68).
[271] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:3, 1:37.1, 1:61).
[272] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:3, 1:61, 1:18).

Zeno's sermons have evinced a deep-rooted sense of the closed cycles of time. The bishop used the concept in preaching to his congregation, who were familiar with the natural rounds of urban and rural life. This periodicity is pervasive and powerful, so much so that it stands as a benchmark of permanency and immutability. Zeno exploits this understanding of time to emphasise the almighty and eternal nature of God and of his son, Christ. Closed temporalities have been internalised and he uses them to underpin core Christian teaching.

In the next chapter, I will focus on one sermon to show how Zeno engaged with a pre-Christian praxis of a temporal cycle, the zodiac. In sermon 1:38 he transmuted the horoscopic houses into Christian symbols, he undermined the ability of the signs to predict the future, and he offered a new redemptive meaning for all through baptism. Zeno showed how the Church calendar, which commemorated key events in the life of Christ, could also be used to outflank astrological beliefs and to claim the rhythms of the cosmos for Christianity.

Chapter 2: A praxis of cyclical time – Zeno explains the zodiac[273]

Christianity meets astrology

In Chapter 1, Zeno's sermons provided us with glimpses of his worldview. The world as he saw it was finite in space and time, a creation of the Almighty. A set of cycles maintained it with a high degree of precision, with rhythmic movement of the heavenly bodies and fixed patterns of birth, growth, decay, death, and rebirth for all forms of life. The bishop's metaphysics correctly embraced the origin of shooting stars in celestial orbits, although his assertion that they could regenerate was superfluous and without evidence.[274] The constancy and immutability of these patterns were hallmarks of their almighty and eternal creator. As such, they were models for human behaviour and featured in the bishop's homiletics as exemplars of Christian virtues and the antitheses of sins. The sermons were framed by extracts from scripture and by the themes of the virtues and the deadly sins.[275] Zeno reinforced his teaching by using examples of cycles from nature that would be familiar to the inhabitants of the vineyards and olive groves, and to the consumers of their produce, in the Verona region. They would also be familiar with the zodiac and with horoscopes based on it. Zeno acknowledged his audience's curiosity about the Christian version of this ancient lore. He availed of the ritual after baptism to give a Christian interpretation of horoscopy, the first we know of in a sermon.

Sermon 1:38 belongs to the post-baptismal set of sermons. It celebrated the new status of the converts and purported to indulge their curiosity: Zeno said he would tell them about their horoscopes from a Christian perspective. He had a firm belief in the centrality and pervasiveness of the cycles of time. The zodiac was one such cycle, a

[273] The term zodiac derives from the ancient Greek ζῳδιακός, meaning small animals or figures of animals.

[274] In sermon 1:2 Zeno argued that the remains of shooting stars are never to be found because these celestial objects are regenerated and resume their orbits; see page 37. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2).

[275] Zeno identifies seven virtues and four deadly sins. The seven virtues and the seven deadly sins were formally codified by Pope Gregory I in 590. Gregory, *Morals on the Book of Job*, books I and XXXI. Gregory I .

cosmic calendar based on observational astronomy. It was known to the Babylonians in the 5th century BC and used diagnostically in the treatment of illnesses and prognostically in the casting of horoscopes.[276] Its predictive claims in the lives of people were very much part of Greco-Roman culture, spanning all creeds and classes. Zeno was wise enough to realise that with such an in-built tradition, rejection and excoriation might not be a prudent strategy in confronting the zodiac; a more nuanced approach was called for. That he was equal to this task is an indication of his belief in the divinity of Christ and in his management of the world and its rhythms. In this chapter, sermon 1:38 is a case study of Zeno's concept of cyclical time as described in chapter 1. It is an instance of preaching on a topic of pre-Christian tradition, in which the bishop blends opposition and accommodation in his teaching. By analysing this sermon, I will show that it was more than a piece of episcopal exuberance, but, based on careful research on the part of the bishop, was a deliberate subversion of the zodiac, and contained the germs of an idea later adopted by the Church and still in practice today.

Departing from the conventions of expository and textual sermons, in sermon 1:38 the bishop undertook to explain the signs of the zodiac to his congregation. Leaving aside the safe ground of the Scriptures and the teachings of Church fathers, he ventured into arcane territory and gave his own innovative interpretation of the zodiacal sequence of signs. This sequence, corresponding to twelve constellations in the solar ecliptic (see Fig 2 on page 204), had been known since the time of the Chaldeans.[277] Zeno had to contend with the weight of centuries of tradition, and with the opposition of the soothsaying and genethlialogical (relating to the science of divination of a person's destiny from his or her birthday) sectors of the community. Ripat and Sogno note the repeated and increasingly restrictive legislation against soothsaying, haruspicy (using animal entrails to predict future events), and divination generally during the fourth century.[278] Zeno showed how the central mechanism of astrology – the annual cycle with its seasons and houses of the zodiac – was

[276] Steele (2017), Steele (2015), Stern (2012).
[277] Barton (1994), Britton (2010).
[278] Ripat (2011, 131) Sogno cites twelve laws against magic and divination between 319 and 409. Sogno (2005, 172-173) Firmicus Maternus, as a professional astrologer, was not unhappy with Constantine's legislation which punished secret acts of divination. Firmicus, *Mathesis*, 2.30.10. Later, however, Constantius forbade all forms of divination. Cod Th. 9.16.4.

calibrated according to Christian metrics. The bishop went further and used Church liturgy, together with a keen understanding of zodiacal dates and their traditional meanings, to offer an auspicious rebirth to the baptismal cohort.[279]

The immediate context of the sermon was Easter in Verona, a busy time for Zeno as bishop of the diocese. In the basilica, he had celebrated the pascal feast, marking the resurrection of Christ, the most significant event in the early Church calendar. In the nearby baptistery, he would now complete the rite of baptism for the current cohort of catechumens, those seeking to become members of the Christian religion. Their induction into their new faith had been a long and arduous process, involving periods of fasting and lengthy vigils, along with lessons on doctrine and grounding in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.[280] At the core of the sacrament was the recitation, perhaps in the antiphonal form of question and answer, of the Creed.[281] In this, the convert confirms his belief in the trinity of the Christian godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – emphasising the voluntary nature of the sacrament and the primacy of human agency and free will.[282] The affirmation of faith took place during the ritual immersion of the converts in the cold water of the baptismal font, a symbolic washing away of the old life and all its errors and vanities.[283] The Christian neophytes would emerge to be dressed in white robes, and then to be anointed with oil, before partaking in a light refreshment of bread and milk. There would be a sense of joy and relief at having completed an onerous journey, and Zeno reflected

[279] Hegedus gives details of the arguments used by early Christian teachers against astrology, and of the traditional responses. Firmicus Maternus is cited in both camps. As an astrologer, he wrote a textbook of the science. After converting to Christianity, he recanted on many of his former beliefs in astrology in a second work. Hegedus (2007), Firmicus, *Mathesis*; Firmicus, *De errore profanarum religionum*.

[280] In the Church of the 4th century, the pre-pascal period of fasting and penitence, now known as Lent, coincided with the pre-baptismal rites of preparation. Thus, for logistical reasons, Easter baptism was the norm. Later, baptism would also be performed at Epiphany, and non-seasonal baptism, particularly of infants, began to take hold in the 6th century. Talley (2000b, 33-37), Cramer (2002, 64, 99-100, 137-138), Connell (2006b, 73-74).

[281] Connolly (1924, 131-133).

[282] Joseph Lemarié describes the sacrament in detail, including the trinitarian affirmation, in the context of the baptismal ritual in Aquileia in the time of Chromatius (late 4th century). This aspect of early baptism was later administered as the separate sacrament of confirmation, when infant baptism became the predominant form and was not confined to key dates within the liturgical calendar. Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 97-103), Cramer (2002, 179-180).

[283] The word ‘baptism’ derives from the Greek βαπτισμός, a term for ritual washing.

this in his final sermon of this baptism cycle. To an audience familiar with auguries and horoscopes, he would be indulgent and explain the true Christian meaning of the signs of the zodiac.

In what is the earliest extant Christian interpretation of the zodiac in textual form, Zeno purported to satisfy the curiosity of his new cohort of Christians, to tell them what their birth signs really meant. After weeks of lessons and homilies of a prescriptive nature, preaching the doctrine of the new faith but preserving a certain *disciplina arcani*, Zeno was now in an open and expansive mood, prepared to demystify the arcane sequence of stellar symbols. In a brief sermon, he mollified and neutralised, for those of the Christian faith, the more harmful zodiacal signs, and transformed the auspicious ones into Christian icons. Mindful of the power of tradition and of the hold that signs and auguries had over people, he was careful not directly to condemn fortune-telling, divination, and other practices that linked astronomical configurations with human fate. However, he did hint that these would soon be outlawed by the state. Finally, the bishop exploited the then coincidence of baptism with Easter and the latter's occurrence within astrological auspicious times of the year to suggest a re-birth that would always be favourable. Baptism, he said, was a re-birth shared by all Christians. When the sacrament was decoupled first from Easter and later from the Church calendar altogether, Christians could still observe the event by celebrating their name-day, the feast day of the saint whose name they were given at the baptismal font. Thus, in one short sermon, Zeno combined several strategies adopted by the Church as it grew as an institution, universal in reach yet personal in the way it touched individual lives. He used rejection and accommodation of the old tradition as appropriate, together with delegation of penal measures to other authorities and substitution of ancient cultic practices with entirely new observances.

Before analysing the sermon in greater detail, we must put it in its broader context. This means looking at the forces and ideas at play in the 4th century western empire, the issues of concern, and the people involved, not least Zeno himself.

The Church and science – a learning curve

I now turn to astrology, in the 4th century part of a long tradition, still closely coupled with physical science. In the 2nd century, Ptolemy constructed an elaborate geocentric apparatus of cycles and epicycles to describe the planetary orbits. This was greatly simplified by the heliocentric system of Copernicus in the 16th century, which entirely dispensed with the epicycles. Nonetheless, the Ptolemaic system had the descriptive and predictive merits of a science. Astronomers versed in the works of Ptolemy could describe the apparent movements of the planets and were able to predict their positions well into the future, although the Ptolemaic model did not pretend to explain the causes of the planetary orbits. But there were others who professed to be astrologers, with little or no scientific methodology. These included practitioners of the cabalistic arts who made a living as soothsayers, thus indicating a market for personal hermeneutics of celestial signs. The spectrum of astrology ran from observational astronomy through soothsaying and horoscopy to the more esoteric practices of cults. We will now see how this ancient tradition was regarded in Zeno's time.

Given the primacy of the sun god in the old traditions, and the official cult of *sol Invictus* (the invincible sun, a familiar name for the god Mithras) in the later empire, early Christian teachers might have been tempted to use solar imagery when describing Christ. That is precisely why some of the Church fathers explicitly condemned such practices. In 253 Origen said that Christians should not worship the sun or the moon or the stars.[284] But these represent the wonder of creation, and their light is celestial, unlike anything on earth. They address prayers to God through his only Son, and since we should not pray to those who pray, we should not pray to these heavenly bodies [285]. Tertullian in 197 said the pagan gods were men, not gods.[286] They encountered human beings rather than creating them. They did not

[284] Origen, *C. Cels.* V, 10-13.
[285] Barton says that Origen makes some concessions to astrology, saying that the stars provide information about the future, but in doing so he was confusing knowledge with causation. Barton (1995, 75). K. von Stuckrad also refers to the semantics of astrology as used in Jewish and early Christian writings, and to the distinction between signs and instruments of divine will. See von Stuckrad (2000, 9).
[286] Tert., *Apol.* X, 2.

create the universe, either – it already existed. Nonetheless, the use of astral bodies to describe Christ was not uncommon. Maximus was bishop of Turin in the early 5th century and used imagery of the sun extensively to embellish his sermons about Christ and his mission on earth.[287] Zeno also spoke in this vein, and in sermon (2:12) he associated features of the sun with the apostles and the evangelists.[288]

Pliny, in describing the planets (and the sun), mentioned their order and predictability; they did not wander (despite their name, which derives from the Greek πλανῆται, or wandering), their distances were determinate, and their motions were complex but tractable and capable of description.[289] The stars, though open to contemplation and classification, included erratic elements, such as shooting stars; as a subset of the heavens, they were unpredictable. Man was below the level of significance for any connection between the configuration of the stars and the fate of individuals, according to Pliny.[290] Before his conversion to Christianity, during the decade of the 330's, Firmicus Maternus wrote, in his *Mathesis*, of the order of the heavens and of the signs in the stars; these were closely coupled, via the mechanism of astrology, to human destiny.[291] In his later *De errore profanarum religionum*, he made less direct reference to astrology, and on one occasion derided the connection between the constellations and "the sorrowful disasters of mankind".[292] Hegedus, though, cites several sources as saying that Firmicus retained a positive post-conversion opinion of matters astral.[293]

The Bible refers to the cosmos as God's handiwork, part of the creation of the world and of its paramount inhabitant, mankind. God also maintains the rhythms of the heavens; only he – and, on rare occasions, his selected agents - can alter these. The scriptures say that God uses the stars to show portents of what is to come,

[287] Conroy (1965, 21-13, 35-36, 61).
[288] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:12).
[289] Plin., *HN*, II 4.6, II 14.
[290] Plin., *HN*, II 6, II 22-23.
[291] Firmicus addressed the book to Flavius Lollianus Mavortius, who was consul in 338. Hegedus (2007, 9), Firm. Mat., *Math.*, 2:27:10-2, 7:1:18-19.
[292] Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.*, VII).
[293] Hegedus (2007, 21).

although only rarely does he reveal the meaning of such signs.[294] Ambrose of Milan endorsed these scriptural points but warned the faithful about the temptations of horoscopy. Writing in 387, he said that the sun, moon, planets, and stars had purposes, to mark time and serve as signs for recurrences. They would provide portents of the end of the world, but we should not be too curious about these, he said. He argued against the astrological influence of the heavens on human fate: there was no correspondence between the heavenly bodies and their movements on the one hand, and the affairs of humans on the other. Ambrose availed of the mocking argument as used by Basil of Caesarea – how can the midwife know to the precise moment when the baby was born, while she waits for the wail showing the child is alive, and checks on its sex?[295] He used the conventional names for the signs of the zodiac - ram, bull, scorpion etc – rather than any of the more emollient alternatives suggested by Zeno in sermon 1:38 (2:43 in the Bigelmair numbering). Ambrose feigned concern at the eponymous wandering of the planets. The astrologers said they move at different speeds, overtaking each other, hiding from each other. They could change their appearance ten thousand times a day, he said. How could such an unstable system, he asked rhetorically, control our lives to the point of immutability?[296]

Astrology made claims that neither the Church nor the state could ignore. As a science, it maintained that by precise measurement and with reference to the annals of the ancients one could foresee the future of individuals and of nations. It was about an asymmetric power relation, with men and women, whatever their rank in society, as playthings of cosmic forces. This was at variance with the temporal and spiritual norms. Astrology had been successfully applied to the management of time

[294] See Gen. 1 for details of the creation and Joshua 10:12-13 for the power to control time by halting the movement of the sun. In Psalms 19, 91, 147 there is reference to the significance God attaches to the stars, while in Revelation 1 Christ describes strange stellar configurations that will presage the end of the world, and he explains their meaning.

[295] Ambrose described a quantised timeline as well as a kind of “uncertainty principle” at play in associating astrological signs with a person’s nativity. The act of recording the birth signs took a finite time and must therefore occupy more than the “space of the lot” belonging to one person. He raised a patriarchal and prurient eyebrow at the whole horoscopic enterprise by asking whether the astrologer (a man) could be present at a birth. Ambrose, *Hexameron*, Book IV, 4, 14; Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, 6.5.

[296] The English word ‘planet’ derives from the ancient Greek πλανήτης, meaning ‘wanderer’.

to produce the Julian calendar, and this had enhanced its standing. It had more intellectual appeal than the superstition and obscurantism of oracles, entrails, and the flights of birds, and it had the early endorsement of Augustus, who had published his own horoscope.[297] In the later and less stable principate, the practice of horoscopy was turned against the emperors. Their fortunes could be bought from so-called astrologers, and the more lurid the predictions were, the better the sales. Public opinion could be swayed by rumours of an emperor's illness or impending defeat, so a succession of edicts against astrologers and soothsayers was issued in the 3rd and 4th centuries.[298] Churchmen of late antiquity were at one in condemning it. H. F. Stander details the position of theologians on astrology, from Origen, Lactantius, and Tertullian in the 3rd century to John of Damascus in the 8th. Throughout the period, the oracular aspects of astrology were very popular among all levels of society but were strongly condemned by the Church.[299] Just as the state had used the Julian calendar to enforce its rule over time against the claims of the old priestly classes, so Church leaders saw the importance of managing time and of having exclusive authority to do so. Fortune-tellers and soothsayers could impede this monopoly and so were condemned by the Church. Christian writers found fault with the moral standing of those who made money out of false prophecy. Some felt able to critique the underlying physical principles of the science. Origen could fault the accuracy of the zodiac, as it did not take account of the precession of the equinoxes, while Gregory of Nazianzus implied that the observations of astrologers could not adequately resolve the fine structure of the zodiac.[300] This is not to say that churchmen did not cite astrologers when it suited their purposes. Augustine said that some astrologers believed in life after death, a fallacious argument (*ignoratio elenchi*)

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[297] As Octavian and before his ascent to power as Augustus, he had consulted Theogenes about his horoscope. The result was supremely favourable, so he made it public and had a coin struck with the image of Capricorn, his birth symbol. Suet. *Aug.* 94.12; Ripat (2011, 150), Wallace-Hadrill (2008, 251), Lewis (2008, 309).

[298] Ripat (2011), Sogno (2005).

[299] Stander (2003, 233, 239), Dihle (1989, 160), Tert. *Apology* 35.21, Lact., *Div. Inst*. 2, 15.6-16.1. See Stepanich (1948) for details of the influences of Cyprian, Lactantius, Novatian, Tertullian, and Hilary on Zeno.

[300] The precession of the equinoxes is a gradual movement of the equinoxes, which presently occur around 21st March and 21st September, along the ecliptic. It is caused by a wobble in the Earth's axis of rotation, with a period of almost 26,000 years. It was first noted by Hipparchus in the 2nd century BC. See also in page 112. Origen, *Philocalia* 23, 17; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata Arcana*, 5, 45-46.

but one which enabled Augustine to recruit the classical scholar Varro to the aid of his theology.[301] In Zeno's time, the Apostolic Constitutions decreed that astrologers, diviners, soothsayers, fortune-tellers, and enchanters were among those who could not be baptised as Christians.[302] That many leading churchmen in the latter half of the 4th century were exercised by astrology and how best to deprecate it would indicate that many among their congregations still maintained belief in the old cosmic cults; this point is made by Virginia Burrus.[303] That bishops felt the need to take collective action to exclude astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers from the priesthood points to an awareness of cultic practices within the ranks of the clergy. The *cause celebre* of Priscillianism in the Church in Iberia was a material case in point.[304]

The Church's doctrines and liturgy did not exist in a vacuum. They were based on the life and teachings of Christ, as prefaced by the Old Testament, documented by the four evangelists, and cited in the epistles. All of this was framed by the art and philosophy of centuries of Mediterranean civilisations, part of a heritage still vibrant in Late Antiquity. That there was contention between the old and the new is evident from the works of the Church fathers. Christian writers argued against beliefs and practices that honoured the traditional pantheon, and pagan philosophers, lacking in neither skill nor subtlety, robustly made the conservative case.[305] The task of preachers was no less challenging, as they sought to counter everyday usages that acknowledged pre-Christian beliefs. The Christian god had to be positioned in a cosmos already populated with celestial objects named after pagan deities. In this chapter, we see how Zeno, as a churchman, accepted this challenge. He did not

[301] August., *De civ. D.* 22, 28.
[302] Apostolic Constitutions, 8, 32.
[303] Hunter (1990), Burrus (1995, 63, footnote 82).
[304] Priscillianism was an ascetic sect with a following, particularly among the rich and educated, in Roman Hispania. Its charismatic leader was a noble in the province, and its doctrines derived from Manichaeism, which was based on the opposition of good and evil. Priscillian and six colleagues were executed as heretics in 385, but the creed lasted until well into the 6th century. Roldanus (2006, 176-177), Chadwick (1976), Burrus (1995).
[305] Julian the Apostate, as emperor, played an active part in this debate. In his literary works, he conveyed his ideals based on the old codes of behaviour. In his letters and laws, he gave effect to these. He was an admirer of Marcus Aurelius and Iamblichus, and in turn supported writers who defended pagan values and practices. Lee (2016, 102-110), Finamore et al. (2002), Sall., *On the gods and the universe*; Julian, *The Caesars*.

directly confront the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods, but rather took issue with a symbolism known to all and indelibly marked in the night sky. The zodiac embodied the sun's yearly progress along the ecliptic through the astral constellations. Its symbols were commonly known and associated with personal destinies. Whatever the credence given to horoscopes, the zodiac, its ancestral provenance, and its cosmic influence were deeply ingrained in the popular psyche.

In Late Antiquity, the zodiac was a time scheme, accepted throughout the empire and beyond, surpassing the Julian calendar in its universality.[306] People knew their birth signs and soothsayers could read their horoscopes. Some fortune-tellers claimed to be able to read the stars and to predict the fate of eminent people. In less than stable times, this was not appreciated by nervous emperors, and the practice was proscribed on several occasions.[307] Nor was the Church enamoured of traditional zodiacal beliefs and practices. They sacralised time in a way that conflicted with the nascent Christian calendar. In addition, assigning one's fate to a determinism governed by the movements of stars and planets was antithetical to the doctrine of free will which Christians espoused, a doctrine which underlined the individuation of moral responsibility and the personal consequences of sin. In this context, the sermon on the zodiac by Zeno of Verona was a signal event. It is the earliest surviving record of Church interpretation of the zodiac. The sermons were for centuries the preserve of the diocese of Verona and there is no direct connection between Zeno's sermon and wider thinking on astrology within the Church.[308] Here the bishop would take on "the most important and widespread Hellenistic system of piety."[309] The sermon provides examples of confrontation and assimilation, both strategies used by Christian leaders in advancing their new monotheism. I will show that this sermon also demonstrates original thinking about the zodiac, its strengths,

[306] Feeney (2007, 219 fn13).
[307] Amm. Marc. *Res Gestae* 26.3.1-4, 29.1.5, 29.2.27.
[308] As with his works, Zeno remained relatively obscure for centuries. Soon after his death, he was referred to by Ambrose of Milan, but he did not feature in the biographies of Jerome in 392 nor in those of Gennadius of Massilia a century later. In the 5th century, while celebrating the enlargement of his basilica in Bologna, Petronius referred to the eminent bishop Zeno. In the following century, Gregory the Great referred to Zeno as a blessed martyr. The earliest references after that are in the *Velo di Classe*, from the Byzantine period in Ravenna, and the *Versus de Verona*, from the Carolingian era. Jer., *De vir. Ill.*; Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*, Truzzi (1985, 45-49).
[309] Martin (1995, 52).

and its weaknesses, on the part of the bishop, and that it presages an onomastic practice still to be found in parts of Europe.

Zeno tackles astrology

Zeno, with his worldview of regularity and recurrence, looks to the heavens as the epitome of the eternal. In a lengthy sermon on faith, he prioritised the affective above the cognitive, the willingness to believe above the content of that belief. He said that the divine focus of belief is in the heavens, and so his teachings were the *disciplina caelestis*.[310] The transcendence of the Jewish god was corroborated by his superior position, his heavenly locus: "Is not God in the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!".[311] There are references throughout the Old Testament to "God on high forever", "the Lord God most high".[312] This is echoed in the Christian New Testament, for example "Glory to God in the highest".[313] In addition to the perceived advantage of the higher position, both old and new testament Scriptures distinguish between earth (low) and heaven (high) as separate worlds.[314] The idea of 'cosmic ascent' is now seen as a trope in philosophy and in religion from Hellenistic to early medieval times. According to the evangelist Luke, Hell is down, under the ground, not discernibly separate from the earth and its corruption.[315] By contrast, in a sermon on the birth of Christ, Zeno spoke of the humble origins of the saviour, of his incarnation in Mary's womb, his birth as a crying baby in a stable, his appearance as a weak man. In the peroration, he switched register:

> *Hic sol noster, sol verus, qui clarissimos ignes mundi germanos astrorumque candentium polorum claritatis suae de plenitudine*

[310] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:3).
[311] Job 22:12.
[312] Psalm 92:8, Gen. 14:22.
[313] Luke 2:14. The notion of a hierarchy and an ascension towards the godhead is to be found in neo-Platonic cosmology and in cults and religions of the time. This progression is reflected in the series of rites through which initiates to Mithraism and Christianity, for example, must pass. Valantasis (2000, 8), Stratton (2000, 303-304), De Conick (2007).
[314] Psalm 14:2, John 3:12-13, Luke 24:51.
[315] Luke 10:15.

> *accendit. Hic, qui semel occidit et orsus est rursum numquam repetiturus occasum. Hic, inquam, quem duodecim radiorum, id est apostolorum duodecim, corona circumdat, quem per ambitum totius orbis non muta quattuor animalia, sed salutiferis praedicationibus quattuor circumferunt evangelia*.[316]
>
> He (Christ) is our sun, the true sun that ignites the bright fires of the world, the brothers of the stars, and the shining skies of the fullness of their own light. He who once perished has also risen again, never to perish. Yes, it is he who is surrounded by the spokes of the crown, namely the twelve apostles, who, on his journey around the entire world, did not lead four dumb beasts, but the four Gospels and their redemptive pronouncements.

Christ is the sun, and his crown of stars has twelve spokes, which stand for the twelve apostles. In the Apocalypse, there is reference to the crown that Mary wore, with 12 stars.[317] Zeno's description bears some resemblance to the *Sol Invictus* of Mithras, with the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The Mithraic cult may not have been much of a rival to Christianity in the latter half of the fourth century; for one thing, it was based on groups of believers operating within communities, including the army, of the High Roman empire. By the fourth century these were not as rigorous or dedicated, given the general changes in demographics, the acceptance of more casual worshippers into the cult, and the reduced investment in existing and new *mithraea*.[318] However, its symbols were not unique to the cult and would still have been familiar to many. The four beasts present at the birth of Christ were not the four horses of the Sun's chariot, but the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, John, and Luke (lion, calf, eagle, face of a man).[319] In one other sermon, Zeno invoked the solar

[316] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:12.2). This motif of a central Christ with the twelve apostles radiating outwards is a visual image not uncommon in church buildings of Late Antiquity. Britt (2019). The two baptisteries in Ravenna – Neonian (or orthodox) and Arian – both feature this design as a mosaic in the dome above the font. Herrin notes that in the orthodox baptistery, Christ is a bearded man, but is an unbearded boy in the later Arian baptistery, thus indicating that he was not ageless, but rather subject to time. Herrin (2020, 98).

[317] Apoc 12, 1.

[318] Beck (1987, 299), Turcan (1996), Gordon (1972), Walsh (2019).

[319] The symbols of the four evangelists were used as early as the second century by Irenaeus of Lyons and the third century by Victorinus of Poetovio. Jerome cites an explanatory reference from Ezekiel, and the symbols are to be found in illustrated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.8; Victorinus, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 4.7-10; Jer., *Commentary on Matthew*; Apoc 4, 6.

aspect of Christ.[320] In consecrating the new church in Verona, he said that the radiance of Christ would make up for the poor internal illumination:

> *Non fenestrarum lumen implorat, quia sol aeternus in eo manet*.[321]
>
> He will not need the light of windows, because the eternal sun dwells within him.

"The heavens tell the glory of God."[322] Zeno affected to take this literally, i.e. that the heavens had a mouth, or at least to indicate that this might be his audience's initial interpretation. This is even though the verse continues: "and the firmament shows his handiwork." Then he dismissed this fabricated interpretation - "no-one has yet heard them (the heavens) speak." Early Christian theologians, including Clement of Alexandria and Origen, saw that allegories had a function in explaining sacred texts to believers and non-believers alike. This was often opposed by literalists, who favoured a stricter interpretation.[323] Zeno balked at seeing "the heavens" as an anthropomorphic allegory, yet he used the sun's radiance as a rhetorical device for Christ's deity. He could be both literalist and versed in allegorical usage. Here he ignored the interpretation of the psalm as the stars and the sky being evidence of God, and instead said that the stars are an allegory of the apostles. Other belief systems held the number twelve (as well as other numbers) to be significant, some associated with the fixed stars of the constellations in the ecliptic. The Greek pantheon had twelve gods on Mount Olympus. Mithras, often referred to as the invincible Sun (*Sol invictus*), had twelve disciples, while Zoroastrianism explicitly links its twelve commanders to the twelve signs of the zodiac. Jews had the twelve tribes of Israel and Jerusalem had twelve gates.[324] Zeno's reverse strategy was to exalt Christ and his mission by saying that the zodiacal signs are analogous to the

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[320] There is another reference to Christ as sun, when Zeno quotes from Malachi in sermon (1:15.2): "*Orietur vobis sol iustitiae*" (May the sun of justice rise on you) Mal 4.2. Anderson says that Maximus of Turin and Jerome found it hard to decouple the god Sol from his astral body, although Zeno has little problem in replacing Sol with Christ when it suits his purpose. Maximus used the soubriquet 'Sol iustitiae' in direct reference to Christ, and approved of the use of Day of Sol as an alternative to the Lord's Day for Sunday. Anderson (2019).

[321] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:6.3).

[322] Ps 19, 1.

[323] Cameron (1991, 64-65).

[324] See, for example, Ayonrinde et al. (2021), Beck (2010), Beck (1987).

apostles. This block translation of the apostles into the signs contrasts with the individual substitutions that he made in his sermon 1:38 in which he compared the twelve signs of the zodiac with various symbols of the new religion.[325] Zeno did not attach any numerological significance to the number 12, as Jews and Mithraists could, with the intention of providing a plausible link between nature and religion, between cosmology and theology.

> *"Et denuo "Caeli", inquit, "enarrant gloriam dei"; et hic utique non tam caelos loqui dicit, quos loquentes nullus audivit, sed apostolos asseverat, quorum praedicatione gloria domini per tota terrarum spatia nuntiata est. Terram homines intellegendos frequens prophetarum assertio demonstravit: "Iubilate", inquit, "omnis terra", et alibi: "Audi, inquit, "terra, ex ore meo." Quo vocabulo gentiles homines sine dubio comprehendit, in quibus adhuc erant opera terrena. Hoc est ergo quod ait: "audi caelum et terra", quod Iudaeis non audientibus Christus dominus esset ab apostolis et gentibus audiendus.*[326]
>
> And again: "The heavens tell the glory of God." At this point, he certainly does not mean that the heavens speak - no one has yet heard them speak - but he confirms that the apostles by their preaching announced the glory of the Lord to every part of the world. This showed to the people on earth how numerous sayings of prophets are to be understood. "Rejoice, everyone", he said, and at another place: "Hear, world, from my mouth." Without doubt, people understood that by this word he meant the gentiles, whose works were earthly until then. So when he says, "Hear, heaven and earth," it means that, since the Jews did not hear him, Christ the Lord should be heard by the apostles and the gentiles.

Zeno's bemusement with the speaking heavens may be a literalist moment. However, his interpretation of the biblical flourishes is of a piece with the techniques of persuasion of the early Church. This rhetoric, says Cameron, was not unique to Christianity, but its use formulated a shift in thought. She compares this with the paradigm shift in scientific thought which Thomas Kuhn described in his seminal

[325] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.2).
[326] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:61.2).

paper.[327] Zeno was about to apply a paradigm shift to the ancient lore of the zodiac. He chose the newly baptised as his audience and interpreted a Christian set of images for them. The new thinking was based on a transformative sacrament. Zeno offered new Christians a uniquely auspicious rebirth through baptism.

Baptism as the arena

In the fourth century, baptism was largely confined to adults. It involved a preparatory phase of instruction, testing, and fasting, which could take up to a year.[328] Zeno's sermons reflect this lengthy ritual, with many of them devoted to preparing the catechumens – those seeking to become Christians – for the formal sacrament of baptism.[329] The whole process was a gruelling one, and those involved, not least the bishop, were no doubt relieved, perhaps even demob-happy, at the end of it. Two groups of sermons bookend the ceremony of baptism.[330] The first set, called *Invitatio ad fontem* and numbered from 1 to 8, were given just before the sacrament itself, held during the Easter vigil.[331] Sermons in the second set are called *Ad neophytos post baptism*a and are seven in number. They were delivered after baptism, at least one on Easter itself (1:24).[332] From their content, it cannot be ruled out that the sermons in this category were given at celebratory meals after baptism.[333] The pre-baptismal sermons are all very short; the average is 61 words, with a standard deviation of ± 11 words. This is because little time was left for

[327] Cameron (1991, 19-21), Kuhn (1970).
[328] McKinion (2001a, 5-7).
[329] Fifteen of the ninety-three sermons are devoted to baptism.
[330] These two groups are subsets of the 'Paschal groups' of Zeno's sermons as described by Jeanes. These comprise sermons on the feast of Easter, those given before and after baptism, and commentaries on Scriptural passages read at the feast. Jeanes (1995, 21).
[331] This set is complete, in that there is one for each of the eight years in which Zeno wrote and delivered his sermons. In the Ballerini/Bigelmair notation, these sermons are 2:30 to 2:37, both inclusive. In the Löfstedt/Banterle notation, they are sermons 1:32, 1:49, 2:28, 1:55, 2:23, 1:23, 1:12, and 2:14.
[332] In the Ballerini/Bigelmair notation, these sermons are 2:38 to 2:44, both inclusive. In the Löfstedt/Banterle notation, they are sermons 1:24, 2:10, 2:24, 1:42, 2:29, 1:38, and 1:41. One sermon is missing from the set of eight.
[333] The sermons before and after baptism were in turn bracketed by sermons at the start and at the end of the Easter service.

extempore preaching in a ceremony with an extensive liturgy.[334] The sermons after baptism were, with one exception, also short, though not as short as the first group. Their average length is 228 words, with a standard deviation of ± 31 words. The exception is 1:38, the sermon on the zodiac, at 439 words almost twice the average length of post-baptismal sermons. The tone of the pre-baptismal sermons is inspirational and hortatory. Zeno urged the catechumens to waste no time in immersing themselves in the water. They would emerge renewed and refreshed, clean and fragrant, united with all those within the Church, having experienced a painless birth into an eternal life. The metaphor of birth is emphasised with imagery of the virgin Mary, mother of the Church and its diverse members, giving milk to the new-born Christians.

> *O admirabilis et vere divina sacrosancta dignatio! in qua quae parturit, non gemit; qui renascitur, plorare non novit. Haec renovatio, haec resurrectio, haec vita aeterna, haec est mater omnium, quae nos adunatos, ex omni gente et natione collectos, unum postmodum efficit corpus.*[335]

> O how wonderful it is, how truly divine, this sacrosanct and worthy event, in which she who gives birth does not groan, and he who is born again knows nothing about crying. This is renewal, this is resurrection, this is eternal life! This is the mother of all, who unites us from all tribes and nations and henceforth makes us into one body.

and

> *Gaudete itaque. In fontem quidem nudi demergemini, sed aetherea veste vestiti, mox candidati inde surgetis; quam qui non polluerit, regna coelestia possidebit.*[336]

[334] Truzzi, noting the distinct brevity of these sermons and of their similarity, said that some were copies of others. He said that this treatment was unique in the Western Church. Truzzi (1985, 58-60). See also page 71, where Stepanich says that these are more like short talks than formal sermons. Whether they are formulaic or of later construction, they highlight 1:38 as a substantial and deliberate, one that is appropriate for the newly baptized.

[335] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:55).

[336] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:23).

> So rejoice in it! It is true that you dive naked into the font, but you will soon rise up with a heavenly garment and then with a white robe; whoever does not defile this will have the heavenly kingdoms.

After baptism, the bishop maintained the upbeat mood. He encouraged those baptised to enjoy the feast, to eat and drink. The theme in these sermons is one of transformation, of rebirth. He told his audience that they were no longer guilty, now they were new and innocent; no longer bad, now they were safe and free, like children. Their bodies were the same, but they were reborn as new people. He compared baptism with the transformation of wheat, through milling and baking, into bread.

> *Imago quidem reatus nunc usque fuistis, sed fortiter examinati estis: et, ut indulgentiam perciperetis, pro vobis ipsis bene vigilastis: optime estis auditi.*[337]

> Up to now, you have been in a guilty state. But now you have been thoroughly tried. In order to be forgiven you have taken care of yourselves so well, and you have been well judged.

In a sermon to the newly baptised, the bishop referred to the nightly vigils preceding the baptism ceremony. The Christian initiation rite underwent major development after Constantine, reaching its apex in the late fourth and early fifth centuries.[338] It involved a vigil, "the mother of all vigils" according to Augustine, the purpose of which was to illuminate the interior of churches:[339]

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[337] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:10).

[338] Searle (1987, 458).

[339] The development of the vigil, and its extension beyond midnight and the end of the Jewish Passover to cockcrow on the Sunday, is described by Thomas J. Talley. He suggests that it may be an indication of concern for the Christian Pascha to be seen to come after the Jewish one. Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson refer to the use of a weekly vigil, including in North Africa. By the fourth century, it survived only in some ascetic and urban monastic communities. Given Zeno's origins and his career as an austere monk, it is likely he was familiar with the practice. His reference to vigils in the plural in sermon (1:24) may be to distinguish a weekly from an annual frequency. Talley (2000b), Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 35-36). Augustine's description is taken from his rhetorical question: "*Quanto ergo alacrius in hae vigilia, velut matre omnium sanctarum vigiliarum, vigilare debemus, in qua totus vigilat mundus?*" (How much more eagerly, therefore, in these vigils, as the mother of all holy vigils, we must watch, in which the whole world watches?) in August., *Sermo* CCXIX.

> *… post clarissimae noctis suo sole dulces vigilias*[340]*, post lactei fontis lavacro vitali in spem immortalitatis animas pullulantes, ex quo qui eratis aetate diversi, diversi natione*…[341]
>
> ... past are the sweet vigils of the night, most brightly lit by its own sun; past are your souls rising up in the hope of immortality from the milky life-giving bath, you who are of different ages, from different nations …

In analysing the context and the meaning of this sermon, I will draw on references from and comparisons with a number of sources.[342] The significance was of Jesus Christ as "*sol salutis*", outdoing the sun by shining at night. Baptism became important as a means of identifying oneself as a Christian. Cramer described it as follows: "And yet, there is no doubt that until about the time of Augustine it (baptism) remained the image of what distinguished the Christian; it contained, doctrinally, morally, eschatologically, symbolically, all that a Christian *could* be, and in that sense

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[340] The 'sweet vigils' is an ironic trope by Zeno, a euphemism for an extensive and trying period for baptizands and indeed for the general congregation. The vigil was accompanied by a fast, which at Easter was longer than the weekly eucharist fast. See Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 17-20), Talley (2000b).

[341] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:24.1). The bishop notes that the catechumens are of different ages, the significance being that they have different birthdays, not that they are a mixture of young and old; in Sermon 1:38 he suggests that they all have the same rebirth day. He also refers to the variety of nationalities represented. Ederle says the reference could be a flight of rhetorical fancy by Zeno, but that it is more likely a factual reference to Verona as an important and cosmopolitan centre; see Zeno (1956, 31) . I tend to agree. Zeno had reason to refer to the different ages, but not to the different nationalities, so it was probably factual. He was also confirming the fact that Christianity separated ethnicity from religious identity; it enabled people of different races to share the one religion, a feature which effectively distanced it from Judaism.

[342] As Stepanich has shown, Zeno was influenced by several writers, Christian and non-Christian. For example, the sermon on Psalm 100 echoes much of the commentary of Hilary of Poitiers. Similarly, the sermon on Genesis has a lot in common with Ovid's opening of *Metamorphoses*. Stepanich (1948). Other influences are the works of Cyprian, Lactantius, Tertullian, and Virgil. Stepanich names these and other sources as those on which Zeno draws. Among the non-Christian writers, he does not include any from the Greek-speaking world, such as Plato and Aristotle. Ideas from these and other Greek writers feature in the sermons and will be identified as appropriate. In reading the sermons and the annotations of recent editions, influences from Aristotle, Athanasius, Hilary, Origen, Ovid, Plato, and Virgil can be found. As comparators and to indicate other ideas contemporary to those of Zeno, these and the writings of Ambrose, Ammianus Marcellinus, Arius, Augustine, Firmicus Maternus, Pliny, Ptolemy, and Socrates Scholasticus will be drawn on. The purpose here is not to be comprehensive, but to provide a representative sample of the worldview on natural philosophy, astrology, and Christian teaching in the western empire in the fourth century. Zeno and Banterle (2008), Ov., *Met.* I, 6-7; Hilary, *Tractatus super psalmos*.

defined what a Christian was."[343] The Creed became a significant feature here, a statement of one's identity.[344] In particular, it was a way of distinguishing Nicenes or orthodox Christians from Arians. Lyman makes the point that perspectives were defined more by conflicts between Christian sects than by traditional themes, be they biblical or philosophical.[345] Churchmen at Councils may have been familiar with terms such as *homoousios* and *homoiousios* and their meanings, but ordinary people needed a simple form of words to affirm their faith and to establish that of others.[346] The Creed was such an affirmation and has served as such since its Nicene origin in 325.

Zeno interprets the zodiac

With the above context in mind, the topic of astrology and the zodiac would not have been a regular feature in the lectionary of a 4th century bishop. In Verona, Christianity coexisted with other beliefs. Scolari points to pagan opposition and Zeno himself confirms this.[347] Emperors continued to proscribe divination and allied practices, thereby underlining their ongoing popularity. Zeno would have to be circumspect if he wanted to convey a Christian interpretation without causing offence or division among the Veronese. Hegedus introduces sermon 1:38 as a substantial and positive use of the zodiac in early Christian preaching.[348] Mapping the signs of the zodiac to other systems is a practice dating from at least the first century. Manilius found a correspondence between the signs and parts of the body, and this was taken up by Priscillianists in the late fourth century.[349] Chin suggests a

[343] Cramer (2002, 48).
[344] Lynch (2010).
[345] Lyman (1993, 160).
[346] That is not to say that the laity were not interested in church affairs. The distinction between religious and civil affairs was not as sharp as it is today, with bishops having functions beyond the purely religious. They were a component of government, local and imperial, and their business was of interest to many citizens.
[347] Scolari (1955). Zeno was aware of the presence of old beliefs in omens and portents, even in supposedly Christian households. In sermon (2:7) he portrayed the havoc caused by a husband who insists that the pronouncements of his (pagan) gods should govern domestic life. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:7.8).
[348] Hegedus (2007, 353).
[349] Hegedus (2007, 341-342).

resemblance between the ways in which Priscilian and Zeno replaced, sign by sign, the powers of the zodiac.[350] I will show that Zeno goes beyond a literal or one-to-one translation of astrological symbols to Christian ones. He purports to explain the signs in Christian terms but actually undermines the whole pseudo-scientific apparatus. Zeno was again addressing adult recipients of baptism, an audience that included both sexes and a wide range of ages: "*Ecce pueri, adolescentes, iuvenes, senes utriusque sexus,…*" ("Look, children, adolescents, young people, grown-ups of either sex…"). He used the context of catechumens being baptised at Easter to try to sabotage astrology.[351] Zeno reminded them that they are being reborn and, since this was a communal ceremony, they were all reborn at the same time:

> *… subito uno momento facti aetatibus diversis aequaevi. Sed curiositatem vestram bene novi. Veteris vitae usurpatione, quod quidem vobis ulterius non licebit, fortassis requiratis et a nobis, qua genitura quove signo tam diversos, tam plures, tam dispares una uno partu vestra vos peperit mater*.[352]
>
> … you, who are of different ages, have suddenly all become of the same age. But I know your curiosity very well. In asserting the old traditional rights – from now on, of course, this will not be allowed - you may ask us the question under which of the many different birth signs your mother acquired you at birth.

They still had their own biological birth-dates, and thus their birth-stars or horoscopes, but this part of the old tradition may no longer be sustained, says Zeno[353]. Elsewhere in the sermons, Zeno showed that he was not unconditionally opposed to prophesying. From Genesis he recounted how Abraham, because he

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[350] Chin and Vidas (2015, 103).

[351] For details of the catechumenate, their induction into the Church, and the positioning of this process within the liturgical calendar, see Pignot (2017).

[352] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.1). Jeanes reminds us that Zeno was an adherent to the *disciplina arcani*, the rule of secrecy surrounding the sacraments. He was in explanatory mode to converts only after they had completed the baptismal rites: hence his acknowledgement of their curiosity. Jeanes (1995, 103-104).

[353] Zeno may have foreshadowed Augustine's distaste for astrology (see page 104), and he would have been aware of state measures against casting – and requesting – horoscopes since the time of Constantine.

believed in God, was given a glimpse into the future.[354] God pointed out the night sky to him and said that his (Abraham's) progeny would be as numerous as the stars, if he could count them. Here Abraham was noted to be just, to be among the righteous. So, a righteous person, with an assist from God, could see into the future, thus defying the uniform and unidirectional flow of time. But Scripture was replete with warnings about prophets, diviners, sorcerers, dreamers, enchanters, and others who told lies about the future.[355] The clear distinction is that these were not righteous people, they did not speak through the Lord. Only those who believed in God and obeyed his commandments could be among those who could defy time and deliver real prophesy.

Twelve constellations map out the observed path of the sun in the course of a year. The zodiac with its twelve signs is a zoomorphic representation of this physical phenomenon and thus has a basis in science. It departs from this discipline when it says that these symbols have an agency and profess to link the cosmos with individual destiny, when it offers horoscopes based on a person's birthdate; this unproven connection has been persistent for millennia. As the catechumens were now Christians, their birth-signs will have had a new significance; the bishop went on to explain the 'secrets' of the zodiacal constellations, the first christianised zodiac that has survived.[356] The bishop's revised version of the signs, which he introduced to his audience as "your horoscopes", can be summarised as follows:

[354] Gen 15.6; Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:3.4).

[355] Deut. 18:10-12, Jer. 14:14-16, Jer. 27:9-10, Matt. 7:15.

[356] Barton (1994, 71). The zodiac, as will be mentioned in page 113, was a feature of Greco-Roman tradition still evident in the 4th century. A Jewish synagogue built in Hammath Tiberias in that time shows captioned signs of the zodiac, but there is no evidence of comparable imagery in Christian material culture of the time. Dunbabin (1999, 185-190), Sessa (2018, 210-212).

Aries (ram)	→ a lamb, to clothe and feed the neophyte
Taurus (bull)	→ a calf, to master the land and forego old auguries
Gemini (twins)	→ the old and the new testaments that signify salvation
Cancer (crab)	→ the symbol of greed, to be avoided
Leo (lion)	→ a young lion that has fallen asleep and woken again, analogous to the death and resurrection of Christ[357]
Virgo (virgin)	→ the virgin mother of God
Libra (scales)	→ signifying equality brought by the son of God, born of woman
Scorpio (scorpion)	→ believers have the power to crush snakes and scorpions[358]
Sagittarius (archer)	→ the Lord has armed believers, they should have no fear of the devil/Sagittarius[359]
Capricorn (goat)	→ an ugly creature, sometimes attacked by the Lord
Aquarius (water-bearer)	→ the water of salvation is used to destroy the evil Capricorn
Pisces (fish)	→ two fish symbolise the two peoples of god, Jews and Gentiles, united under baptism[360]

The delivery of the Christian zodiac was calm and confident. When the signs were propitious, the bishop's tone was pastoral, couched in images of peace and comfort. He enjoined his audience to submit to the will of God, to serve Christ and his mother. He included a gibe at old superstitions and portents based on counting birds:

> *Primus vos, qui in se credentem reprobat nullum, non Aries, sed agnus excepit, qui vestram nuditatem velleris sui niveo candore vestivit, qui suum lacte beatum vagitu hiantibus vestris labris indulgenter infundit. Idem non tumidus cervice, non torvus fronte, non minax cornu Taurus, sed optimus, dulcis, blandus ac mitis vos admonet vitulus, ut nulla ullo in opere*

[357] Gen 49, 9.
[358] Luke 10, 19.
[359] Eph 6, 11-16.
[360] A reading from Paul's letter to the Romans was believed to foretell the salvation of the Jews through baptism. Jeremy Cohen traces this exegesis and its popular reception from Patristic times to the Reformation. Paul, *Romans* 11:25-35, Cohen (2005).

captantes auguria, ejus sine malitia succedentes iugo terramque vestrae carnis domando fecundantes, laetam divinorum seminum messem coelestibus horreis inferatis. Et admonet prosequentibus Geminis, id est duobus salutare canentibus testamentis, ut principaliter idolatriam, impudicitiam avaritiamque fugiatis, quae est incurabilis Cancer. Leo autem noster, sicut Genesis protestatur, "leonis est catulus", cuius ista pia sacramenta celebramus, qui ad hoc "recubans obdormivit", ut vinceret mortem, ad hoc envigilavit, ut beatae resurrectionis suae in nos munus immortalitatis conferret.[361]

The first one, who does not reject anyone who believes in him, has accepted you. But he did so not as a ram, but as a lamb. He has clothed your nakedness with the snowy whiteness of his fleece; in a kindly way, it poured its blessed milk into your mewling lips. Moreover, not as a bull with a swollen neck, a ferocious brow, and threatening horns, but as the ideal, a sweet, kind, and gentle calf, he warns you, in any undertaking, not to look for signs from the flight of birds, but to submit to his yoke in good faith, to make fertile the field that is your body under control, and to bring a rich harvest from the divine seed into the heavenly granary. And he warns you by means of the following twins, namely the two testaments which signal salvation, that you above all should flee idolatry, impurity and greed, the latter of which is the incurable Cancer. But our lion is, as Genesis testifies, a young lion, whose pious secrets of salvation we celebrate, and who lay down for this purpose and fell asleep to overcome death; and to this end he woke up, to bring us immortality as a gift from his blessed resurrection.

A loose narrative linked some of the signs, as Virgo the virgin introduced Libra, the symbol of equality, and served as an exemplar of virtue and an antidote to the Scorpion. A favourable sign was used to counter an unfavourable one, and St Paul was recruited against the egregious Archer:

Quem competenter sequitur Virgo praenuntians Libram, ut nosceremus per filium dei, qui incarnatus processit ex virgine,

[361] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.2). Truzzi points out that drinking milk at baptism was a widespread practice in the Church in Africa and western Europe. Zeno had it taking place immediately after the sacrament, as described by Tertullian. Truzzi (1985, 218), Tert., *De Corona*, 3.3.

aequitatem justitiamque terris inlatam. Quam qui constanter tenuerit ac fideliter ministraverit, non dicam Scorpionem, sed, sicut dominus ait in evangelio, omnes omnino serpentes inlaesa planta calcabit. Sed nec ipsum quoque diabolum, qui vere est acerrimus Sagittarius; formidabit umquam, variis atque igneis sagittis armatus, totius humani generis omni momento corda distringens: propter quod sic Paulus apostolus ait: Induite vos armaturam dei, ut possitis vos constare adversus nequitias diaboli accepto scuto fidei, per quod poteritis omnes sagittas illius mali, quae sunt igne plenae, extinguere. Is enim infelicibus nonnumquam inmittit Capricornum vultu deformem, qui cornu exsiliens, labra liventia spumantibus venis ebulliens palpitante ruina captivi tota miserabiliter per membra desaevit. Alios amentes, alios furiosos, alios homicidas, alios adulteros, alios sacrilegos, alios avaritia efficit caecos. Longum est ire per singula: varias atque innumerabiles nocendi artes habet, sed has omnes salutari profluens amne non magno opere noster Aquarius delere consuevit. Quem necessario uno sequuntur duo Pisces in signo, id est duo ex Iudaeis et gentibus populi baptismatis aqua viventes, in unum populum Christi uno signo signati.[362]

He (the lion) is followed in order by the virgin, who announces Libra, the balance, in advance: this lets us know that through the Son of God, who came incarnate from the virgin, equality and justice were brought to earth. Whoever holds to her loyally and serves her faithfully, I will not call him a scorpion, but, as the Lord says in the Gospel, he will completely trample all snakes with an invulnerable heel. Nor will he ever fear the devil himself, who is in truth the sharpest archer, for he is armed with fiery projectiles of all kinds and keeps the hearts of all humanity in care at every moment; for as the apostle Paul says; “Put on the armour of God so that you can stand up to the evil of the devil. Take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all his evil arrows that are full of fire." Sometimes he casts the Capricorn, ugly to look at, at the unfortunate; it spits through discoloured lips and with horn extended and poison from his boiling veins and takes out his rage in all limbs of his prisoner, so that he perishes trembling and in misery. He drives some out of their minds, drives others to frenzy, others he turns into murderers, others into adulterers, others into temple-robbers,

[362] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.2); Paul, *Eph.*, 6.11.

> and others blind from greed. There is too much to go into detail; he has an innumerable variety of means of causing harm. But our Aquarius was used to destroy them all without much effort, overflowing with the water of salvation. He is in turn followed by the two fish in one sign: these are the two peoples of Jews and Gentiles who are joined alive in the water of baptism as one people of Christ under a single sign.

In these ways Zeno tamed the zodiac. He mollified the signs amenable to Christian interpretation and indemnified the baptised against the depredations of the incorrigibly maleficent signs. The symbols, he said, were either safe for Christians or they could mobilise divine power to protect true believers. The whole cosmic apparatus was rendered useless as a determinant of human destiny.[363] The only relevant factor was whether one had chosen, through free will, to be baptised in the Christian faith, as Zeno's just-baptised audience clearly had.[364]

Zeno used the metaphor of birth/rebirth to provide catechumens and the newly baptised with a Christian interpretation of the zodiac[365]. The ritual of baptism, with its immersion of converts in water, represented the washing away of their old identities as they were born anew into the Christian religion. They were all being received into the new faith in a collective ceremony, so they shared the same rebirthday. They retained, though, their individual biological birth dates, and it is these that gave the zodiacal signs that Zeno explains to his congregation. This reference to unity in diversity – a random selection of newly-baptised converts, with different ages and birth dates, all united in this common day of their new beginning – is emphasised by Hegedus as a theme of the sermon.[366] Francesca Dirani also underlines the unity

[363] Truzzi says that Zeno tells the converts that they need no longer fear the astral powers of the devil and his disciples. Truzzi (1985, 153).

[364] Free will is a recurrent topic in the bishop's sermons. He said that Christian converts had made rational decisions, and that this was a strength and a distinguishing feature of the new faith. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:23, 2:3.2, 1:1.7, 2:2.3, 2:4.2).

[365] The concept of rebirth was not unfamiliar in Roman times. In *The Golden Ass*, Lucius is told that the initiation ceremony into the cult of the pagan goddess is a kind of death and rebirth (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11:21). Before his conversion to Christianity, Firmicus Maternus saw rebirth as a way in which those with the misfortune of a bad horoscope might save themselves by being reborn (Firm. Mat., *Matheseos* 5:3:27). Easter is a spring festival and Eliade argues that such events are characterised by the "metaphysical and religious significance of the *rebirth* of Nature and the *renewal* of life." See Eliade (1958, 390).

[366] Hegedus (2007, 353, 364).

that Zeno created by covering all stages of Christian salvation in his account of the zodiac. The cosmic round of the constellations in the ecliptic corresponds to the "circle of life", she writes.[367] The zodiac, with its unfailing cycle of renewal, was part of Zeno's worldview. His sermon did not refute this and was more an exercise in accommodation than a condemnation of astrology; this is borne out by a comparison with the writings of earlier Christians. Bardaisan and Tertullian believed in Fate, though not in astrological fatalism. The former saw life as a balance between nature, Fate, and liberty, while the latter allowed that astrology might have had some validity before Christ, but not since his incarnation on Earth. Pseudo-Clementine wrote about a horoscope being fulfilled, but the denouement of his tale was that God could always save a believer from malign Fate. Origen had a high regard for celestial bodies. He said that they were signs, rather than causes, of events; as such, they should not be worshipped. All these early Christians were at one in their belief in free will and moral responsibility for one's actions, but they did not condemn astrology outright.[368] There is no unity, though, in the interpretations given by Zeno to the diverse signs of the zodiac, as will be seen below. Except for a single curt dismissal of ornithomancy (see page 111), Zeno did not touch on the predictive or deterministic aspects of astrology, nor was there any attempt to repudiate the pseudo-science, nor to decouple the life-forms of the zodiac from the ecliptic and from any significance in the affairs of men and women. Zeno's approach was a general one, using analogies to render the arcane and the obscure more meaningful by reference to the known and the commonplace. The signs themselves are *sui generis*, belonging to no category other than their putative resemblance to stellar constellations. This makes it difficult to find a single theme for Zeno's transformation.[369] There are linkages between adjacent signs: Virgo introduces Libra and is a bulwark against Scorpio, Aquarius succeeds Capricorn and destroys it with the water of salvation. The sermon shows Zeno progressing rapidly through the twelve signs, as he had already

[367] Dirani (2006, 551-552).

[368] Hegedus (2000, 261-270, 307-312, 319-324, 329-333), Bardaisan (1965), Tertullian (2010), Origen (1710).

[369] There is a process of biblicisation, as Dirani points out, where symbols from the Bible are substituted, but this does not apply to all the signs. Truzzi says that the substitutions are somewhat contrived: "… *un nuovo oroscopo in cui i vecchi segni vengono trasposti, non senza diverse forzature, in varie figurazioni bibliche.*" ("… a new horoscope in which the old symbols are translated, not without some force, into Biblical configurations." See discussion of Truzzi's comment below in page 107. Dirani (2006, 540-546), Truzzi (1985, 219).

dealt with the main business, which is rebirth through baptism. Hegedus contrasts the Christian repudiation of astrology, as expressed by Augustine, with Zeno's attention to detail, such as his use of technical terms like *ortus* (rising), *genitura* (birth constellation), *signum* (birth sign), and *genesis* (horoscope).[370] This may have been a rhetorical device to pique the interest of the congregation. Also, while Church figures like Augustine made it known that astrology in pursuit of people's destinies – and tomorrow's weather – was at best a vain pursuit, and while Constantine and subsequent emperors proscribed consultations of private astrologers, Christian scriptures pointed to an inherent significance in the stars, and to how this impinged on human behaviour.[371] Zeno's aim, having likened baptism to a re-birth, was to give each person his horoscope: "*Igitur, fratres, genesis talis est vestr*a." ("So, brethren, such is your birth sign").[372] By *genesis*, he simply meant the birth sign, without claiming any direct linkage to future destiny.

Zeno's explanation began with the sign of Aries, the constellation in which the rising sun appears in spring, the start of the year. He followed the signs in sequence, although he made no connection with the annual sequence of seasons. There is no cyclical or temporal sense in Zeno's Christian analogues of the signs of the Zodiac, no observational unity in his explanation of people's birth signs.[373] Compare Zeno's zodiac with the mosaic floor (completed in 1166) of the cathedral of Otranto, where each sign of the zodiac is associated with the work appropriate to that month of the year (see Figure 3 in page 205). This is a mapping of the celestial to the terrestrial, of the eternal to the temporal, of the cosmic to the natural world, for the purpose of providing people with guidance and certainty in their lives. The vicissitudes of fortune

[370] Hegedus (2007, 353-355).

[371] Ammianus Marcellinus describes how sorcerers and fortune-tellers – and those who used their services – were dealt with severely in the late 360s and early 370s, by local administration and by the emperor himself Amm Marc, *Res Gestae* 26.3.1-4, 29.1.5-10, 29.2.27; August., *Ep*, 15,5; Gen 1:14; Matt 2:1-12, 24:29; Luke 21:25.

[372] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.2).

[373] The bishop is quite comfortable in staying in the natural world when it comes to adapting the zodiacal signs to Christian purposes. Henry makes the point that since Christianity worshipped a man as a god, it made it possible to consider natural philosophy alongside theology. The nature of god and his creations, and not just his commandments, was on the agenda for discussion, something which was not seen as important in Judaism. Henry (2011, 49-50)

are replaced by the known rhythm of the seasons and the discipline of work.[374] Representations of the cycles of the months and the seasons of the year feature in mosaics throughout the empire. Many have survived from Italy of the fourth century, including those recorded in Aquileia, Ostia, Rome, and in north-east Spain.[375] Fachechi traces the artistic representation of the months from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. She identifies three distinct iconographies – zodiac, festivals, and agricultural – starting in the second half of the 4th century.[376] However, the cycle of the four seasons has been found in mosaics from earlier times. In North Africa, pavement mosaics dating from the second century have been found in private houses and public buildings from Tripolitania to Mauretania (Libya to Morocco), including in Caesarea (Cherchell), putative birthplace of Zeno.[377] The cyclical design of these works represented the bounty of the season and conveyed a sense of wellbeing and security. In some cases, the months associated with each season were shown in the same register.[378] Another frequent accompaniment of the seasons was the male figure of Annus or Genius Saeculi. He personified the largesse of nature and often held, or was framed by, a ring featuring the signs of the zodiac. This attribute represented the recurring cycle of the year. Annus is equivalent to the Hellenistic figure of Aion, a deity associated with cyclical time.[379] The figure, holding a zodiacal ring, appears in a funerary mosaic near Ostia. Dunbabin suggests that this links the occupant of the tomb with the eternal life of the soul.[380]

Thus, the zodiac and its sense of the annual cycle featured and had real influence in the empire. It appeared in mosaics in Jewish synagogues in the 4th century. A

[374] Cheney (2016). The Otranto imagery is as follows: January (Capricorn): a man warming his hands over a fire. February (Aquarius): the water carrier – a spit roasting. March (Pisces): a man cleaning his feet. April (Aries): the ram – taking the sheep to pasture. May (Taurus): the bull – the joy of spring. June (Gemini): the twins – reaping and stacking. July (Cancer): the crab – threshing grains. August (Leo): the Lion – grape harvesting. September (Virgo): – pressing grapes. October (Libra): – ploughing. November (Scorpio): – cutting wood. December (Sagittarius the Archer): – killing pigs.
[375] Stern (1981, pp 465, 453-54, 462), Galiano (1986). In north-east France, the cathedral at Amiens has relief carvings of the signs of the zodiac, and each sign is paired with a vignette of the labour corresponding to that time of year. Duval (2016).
[376] Fachechi and Parodo (2020).
[377] Parrish (1984, 80-83).
[378] Parrish (1984, 66).
[379] Dunbabin (1978, 158-160), Alvar Ezquerra and Gordon (2008, 78, 128).
[380] Calza (1940, 183), Dunbabin (1978, 159).

common theme was a floor design showing the twelve signs of the zodiac surrounding a central figure of Helios or the sun.[381] Early Christian churches in Palestine and Syria used similar themes, sometimes with the signs of the zodiac replaced by figures of the months. There may have been influences in design between Jewish and Christian mosaics, but the common classical heritage would have permeated both.[382] In sermon 1:38, Zeno acknowledged that heritage while freely reinterpreting it within his own frame of belief.

The Codex Calendar of 354 provides representations of cyclical time in another medium. This book's calendric depiction of the yearly round of holidays is accompanied by a chronography of Rome's past and the dates of Easter into the future. It is composed of several diverse texts, each with its own prior existence and tradition, underlining the widespread knowledge of a standardised metrication of cyclical time.[383] In sermon 2:11, Zeno himself described in detail the various stages of the annual cycle of viniculture: taking a cutting, planting it, early growth, thinning, trellising, and so on.[384] Natural cycles were central to Zeno's worldview. His familiarity with and acceptance of lunar and solar cycles in nature may help to explain his decision to engage publicly with the cult of the zodiac and horoscopes. These cycles were marked out with what were seen by popular culture as propitious days, and the lexicon used the names of pagan gods and feasts to codify them. Bernadette Filotas writes that churchmen in Late Antiquity may have felt uncomfortable with this, but Zeno exhibited no reluctance in tackling this survival of astrological lore.[385] She says that the Church viewed time as linear, running from Creation to Apocalypse, and that seasonal rites were condemned as pagan, but could not be suppressed. Two strategies were used: festivals of the old tradition were either banned or were replaced with Christian ones. Filotas also makes the point that among the extant material, primacy is given to Latin texts written for "normative purposes" and that these are invariably supportive of the orthodox view,

[381] Goodenough (1953). Floor mosaics were often copied from domed ceilings where the central sun with the surrounding zodiacal symbols would have been an imposing image. Lehmann (1945, 9), Magness (2005, 13-16).
[382] Dunbabin (1978, 232-233).
[383] Salzman (1990, 23).
[384] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:11).
[385] Filotas (2005, 135).

be it political or religious. Writings solely in favour of arcane and astrological practices might not be the copyists' favourites.[386] If they wrote about such beliefs, churchmen invariably sided with free will, but as discussed above, they could also find a place for astrology – see page 103.

The outcome

Given Zeno's knowledge of the zodiac and of Christian scripture and teachings, it seems paradoxical that he was unable to find replacements for all twelve symbols, and that the changes he did make were, according to Truzzi, poorly chosen.[387] The choices may seem facile and reductive, and to lack consistency. Take the changes from ram to lamb and from bull to calf: what do they achieve apart from conveying a more comforting image but at the risk of appearing to condescend? However, this misses the point of Zeno's strategy. I have shown that he chose three different means – generic mollification, numeric signification, and sacramental indemnification – to transform or tame the signs as appropriate. He did not choose a seasonal theme, but the benefits of baptism ran through every symbol he explained. Zeno's terms have been carefully chosen, individually and collectively. Even without his alternative rebirthday of baptism, this sermon is a considered encounter between the bishop's Christology and the deep-seated tradition of the zodiac. Zeno stressed the unifying power of baptism and downplayed what he saw as arbitrary zodiacal signage. In his introductory words, he signalled that the traditional use of the calendar to link birthday to astral sign was no longer valid but told the newly baptised that they were now like children and free of any guilt.[388] Moreover, while preserving their diversity, they were now all the same age, as they shared a common birthday:

> *Ecce pueri, adolescents, iuvenes, senes utriusque sexus, qui eratis rei, eratis et immundi mundana natavitate, contra omni reatu iam liberi mundi estis infantes et, quod est admirabile et*

[386] Filotas (2005, 153-155, 9).
[387] Truzzi (1985, 219).
[388] This juvenescence of the newly baptised corresponds to some of the zodiacal changes to younger forms: ram to lamb, bull to calf, lion to lion cub.

> *gratum, subito uno momento factis aetatibus diversis aequaevi.*[389]
>
> Look, children, adolescents, young people, grown-ups, of either sex, you who would be both guilty and unclean because of your worldly birth, now you are free of all worldly guilt and, what is wonderful and welcome, you of different ages have in an instant become the same age.

Hübner cited this passage, particularly the phrase "you have become the same age" in his paper on *Das Horoskop der Christen: (Zeno 1,38 L.)*:

> And finally, the basic question itself, the question why the baptised can now all be "the same age" an argument that since Carneades and Panaetius - not against Christianity, but against astrology has been put forward: How can many people who are born at the same hour have different fates? Or vice versa: How can people of the most diverse birthdays suffer the same fate, for example in a catastrophe?[390]

Hegedus attributes the origin of this scepticism about astrology to Carneades (214-129 BC).[391] But Zeno's purpose here was not implicitly to invoke this argument, known as the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά (customs of the nations). Rather, he was saying that by being born again as Christians, the baptismal cohort now had a lot in common. Their unity would in years to come be celebrated as name-days, coinciding with the feast days of the saints with whose names they were baptised.

Having associated horoscopy with worldly corruption, and hinting at the liberation offered by baptism, the bishop, perhaps grudgingly, had agreed to give people their horoscopes. This was bound to be fraught. It would not be plausible to an audience all too familiar with the vicissitudes of fortune to represent all the signs as propitious or at least neutral. Zeno transformed five of the zodiacal signs in a benign way - Aries, Taurus, Leo, Libra, and Virgo (generically mollified). He gave two a new numerical significance - Gemini and Pisces (numerically signified). He explained the

[389] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.1).
[390] Hübner (1975, 123).
[391] Hegedus (2007, 94).

other five - Cancer, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, and Aquarius - as being ugly and inimical but innocuous to the baptised or as an active agent of protection through baptism (sacramentally indemnified). Hegedus reads the sermon as one themed on good (Christ) and evil, on unity and diversity. Signs such as Libra, Leo and Virgo refer, directly or indirectly, to Christ, while signs like Cancer lead to an increasing number of sins – idolatry, indecency, greed, and so on.[392] There is no unifying theme, though, nor is there any temporal aspect, no correlation with the observed seasons of the year. The seasonal categories of the signs of the zodiac featured regularly in the astrologies of Ptolemy and Firmicus Maternus.[393] The question must be asked, though, as to why would Zeno associate a third (on average) of the congregation with evil signs? This could really put newly baptised people off and undermine any belief in free will. If your birth sign is Cancer, say, and you are told that this is the sign for a variety of unsavoury sins, what is the prognosis - what can you do about it? Even if your birth sign is propitious, there are bound to be others among your family and friends who are not so fortunate - your daughter was born under Sagittarius, your father under Scorpio. The answer lies in the collective security of baptism, and the bishop signalled this in his opening announcement, that all the newly baptised in attendance are reborn, and all share the same new birthday. In marginal notes on the Rheims manuscript of this sermon, there are references to the sacrament of confirmation:

> *Ad S. Stephanum ad Martyres secunda feria paschae legenda in ambone, antequam Pontifex consignationem sancti Spiritus celebrare incipiat.*[394]
>
> To be read at the lectern at (the church of) St Stephen and the Martyrs on Easter Monday, before the bishop starts to celebrate the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

The church referred to here is that of St Stephen, an early Christian place of worship in Verona, located near the Roman theatre. The manuscript dates from the 8th century, but the note refers to the practice of the early Church to administer

[392] Hegedus (2007, 362).
[393] Ptol., *Tetr.*; Firm. Mat., *Matheseos*.
[394] Rheims 31; Stepanich (1948, 21), CCSL xxii, 105.

confirmation immediately after baptism. A bishop performed the former sacrament, and continues to do so today, although the two are separated in time.[395]. Easter is a moveable feast and Easter Sunday can occur on a range of possible dates. All, however, are within the zodiacal periods of Pisces and Aries, both of which are benign signs under the Christian dispensation, according to Zeno. They had also been auspicious signs since the earliest known records of astrology in Chaldean times; Aries was associated with rebirth, with the vernal equinox, and with wealth through the production of wool, while Pisces was also connected to the notion of abundance.[396] So the auspices were uniformly good for all who adopted their new birthday as the day of their rebirth as Christians – at least as long as the convention of baptising converts in annual cohorts at Easter lasted. In addition, Zeno had hinted that practice of the old lore would soon be forbidden – *quod quidem vobis ulterius non licebit* (which, indeed, you will no longer be allowed). Fortune-telling was already against the civil law, so this cryptic remark could mean that further measures were in the offing or that the Church would anathematise astrology and all its trappings. This was all the more reason for the newcomers to Christianity to celebrate their baptism or religious birthday rather than their biological birthday[397]. The catechumens, prior to baptism, were enrolled as candidates – the *electi* – and were given new names, and baptised into the ranks of the *fideles*, the faithful.[398] Once baptised, they became members of a community with all the benefits and security that that entailed. They were purged of all the guilt of their worldly births. Since a horoscope is based on the date of those births, this might have prompted converts to wonder what effect this might have on their individual fates. Zeno anticipated such curiosity and

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[395] Bennett (1841, 297). In today's Catholic church, baptism and confirmation are completely separate sacraments. The former is usually performed on infants, while the latter is seen as confirming that ceremony when the individual has reached the age of discretion, usually from seven years upwards. Its importance is underlined by the fact that it is normally administered by the bishop of the diocese; only in exceptional circumstances can this office be granted to a specified priest.

[396] Bouché-Leclercq (1899, 130-132, 147-148). The zodiac as we know it has a lineage extending far back in time, but it is important not to confuse the primeval with the primordial. In other cultures, astral symbols are represented and interpreted in different ways.

[397] This notion depended on birthday and baptism being largely independent of each other, a circumstance which did not survive beyond the centuries of conversion in Europe. A similar concept, the name-day (*onomastico* in Italy, *fête du prénom* in France, *navnedag* in Denmark, *именни дни* in Bulgaria, *névnap* in Hungary, etc), in still a feature of life in many countries to this day.

[398] Pignot (2017, 12-13). John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople in the 4th century, urged parents to have their children christened with the names of martyrs. This was another way of making the "rebirth" more auspicious for those baptised.

proceeded to satisfy it. He explained that his baptised congregation was now blessed by the benign Christian signs and inoculated against the malign pagan ones. Finally, Zeno explicitly deprecated the old Roman practice of ornithomancy, of reading the flights of birds for omens of things to come. He said that the calf – his Christian proxy for Taurus – advises us not to waste time looking for signs in the movements of birds, but rather to use the calf to work the land and make it fertile.

So, before explaining the signs, good and bad, the bishop had discounted them all in favour of celebrating the rebirth day, rather than the birthday. He did so by saying that the common re-birth is *admirabile et gratum* – wonderful and favourable. Zeno must have scientific or even purely astrological grounds for this assertion. He must be able to show that the sacrament of baptism, which coincided with Easter in the liturgy of the time, is performed under auspicious signs. Apart from the individual significance of the twelve signs of the zodiac, there had traditionally been binary forms of classification. Ptolemy and Firmicus both divided the twelve signs into alternating groups of masculine and feminine; the former were diurnal, the latter nocturnal.[399] Thus Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, and Aquarius are masculine, while Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn, and Pisces are feminine. These are sometimes referred to as positive and negative, respectively. Three of the four sinister or malevolent signs as interpreted by Zeno come from the set of feminine or negative signs – Cancer, Scorpio, and Capricorn. It would have been problematic to cast the remaining three as symbols of evil, or to change Sagittarius to a benevolent sign. Zeno may have been tempted to balance the numbers of good and evil signs by selecting another three with sinister connotations, this time from the masculine/positive set, but, if so, he resisted the temptation. That he took the hermeneutic options that he did in his homily may be due to a tradition of keeping separate the two sets of zodiacal symbols.[400]

[399] Ptol., *Tetr.*, I, 12; Firm. Mat., *Matheseos II*, preface.

[400] Wolfgang Hübner argues that Zeno balanced signs not only between Christ and the Devil (Leo, Virgo, and Libra versus Scorpio, Sagittarius, and Capricorn) but also between the good and bad sides of duality (Gemini and Cancer) and of baptism (Aquarius and Pisces). His arrangement is one of admirable symmetry, although it seems a bit strained and it ends the sermon on a negative note, highlighting a supposed conflict within Pisces rather than Zeno's peroration on the sign symbolising the unity of Christians. Hübner (1975, 135-136).

Zeno did not mention, although it was known at the time, an imperfection in the astrological cycle. This was due to a phenomenon, known since the time of Hipparchus (2nd century BC), called the precession of the equinoxes. The orientation of the earth's axis of rotation is not fixed relative to the distant stars. Rather, it undergoes a rotation with a cycle of about 26,000 years. Thus, the axis of the earth has not always pointed to the pole star, Polaris, nor has the ecliptic always been aligned as it is now. The point on the vernal equinox where the ecliptic intersects the celestial equator as the sun moves north has moved from Aries back into Pisces due to this precession.[401] This means that there is a marked and growing discrepancy between the zodiacal calendar and the actual position of the sun relative to the heavenly constellations. This was known to Ptolemy who measured and recorded the effect and to Origen who used the "error" in his argument against astrology.[402] As well as introducing a growing discrepancy, the precession undermines the principle of the zodiacal calendar. Astrologers regard this calendar as being based on a cyclical or time-bound occurrence against the backdrop of an unchanging or infinite framework. It is a cycle within a cycle, as the earth itself, the centre of creation to many, is mounted on a wobbling axis.[403] Unlike Origen, however, Zeno did not advert to this imperfection in the zodiacal calendar. It could be that he was unaware of this perturbation, or that he felt it outside his remit of interpreting the signs of the zodiac, or that he felt that by pointing to an unreliability in the cycle of the constellations in the ecliptic he might be undermining the very basis of cyclical time.

Accommodation plus confrontation yield positive results

In Chapter 1, the centrality of fixed cycles in Zeno's view of the cosmos was shown through his sermons. The bishop found instances of fixed repetitive patterns in nature, even imposing such patterns where they did not exist. By induction, he used instances of cycles well known to his Veronese audience, and to anyone reading the

[401] Barton (1994, 92).
[402] Ptol., *Alm.* VII, 1; Origen, *Philocalia* 23.17. Ulansey argues that exponents of the Mithraic cult not only knew of this phenomenon, but incorporated its effects into their symbolism and rituals. Ulansey (1989).
[403] The technical term for this movement is precession.

sermons, to explain the life of Christ and its similarity to the life, death, and salvation of his followers. His sermons were a product of their time, reflecting practices and beliefs of the western Church in the 4th century. The genres he used and the topics chosen are comparable with those found in the works of contemporary preachers.[404] In this respect, sermon 1:38 is an exception. No similar exegesis of the zodiac is to be found in Christian preaching until that time. It marked a departure by Zeno to take as his topic a natural cycle manifested in constellations in the heavens and known to all through an accumulation of symbols from traditions going back to the Babylonians of the 5th century BC.

In another way, however, sermon 1:38 is very much part of its context. From page 92 we recall the form and thematic content of the baptismal sermons, particularly those of the homilies delivered just after the sacrament was administered. In these, the bishop reminded the new Christians that they had been born again, this time into a life of freedom and security, destined for the eternal bliss of heaven. They had left behind the guilt of their old lives and were now, as innocent children, at the start of new lives. This they had done of their own free wills, without being forced in any way. Sermon 1:38 is unique, it is *sui generis*, yet it conforms to the template of the *Ad neophytos post baptisma* sermon. The zodiac belongs to the old life and, as Zeno hinted, would soon be a thing of the past. Baptism has given them a new life, an alternative birthday, and a Christian horoscope of eternal happiness.

In this chapter, we have seen that Zeno did not balk at the challenge posed by centuries of astrological lore. Neither the pagan imagery nor the claims of genethlialogy[405] – so antipathetic to the free will that he preached – deterred him. Rather, he acknowledged the fact that the sun processed through the twelve constellations every year and the association that people made between their birth dates and the signs of the zodiac. The material culture of the 4th century empire, both in Zeno's native Mauretania and in western Europe, was rich in depictions of the

[404] Comparable but not always similar. Truzzi finds Zeno to be more imbued with classical culture than his contemporary bishops, Gaudentius of Brescia and Chromatius of Aquileia, and to be more rigorous and consistent in his teachings. Truzzi (1985).
[405] See gloss on this term on page 79 above.

zodiac.[406] He knew the sequence of astrological symbols and made himself familiar with the requisite astrological terminology. Zeno's approach might appear to be one of accommodation to belief in the zodiac. He was shrewd enough not to inveigh against the practice of fortune-telling: this might not be well-received by those in his audience who liked to hear their horoscope from one who could read the signs. He accepted that people wanted to know their star signs and that a mild interest in the zodiac did not merit eternal condemnation. So, the bishop agreed to tell people their horoscopes and, as might be expected, substituted Christian icons for the pagan signs. But he went beyond a simple replacement of one set of symbols with another. He used the liturgical context – the sermon was delivered at Easter to those who had just been baptised – to offer a paradigm shift from an old belief system to a new one. Rather than referencing their biological birthdays, Christians now had a rebirth-day. Baptism marked the start of a new life for them, one that broke free from the bounded schedule of worldly cycles and that promised eternal bliss in the presence of God. Zeno's alternative, the idea of a rebirth to coincide with baptism, was universally propitious, and with eternal salvation as its ultimate reward. Some other churchmen of the time chose, like Zeno, to learn the basic terminology of astrology, in order to lend weight to their polemics against it.[407] As they condemned the underlying fatalism of the zodiac, it is likely that they saw it as inconsistent to venture a Christian reinterpretation of the signs. Zeno's was the first such attempt in the form of a sermon. While his version of the zodiac did not enjoy much success, the idea associating baptism with a re-birth was subsequently repurposed by the Church and is still honoured as name-days in parts of Europe, all from the original idea of Zeno of Verona.

[406] Ling (1998), Dunbabin (1978, 249), Dunbabin (1999, 185-190), Şahin (2009).
[407] Hegedus (2007, 30-31).

Chapter 3: Linear time

Time as the dimension of history

In Chapter 1 we saw, through his sermons, that Zeno's temporal worldview was one of well-regulated patterns, of unfailing cycles. These were reflected in people's daily routines, in the labours of the seasons and in the cycle of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The sermons themselves map out the liturgy of the Church in the eight or nine years of Zeno's tenure at the see of Verona. In Chapter 2, we saw how Zeno undertook an explanation of the pre-Christian zodiac, the yearly cycle of constellations through which the sun appears to move. Accepting the observational evidence for this astronomical sequence, the bishop explained the signs from a Christian perspective. He put his instinct for the cyclical to good effect: baptism, he said, was a rebirth, an auspicious one that binds all Christians together within the calendar of the Church.

In this chapter my ambit takes in the cultural change taking place in the 4th century. The Roman *imperium* had been a joint political and religious power. Now the state was ceding its religious authority. The Church increasingly filled this role, as it became the moral centre. A new worldview comprised two dominions, secular and religious, with tension and conflict across the changing interface between them. Christianity itself was in the process of institutionalisation. It needed not just piety and belief, but also people of learning and ability to develop a doctrine, and a liturgy to deliver it to the faithful. The new politico-religious landscape and the change in demographics as frontiers became more porous contributed to new ways of thinking and new behaviour in the Christian world. Zeno exploited the new worldview, and his career was not untypical of the informed and well-motivated men who made up the prelacy. His formative readings included the classics and the works of Church teachers.[408] As a monk, he migrated from North Africa to northern Italy, very much emblematic of an open Church. In 361 or 362, Zeno had taken charge of the diocese of Verona, indicating a change to being an agent of the new thinking, not

[408] Stepanich (1948).

simply its product.[409] His works show him as an assiduous guide to his congregation in matters of faith, and as an innovative thinker and developer of doctrine.

As in previous chapters, the theme is time, in particular linear or historic time. I will show how the bishop's description and use of time was a product of the cultural change and had a purpose that was central to his mission. Historians of the period used a new teleology that derived from Jewish tradition as re-purposed by Christian teaching. The new faith was universal in that its message was for people of all nations and had a narrative that spanned all time. History, according to the new writers such as Sextus Julius Africanus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Orosius, and Socrates Scholasticus, was made up of a complex of epochs at different times and with their own contours, territorial domains, and civilisations.

Through a close reading of Zeno's sermons, I will outline the bishop's perspective of linear time or history as *sui generis*. In Chapter 1, we saw Zeno pointing to instances of cycles in nature, often where they did not exist, as evidence of God's maintenance of the universe. Linear time differs from that cyclical time in that it is not regular or recurrent. It was initiated by God for man's use. Historians like Herodotus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Eusebius have mapped out the stories of civilisations as tracts of elapsed time of arbitrary length. These periods of time are commensurable with the sacred agenda of the Old Testament and are thus part of the divine creation. Ostensibly, Zeno was performing his duties as bishop, preaching to the faithful and the converts within the liturgy of the Church. In doing so, he was making known his own thinking on linear time, and he had a purpose in doing so. His practice was consonant with Christian historiography in that period but differs from the temporalisation of later ages. Creation has a final cause and so time is the trajectory of an eternal consciousness, according to Church teaching. This continuity is not present in more recent historiography, which sees history as temporalised, or as particular to its own time.

[409] Everett (2016, 61-63), Lanzoni (1927).

History had a purpose and Zeno, through his sermons, gave effect to this. The story of Christ and the lives of the martyrs set examples of sacrifice and devotion for the faithful. They also show features of linear time that distinguish it from the predictable rhythms of cyclical time. Using Zeno's sermons, I will argue that his Christian imagination made a clear distinction between time used to regulate the affairs of mortals – linear or historic time – and the unending rhythms of nature which were a metaphor for the timelessness of divine eternity. These ideas were framed by the Church's doctrine of salvation. This offered to the faithful an eternity in the heavenly kingdom. During his incarnation on earth, Christ had spoken of this reward, a promise underwritten by the deity's infinite timeline.

In his sermons, the bishop uses linear time as a semblance of the impossible, a yardstick for the power of the almighty. Man's attempts to manage time impinged on the rhythms of nature and led to unknowable outcomes. Free will meant that human appetites were subject to "time and transience" and thus were sources of evil, at odds with the requirements for salvation.[410] God, and only God, was fully able to manage time. He alone could abrogate its direction and grant a prospect of the future, or he could halt the march of time altogether for as long as needed. Using Zeno's sermons and contemporary material, I will show how the Church abstracted linear time in its liturgy through the lives of saints and martyrs. Hagiographies and the population of the Christian calendar were features of Late Antiquity, with an outcome that gave the Church an increasing control of time. But we should not lose sight of a very real and vibrant faith, on the part of lay and clerical Christians, as expressed in the rituals and homilies that Zeno's works have left us.

Context: controlling time

Since the introduction of the Julian calendar in 45 BC, the Romans had accurately numbered the days and the months in a solar year. This was a considerable improvement over the lunar calendar, with its months of varying length and its lack of synchrony with the year. The regulation of time was now based on observation and

[410] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:36.8).

calculation: it was in the realm of science rather than exclusively the preserve of the priestly caste. This was a cultural achievement as well as providing a reliable temporal infrastructure that underpinned the political and economic life of the empire. Over time, it would help historians to synchronise the history of Rome with those of civilisations they had encountered in the process of expansion.

In their calendar, the Romans did not number the sequence of years: they named them after the incumbent consuls of the year. Feeney describes the resultant chronology as being based not on dates but on coincident events. The cycle of consuls provided an orderly movement through the years, as regular as celestial orbits, as normal as the seasons. The *fasti* captured the relative frame of events for Roman chronology, yielding a calendar representing a political order and the *cursus honorum* of patrician families; as Lucan put it, "*annos a consule nomen habentes*" (years having their name from the consul).[411]

The *cursus honorum* was a template for the careers of Romans, at least for those within the elite. It mapped out a succession of public offices for aspiring leaders in the Roman republic and the early period of the empire. Typically, it began with a period of military service and was followed by a series of posts in the financial, judicial, and political administration of the state. The high point of any career was the position of consul, which was reserved for two figures, of at least 42 years of age, who were the supreme political and military leaders – at least during the republican period – for a term of one year. This apex of the *cursus honorum* had a historic dimension, as the consuls had the year of tenure named after them. Rome itself had a career. Its historians and epic poets told of its progression from a small settlement on the Tiber, through its expansion throughout Italy, to its complete domination of the Mediterranean basin. With the perspective of an outsider, Polybius saw Rome in the 1st century BC as exceptional, as it had not gravitated into despotism like most large polities of the ancient world.[412] It had a precise origin, in time and place, and a god-given mission to rule the world, or at least to defeat the

[411] Feeney (2007, 14-16, 169); Luc., *Pharsalia* 7.441.

[412] The political theory of anacyclosis saw all forms of government inevitably descending into oligarchy or despotism. (Polybius, *The Histories* 6.2), Straumann (2016, 156-158).

Carthaginians.[413] Historians told of portents predicting the downfall of Rome, and there were prophecies of doom in the Sibylline books, which the state kept to itself.[414] If Rome had any official destiny, it was shrouded in oracular mists, in rituals that derived from practices in the early pre-urban days, and in what Mary Beard called the intellectualised exegeses of those rituals, by writers including Ovid, Cicero, Plutarch, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[415] The religious rites and their interpretations together provided a tableau of Roman history, condensed into the calendar year; the annual cycle normalised the story of Rome and what it meant to be Roman. The longevity if not the success of the Roman empire owed much to the openness of its social, economic, and religious forms, and its ability to co-opt people into the system.[416]

The Roman system of consular dating indicates the value they placed on antiquity and continuity. Romans relished their ancient origins, and a long lineage of antecedents was highly prized. Continuity in family and social affairs was preferred to change. In the stories of their families and their cities, ancient Greeks and Romans recognised a demarcation between the present mortal era and a past epoch of heroes and gods. The boundary in time between the two may not have been clear, but Homer recognised a difference in historiography when he said that we learned of the age of the immortals through the Muses.[417] This meant that the origin of the world was beyond the knowledge of man, a view echoed by Censorinus in the 3rd century AD. He said that history could begin only from a time which we knew, and he used Varro's term of historic time (*historicon*) to describe that period.[418] Christian teaching, through its chronographic sources, would claim to know about the origins of the universe.[419] In its early years, Christianity epitomised change, and this became very evident in the Constantinian era. Consular time was static whereas Christian time was dynamic and embodied the movement from origins to conclusions.

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[413] See Naevius, *Bellum Punicum*; Verg., *Aen.*
[414] Cass. Dio, 57.18.3 – 5.
[415] Beard (1987, 2-3).
[416] Dench (2018, 156).
[417] Feeney (2007, 68-70), Homer, *Iliad* 2.485-86.
[418] Censorinus, *DN*, 21:1; Varr., *Rust.*, 2:1.
[419] Feeney (2007, 78).

The belief system had a venerable past, as documented in the Old Testament; with its New Testament, it had a more glorious future. For Christians, the direction of travel was clearly forward in time. Doctrinally, the rewards lay ahead, awaiting the faithful after death. Evidentially, this orientation coincided with progress for Christianity, as persecutions faded into history and the Church was accepted as an integral part of society. The past, as documented in the Old Testament, served to provide prophecies of the Messiah, to foreshadow his deeds, and to provide retrospective endorsement.[420] Christians, with the Gospels as their sacred texts, had not only a cosmogonical back-story, and validations of the incarnation of their Saviour, the Son of God, but also a clear view of the future and details of the end of history.[421] Unlike the traditional historiographies, theirs did not recognise the duality of mythic time and historic time. The history of God's worldly kingdom was well-documented, with a beginning and an end, all within the timeless reaches of the heavenly kingdom.

In *The City of God*, Augustine had written about the unique linear trajectory of history, epitomised by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Those who thought otherwise were badly mistaken;

> "It is no wonder that those theorists wander in a circuitous maze finding neither entrance nor exit, for they do not know how the human race, and this mortal condition of ours, first started, nor with what end it will be brought to a close. They cannot penetrate the depth of God, the deep counsel by which, being himself eternal and without beginning, he started time and man from a beginning, and made man in time, as a new act of creation, and yet with no sudden change of purpose but in accordance with his unchanging and eternal plan."[422]

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[420] Lactantius recruited non-Judaeo-Christian sources to this purpose when he cited the Sibyls as prophesying the coming of the Son of God in human form. Lactant., *Div. Inst.*, II, 11; Whitby (2011, 349).

[421] Rome had its own epic back story, based on the fall of Troy, and used it to lend a divine aura and historical authenticity to Julio-Claudian and later emperors c.f. Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Their historians pointed to the series of empires – Assyrians, Medes, Persians, and Macedonians – that, they said, culminated in the supremacy of Rome. Aemilius Sura, *De annis populi Romani;* Vell. Pat., *Roman History* 1.6.6; Alonso-Núñez (1989, 110-112).

[422] August., *De civ. D.* 12.15.

Citing Augustine, Holland says that the Gospels reconfigured time, which was to be measured henceforth on a straight line from Genesis to Apocalypse:

> "Here, in this apocalypse, was a vision of the future more overwhelming in its impact than that of any pagan oracle. No riddling pronouncement of Apollo had ever served to reconfigure the very concept of time. Yet this, across the Roman world, was what the Old and New Testaments had combined to achieve. Those who lacked the Christian understanding of history, so Augustine had written, were doomed to 'wander in a circuitous maze finding neither entrance nor exit'. The course of time, as sure and direct as the flight of an arrow, proceeded in a straight line: from Genesis to Revelation; from Creation to the Day of Judgement."[423]

In the passage cited, Augustine echoed Plato's account of the origin of time: it was created by the eternal deity to regulate the life and the finite temporal span of his mortal creations.[424] In concluding the previous chapter, he distinguished between the peripatetic behaviour of the wicked and the recurrence of cycles in nature:

> And that too which follows, is, I think, appropriate enough: The wicked walk in a circle, not because their life is to recur by means of these circles, which these philosophers imagine, but because the path in which their false doctrine now runs is circuitous.[425]

Zeno, in the previous century, had spoken of time based on natural cycles, created and maintained by God, as different from the time, also a product of God, used by mortals to calibrate their finite lives.

The story of Christianity was first told in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles by the four evangelists.[426] There was a gap of two centuries before Eusebius set out to trace the succession of the Apostles and to relate important events in the history of

[423] Holland (2020, xxiv, 152-153).
[424] Pl., *Ti.*, 37c – 38c.
[425] August., *De civ. D.* 12.13.
[426] Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Christianity. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* he would describe important people and places and would refer to Church teachers and theologians. Instead of writing about dynasties, he traced the episcopal successions in the major sees of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome. His extensive use of texts – he had access to the theological library of Caesarea as well as to many other sources - emphasised the importance of authoritative documents to Christian polemicists of the Constantinian era.[427] *Historia Ecclesiastica* set a pattern for subsequent Church histories. The story of Christianity focused on the continuity of established dioceses and on doctrine defined in conclave. Events on the periphery went unrecorded and diversity of belief, if mentioned, was described as deviant and heretical. Once the new orthodoxy had gained currency, traditional beliefs were also categorised as perverse. Churchmen saw the importance of the historical narrative and its alignment with the teaching of salvation through Christian belief and practice.

Eusebius, as a Christian teacher, knew that the centre of power had moved within the community. He contrasted the unbroken Apostolic successions of the Church with the successions of kings and emperors – and of Jewish high priests – which all came to an end or were interrupted with confusion and violence. Ammianus, as soldier and governor, saw the changes of the Constantinian imperium and the importance of the Church as a source of legitimacy to emperors in the 3rd century. Neither may have paid enough attention to arguments going on in the community and at diocesan level in the Church, perhaps seeing these as distractions rather than as an essential part of the new religion as it developed its liturgy and its doctrine.[428]

Historians of the Greco-Roman tradition told of events in the past in a linear fashion, with history measured in the units of cyclical time. Its longevity, however, needs a starting point. To define the time period or history of a civilisation, an ending point is also needed. Early Christian writers, aware that different civilisations used various means of calibrating their histories, knew that they shared a single linear progression of time, with varying degrees of synchrony and points of contact, and each with its own start and end. Eusebius represented the contemporaneous nature of

[427] Euseb, *Hist. Eccl*., I; Whitby (2011, 350-352).
[428] Judge (1983, 28), Drake (2002, 123-124).

civilisations in a tabular fashion, with parallel columns for the key historic events of each, and with simultaneous events aligned horizontally. Similar schemas were used in histories, in calendars, and in almanacs of the period.

Martin F. Stepanich goes into detail about the influence on Zeno of the writers Theophilus of Antioch (died ~184), Tertullian (died 220), Novatian (died 258), and Lactantius (died 320). In this context, he also mentions Cyprian of Carthage (died 258), Hilary of Poitiers (died ~367), and several pagan authors.[429] However, there is no reference to Eusebius (died 339) in his discussion of Zeno's style or content. Zeno would have been in his twenties when the historian's *magnum opus, Historia Ecclesiastica,* was published (324 – 325) and may have been familiar with some of the ten books. He refers to the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament on many occasions, in scriptural terms appropriate to their function and their chronology. He never uses Eusebius's trope of saying that some of these "friends of God" were Christians *avant la lettre* – "Christians in fact if not in name."[430]

Eusebius also used a tabular array to present the four Gospels as parallel texts. Thus, each long narrative was arranged in smaller sections and readers could see the relationship between the four Gospels.[431] The new paratextual method of tabular representation was accompanied by conceptual frameworks for the occurrence of distinct epochs of time, independent of each other although not incapable of temporal contiguities. There was a teleological view, expressed by Church historians of the period, that histories were part of an overall progression towards perfection as prescribed by the deity. Failures to make progress or properly to look after the welfare of the people were not ascribed to God but to the people or their rulers for not worshipping the one true god. This was made clear by the punishment meted out to cruel or recalcitrant emperors, usually by reporting, in clinical detail, their final shame and degradation, the excruciating agonies of their deaths, and the *damnatio memoriae* and *abolitio nominis* (condemnation of memory and erasure of

[429] Stepanich (1948, 24-29).
[430] James, 2:23; Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* 1:4:6. Zeno does, however, acknowledge that "the wisest of them" (Plato) reasoned that the soul was immortal, as Lactantius had done before him. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.1), Lactant. *Div. Inst.* VIIc, 8f., Pl. *Phd.* 70c-72e, 72e-78b, 78b-84b.
[431] Crawford (2019).

name) or erasure of their memory by the destruction of their various public image and inscriptions.[432] For Christians, all were contained within the biblical schedule of the world, which began as described in the book of Genesis and would end according to the book of Revelation. The direction of time was defined by the progress towards the goal of fulfilment of the divine will.[433]

Thus, the Church was seen, and saw itself, as involved in the betterment and salvation of mankind; it was the engine of progress and so played an active part in the lives of its members. This was not without internal dissent. The Old Testament formed part of the Christian back story. It was cited by early teachers for prophecies about Christ and for lessons on faith and morals. Among the Gnostics, however, there was dissatisfaction with the Jewish cosmology of the Old Testament, while Marcion and followers in the 2nd century said that it should be rejected, as it had been superseded by the New Testament.[434] As part of the process of institutionalisation, the Church christianised time, filling the calendar with the extended seasons of Easter and Advent, and with singular feast days. This expanding liturgy of rituals served as the framework for churchmen to preach to the faithful. In Italy of the 4th and 5th centuries, sermons by Zeno, by Chromatius of Aquileia, by Philastrius of Brescia, by Maximus of Turin, and by Ambrose of Milan show the emerging shape of a liturgical year.[435] An algorithm for the date of Easter, based on both lunar and solar calendars, had been established, and this gave rise to a structured Paschal season, with Lent, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost being celebrated each year.[436] Christ's Passion was mapped to the Easter ceremonies in real time, from the trial and crucifixion on Good Friday to the Resurrection on Easter

[432] See, for example, Eusebius and Lactantius on the death of emperor Maximinus Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, 9.10.14; Lactant., *De mort. pers.*, 49.1 and Lactantius on the death of emperor Galerius; Lactant., *De mort. pers.,* 33 – 35. These lurid accounts have many similarities. They provide a cliché for the deaths of iniquitous persecutors and a vengeful mirror image of the deaths of Christian martyrs. Their veracity is often questionable but they can only have helped to promote the readership of the historians' works by catering to a preference for racy biography rather than dry history. Marcos (2013), Croke and Emmett (1983, 2).

[433] Since the early 20th century, the direction of time has been accepted as being determined by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which says that the entropy of a closed system can only increase over time.

[434] Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 1.2, 44.11.9; Tert., *De praescr. Haeret.* 30; MacCulloch (2009, 121-127).

[435] Connell (2006a, 111-112, 164-171).

[436] Stern (2012, 380-409).

Sunday. A period of fasting and penitence was felt necessary before this signal feast. This began as a week with six days of fasting (there was no fasting on the Sabbath). A longer period of abstinence was associated with the instruction of catechumens, lasting 40 days (46 counting the Sabbath days), and starting on Epiphany, which celebrates the visitation of the three Magi to the infant Jesus and also commemorates his baptism. This 40-day period was adopted as the pre-Paschal period of Lent and as part of the temporal cycle of the liturgical calendar.[437]

The sanctoral cycle was made up of the feast days of martyrs and saints. It was first shown by Brown to have developed from popular cults, unlike the temporal cycle which was largely decided by prelates and scholars.[438] Martyrs were seen as models for the life and death of Christ. Cyprian urged priests to honour them "on the days on which they depart."[439] Thus martyrs and saints would be honoured on individual dates, the default being the date of their departure or death, also seen as the date of their birth into a new life.[440] Zeno commemorated the martyrdom of Arcadius of Mauretania within the ambit of his sermons.[441] The process of populating the Christian calendar with such events was under way. In the 4th century, post-Constantinian Christians were aware of the historic change their Church had undergone. For so long, it had been persecuted by the Roman empire, and now it was officially recognised and promoted by the state. As R. A. Markus points out, a generation gap was opening, threatening the unity of the Church. New Christians would regard the early years of their religion as increasingly remote and distinct. Church teachers and historians had to remind themselves that theirs was still the Church of the martyrs. Eusebius made sure to stress the continuity of the lines of succession of bishops, maintaining that the Church was still the same, despite the major changes in its fortunes. For their part, the clergy saw how the cult of the martyr could combine the saintly deeds of the past with the ritual devotions of

[437] Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 99-119).
[438] Brown (1981, 12 ff), MacMullen (2015), Young (2010, 74-75), Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 171-195)
[439] Cyprian, *Ep* 36.2.
[440] See page 2 in the Introduction for details of the commemorative dates for Zeno, generally and in Verona.
[441] Barelli (1980). See also footnote on page 144 regarding sermon 1:39.

the present.[442] The liturgy was the vehicle for this consolidation. The main calendar of the Church's liturgical seasons consisted of direct correspondences between events from the life of Christ and their representation in worship. There were some ancillary parts of the calendar, usually devoted to penance and fasting in preparation for the holy day. Lent belongs to this category, and its length was possibly a metaphor for the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness.[443] A feast day in the sanctoral cycle mapped to a saint or martyr and was used to commemorate the life of the person and all its sacred moments. These feast days were abstractions of linear time, condensed into singularities in the cyclical calendar. I will also show how linear time was used – and abused – in the lives of the saints. The feast days of saints and martyrs also pointed to the infinite life of the saints in heaven.

Linear or historic time

In the 4th century, history or the sequence of events that occurred during the passage of time, was seen by Christian scholars as a series of epochs culminating in the Christian era. In sermon (1:26), delivered during the Easter vigil, Zeno exhorted his congregation to rejoice in the ceremony marking the death and resurrection of Christ. He showed a Christian panoptic of history, describing how God, and only God, could frame all that happens, under different dynasties and at times spanning thousands of years, in fixed cycles of days, years, and centuries. The history that the Almighty created so skilfully encompasses all the irregularities of man and of nature, yet it maintains constant pace and direction as it progresses towards eternity. A single consciousness defined a contemporary elapsed time for all. History had a purpose, in other words. Within the epoch of biblical time, Zeno uses the uncertainty of fate and the direction of time to mark out the righteous from the damned: both can say what happened in the past, but only the righteous can see into the future, and then only with the help of God. These immutable features distinguish linear time from the predictable rhythms of cyclical time. In his sermons, the bishop used linear time as a semblance of the impossible, a yardstick for the power of the almighty. God

[442] Markus (2004, 89-95).
[443] Lent was originally part of the preparation of catechumens for baptism, held at Easter in the early Church. Connell (2006b, 73-75), Roldanus (2006, 171), Matthew 4:1-2.

alone was able to abrogate the direction of time and to grant a prospect of the future, or he could halt the march of time altogether for as long as needed. Thus, it is only with God's blessing that Abraham could see that his progeny would be numerous in the future; this lesson from the Old Testament was read in Easter week, probably to the recently baptised.[444] In another sermon, on faith, Zeno reminded his congregation how God stopped time to help the Israelites defeat their enemies.[445]

Schools of cosmogony

In the 20th century, there was a period during which two schools of thought, popularised as Big Bang and Steady State, contended for acceptance as the science of cosmogony, the theory of the origin of the universe.[446] Fred Hoyle, a leading proponent of the Steady State theory, gave the opposing idea its name as a derogatory term. However, the Big Bang would eventually triumph, largely due to observational evidence such as the so-called cosmic background radiation.[447] The two schools had their counterparts in the ancient world. The term "*ex nihilo nihil fit*" (nothing comes from nothing) was used to describe those theories that the universe had always been and would always be.[448] The cosmos was full of movement and change, but on aggregate it did not change over time. This was a cosmology that was in essence espoused by the stoic school of philosophy and was given poetic

[444] Genesis 15,6. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:13.4).
[445] The Ammonite kings (from Ammon, modern-day Amman in Jordan) joined forces against Joshua and the Israelites. The Lord God was on the side of Joshua and the Israelites, and between them they wreaked havoc on the Ammonites. The day was drawing to a close and not all of the enemy had been slain, so Joshua, with God's endorsement, told the Sun and the Moon to stand still: in other words, he stopped time. This gave the Israelites enough additional daylight to complete their work of slaughter. Joshua 10, 12-13. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:3.5). See also Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:36.3).
[446] For a thorough description of the development of cosmology, see Bell (2017).
[447] Penzias and Wilson (1965). Interestingly, Pope Pius XII endorsed the Big Bang theory, noting its resonance with the *fiat lux* moment in Genesis. He was not speaking *ex cathedra* at the time, but he never subsequently made pubic his views on the topic. Genesis 1, 3; Gorst (2002, 254-255).
[448] In the 6th century BC, Parmenides argued that nothingness was ontologically impossible. If the world was created from nothing, then a need for this must have arisen prior to creation. That means that something must have changed, something only possible if something material altered in some way. Aristotle argued both scientifically and semantically along the same lines: a void is nothing and cannot be said to exist. Parmenides, *Fragments*, VI; Arist., *Ph.*, IV, 6-9; Arist., *Categories* I:6, III:7.

expression by Lucretius in his major work, *De rerum natura*.[449] More generally, it was the watchword of those who opposed theism of any sort, the belief that a deity created – and maintained – the world. In the Jewish tradition, the idea of the corollary, *creatio ex nihilo,* is referred to in 2 Maccabees in the 2nd century BC:

> I implore you, my child, look at the earth and sky and everything in them, and consider how God made them out of what did not exist, and that human beings come into being in the same way.[450]

The Christian view was based on the Creation as documented in the Old Testament.[451] It was more constant and emphatic than its Hebrew antecedent, though, as it involved the Son of God, saviour of mankind and centre of the Christian godhead. This theory said that there was a singularity in time at which God had created the universe, a big bang as it were. This was an instance of "*creatio ex nihilo*" (creation out of nothing). It was this theory that Zeno defended in an Easter vigil sermon on the Book of Genesis, 1:7.[452]

The beginning of time

In each year of his episcopate at Verona, Zeno delivered a sermon on Genesis *(De Genesi*) during the Easter vigil. These sermons are, in chronological order, numbers

[449] Lucr., *De rerum natura*. Pliny said that the universe is without physical or temporal bounds. He equated it to a spirit or deity (*numen*). Plin., *HN* 2, 1.1.
[450] 2 Maccabees 7:28.
[451] There had been a diversity of Hebrew thought on the universe and the deity, according to Bernstein. Wright points out that the Old Testament represents the religious beliefs of only a select group of scholars and scribes in and around Jerusalem. Genesis 1, 1-10; Bernstein (1996, 134), Wright (2002, 52).
[452] In recent times, quantum theory has been used to put forward new scenarios for the origin of the universe. The pre-quantum nothingness becomes a quantum void, the vacuum becomes a state of metastable parity between matter and antimatter. The universe is then an enormous "vacuum fluctuation". Energy is not conserved but the change could be so small as to allow a finite timespan for the universe within the quantum uncertainty relationship $\Delta E.\Delta t \sim h$, where ΔE is the net energy, Δt is the timespan, and h is Planck's constant. Such a universe might be said to have materialised *ex nihilo* without divine agency. Bell (2017, 113-114).

7, 17, 27, 45, 50, and 56 in Book 1, and numbers 12 and 30 in Book 2. The opening lines of the first of these, 1:7, have some similarity to the beginning of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

> *Sunt enim multi, qui adserere conantur chaos in principio fuisse,*
> *id est informem, indigestamque latentis naturae congeriem,*
> *acervo quodam magnitudinis suae per se in se manentem.*[453]
>
> For there are many who try to assert that in the beginning there was chaos, that is, the shapeless and jumbled mass of nature as yet unrealised, which persisted in a certain accumulation of its own magnitude.

Compare with:

> *Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum*
> *unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,*
> *quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles*
> *nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem*
> *non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.*[454]
>
> Before there was earth or sea or the sky that covers everything, Nature appeared the same throughout the whole world: what we call chaos: a raw confused mass, nothing but inert matter, badly combined discordant atoms of things, confused in the one place.

Zeno's familiarity with the classics was noted by Truzzi and Stepanich. That he was comfortable in recruiting pagan authors to his cause supports what Markus had to say about the survival of tradition in the secular sphere – see page 66. Jeanes shows that these sermons had, as well as the explicit function of explaining the first book of the Old Testament, a "less explicit role" in referring to the Creation, the Incarnation, and the second coming.[455] In sermon 1:7, Zeno was quite clear on the

[453] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:7).
[454] Ov. *Met*. 1.6-10.
[455] Jeanes (1995, 112-113) The second coming (of Christ) or the day of judgement is foreseen in the Old Testament Psalm 96.10-13, while the New Testament even gives an approximate time of its occurrence: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt 24:34); see also Matt 16:28; Mark 9:1, 13:30; Luke 9:27, 21:32. Early Christians may have been disappointed that Christ did not return within a generation of his Resurrection. By the 4th century, the

basics of the Creation. He stated the contrary idea on how the world began, although he attributed this theory neither to a specific person such as Lucretius nor to a school of philosophy such as Stoicism; rather, he simply said that there were many (*sunt enim multi*) who held the view that a deity merely formed the world out of a pre-existing chaos. This process was formative, not creative, and does not account for the origin of the universe; it is not comparable to the modern term of 'big bang.'

Zeno used proof by contradiction to assert that God existed before the universe. He stated a contrary argument, that before God created the world, there was chaos, or a disordered agglomeration of matter.[456] The act of creation was really one of organising this into the forms of earth, planets, and stars. But if he could do that, then he must be pre-eminent, conscious of what he is and, in effect, the origin of himself. He alone could have created the chaos if it pre-dated the world. The bishop, although using a false dilemma argument, did not rail against it nor did he accuse its adherents of heresy. He accepted that some people may have had such opinions, but reasoned that it was illogical: if chaotic matter pre-existed, then who created it? Would its creation not constitute the real beginning of the world? Rather than attacking a traditional view of creation, he emphasises the Christian standpoint. The Creator is eternal, the master of eternity and the key to everlasting happiness.[457] Zeno also underscored the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, making this divine trinity normative or orthodox.

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second coming was seen as a time of judgement coincident with Revelation/the Apocalypse/the end of the world. It would be at some unknown time in the future, which gave Christians time to prepare, through piety and good works, so as to be judged mercifully. August., *CCL* 39.1351-1353.

[456] This is only one of many cosmogonic alternatives to the Christian model. It is a particular variant of the Stoic position. Another Stoic viewpoint, an agnostic one, was expressed by Lucretius. This does not require any creator or supreme being. It merely states that the world has always existed, is coterminous with time itself, and has no need for any formative deity. Lucr., *De rerum natura.*

[457] The ancient Greek theory was that Chaos, a primordial form of the universe, came first, and that Gaia (Mother Earth) then came into being, the first of the primeval deities. New generations of gods appeared, and a plethora of supernatural beings formed as life in all its variety evolved on earth. The process was symbiotic, with gods and the world evolving in synchrony. This marked a trajectory from an animistic association of spirits with aspects of nature to a panoply of Olympian gods with human forms. The Judaeo-Christian God, by contrast, was unique, supreme, and eternal. For Christians, God, creator of the world, made man in his own image, thus inverting the pagan construction. Hes., *Theog.* 67 – 71; Hall (2014, 67-71).

As he dealt with the management of creation, Zeno expressed his own form of Christology. The sequence was made explicit in sermon 1:56: the Father commands, the Son carries out:

> *Neque enim sine patris esse possit iniuria, si hac necessitate opus esset illi, qui in sinu patris commanens voluntatis eius perfectionem non didicerat, sed habebat*.[458]
>
> For it would have been a slight to the Father if, out of this necessity, the Son, remaining in his Father's bosom, had not learned his will and carried it out.

and in sermon 1:50:

> *Quicquid enim pater praecepit, ut fieret, filius, utpote dei virus deique sapientia, omnia illa opere mirifico eius cum dicto complevit*.[459]
>
> For what the Father ordered to be done, the Son, as the spirit and the wisdom of God, carried out all this in wonderful work with his word.

The bishop made clear that this did not diminish the Son in any way. The scale and magnificence of the Creation were the yardsticks with which to judge the Son; they reflect the presence of Father in Son and of Son in Father.[460]

These details of the origin of the universe gave Zeno ammunition against what he saw as the Church's most serious challenge – the Arian doctrine which held that the Son was subsidiary to, and generated by, the Father, that he came into being only with the creation of the world. The bishop's practice was never explicitly to name Arius or his followers, but to cast them as the holders of dubious and implausible beliefs. Thus, in sermon 1:50, he asserted that Father and Son were completely alike and that those who denied this were misguided and at fault:

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[458] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:56.1).
[459] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:50).
[460] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:45).

> *Hunc curiosi opinationibus vanis violare conantur nec intelligunt miseri, quoniam curiositas reum efficit, non peritum*.[461]
>
> Prying people want to harm him with their worthless opinions, nor do the wretches understand, because curiosity makes them guilty, not expert.

In the same set of doctrinal sermons, the bishop spoke about the spirit and the body. In the second verse of 2:4, he took on the challenge of explaining Christ's title of son of man. As one of the Trinity, Christ was Son of God, a term underlining his divinity. His humanity too was part of orthodox Christology, and 'son of man' or even 'second man' were terms used in the Old Testament in messianic contexts.[462] But Christ could not be the second man: as God, his timeline was infinite. Rather, he was eternal, he has always been. He was the son of man only in name, not in essence, said Zeno. Mankind, and only mankind, was formed from the clay of the earth in the image of God.[463] Men and women were mortal, they had a limited lifetime. It is this property, this bounded timespan that is part of our humanity and sets us apart from the recurrent rhythms of nature and the timelessness of the Almighty. However – and this is the theme of the sermon – man has both body and soul, one mortal, the other everlasting. It is through this spiritual nature of man that Christ has made eternal bliss available.[464]

In 2:5, another doctrinal sermon, Zeno defended the trinitarian view in his explanation of Paul's description of the end of the world:

> Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.[465]

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[461] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:50).
[462] Daniel, 7:13-14; Psalm 8:4.
[463] Genesis 1.27.
[464] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4.4).
[465] Paul, 1 *Cor* 15:24. As Stepanich points out, this passage favoured the Arian interpretation. If the Son is to give up his kingdom at the end of the world, then he will not reign forever. Therefore, he cannot be co-eternal with the Father nor can he be his equal. This interpretation is associated with Marcellus of Ancyra. Stepanich (1948, 61), Parvis (2006).

Zeno denied the apparent hierarchy implicit in this cession of a kingdom by the Son to the Father. This was the temporal kingdom or world that God, both Father and Son, had created and which belonged equally to both. The world would come to an end, as would all its inhabitants. This nexus between God and man was at the core of the trinitarian doctrine and underpinned the redemption of mankind. Zeno dealt with this complex subject in two sermons, from two perspectives. Sermon 2:5 is a doctrinal exegesis on 1 Cor 15:24: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" in which he preached what the human element added to the divinity of the Son. Man was mortal: his history was bounded by time, it had a start and would have an end. But in a God who was both human and divine, he could truly believe that salvation was possible.[466] The temporal kingdom was contained within the divine kingdom which had neither beginning nor end, just as God was timeless and unchanging. Man, however, does change, because of work, old age, illness, anger, joy, and sadness. Zeno made this point in one of the Easter vigil sermons on Genesis (1:27), in which he developed the theme of man being made in the image of God. That resemblance is certainly there, he said, but it is internal. Man is not divine but mortal, and subject to all the pain and sorrow of humankind but having Christ within made him redeemable and worthy of eternal life.[467] Zeno's topics for sermons on Christian doctrine were not unique among preachers of the time. His delivery, though, is not as polemical as some of his more vehement contemporaries, who often used heresy as antithesis. Ambrose's career was based largely on his anti-Arian stance, while Chromatius of Aquileia seems to have had a heresy for every occasion.[468]

The sequence of time

In the doctrinal sermon 2:4, entitled *De spiritu et corpore* (On the spirit and the body), Zeno iterated the sequence from Creation to the life of Christ on earth. He made clear the role of God the Son in every phase of this sequence. The Son created the

[466] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5).
[467] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:27).
[468] McEachnie (2014).

earth, then equipped it as a dwelling place for the coming human race. Next, he created man in his own image, giving him senses, wisdom, and free will. Finally, he gave man charge of and dominion over all that was on earth. The devil intervened, induced man to disobey God, and therefore, man's lot was transformed into one of toil, sickness, sorrow, pain, and death.[469]

Zeno did not specify the length of time between Creation and Nativity:

> *Haec cum diu sic haberentur*.[470]
>
> Things remained thus for a long time.

The next phase in the story of Christianity is the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, resulting in the salvation of mankind and the gift of eternal life for the faithful. The final phase was the second coming, the Book of Revelation, the end of the world. All of this was documented whether it had already happened or was to come. The world had an author and a purpose, both revealed by the teachings of Christianity.

Exceptions to the flow of time

Historical time is linear and inexorable. Without stopping, it flows in the one direction – the arrow of time is a metaphor that conveys this sense. We can experience what is happening in the present and, from memory or the recollection of others, know what has taken place in the past. But it is not possible to see into the future, to predict our own fate or that of others. Those who sold fortunes were in error, as were those who believed them; the practice was condemned by both Church and state, as we have seen in Chapter 2 (see page 84). Only exceptional circumstances and prodigious powers can overcome the unrelenting nature of time. To emphasise the power of faith, Zeno cited two instances from scripture in which mortals defy the

[469] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4.2-3), Genesis 1.26-28, 2.7, 3.6-24.
[470] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4.3).

laws of nature; faith can move mountains, anything is possible for him who believes.[471] In a sermon on faith, hope, and charity (1:36), Zeno recounted how Abraham, because he believed in God, was given a glimpse into the future. God showed him the night sky and said that his (Abraham's) progeny would be as numerous as the stars (if he could count them). Abraham is registered here as just and righteous. So, a righteous person, with an assist from God, can see into the future, reversing the arrow of time.[472] In the same sermon and speaking specifically about faith in another of his sermons on moral topics (2:3), Zeno once again enlisted the Old Testament to help make his point about the unique potential of faith. He reminded his congregation that Joshua, speaking through the Lord, told the sun and the moon to stand still. The effect was to stop the heavenly bodies, to defer sunset, so that the Israelites would have enough daylight time to destroy their enemies, the Amorite confederacy, at Gibeon.[473]

A new time for a new institution

Church history

God, having created the universe, his temporal kingdom, "governs it with his power, protects it with his majesty."[474] He uses a system of interlocking cycles to regulate the natural world. These are the rhythms of day and night, of the seasons of the year, of the orbits of heavenly bodies: all were familiar to Zeno, as seen in Chapter 1. Mankind was part of this creation, and dependent on these cyclical patterns, but was unique among the creatures of the earth in being made in the image of God. He was subject to changes but was also the cause of changes. With their God-given attribute of free will, humans had the power, individually and collectively, to influence the course of events, to make history, or rather to make histories: free will meant that mankind was not a single polity or monoculture, but rather a set of contemporaneous and consecutive civilisations. Each had its own history, sometimes intersecting with

[471] Mark 9, 22.
[472] Genesis 15.6; Romans 4.18; Zeno and Banterle (2008, :36.2).
[473] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:36.3, 2:3.5), Joshua 10.12-14.
[474] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:7).

those of other civilisations. To a Christian, the past was worthy of study because it had theological significance, and so it had to be considered in its entirety, from the creation of the earth and the time of Adam and Eve and embracing all tribes and nations.[475] The historian Eusebius was familiar with this mosaic of ancient and recent civilisations.[476] In his *Chronicon*, he wrote of the methodology later used in his history of the Church. With due acknowledgement of his sources, he noted the lists of kings of Assyrians, Persians, Hebrews, Egyptians, Athenians, Romans, and others, and their regnal dates which provided temporal sequences. Arranging these lists side-by-side as vertical columns and using recorded concurrences of historical events, he was able to interconnect the separate sequences.[477] He showed how disparate people, with their own rulers and their own histories, all belonged to a single temporal kingdom, maintained by the divine Creator.

The Church, universalist in its mission, had a story contingent on all nations, on all civilisations. Thus, God's management of time was not limited to natural periodicity, but also embraced aperiodic or irregular time, the open linear periods of human histories. Zeno rejoiced in this dual mandate and, in a sermon during the Easter vigil, marvelled at the combination of linear and orbital:

> *Mira prorsus ratio! Innumerabilium saeculorum diversa mensura conterendo innovat spatia, et tamen eius semper orbita est una.*[478]

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[475] Historians did of course exercise some editorial discretion in their work. Ammianus noted: *quod non omnia narratu sunt digna* (not everything is worth relating), referring specifically to the affairs of the lower classes. Amm. Marc., *Res gestae*, 28.1.15.

[476] Brian Croke traces the development of world chronicles from the lists of kings kept by the Egyptians since the 4th millennium BC through Eratosthenes of Cyrene to Africanus and others whose works were known to Eusebius. Burgess and Kulikowski, however, point to Eusebius' eschewal of chronologies based on a countdown to the end of the world. Rather, he chose as the start of historical time the birth of Abraham, whom he regarded as the first Christian. Croke (1983), Burgess and Kulikowski (2013, 123-125).

[477] Here is a sample of Eusebius' calculation: "Of course the second year of Darius was in the first year of the 45th Olympiad, and the 15th year of Tiberius occurred in the 201st Olympiad. Therefore, there were 137 Olympiads between Darius and Tiberius, 548 years, counting four years in one Olympiad. Then in the second year of Darius the 70th year from the destruction of the Temple is completed, from which 64 Olympiads, or 256 years, are counted backwards to the first Olympiad." Euseb., *Chron.*

[478] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:26).

> It is a wonderful phenomenon indeed! Time and again and with different measures, he maps out and renews the expanse of innumerable centuries, and yet his orbit is always one and the same.

In the hands of God, time is regular and secure, spanning all epochs and the many centuries of human existence. Left to man, however, it becomes erratic and transient. Zeno made a similar distinction between divine love – *caritas* – and carnal love in his sermon *De spe, fide, et caritate* (On hope, faith, and charity). The one is constant and paramount among the graces, the other is fickle and profane, the cause of violence and sin:

> *Est enim et alius amor sane saluti nostrae contrarius; cui recte hominis forma tribuitur, quia temporalis ac fragilis esse cognoscitur.*[479]
>
> For there is also another love opposed to our salvation; quite aptly, the form of a man is attributed to it, because it is known to be subject to time and transience.

The bishop saw the divine hand in nature's cycles, as orderly and predictable mechanisms to regulate the world. As against this, man's efforts at managing time were flawed and dubious, often at variance with the Church's mission of salvation. Zeno made this explicit in his sermon on patience (1:4). He made clear the difference the natural course of events and man's attempt to replace it with his own schedule of events. His sources included Scripture as well as the more recent genre of martyrology, while his delivery changes in tone as he moves from extolling the virtue of patience to condemning its antithesis. Stepanich has shown influences on Zeno's teachings from Cyprian, Lactantius, and Tertullian, all of whom wrote about patience as a virtue.[480] Lactantius called it "the greatest of all virtues", while Tertullian deemed himself, "a man of no goodness", unfit to write a treatise on so divine a subject as patience. For these reasons, and because Zeno had his own

[479] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:36.8).
[480] Stepanich (1948, 25-29); Cyprian, *De idol. vanit.*; Lactant., *Div. Inst.* 5.19-22; Tert., *On patience*.

ideas about the fabric of time and its different treatment by God and by man, it is worth considering the sermon in detail.

The significance of patience

Zeno gave a lengthy sermon on patience, one of a series on virtues that included faith, hope, charity, justice, chastity, abstinence, humility, and fear of God.[481] It is not a virtue with much recognition among the ancients, if indeed it was seen as virtuous at all. Cicero, Seneca, and Tacitus spoke of the importance of endurance or perseverance, but these were not quite the same qualities as Christian patience, with its sense of submission and long-suffering; slaves had patience, according to Tacitus, by which he meant they were long-suffering and could not complain about it.[482] From the 2nd century, the early Church fathers saw the importance of patience. Origen cited it as a Christian virtue in arguing against the pagan Celsus, and among African churchmen in the third and fourth centuries, patience was singularly praised. Minicius Felix defined it as "living in contemplation of the future", and Cyprian wrote that it is was epitomised by the maxim: "We do not speak great things, but we live them."[483]

Patience was the common example set by the martyrs. The Church saw these victims of persecution as role models for Christian converts and incorporated them into the growing liturgy. Their stories would be developed as hagiographies, enjoying widespread popularity in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Cults were developed for many martyrs, with relics featuring in their worship. The common theme was that martyrs heroically endured sorrow and pain because they knew they would be rewarded in the afterlife. For the sake of short-term comfort, they could have renounced their faith, agreed to take part in pagan rituals,

[481] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:4).
[482] Cic., *Inv. rhet*, 2; Sen., *Dial.*, 4; Tac., *Ann.*, 3.65; Bommarito (2014, 269), Wilken (2003).
[483] Minicius Felix, *Octavius*, 38.6; Cyprian, *De idol. vanit.*, 3. Augustine valued patience as a gift of God. That meant, he wrote, that it must be God's to give and so is part of divine nature. It is not divine in its sense of "long-suffering", which is not consonant with the supreme being; God is patient in an impassive or passionless way. August., *On patience*. See also Tert., *On patience*, 1.7; Lactant., *Div. inst.*, 5.19, 22).

acquiesced to the forms of the old traditions, but they chose the painful route of steadfast faith in adversity. Martyrs were an object lesson in waiting for one's just reward, in transcending the bounds of linear time in this world in anticipation of eternal bliss in God's realm.

Sermon 1:4 has eight distinct parts. Each one deals with an aspect of patience and, rather like the movements of a symphony, each has a particular mood. In the first two parts, the mood was *allegro* as Zeno extolled patience as an essential feature of all the other virtues. It can be seen in the steady movements of the sun and the moon, on earth while storms sometimes rage, the normal state is one of calmness and serenity. Nature is patient, it ensures that fruit is ripe on time, not too early and not too late.

> *Non virtutes possunt esse virtutes, non perennes elementorum status, non tempora cognata connexione in solemnes reditus commearent, nisi rerum disciplinam conversionemque, quasi quaedam sollicita mater, patientia custodiret.*[484]
>
> The virtues could not be as they are, the elements of nature would not endure; the periods of time would not move to their normal endpoints in the context that we know them unless patience, like a concerned mother, watched over the orderly course of events.

Patience, according to the bishop, resembled the precise clockwork of the cosmos. It was an expression of the divine agency that managed the many regular cycles of the natural world.

The mood changes to *andante* in the third part of the sermon, devoted to impatience, the opposite of the virtue in question. Here, Zeno spoke of impatience, imputing it uniquely to mankind:

> *Solus homo praeceps, solus impatiens, pravis quotidie mobilitatibus gaudet: varietatibus studet; miserum se putat, si*

[484] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:4.2).

> *ipse sit, nec intelligit rem dementiae esse consimilem, in statu suo animum non manere.*[485]
>
> Man alone is hasty, he is impatient, takes pleasure every day in perverse inconstancies, devotes himself to change, feels unhappy with himself, with who he is; he does not see that it verges on madness if the mind does not remain in its own state.

Zeno cited examples from the Old Testament of man's impatience, his obsession with trying to force change, his inability to let things take their natural course. Adam, Cain, the inhabitants of Sodom, all were impatient and brought ruin on themselves and their people. Indeed, Adam's impatience cost man his immortality and brought death as a penalty on the race. Collectively, the Jews were impatient with Moses, and he put to death three thousand of those who had worshipped the golden calf.[486] Impatience, said Zeno, was "the mother of crimes, the mistress of curiosity, the height of temerity, the creator of abominations, and, in addition, the teacher of evil."[487]

Turning to patience again, Zeno gave the Biblical examples of Abel and Noah. He started the latter part of the sermon with the story of Abraham and his son Isaac, maintaining that the patience of each of them was a form of worship, whether it gave precedence to filial loyalty or adherence to the divine will. He went on to explain the stories of Jacob and of Joseph and then the story of Job, synonymous with patience.[488] The bishop linked the episodes from Scripture with the practice of patience by martyrs of the Christian era, who had learned to tolerate that which they did not deserve. Patience was the martyr's crown and the sustenance of the slave.

The leitmotiv of the sermon is that patience is a control mechanism, part of the divine clockwork that maintains the regularity of the cosmos. It provides a rein on the

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[485] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:4.3).

[486] Exodus 32.

[487] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:4.3).

[488] Baskin notes the parallels between the lives of Job and Christ. Both became poor to make us rich, Job was insulted by his friends while Christ was taunted and mocked by the priests. Gregory, in his *Moralia in Job*, said that Job, in his life, prefigured Christ and foretold the mysteries of his passion, not in what he said but in what he suffered. Baskin (1981, 229); Gregory, *Moralia in Job,* preface 14.

human proclivity to break free from the cyclical rhythm of nature and to plot an independent linear path. In extolling the virtue, Zeno aimed to strengthen the faith of his congregation, to urge them to shun the trivial, the evanescent, the transitory; these were all distractions from the regular course of life. There might be suffering to endure, but these would be far outweighed by the reward of eternal bliss in the next life. The regular cycles of nature are part of the divine order and belong within the timeless world of God. The impatience inherent in human nature disrupts this order when it seeks to set its own course, at variance with the ordinance of the Creator. The role of the Church, the core teaching of Christianity, is that the faithful will be rewarded after death, in the next life, which will have no end.

Epochs of time: temples, synagogues, churches

In sermon 2:6, delivered to commemorate the consecration of a new church in Verona, Zeno brought together three of these "different measures" of time. He compared the new building with temples built by gentiles during the Classical era, and with Jewish synagogues from the Old Testament era:

> *Vellem, fratres dilectissimi, triumphali quodam modo uti sermone novique operis arcem sacram laudibus geminare. Sed quamvis optimum laudare, quae dei sunt, tamen praecipuum non est, quod cum gentibus vel Judaeis potest esse commune; nam et illi, si liceat vel si velint, fortassis cultius synagogas aedificent, cultius erigant capitolia, sed in his omnibus operibus vero iudicio structores magis possunt placere quam sacerdotes.*[489]
>
> I would love, dear brethren, in some way to use a sermon of triumph and to redouble my praise for the holy arch of this new building. But however good it is to praise that which is from God, yet that which it has in common with the gentiles or the Jews is not what is most important. For even these, if they could or if they wanted to, could perhaps build synagogues and temples to the gods with even greater splendour. But all these

[489] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:6.1).

> buildings, if you consider it correctly, earn more praise for their builders than for their priests.

The Bible and the surviving works of classical architecture are part of the historical record, of the continuum of time since the Creation. They are real and amenable to comparison with the contemporary world, including the new church in Verona. Zeno conceded that the construction might be lacking in architectural magnificence, but went on to emphasise the equivalence, in the eyes of God, of the temple with the people who worship in it; without the priest and the faithful, the physical church itself had no spiritual significance.

Time management

Early Christian leaders saw the importance of history in the institution of the Church. They set about mapping the linear narrative of Christ's passion, and, later, the lives of martyrs and saints, onto the cyclical calendar, thus setting the rhythm of days, weeks, month, and years that regulated people's lives. This project to populate the calendar with holy days and to manage the observances of the faithful was not without its challenges, not least the pre-existing festivals and special days associated with tradition, often with a long and venerable ancestry. The process was one of transition from myth into history, as Feeney described the processes of managing time in the civilisations of antiquity.[490] Zeno drew attention to this process in sermon 1:25. The bishop took Psalms 47 and 49 as his text, citing the verses that referred to the divinity of Christ and that describe the type of sacrifice that is to be offered as praise to the Lord.[491] In doing so he condemned the pagan gods as evil spirits: those who worshipped them and offered blood sacrifices to them were guilty of sacrilege and would be punished. He went on to distance his message from its Hebraic context and said that the Jews were no longer God's chosen people, and their sacrifice was not pleasing to God. Only the Christian sacrifice was acceptable

[490] Feeney (2007, 88 et seq).
[491] Psalms, 47:7, 49:12-15.

to God. It was a spiritual not a physical offering, it came from the heart, not the purse, it was an expression of praise, not of admonition.[492]

In the final section of this sermon, Zeno was blunt in his criticism of certain Christians. They might well observe the proprieties of Christian worship, but many were aware of idolatrous practices and lewd rituals taking place on their own lands. In pretending not to know what their tenants were doing, they were just as guilty as them. Among the practices he condemned were the reading of auguries from animal entrails, the creation of their own martyrs, and the commemoration of certain days as ominous rather than propitious:

> *Non hi solum, qui tales sunt, displicent Deo, sed et illi, qui per sepulcra discurrunt; qui foeterosis prandia cadaveribus sacrificant mortuorum; qui amore luxuriandi atque bibendi, in infamibus locis lagenis et calicibus subito sibi martyres pepererunt; qui dies observant; qui Aegyptiacos de candidis faciunt; qui auguria captant salutemque suam pecudum violenter scissis in ventribus quaerunt; qui coniugale exasperant iugum, affectuque calcato subdititiis personis, ut obumbrent furta turpissimae utilitatis, rem familiarem tuendam committunt, amore non fidei, sed libidinis;* [493]
>
> It is not only these (Christians) who displease God, but also those who loiter around the graveyards; those who sacrifice meals to the fetid bodies of the dead; who, for the love of self-indulgence and drinking, who in infamous places and with bottles and chalices suddenly produce their own martyrs; those who observe the day, turning an auspicious day into an ominous one; those who take auguries for their own safety by violently tearing out the entrails of their animals; they who ridicule the bond of marriage, and trample conjugal love underfoot, those who, in order to hide their shameful secret pleasures, entrust subordinates to manage the property of their family, not out of love of faith, but of lust;

[492] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:25.2, 3, 5).
[493] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:25.6).

Zeno was clearly directing his strong disapproval at some of the better-off members of the congregation. These were respectable Christian landlords who resided and worshipped in Verona, and whose wealth was based on holdings in the hinterland and rental income from farmers who worked the vineyards, olive groves, and livestock. A land tax imposed at the beginning of the 4th century had made many smallholdings uneconomical. These were bought up by large landowners and the countryside was increasingly made up of *latifundia* or large estates worked by impoverished tenant farmers.[494] These people were outside the quotidian urban amenities and influences, including those of the Church. The implication of Zeno's denunciation was that the demographic of Christianity at that time in the western empire was largely urban. The countryside had not yet been christianised.[495] The bishop deplored the immoral behaviour and the bloody practice of divination using animal entrails. He was also angered by the worship of false martyrs and the observation of arbitrary days as ominous. These were clear assaults on the Christian calendar, challenges to the Church's management of time.[496]

In his sermon on greed (1:5), Zeno dealt at length with the concupiscence of man – it knows no bounds, he said:

> *si orbem totum possideant, fines oderunt.*[497]
>
> if they possessed the whole world, they would detest the fact that it had boundaries.

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[494] Cracco Ruggini (1961, 25-31). Zeno condemns the disparity of wealth and the practice of people enriching themselves at the expense of others; see also sermons 1:5 and 2:1. Later in the century, this greed and plunder of the land were still being deplored by Ambrose of Milan, Gaudentius of Brescia, and Maximus of Turin.

[495] Lee (2016, 134-135), Trout (1995). Ariano says that Zeno was well aware of the presence of paganism in the countryside and of its possible return in the imperial dynasty; his early years as bishop had coincided with the reign of Julian the Apostate. Ariano (2014, 141). See also pages 42 and 56 in Chapter 1.

[496] But see page 57 in Chapter 1. Zeno devoted sermon 1:39 to a recognised martyr. Arcadius was a martyr from Zeno's native North Africa. Zeno marked his feast day by relating details of the saint's ordeal and death, knowing that martyrology as a literary genre was growing in popularity at the time. The bishop was abstracting the life story of Arcadius onto a date in the Christian calendar, taking linear time into a repeating cycle. Each year, that day was identified with the memory of a martyr. In this way, the mortal lifespan of a Christian exemplar was made eternal by being incorporated into the Church calendar. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:39).

[497] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:5.2).

Man will do anything to acquire more of everything – land, gold, influence – but he cannot master time:

> *Nec sui umquam venit in mentem non esse humanae potestatis crastinum diem, ac ne ipsum, quo res agitur; quia quod volvitur semper, in momento quid afferat, dubium est.*[498]
>
> Nor are they ever aware that tomorrow is not in man's power, nor even the day on which their deed is to be done; for whatever is in motion means that it is in doubt as to what it will bring in the next moment.

God, being eternal, is incompatible with time: it can have no meaning for an unchanging entity. Time was part of the world created by God, set up to regulate the finite lifetimes of humans (see page 121). It was not the cyclical time with its known periodicities and predictable recurrences, but a metric shaped by the free will and mortality of humankind, one which could not be foreseen, let alone controlled, by man.

Aspiring to eternity - there is no end of time

In Chapter 1, we saw how Zeno's sermons revealed the pervasiveness of cycles in the bishop's worldview. The natural world was regulated by predictable and unfailing rhythms. On earth, the diurnal cycle and the round of the seasons enabled people to tend to their flocks and manage their crops. In the sky above, celestial bodies followed their regular orbits without fail. All this order evinced the hand of the deity and his purpose in maintaining mankind in the world. In this chapter, the distinction made by Zeno between the cyclical time that pervades God's creation – the natural course of events – and the linear and unidirectional schedule that man uses to gauge elapsed time is found in several of his sermons. The distinction parallels that between God and man, between the spiritual and the secular, between good and

[498] Zeno and Banterle (2008).

evil. In the rhythms of cyclical time, there are peace and serenity, while in the short and uncertain tracts of linear time, there are discord and immorality. The former has intimations of the immortality that awaits the faithful in the heavenly kingdom. The latter leads only to misery and failure and ends abruptly with the Second Coming of Christ and the final judgement of all mankind.

Zeno likens man's preference for the temporal over the eternal with his preference for lust over virtue, for leisure over work, for the present over the future. Man's sights are clearly set on what is immediately available:

> *Quae res efficit, ut sive metu, sive incredulitate praeponantur praesentia futuris, mala bonis, fragilia solidis, falsa veris, terrena coelestibus, temporalia sempiternis.*[499]
>
> As a result, whether through fear or lack of faith, the present is preferred to the future, the bad to the good, the transitory to the permanent, the false to the true, the earthly to the celestial, and the temporal to the eternal.

Man must overcome these predilections if he is to attain salvation. This means accepting that the promise of eternal life is contingent on faith in Christ and belief in his teachings. Man must also cast off any human notions of elapsed time and longevity. Eternity is not simply an extension of worldly time, it does not belong to any known continuum, it is in fact a condition of timelessness. Eternity has a greater affinity with the cycles which Zeno found everywhere in nature and in their constancy and predictability were very much the handiwork of the Creator. It is something he referred to explicitly and joyfully. His Christian view of historic time, whether spoken directly or read from the subtext, brings home some basic principles of this temporal phenomenon:

- it proceeds in one direction – the arrow of time;
- man can know what happened in the past but cannot see into the future;
- man cannot stop time, let alone reverse it;

[499] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:12.7).

- linear time is part of the Creation, a consequence of the Fall of man;
- God alone has absolute control over time.

These axioms of time would not be unfamiliar to ecclesiastical leaders of the time.

In Chapter 4 this connection between cyclical time and eternity will be further explored in Zeno's sermons. I will show that this underlined the bishop's condemnation of Arianism, specifically its doctrine of the procession of Christ from the Father. By comparison with contemporary bishops in northern Italy Zeno stands out for his defence of Christ's co-eternity with the Father. He saw it as part of the epistemology of salvation: only an eternal deity could plausibly promise everlasting life in heaven for the faithful. Equally, only a perfect god could have a son who was timeless. He developed the concept of eternity not simply as an extension of linear time, but as a distinct quantity at the heart of Christianity.

Chapter 4: Time and Eternity

For ever and ever – what does it mean?

In Chapter 1, we saw how Zeno drew on cycles of time in the natural world to explain the permanency and immutability of Christ and the Christian doctrine. In Chapter 2, the first known Christian interpretation of the temporal cycle of the zodiac was considered. In Chapter 3, the focus was on Zeno's treatment of time and how historic time, created by God, was often misused by man, who chafed at the fixed rhythms of natural cycles. These concepts of time are all of divine origin, but they are subsidiary. Their purpose is to serve as the independent variable against which other quantities register change, which is the hallmark of life. In this chapter I will use Zeno's sermons to describe his view of eternity and why it formed a recurrent part of his Christology. In his pastoral role, the bishop contributed to cultural changes: he suggested name-days as we saw in Chapter 2, his celebration of the feast of Arcadius was an early instance of the development of the sanctoral cycle of the Church calendar, while his sermons on the birth of Christ presaged the Nativity and Advent as part of the temporal cycle. He went further: in the philosophy of religion, he anticipated later thinking. Thus far in the thesis, my focus has been largely on Zeno and his sermons. Now I will broaden the context and compare his sermons with those of contemporaries in northern Italy.[500]

The phrase *in saecula saeculorum*, often proceeding the terminal *Amen*, is to be found in the Hebrew as well as the Christian scriptures.[501] Meaning "for ever and ever", it became a formula used by churchmen, including Zeno, as a means of expressing "eternity" without having to explain what it meant.[502] Eternity is an abstraction. It has properties and can be treated mathematically, according to scientists.[503] But it cannot be observed, let alone measured, as part of a process to understand its nature. Ideas of the infinite appear in the works of Zeno of Elea (5th

[500] Most of the surviving sermons from northern Italy come from later in the 4th century. The lives of Ambrose, Chromatius, Gaudentius, and Philastrius overlapped with that of Zeno, but they were in their prime after the bishop of Verona died.
[501] See Psalm 90:2, Neh. 9:5 in the Old Testament, Phil. 4:20, Rev 1:6 in the New Testament.
[502] In their concordance of Zeno's sermons, Löfstedt and Packard find thirteen occurrences of the phrase *in saecula saeculorum.* Löfstedt and Packard (1975, 328).
[503] Hudson (1925), Ravn (2019).

century BC) and the Pythagoreans (6th and 5th centuries BC). Zeno's well-known paradox involves an infinite sequence. The tortoise starts the race against the hare with a certain lead. The hare must cover this distance between them. He first covers half the distance, thus halving the tortoise's lead. He then covers half this distance, one quarter of the original lead. This sequence 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16, … goes on forever, with the hare's lead over the tortoise approaching, but never quite reaching, zero. Archytas of Tarentum (428–347 BC) and Anaximander (~610–~546 BC) argued that space was infinite. If space could be without limits, then so could time, and early philosophers thus conceded that eternity could exist.[504]

This chapter starts with general concepts of time throughout history, leading to broader questions of eternity and the Christian idea of eternal life. I will show that the ideas that emerge from Zeno have relevance to the ongoing debates on the nature of time and on the philosophy of eternity. The ontology of eternity is bound up with the concept of time. The Greco-Roman idea was that time was a process or state of flux. It was likened by Marcus Aurelius to a violent stream.[505] This captures the inexorable passage of time, the associated change or succession, and the unique sense of direction – the arrow of time, as Eddington called it.[506] It also shows that this is a subjective view of time, based on our perception of its passage. Moving forward to the 17th century, a more objective approach began to develop. When treated mathematically, time would be used as an independent variable to explain the orbits of the heavenly bodies under the influence of gravity. The laws of motion, as defined by Kepler and Newton, can be used to predict the paths of planets and moons. Time can be put into reverse, in theory at least, to give retrospective pictures of the heavens. This idea of time as something that could be measured and used prescriptively was preserved in Einstein's theories of relativity in the 20th century. There was a fundamental change, however, a paradigm shift, with the treatment of time as a fourth dimension, in addition to the three spatial dimensions. All four dimensions were relative to the gravitational frame of reference: time was no longer absolute or inexorable.

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[504] Easwaran, Hájek, Mancosu, and Oppy (2021).

[505] See footnote 514 below.

[506] Eddington (1929). The flying arrow is used in another of Zeno's paradoxes of motion, one that is repeated by Aristotle. Aris. *Ph*. 239 b30.

Time and eternity have been discussed together in the works of philosophers since early antiquity. From Plato and Aristotle, we have the respective ideas of time as an image of eternity, and of eternity being outside of time, an alternative to it.[507] The ontological basis for any distinction between time and eternity had to be qualitative rather than quantitative.[508] In Late Antiquity, contrastive and inclusive views of eternity emerged, based on whether time and change were present in the eternal. I will show that Zeno went beyond the conventional categories of that period. His imaginative approach was to show how eternity can be seen in the everyday. This was possible only with reference to Christ, who uniquely embodied both the temporal, as man, and the eternal, as God. I will argue that in this regard the bishop's sermons prefigured the philosophy of Schiller, the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth, the mathematics of Cantor, and more recently, the theology of Barth. But first, a preface on the theoretical framework of God and eternity.

God and eternity in Christian belief

In philosophy, the theoretical framework of a topic for discussion depends on a clear understanding of the terms used. The relationship between God and time has been part of the philosophical tradition since pre-Socratic and Biblical times. It is often focused on the divine attribute of eternality and how we understand it. Two main views have emerged. In one, God is outside of time, often expressed as being timeless. In the other, God is everlasting in time. Both views hold that God is eternal, that he always was and always will be; at issue is how we understand this divine property. A timeless God cannot change, while a God who is everlasting may change. The Biblical view was of an everlasting God, one who exists in time. He has a history, often linked to the story of his chosen people, the Jews, so in this sense he is temporal. Recent scholarship has adherents of this view, often based on other attributes of the deity, such as omniscience: if God were timeless, he would not

[507] Pl. *Tim*. 37c6 – 38b5; Aris. *De Caelo* 279°18 – 22.
[508] At least until the time of Cantor and the distinction between finite and transfinite numbers; see below, page 185.

know what time it is. This viewpoint is described by Hasker and by Swinburne, among others, while Leftow, Strump, and Kretzmann argue that God is timeless. Again, this can be predicated on a divine attribute, that of perfection – if God is perfect, then he is immutable and cannot change; he is not subject to time. A recent hybrid of these stances is that of Craig, who says that God is timeless without creation, and becomes temporal with creation.[509]

Augustine was associated with the notion of divine timelessness (or a timeless divinity). The transcendent attributes of God, notably his immutability and his eternality, put him outside the bounds of time: "It is not in time that you precede time. Otherwise you would not precede all times."[510] Stump and Kretzmann came to the same conclusion via a different route. A timeless being experiences its complete life in an instant. It does not experience succession and is thus outside time.[511] The case for an atemporal God is challenged by the divinity's omniscience. If God knows everything, he knows what time it is. Since the time changes, what God knows changes. If what God knows changes, then God changes, and he is therefore temporal.[512] If an atemporal God does not know what time it is, then he is not omniscient; this did not conform to the Nicene doctrine of the Church. God's immortality, on the other hand, could be reconciled with his omniscience and his perfection: he can know all things and their succession, and remain unchanged. This idea of timeless eternity has been developed recently by Brian Leftow for the relativistic age, in which space and time are interconnected dimensions.[513]

In this chapter, I will address the question: what stance, if any, did Zeno take on God's temporality? In doing so, I am mindful of the bishop's views on the divine

[509] In a chapter on *Eternity* in the *Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, Padgett reviews the current schools of thought. Padgett (2007). See also Leftow (1991, 217-245), Stump and Kretzmann (1992), Craig (2001), Swinburne (2001). Deng, in her section on *Eternity on Christian Thought* in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, also discusses these Christian views on eternity, tracing them back to scholars in Late Antiquity. She also expresses these stances in terms of time as a flow, or as a dimension in spacetime. This leads to the criterion of whether God can experience succession if he is everlasting and thus present at every point in time. Deng (2018).

[510] August. *Conf*. 11, 8(16).

[511] Stump and Kretzmann (1992, 1981, 1987).

[512] Deng (2018).

[513] Leftow (1991).

maintenance of time. In Chapter 1, we saw how he internalised the closed cycles of time in this regard. In Chapter 3, Zeno's axioms of historic time were shown to include the principle of time as a unidirectional flow – the arrow of time, as it were. It was like the violent stream which Marcus Aurelius described as inexorably ordering events in sequence.[514] This was a dramatic visualisation of time as defined by Plato. He said that it was absolute and independent of events that occur in time. In his *Timaeus*, the Greek philosopher anchored time to the celestial sphere and the movements of Sun, Moon, and planets.[515] Aristotle argued that this required time to have a beginning, thus implying a non-eternal universe. He said that time is not independent of events, that it is relative in that it temporally relates one event to another.[516] Time exists, but because it is insubstantial, it does so in a dependent way. Length is used to measure a line, and time is used to measure change. Without a line, there would be no length, so without change, there would be no time, Aristotle reasoned. In Late Antiquity, the apparent orbits of heavenly bodies were as described by Ptolemy, while the debate on space and time was informed by the distinct views of Plato and Aristotle. These worldviews lasted for over a thousand years after Zeno.[517]

Zeno saw time in Platonic terms, as something absolute and independent. Man experiences time as a flow, a process, and Scripture says that only God can stop or alter this flow. Time is coterminous with the world, but not with its Creator. To God, it is a dimension which calibrates time past, present, and future. As the bishop reminded us, God can see into the future and can access all points in time.[518] Time, for the Almighty, is relative; his lengthening of the day to help the Israelites to

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[514] "Time is like a river made up of the events which happen, and a violent stream; for as soon as the thing has been seen, it is carried away, and another comes in its place, and this will be carried away too." M. Aur. *Med. 4.*

[515] Pl., *Ti.* 37d-38c.

[516] Aris. *Ph.* 251 b14-26.

[517] The observations by Brahe and analysis by Copernicus in the 16th century laid the groundwork for scientists such as Kepler, Leibniz and Newton. The former sat time as relative, while the latter believed it to be absolute. These and other scientists of the Enlightenment saw time as a dimension, like the dimensions of space. Time as an ordinate in the dynamics of the sun, moon and planets has been used by scientists since Kepler and Newton in the 17th century. Since the end of the 19th century, the dimensions of space and time have together defined the fabric of our universe. Their interrelationship is at the core of relativistic science and modern cosmology.

[518] God told Abraham that his progeny would be numerous in the future. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:13.4), Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:3.5). See also page 135 in Chapter 3.

slaughter the Ammonites was a demonstration of time dilation, which we now know to be an outcome of special relativity. Zeno combined the absolute and relative theories of time by using human and divine perspectives. The human view is one of man subject to temporal change, while God maintains the objective view of one with agency at all points in time. So, the question I posed above might be rephrased in current terms as: Is God eternal and located at every point in spacetime, or is he outside of spacetime, yet everlasting?[519]

Infinity and eternity in Graeco-Roman times

In Greek and Roman philosophy, ideas about the infinite, including eternal time, were often bound up with cosmology – theories about the nature of the universe – and with cosmogony – its origin and evolution. Polytheistic cosmogonies had different views of the creation, indeed the term κόσμος (cosmos), meaning order, had been used to distinguish the creation from the chaos that was supposed to have existed before. Early Greek philosophers had argued for a spherical earth and for the concept of infinity.[520] Anaximander identified the principal cause of existing things as the infinite, while Anaximenes (~586-~526 BC) posited an infinite number of universes. In response to the former, Aristotle proposed a universe (or cosmos) finite in size but without a beginning and with an indefinite timespan; this was a sort of "steady state" view, *avant la lettre*.[521] By the time of Hippolytus of Rome (~170-~235) at the turn of the second and third centuries AD, such ideas, along with those of a spherical earth and man's evolution from marine creatures, were counted as heresies.[522] In imperial Roman times, cosmology featured in the form of poetry as well as in more didactic genres.[523] The poetic medium exploits more elliptically but no less effectively the dialectic between chaos (disorder) and cosmos (order). Ovid's

[519] See Deng for details of this question and of several answers to it. Deng (2018).
[520] Theodossiou and Manimanis (2010, 206).
[521] Aris. *Ph*, 5; Mendell (2019). See page 127 in Chapter 3 for more on the Steady State and the Big Bang theories on the origin of the universe.
[522] Hipp. *De Haerisibus*, 5.
[523] López-Ruis (2016).

Metamorphoses provides examples of this: in the beginning there was chaos, and god/nature put order (*cosmos*) on it.[524]

Early Greek poets and philosophers argued that the assignment of immortality in the Homeric poems depends not just on endless duration, but on godlike behaviour. Reincarnation was taken for granted by a number of early Greek thinkers, but Alex Long points out that it did not necessarily make a person or his soul everlasting.[525] Empedocles (~492–432 BC), a pre-Socratic philosopher from Sicily, applied the term 'immortal' to beings who may not die within a cosmic cycle, but will die when the cosmos comes to an end. His worldview was of a cosmos in an eternal cycle of change. There was a never-ending struggle for supremacy between Love and Strife, resulting in cycles of growth and decay. The world was made up of four basic elements (or roots, as Empedocles called them) – earth, air, fire, and water. These remained eternally constant beneath the everlasting cosmic turmoil.[526]

In the Hellenistic era, for Aristotle, for most of the Stoics, and for the Epicureans, immortality in the sense of being godlike took priority over immortality in the sense of everlastingness. For Chrysippus (279-~206 BC), the gods in the plural (as opposed to Zeus, the ruler of the universe) were immortal, but would perish along with everything else, except Zeus, in every periodic conflagration of the universe. When Epicurus promised his followers that they would live like gods among other human beings, he seems to mean that their 'immortal' goods would last only as long as their lifetimes."[527] Sophocles, when contrasting the natural laws with man-made laws, wrote: "Neither today nor yesterday were they born: they are eternal and no one knows when they first appeared."[528] The sense of 'eternal' was something that lasted as long as the world and was therefore an integral part of the world.

In the new monotheism of Christianity, eternity was a key concept. The Bible contained references to an everlasting God, and to an eternal reward in paradise for

[524] Ovid, *Met.* I, 6-7.
[525] Long (2021, 27).
[526] Campbell (2019), Trepanier (2021, 28-35).
[527] From a review of Long (2021).
[528] Soph. *Ant.* 456 – 457.

his worshippers.[529] These provided a basis on which Church teachers could develop an accessible and consistent doctrine of piety and salvation. Apart from the presence of Christ, the Scriptures had little to say about everlasting life in the hereafter, so its nature was open to conjecture. Different ways of imagining eternity soon arose.

Early Christian ideas of eternity

In his monograph about *creatio ex nihilo*, Gerhard May shows how Christians developed the doctrine of Creation and that it was well established by the end of the second century. They had inherited the Judaic belief in the creation of the world. The idea of one universal and all-powerful God was scarcely known to Graeco-Roman philosophy. Rather, the intellectual climate in which Christians debated their religion was shaped by prevailing Graeco-Roman philosophy, notably the Stoic, Epicurean, and Platonic schools of thought. Christians shared some common ground with the stoics on ethics and with Platonism on a single divinity. On cosmogony, Plato's *Timaeus* was often cited, though it was interpreted in different ways. One was that the universe was eternal. The world had been formed, not created, out of this eternal material at a certain point in time. In the 2nd century, Christian teachers developed the idea of a world finite in space and time, created out of nothing – *creatio ex nihilo* – as documented in Genesis and in John 1. These teachers included Basilides (d. 140), Valentinus (100–160), and Justin Martyr (~100-~160).[530]

The creation, as opposed to the formation, of the universe meant that the Christian God transcended the pagan pantheon in two ways: he was all-powerful, able to create something out of nothing, and he existed before time and outside of time – he was eternal. Those faithful to the new religion would share in this eternity at the end of their lives on earth. Justin Martyr put it as follows:

[529] For example, Ps 90:2, Ps 102:27, Ps 103:17, Isa 44:6, Titus 1:2.
[530] May (1994).

> And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.[531]

Jerusalem, where Christ had died and arisen again, was the holy city of early Christians. Justin may have seen the thousand years spent there as a suitable precursor to eternity in heaven.[532]

Zeno's Christology – Father and Son are co-eternal

In Chapter 3, we saw Zeno, in Sermon 1:7, borrowing from Ovid to describe a cosmogony held as true by many – *sunt enim multi* – that was not about creation, but rather dealt with the formation of the world.[533] The "many" included the followers of Lucretius, whose *De rerum natura* gave an account, in verse, of the universe as a random agglomeration of atoms. Stars and planets had been formed, but without any divine author and not for the purpose of accommodating mankind.[534] The present configuration was formed by physical processes out of chaos, which was a pre-existing unordered mass of material.[535] But this account did not explain where the material, albeit shapeless, had come from. The bishop went on to assert that God alone was the creator, that therefore he had paramount qualities:

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[531] Justin Martyr, *Trypho*, 81.

[532] In this synopsis, Justin conflates several episodes from the end of the world, as documented in the Book of Revelation. The initial thousand years in the company of Christ was reserved for martyrs who had suffered for their faith. (Revelation 20:4) Jerusalem is not mentioned until the next chapter, when it is rebuilt as the new and everlasting kingdom, where all God's faithful will live forever. (Revelation 21, 22).

[533] Ovid *Met*, 1.6-10, Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:7.1).

[534] Lucr. *De rerum natura*, 5.416 – 5.770.

[535] The current cosmological model is of a Big Bang, some 13 billion years ago, resulting in a space filled with dark and formless matter. Some hundreds of millions of years elapsed before agglomerations of this matter, formed by gravity, became dense enough to start a fusion process with the generation of energy. Stars, galaxies, and matter as we know it today began from that *fiat lux* moment. Thus, like the models of Lucretius and others, the universe is generated in two separate phases, a creation and a formation, as it were. See Loeb (2006) for theory on the dark age of the universe, and Oesch and al (2016) for recent evidence.

> *Solus ante omnia et post omnia, quoniam in eius manu inclusa sunt omnia; ex se est quod est; solus sui conscius, quantus et qualis est; solus perfectus, quia non potest illi aliquid nec addi nec minui; solus omnipotens, quia ex nihilo universa constituit, virtute regit, maeistate custodit; solus indemutabilis ac semper aequalis, quia in se non admittit aetatem; solus sempiternus, quia immortalitatis est dominus. Hic est deus noster, qui se digessit in deum; hic pater qui suo manente integro statu totum se reciprocavit in filium, ne quid sibimet derogaret.*[536]

> He alone is before everything and after everything; everything is included in his hand. He is what he is. He alone is aware of his greatness and his nature. He alone is perfect; because nothing can be added, and nothing can be taken away. He alone is omnipotent; for he has made the universe out of nothing, rules it with his excellence, preserves it with his majesty. He alone is unchanging and always consistent; he does not know the term age as applied to himself. He alone is eternal because he is the master of immortality. This is our God who is interpreted as God. This is the Father who, unchanged in his nature, replicated himself in the Son, without taking anything from himself.

Zeno's God makes the universe out of nothing, but he is immanent and continues to manage it. This function was attributed by Anaxagoras (c 500–c 428 BC) to νοῦς (*nous* or intellect); the Pythagoreans are thought to have ascribed the role to λόγος (*logos* or reason).[537] Zeno's God differed in two fundamental ways from these abstractions. First, he must be thought of as having a physical form. Since he created man in his own image, that form was human. This is a key distinction for Christians, as the presence of God in man, of the eternal in the temporal, underlies their faith. The pre-Socratic *logos* and *nous* were defined as distinct from all elements of creation, particularly from entities with a ψυχή (*psyche* or soul). Second, he did not reshape a pre-existing chaos, he created the world out of nothing. God pre-dated the universe, which had a definite beginning in time – and a predicted end.

[536] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:7.3-4).
[537] Curd (2019), Sorabji (1993, 99-100, 173).

Before Creation, there was nothing. God not only created the world out of nothing, but he also governs it with his power, and he guards it with his majesty. The transcendence of God is emphasised; he is not simply the craftsman who designs and forms the universe out of material already there – and created by whom? Further, God is a hands-on creator and his creation is high-maintenance. The world is not self-fulfilling but depends on God, its creator and preserver;[538] there is diversity in nature and in the ways that it works, but the one God manages everything;[539] God surpasses all things, yet without him nothing would exist.[540] It is not like the cosmos of Lucretius, vast but devoid of any divinity; it is suffused with God's omnipresence. The Creator of this universe must have superlative qualities, such as almighty power, knowledge of everything, and, in the same vein, he must be eternal. The bishop spelled this out in an Easter vigil sermon on Genesis, subtitled *De aeterna Filii Dei generatione* (On the eternal begetting of the Son of God).[541] As God was arbiter of the everlasting reward for the faithful, he himself must be everlasting. Zeno's world had a start and an apocalyptic end, but was managed and preserved in the interim, in a steady state, as it were.[542] But that was only the temporal universe. There was a parallel spiritual universe, without beginning and without end. This was the kingdom of God, where the just and the good would enjoy eternal rest. Stepanich, in analysing Zeno's Christology, focuses on the influence that Lactantius, Novatian, Tertullian, and Theophilus of Antioch had on the bishop. These Church fathers also wrote of the temporal and the eternal kingdoms of God, and Zeno made the distinction in his sermons.[543]

Zeno saw eternity, particularly the co-eternity of the Trinity, as central to Christian teaching. However, this did not prevent him from using the term in a more colloquial and less doctrinal manner; it does not always signify the endless reaches of time, the

[538] Cochrane (1944, 239).
[539] 1 Cor. 12,6.
[540] Coll. 1,16-17.
[541] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:17).
[542] John 1,1-3; *Book of Revelation.*
[543] Stepanich (1948, 29). References to the divine kingdoms can be found in Lactant. *Div. Inst.*; Novatian, *On the Trinity*; and Tert. *On the Flesh of Christ*. In Chapter 3 see Sermon 2:5 (on page 142), in which Zeno uses the distinction between the two kingdoms to denounce the anti-Trinitarian interpretation of 1 *Cor* 15:24 by Marcellus of Ancyra and others.

immeasurable existence of the divine. 'Eternal' can mean 'of very long duration', even 'as long-lasting as the world', which is of course of finite duration, with start and finish as documented in the Bible. The bishop conveyed this sense of the term in his sermons when he spoke of 'eternal beauty' or 'eternally voracious earth'.[544]

Predominantly, though, his usage of eternal was confined to the divine realm, to Christ's nature as co-eval with the Father, and to the heavenly reward promised by Christ to the faithful – the unique selling point of Christianity. This was consonant with Scripture and with Nicaean Christology. Thus, on the equivalence of Father and Son:

> *Ergo ubi purum Deum significat, sic dicit in Genesi: Et fecit Deus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei: et in psalmis: Deus autem rex noster ante saecula operatus est salutem in medio terrae et alio loco: Parata sedes tua Deus, ex tunc, et a saeculis tu es.*[545]
>
> Where it refers to him simply as God, thus it says in Genesis: "And God created man in his own image and likeness" and in the Psalms: "But God our King hath worked salvation from time immemorial in the midst of the earth." And in another place: "Your throne has been established from time immemorial, you are from eternity".

and

> *Haec est enim potestas Dei, ut salvo, quod est, possit esse, quod non est. Hic est Deus noster aeterni Dei coaeternus Filius.*[546]
>
> For this is the power of God, that he can be what he is not, and yet remain what he is. He is our God, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father.

and

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544 Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:1.17, 1:12.6).
545 Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5), Gen. I, 27; Psalms 73,12; Psalms 92, 2.
546 Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:12.2).

> *Denique inquit: Ego et Pater unum sumus. Unde non diminutiva, sed religiosa, ut dixi, subiectione est Filius Patri subiectus; cum quo originalis perpetuique regni una possessio, coaeternitatis omnipotentiaeque una substantia, una aequalitas, una virtus maiestatis augustae, unico in lumine una dignitas retinetur.*[547]
>
> Therefore he says: "I and the Father are one." So, as he said, the son is subject to the father in an obedience which is not because of a lower position, but proceeds from a reverential disposition, and he retains with him the one possession of the original eternal kingdom, the one essence of the same eternity and to the same omnipotence, the one equality, the one power of sublime majesty in the one light, the one dignity.

Zeno's interest was in the happiness and well-being of his congregation in this world and in the next. Christians have moral and social obligations, but that does not mean that they must forego all pleasure until the next life. Good Christians can thrive and prosper in this world - see Sermon 1:55, *Invitation to the baptismal font* – eternal life starts with baptism. Eternity with Christ is the reward, eternity without him is the punishment - see Sermons 1:46b *Easter vigil*, 1:21 *On greed*, and 2:4 *On the soul and the body*.[548]

However, Zeno's entire mission as bishop was challenged by Arianism. This was a variant of Christianity named after Arius, a priest from Cyrenaica (modern Libya) who served under the bishop of Alexandria. It was condemned as heresy by Councils of the Church yet was still, in Zeno's time, the version of Christianity preached in some dioceses, mainly in the eastern Church. Its central tenet was that Christ was created by God. The Son proceeded from the Father, was subsidiary to him and subsequent to him. They were of different substances and were not co-eternal. Zeno saw Arianism as a threat because of its watchword "There was a time when he [meaning the Son] was not".[549] A measure of how seriously Zeno took this was the bishop's

[547] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5).
[548] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:55, 1:46b.3, 1:21, 2:4.12).
[549] According to Hilary of Poitiers, Arius himself made this claim in a letter he wrote to his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria: *Filius autem sine tempore editus a Patre, et ante saecula creates et*

readiness to beard the Arian lion in its den, to challenge the very slogan of the followers of Arius. He is not concerned with the issue of the substance of God, which pre-occupied most of the relevant Church conclaves. The reasoning may be more logical than ideological: if the promised reward was to transcend death and to spend eternity in the presence of God, then Christ, who made the promise, must himself have overcome death. He must have died and risen again. Zeno expressed this tenet, the cornerstone of his Christology, in sermon 2:4, "On the soul and the body":

> *Haec cum diu sic haberentur, solertissimus ille artifex rerum filius dei, cuius sapientia non habet finem nec fortitudo mensuram, amore imaginis suae de caelo descendit, uteri virginalis illustrat hospitium ibidemque in homine includit deum. Utitur et figura et conditione mortali. Iustitiam docet immortalitatis esse comparatricem. Factis praecepta consummat. Postremam suscepit mortem, ut ea devicta, resurgens homini per hominem, quem gerebat, et spem vincendae mortis offerret et eum ad praemia immortalitatis admitteret. Sicque factum est, ut, quomodo per unius hominis damnationem in omnes homines damnatio, sic per unius iustificationem in omnes homines iustificatio aeternae decurreret vitae. Videtisne iam manifeste in homine suscipiendo fuisse providentiam, in passione sacramentum, in resurrectione summum bonum?*[550]
>
> It had been like that for a long time. Then the Son of God, the most skilful creator of things, whose wisdom has no limit, whose strength is immeasurable, for love of his image he descended from heaven; he enlightened the hospitable place of the virgin womb with his splendour; he embodied the divinity there as a man. Using the form and circumstances of mortal man, he taught that justice brings immortality; by miracles he confirmed his commandments. Finally, he took death upon himself in order to rise again after overcoming it and, through the humanity he carried within himself, to bring man the hope of overcoming death and opening up access to the reward of immortality. So it

fundatus, non erat antequam nasceretur. (But the Son, who was born out of time by the Father, and who was created and founded before the ages, did not exist before he was born). Hilary, *De Trinitate* 4,13.

[550] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4.3).

> happened that, as if by a man's sentence of damnation, the judgement on all people, just as the justification for eternal life passed to all through the justification of one. Do you now see clearly how providence lay in his acceptance of humanity, a sacred power in his suffering, and the highest good in his resurrection?

In Chapter 2, we saw the origins of Arianism in the eastern Church and its uptake as a version of Christianity in the Greek-speaking world. Arianism reached all parts of the empire – and beyond - and was of concern to Constantine and his successors. Clearly, Zeno saw Arianism as a danger, as it challenged the eternal nature of Christ. Was the bishop overreacting to a spent force? Was the importance he assigned to eternity in line with the views of his contemporaries? Did he use the teachings of Arius as a straw man for something else? Did others see Arianism as a palpable threat to the Christian message? To address these questions and to see whether Zeno aligned with any distinct school of thought, I will compare what he said in his sermons with views about eternity from others in Late Antiquity. Before making such comparisons, we need to look at the historical context, particularly within the Church in northern Italy in the latter half of the 4th century. Who were the key figures and what were the main issues they dealt with?

Arianism in Italy in Late Antiquity

Christianity as a religion had been gaining ground throughout the empire and in neighbouring domains since the 1st century AD. It did so under both persecution and patronage. With its acceptance in the era of Constantine, it went beyond being solely an accepted belief system. As a moral authority, it was the envy of its opponents.[551] It had political power, exercised by its institution, the Church. Within the Church, governance was in the hands of Councils of Bishops. These made decisions which were binding on all Christians.[552] During the 4th century, many of these Church conclaves were concerned largely with the Arian-orthodox controversy.

[551] See Chapter 3.
[552] Edwards (2010, 607).

In these gatherings, the nature of the godhead was a key issue of debate. The protagonists were aligned according to whether and how they distinguished between the substances of the Father and the Son – were they identical, similar, or different.[553] A signal event during this dispute, at least in the western Church, was the Synod of Aquileia in 381. This was organised by Ambrose, bishop of Milan (~339–397), who used it to depose two Arian bishops, Palladius of Rataria (in north-west Bulgaria) and Secundianus of Singidunum (modern Belgrade).[554] From that point on, Arianism was seen as a spent force in the West and was largely confined to the Goths on the northern frontiers of the empire. The year 381 was the effective expiry date of Arianism, at least until the Ostrogoths arrived just over a century later.[555] Also in Aquileia at the time of the Synod was Chromatius (d. ~407), a friend and associate of Ambrose and later bishop of Aquileia from 388 to 407.[556] He would continue to preach against the Arians, despite their waning influence inside the western empire. He associated heretics such as the Arians with rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and with attempts to corrupt the Church.[557] Chromatius condemned all who were outside the Nicene confession of Christianity, be they pagan, Jew, or Arian. If the latter were now a rarity, he could remind people of their heretical beliefs by conflating them with the Jewish community, which was sizeable in the major trading port of Aquileia.[558] The bishop could generalise or he could be specific when it came to those who were not *catholici*, as he called those of the true

[553] These terms were used, in Greek, to identify the various parties in the doctrinal dispute. Thus, the *homoousians* (of the same substance) were the orthodox, while Arians were called *heteroousian* (of different substance). A group which became known as the *homoiousian* (of similar substance) attempted to heal the rift with a compromise position, but this was doomed to failure. The orthodox churchmen rejected this stance, saying that similarity is somewhat short of identity and thus implies difference.

[554] Strictly speaking, Singidunum and its diocese were in the eastern empire. Nonetheless, the Council of Aquileia, which exclusively comprised western bishops, saw its remit extending to all of Illyria. Lizzi (1989, 26).

[555] Ambrose, *Epistles* 20:12; Oros. *Adversus paganos*, VII:33.19; Williams (1995, 227-232). Arianism would return to northern Italy a century later when the Ostrogoths set up a kingdom with the Arian form of Christianity as the official religion. Brown (1998), Herrin (2020).

[556] Lizzi (1990, 158, 165), McEachnie (2014, 273).

[557] McEachnie (2014, 284-286).

[558] McEachnie (2014, 276 and 292), Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 4:1), Noy (2005, 11-13), Cracco-Ruggini (2008, 184-185).

Nicene faith.[559] Taking his text from Corinthians, he described some of the contestants in the great race of life, in which there could be only one winner: Jews take part according to their law, philosophers run because they are addicted to their vain wisdom, heretics compete while declaring false doctrines, and Catholics are the contenders who preach the true faith.[560] Heretics in general were impure and unfaithful, like crows, they were enemies of the unity of the Church, and they were trying to dismantle the Trinity.[561] On two occasions, he named the heresies he condemned. As the archetype of those who denied the divinity of Christ he chose Photinus, whose beliefs were often suspected of being unorthodox, although the absence of any of his writings makes it difficult to reconstruct his Christology.[562] He used Photinus to represent anyone who disputed the dual nature of Christ. He mentioned Arius by name only once. In a sermon on John the evangelist, he quoted the first verse from the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."[563] He goes on to say:

> *Amaricavit Arrius qui non credidit de Patre Filium processisse, cum Verbum Patris non alia ratione Filius, nisi proprie de paterno corde processisset, credatur.*[564]
>
> Arius was bitter, not believing that the Son proceeded from the Father; it could not be believed, in effect, that the Son was the Word of the Father, unless he had properly proceeded from his father's heart.

The issue with Arianism, according to Chromatius, centred on the substance of the Son. Is it identical – and not just similar - to that of the Father? Are they "one in substance", as the Nicene creed would have it? This was the battleground on which bishops had contended with Arianism at councils throughout the 4th century.

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[559] Zeno used the term 'catholic' only once, in Sermon 1:45.1, and he was referring to the orthodox side of the Church as opposed to any faction or heresy. More generally, and more inclusively, he addressed his congregation as 'Christians.'

[560] 1 Cor 9:24 ("Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."), Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 28:1).

[561] Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 2:5, 33:3, 4:1).

[562] Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 11:4).

[563] John 1:1.

[564] Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 21:3).

Chromatius was very much part of the Nicene apparatus, having helped to set up the Synod of Aquileia in 381 which all but settled the matter in favour of the Nicene position, at least in the West and for the moment. As to Christ's co-eternity with the Father or the Arian shibboleth that denied it – "There was a time when the Son was not" (*Fuit tempus, quando non fuit Filius*)– these did not feature in the sermons of Chromatius.[565] He made two epithetic references to God's eternal nature, but the topic is not developed or explained.[566] According to McEachnie, his main critique of Arianism was that it denied the Trinity. This meant that neither baptism nor the remission of sins could be performed, as salvific powers came only with full acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity.[567] This practical restriction was one of the earliest concerns with Arianism and was dealt with at the first Council of the Church, at Nicaea in 325. The outcome was the adoption of the Nicene Creed, which explicitly endorsed the doctrine of the Trinity.

Philastrius (d. ~397), bishop of Brescia and a contemporary of Zeno, was also at the Synod of Aquileia in 381. He, and his successor Gaudentius, would not let the virtual demise of heresy in the see of Brescia moderate the flow of rhetoric in their sermons against Arians and others.[568] Finally, Ambrose of Milan is also cited for aligning Arians, pagans, and Jews in their denial of the true Christ.[569] As bishop of Milan, where the western emperors had residence and held court in the 4th century, Ambrose confronted three emperors and checked their power. However, at the time of Zeno's tenure in Verona, Ambrose had not yet taken holy orders: he was following in his late father's footsteps and serving as a magistrate in the Imperial civil service.[570] His appointment to the see in 374 followed a bitter campaign against his predecessor, Auxentius, who was accused of being a follower of Arius. He

[565] This central tenet of the Son's non-eternity was not confined to Arians. The writer Tertullian, who was the first to use the term Trinity with reference to the Christian godhead, wrote in a treatise towards the end of the 2nd century: *Fuit autem tempus cum ei delictum et filius non fuit quod iudicem et qui patrem dominum faceret*. (For there was a time when neither sin existed nor his son, which respectively would make the Lord a judge and a father.). Zeno's intellectual formation, based on the works including those of Tertullian, did not prevent him from critiquing the views of his mentors. Tert. *Adversus Hermogenem* 3.

[566] Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 15:14, 26:25).

[567] Chromace and Lemarié (1969, 34:2, 3:8), McEachnie (2014, 284).

[568] Philastrius and Banterle (1991), Piardi (2014).

[569] Williams (2017, 185), Doerfler (2011).

[570] McLynn (1994, 2).

continued to condemn Arianism in his writings and as convenor of the Synod of Aquileia.[571] Ambrose gave the impression that he was not certain what precisely Arianism stood for, and M. S. Williams says that the bishop's strategy here was to misrepresent his enemies; he cites D. H. Williams, Hanson, McLynn, and Markschies in saying that this was a widely held view of Ambrose.[572] It is certainly the case that Ambrose was often liberal with the truth in the charges he laid against Arians. He accused those who held *homoian* beliefs of being Arians, even though, as Christians, they had tried to define a position which avoided the contentious issue of the substance of the Son of God.[573] But there are times when he was clearly unaware of the doctrinal points at issue when he rejected the Arians. They opposed his melting down of sacred vessels to raise ransom for Christians in the East largely because, as a precedent, this practice could give bishops too much wealth and power. He failed to see (or turned a blind eye to?) the relevance of such a charge and the impact it could have on Church authority and doctrine, and said that the Arians were just being awkward and trying to blame him for something.[574] In writing about the doctrinal outcomes of the Council of Rimini, held in 359, he was unable to, or chose not to, engage with the details of the Arian position, preferring instead to recite all the salient differences between Arianism and the Nicene expression of Christianity.[575] In his treatise *De Fide*, Ambrose was perhaps at his most cogent in stating the case against Arianism. Nevertheless, Hanson finds his arguments here as 'beneath contempt', while M. S. Williams says that they are largely irrelevant.[576] Ambrose did, however, identify one of the key tenets of Arianism, one that became known as their watchword: "There was a time when he [meaning the Son] was not." The narrative he ascribed to the putative Arians includes the following:

> *…et ideo quia Filius est, principium habet et ex tempore esse coepit*.[577]

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[571] Ambrose (2005).
[572] Williams (2018b, 347), Williams (1995, 146-147), Hanson (1988, 669), McLynn (1994, 103), Ambrosius (2005, 103).
[573] Williams (2017, 221).
[574] Ambrose, *De Officiis*, II.28.136-143; Williams (2017, 172).
[575] Ambrose, *De Fide*, I.19.129-132; Jer. *Dialogue against the Luciferians*,19; Socrates Scholastichus, *Hist. Eccl.* 2:37; Williams (2017, 258).
[576] Hanson (1988, 669), Williams (2017, 136).
[577] Ambrose, *De Fide*, I, 11.73.

> … and therefore, because he is the Son, he has a beginning, and begins his life in time.

If the Son's beginning is *ex tempore* then his nature is temporal, in the sense of being worldly, transitory, and secular, as against being eternal, as Ambrose would have it. In *De Fide*, he referred to this timeless quality on several occasions, often bracketing it with other divine attributes:

> "Therefore we ought to believe that God is good, eternal, perfect, almighty, and true, such as we find Him in the Law and the Prophets, and the rest of the holy Scriptures, for otherwise there is no God."[578]

Eternity is one of a set of properties that the godhead must have. If any one of them is missing, then Christ is not complete or perfect, he is not divine. Eternity had no special significance for Ambrose. It was a *sine qua non* for the Son of God, just like the other attributes he listed. He did not refer to its centrality to Christology and to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. Towards the end of Book I, Ambrose recruited support against the Arians from a selection of prophets, apostles, and evangelists. He cited the following, the penultimate line from the first Johannine epistle:

> And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.[579]

Ambrose did not develop the clear linkage here between the Son and eternal life. It is the Son's co-eternity with the Father, his "eternal life" that makes possible his role as the Saviour who offers eternal life to his faithful followers.[580] The Christian

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[578] Ambrose, *De Fide*, I.2.14. The sense of "perfect" here is one of completeness or integrity, and the connotation is that God does not change. But if the Son is not eternal, then there was a time when the father did not have a son. He was therefore not unchanging, as he would have changed from not being a father to being a father.

[579] 1 John 5:20.

[580] Origen held that the Son and the Father were coeternal. Nonetheless, his writings would place the Son in the intermediate position between the Father and humanity; Origen, *C. Cels*. 5.39.

concept of eternity was framed by the timeline of Christ and the everlasting heaven promised to the faithful; the Arian sect challenged these intimations of immortality and thereby undermined the doctrine of salvation and eternal reward. This was at the core of Zeno's sermons against the Arians, but two decades later, Ambrose was either unaware of this gap in the Church's defences or he chose to ignore it. There are many studies of the bishop of Milan and more recent works point to the way in which he exploited opposition to the Arians as a means of advancing his career.[581] There is certainly evidence for the argument that Ambrose exaggerated the influence of Arianism in the late 4th century and played up his own importance in defending the Church against it.

Zeno, preaching in the decades before the watershed of the Aquileian synod, rejected Jews and heretics in the same Sermon, 2:8, on the birth of the Lord. He was averse to any deviation from holy scripture and from the orthodoxy of the Nicene creed. He saw attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible as a form of madness and said so in several sermons.[582] He was forensic in identifying the errors of each and their impacts on the true faith. Without mentioning either explicitly, he condemned the variant belief associated with Paul of Samosata and the more widespread Arian doctrine.[583] The Samosatene teachings were anathemised in 268 at a council in Antioch. That Paul himself was bishop there may indicate that his heresy was something of a "straw man" when used by Zeno. But there is nothing feigned about Zeno's ranking of Arianism as the most insidious of all, the greatest menace to Christianity. His rationale was precise: the Arian sect was dangerous not simply because it was different or because it rejected the divine Trinity, but because Arians said that Christ was not co-eternal with the Father. For Zeno, the most important divine property was eternity. According to the Nicene Creed, Christ was the only Son of God, and was "eternally begotten of the Father", a wording that, while asserting the filial relationship of the Saviour, rejected the Arian shibboleth: "There was a time when he was not." Zeno asked rhetorically whether Father and

[581] See, for example, Whelan (2017); Williams (2018a); Williams (2017); Williams (2018b).
[582] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:54, 1:56, 2:8.3). The Orthodox Encyclopedia itemises these and other references to what Zeno saw as heresy – see https://www.pravenc.ru/text/199839.html .
[583] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:8.1). Details of the doctrine associated with Paul of Samosata are to be found in Edwards (2015, 288) and in Roldanus (2006, 74).

Son both possessed infinite timelines, or was there even a scintilla of difference in their timespans:

> *Videamus nunc, optime Christiane, quemadmodum inter patrem filiumque tempus infulcias: si enim tempori, non sibi debent, quod est alter alteri obnoxius; procul dubio, ut tu vis, maior est natura, quam Deus. At cum naturam ex nihilo fecerit Christus; sit autem ex natura tempus, ineptum satis est, opus suo praeponere artifici: ac per hoc solum interest, quod soli se sciunt*.[584]
>
> Now, good Christian, let us see you inserting time between father and son. It is because of time, not due to themselves, that one is subject to the other. Without doubt, it is as you wish, nature is greater than God. As Christ made nature out of nothing, the term itself (time) comes from the created; it is not suitable to put the work ahead of the creator, in terms of time: and the only difference between them is that they know each other.

This Sermon, 2:8, was titled "The Nativity of the Lord" and referred to Christ's first birth, from the Father. In the second nativity, he was born again of the Virgin Mary. Zeno, like his fellow North African predecessor Lactantius, distinguished between these two nativities.[585] Zeno said that Christ was loved by the Father, but was not revealed by him. What was concealed was not so much Christ as his first birth. His incarnation in human form was prophesied in the Old Testament by Isaiah, who was cited in turn in the New Testament.[586] Zeno himself referred to Isaiah's prophecies in at least eight sermons, and in Sermon 2:5 he quoted from seven passages of scripture that advert to the coming of Christ on earth.[587] Gaius Marius Victorinus, also of African origin, referred to the double birth of Christ: *Duplex enim generatio*

[584] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:8.3).
[585] "For we especially testify that He was twice born, first in the spirit, and afterwards in the flesh." Lactant. *Div. Inst.* Book IV, 8. In evidence, Lactantius quotes from Jer. 5: "Before I formed You in the womb, I knew You."
[586] Isa. 7:14, 9:16, 53:1-12. These passages are cited in Matt. 1:23 and 8:17, John 12:38, Mark 15:28, Luke 22:37.
[587] Isaiah cited in Sermons 1:61, 1:30, 1:20, 1:47, 2:21, 2:11, 1:10, 1:60. In 2:5 Zeno cited from Jer. 17:5, Gen. 1:27, Ps. 73:12, Ps. 92:2, Zach. 9:9, Ps. 23:7, Matt 2:2.

eius, while Cyril of Jerusalem mentioned to two advents of the Lord, the first of which was not revealed, thereby showing his patience.[588]

In assessing risk, two factors are considered: impact and likelihood. The level of risk is the product of these.[589] In the latter half of the 4th century, Arianism as a risk was becoming less and less likely. Zeno saw the outcome of the risk as serious for the salvation of his flock, but the likelihood of it taking hold was minimal; this would have declined even further as Ambrose took over the archdiocese of Milan, and as the Council of Aquileia effectively put paid to any remaining Arian tendency in the West. Arianism was all but eliminated in the region at that time (though it would re-appear in the 6th century under the Ostrogoths), there were no Arian figures or centres in the west, unlike their presence in the eastern empire.

But Zeno's Christology was not a reaction to a variant belief. He saw that pagan superstitions and practices were still in evidence, and that Judaism claimed title to much of the Christian tradition. He aimed to "shake Christians from the torpor generated by familiarity" with these.[590] To do this, it was not enough to engage in polemics with old rituals and new heresies. Zeno's Christology is evident in his sermons. It formed a doctrine of faith and salvation and made a positive contribution to the culture of the Christian community.

[588] Marius Victorinus, *Adversus Arium*, 1, 24; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* XV, 1.

[589] Thus, the impact of a meteorite with the earth would be catastrophic, potentially causing the extinction of mankind. But the chance of it happening is very small: on average, such events occur once every 10 million years. The level of risk is therefore low, so meteorite extinction is not high on our list of concerns. On the other hand, while catching a cold is for many people a matter of inconvenience, the likelihood of it happening is quite high. The level of risk is not insignificant, so we take precautions to mitigate the risk.

[590] Ariano (2014, 141). Sermon 1:25 is a comparison of the sacrificial practices of pagans, Jews and Christians. The least bloodthirsty and the most pleasing to God is the Christian ritual of worship, according to the bishop. It is based on the filial relationship between Christ and his Father. But it is not pleasing to God unless it comes from the heart. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:25.4).

Liturgical change - Zeno's purpose and contribution

Zeno's sermons are among the earliest from the Church in northern Italy. They predate Ambrose's tenure in Milan and come from a time when Verona was only partially Christian. Even among the baptised there were those who clung to pagan rituals and unchristian behaviour such as the hoarding of gold and silver; Zeno castigated his congregation for such practices.[591] He saw the Church as a moral centre, and it was his function to encourage virtuous lifestyles among the Christian population. Like his near contemporaries Chromatius in Aquileia and Gaudentius in Brescia, he preached moral examples and explained lessons from Scripture.[592] Zeno's purpose was progressive, and his manner was positive. His teachings about the eternal life of the Christian deity and how it was now accessible to the faithful should not be seen as solely an attack on Arianism; they were not simply a defensive reaction to the doctrine of the subordination of the Son to the Father. Christ's role was that of saviour and the reward he brought was the eternal life which awaited the faithful in the next life. This was Zeno's belief and he taught it rigorously, carefully gauging his audience and using the Church calendar to best effect. We can see how the bishop systematically constructed the concept of everlasting life in sermons over several years. In each year, he addressed the catechumenate during the Easter vigil, which was a period of fasting and spiritual exercise for the candidates for baptism. Among the topics which Zeno chose for these sermons were the Book of Genesis and an exegesis of the Creation. He taught how the worldly kingdom began from an everlasting divine kingdom, and would, at the end of time, be returned to its eternal creator. Time and eternity were key elements in the bishop's Christology, respective metaphors for man and God.

The 4th century was a time of rapid change in the Church. From an oppressed and subordinate position, it came to rival the moral authority and political power of the state. It was in a phase of growth and institutionalisation. New converts, new churches, and new dioceses marked this progress. Christian doctrine was debated and defined, framed by new rituals and ceremonies practiced by the faithful. The

[591] Lizzi (1990, 161-163), Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:25.10, 1:14.3).
[592] McEachnie (2014, 277), Gerzaguet (2017), Mascari (1996), Truzzi (1985).

sermon was part of this liturgical practice. It began as an exegesis of scriptural readings and expanded to include the homily on topical issues. We can see both forms in Zeno's preaching. He spoke on topics as he saw fit, to influence the lives of his listeners. We saw this in Chapter 2, with Zeno's unique sermon 1:38 on the zodiac. In that sermon, he suggested the celebration of name days. This was taken up by the Church in the Middle Ages and is still practiced in some countries. This is part of Zeno's legacy, the impact he had on Christians' lives long after his own lifetime.

We have seen how Zeno challenged the core tenet of Arianism – that Christ was subsidiary and subsequent to the Father. The Son's co-eternity with God was a *sine qua non* of the bishop's Christology. Eternal happiness was the reward promised by Christ – and by the Church – to the faithful. Eternity was an abstract topic of philosophy, but Zeno saw it as important to provide a Christian explanation of it to his Veronese congregation. The liturgy of the Church enabled the bishop to explain the doctrine of eternal salvation and he invariably started at the beginning, as documented in Genesis.

The Judaeo-Christian God created the world out of nothing. Nothing existed before God, so the infinite timeline of the deity is established. The end of the world is pre-ordained, it is documented in Scripture, but God will continue as everlasting deity. Zeno also had to show that there was equal divinity between Father and Son, and that they were co-eval i.e., that both were eternal. In Sermon 1:45, he spoke of the holy equality of the undivided deity, pointing out that Genesis 1:26 was a wish rather than a command, the mood subjunctive rather than imperative:

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.[593]

It is not a question of the Father giving orders and the Son carrying them out, but rather of the Son, who is the Word, pronouncing everything that the Father says.

[593] *Gen.* 1:26.

The Word resided within the mind of God and, in the act of Creation, was his intermediary.[594] Zeno cited the evangelist John in his support.[595]

In Sermon 1:17, also during the Easter vigil, Zeno said that Christ had always existed within the godhead, and that only God knew why he was not revealed earlier. This was a mystery, he said, beyond the comprehension of mortals. The register in which he recited the generation of the Son is credal and formulaic – it was not open to question:

> *De Deo nascitur Deus, de ingenito unigenitus, de solo solus, de toto totus, de vero verus, de perfecto perfectus. Totum Patris habens, nihil derogans Patri.*[596]
>
> God is born from God, from the unbegotten comes the only begotten, the whole from the whole, the true from the true, the perfect from the perfect. He possesses everything from the Father and yet takes nothing away from the Father.

It may seem strange that in this sermon the bishop chose not to cite instances of the revelation of Christ from the Old Testament. He was familiar with such passages and used them elsewhere in preaching his doctrine of Christology.[597] Stepanich explains this as distinct interpretations of the Word, the first being hidden within the bosom of God, the second referring to the agency of creation, and attributes this to the teachings of Theophilus of Antioch. But he goes on to say that Zeno maintains the eternity of the Son *per se*, and not just as an instance of the Word.[598] This is born out in a passage from Sermon 2:5:

> *Denique inquit: "Ego et Pater unum sumus." Unde non diminutiva, sed religiosa, ut dixi, subiectione est Filius Patri*

[594] Stepanich (1948, 29).
[595] "But if I do not the works of the Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe me not, believe the works: that ye may know, believe that the Father is in me and I in him." (John 10:37-38).
[596] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:17).
[597] In Sermon 2:8 Zeno quoted from (Isaiah 7:14) and the prophecy of the virgin birth, in his sermon on patience (1:4) he described Noah in terms that presaged the righteousness of Christ, and in Sermon 1:37, an interpretation of the dream of Jacob, he said that the patriarch carried within himself the image of Christ. Isa. 7:14; Gen. 6-8; Gen. 28:16; Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:8.3, 1:4.4, 1:37.1).
[598] Stepanich (1948, 37).

> *subiectus; cum quo originalis perpetuique regni una possessio, coaeternitatis omnipotentiaeque una substantia, una aequalitas, una virtus maiestatis augustae, unico in lumine una dignitas retinetur;*[599]
>
> Therefore, he says: "I and the Father are one." So then, as said, the son is subject to the father in an obedience which is reverential but not inferior, and he retains with him the unique possession of the original eternal kingdom, the one essence of the same eternity and to the same omnipotence, the one equality, the one power of sublime majesty in the one light, the one dignity.

In Sermon 2:12, delivered during Easter vigil to the *competentes*, the candidates for baptism:

> *Totum contra conscientiam suam, ut homo infirmus patitur, ut homini mortis lege consumpto immortalitas tribuatur. Haec est enim potestas Dei, ut salvo quod est possit esse, quod non est. Hic est Deus noster aeterni Dei coaeternus Filius.*[600]
>
> Completely against his consciousness, like a weak man he takes all suffering upon himself; he does it so that immortality may be bestowed on man who was subject to the law of death. For this is the power of God, that he can be what he is not, and yet remain what he is. He is our God, the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father.

The distinction between man and God is mapped to two separate kingdoms, earth and heaven. In Sermon 2:5, the bishop refers to “the temporal kingdom of man”, whereas “his (God’s) kingdom will have no end.”[601] The kingdoms are distinct, but in both space and time the earthly is contained within the heavenly – the former is a subset of the latter. Christ is the link between them. In Zeno’s Christology, only the eternal can promise eternity.[602] Since Christ is co-eval with God the Father, he is

[599] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5.10).
[600] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:12.2).
[601] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5.3).
[602] This thesis is crucial to Zeno’s argument and is dealt with in one of the major sermons on moral and doctrinal issues, 1:3. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:3.5).

eternal. Hence Christ is authenticated as the Saviour who can promise – and deliver – the reward of eternity to the faithful.[603] Zeno's syllogism and his persuasive skills of oratory made a convincing case against Arianism. They also made clear the Christian selling point of eternal life. Zeno's compelling argument that Christ is eternal was the basic premise for the theology of time and eternity; this is expanded further in the next section – see page 178 et seq.

Scriptural backing for redemption and salvation for the faithful appear in several of Zeno's sermons. The corollary, condemnation of the wicked, is also mentioned. Reward and punishment are equally absolute and eternal:

> *Nunc scire debemus (quoniam iusti vitae perpetuae, impii aeterno sunt destinati supplicio, nullaque eos cognitio exspectat ulterius) quinam sint isti, quibus est iudicium praeparatum. Et a quo scire debemus, nisi ab ipso Domino, qui suum dictum prosequitur dicens: "Hoc est autem iudicium, quia lux venit in hunc mundum, et dilexerunt homines tenebras magis, quam lucem."*[604]

> So if the righteous are destined for eternal life, the wicked for eternal punishment, and neither of them awaits judicial investigation, we must know who are those facing judgment. And from whom should we learn it but from the Lord himself, who continues his sentence with the words: "But this is the judgment, that light has come into the world and men loved darkness more than the light."

In verse 5 of 1:2, a major doctrinal sermon on the Resurrection, Zeno cites from both New and Old Testaments. From Ezekiel, he quotes God's promise of life after death and return to the land of Israel. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that the faithful who died had fallen asleep in the faith and would, like Christ, be resurrected. In Luke's Gospel, that promise is delivered to the good thief on the cross:

[603] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:7.1, 2:12.1, 1:17).
[604] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:35.2), John 3:19.

Nam et Dominus ista exempla confirmans uni ex latronibus in se credenti, qui cum eo de patibulo dextra laevaque pendebant, ait: Amen amen dico tibi, hodie mecum eris in paradiso. Itaque si homo mortuus in aeternum perit, ergo mentitus est Dominus, qui ei deinceps nihil futuro paradisum repromisit. Sed et homo ipse, quem Dominus adsumpserat, perit, si Iesus non resurrexerit. At si resurrexit, humano generi formam dedit, quoniam ad hoc Deus pro homine mortis iura gustavit, ut homo per Deum ius immortalitatis reciperet, quod amisit. Propter quod Paulus beatissimus ait: Nolumus autem ignorare vos, fratres, de dormientibus, ne contristemini, sicut caeteri qui spem non habent: si enim credimus quia Iesus mortuus est, et resurrexit, sic et Deus eos, qui dormierunt in Iesum, adducet cum eo. Nam et Deus per Ezechielem prophetam loquitur, dicens: Ecce ego aperio monumenta vestra, et educam vos de monumentis vestris, et inducam vos in terram Israel: dabo spiritum meum in vos, et vivetis.[605]

And finally, the Lord confirmed these examples when he spoke these words to one of the two thieves who were hanging on the cross with him on either side, the one who believed in him: "Truly, truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." If now a person who has died perishes for all eternity, then the Lord has lied when he promised paradise to him who from then on should be nothing more. But even the man whom the Lord Himself accepted perishes if Jesus is not risen. But if he rose again, he thereby also gave the human race a model; for this reason, God in the human form experienced the right of death taken upon himself, that man may regain through God the right of immortality which he had lost. That is why Blessed Paul says: "Brethren, we do not want you to be ignorant of the fate of those who have fallen asleep, lest you mourn like those who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring up with him those who have fallen asleep in faith in Jesus." Thus also says God through the prophet Ezekiel: "Behold, I will open your tombs, and I will bring you out of your graves and into the land of Israel, and I will put my spirit in you, and you shall live."

[605] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.5); Luke, 23:43; Paul, *Thessalonians* 4:13-14; Ezek. 37:12-14.

Thus far, Zeno's sermons on eternity have been polemics against the Arians or concerned with the doctrine of the co-eternity of Christ with the Father. The stance of the Arians, with the Son who did not always exist, was cited as the antithesis to this doctrine. The titles of these sermons are of a piece, dealing with the generation of the Son as deity or with his birth as the Lord:

1:7 On the begetting of the Son
1:17 On the eternal generation of the Son
2:12 On the birth and divine majesty of our Lord
2:8 On the birth of the Lord

The first three were delivered during the Easter vigil, while the fourth was given at Christmas, soon to be formalised in the calendar as the feast of the Nativity and a central component in the season of Advent.[606] Three other sermons cited above, 1:2, 1:35 and 2:11, dealt with eternity as a reward for the faithful – and a punishment for the damned – but not directly with eternity as part of the doctrine of Christology. But Zeno discussed eternity in at least three other sermons, and these cannot be categorised in the same way as those we have seen already. They are not polemics against other faiths or variants of Christianity, nor are they dogmatic in favour of the Nicene doctrine. These sermons are more philosophical in their content, more open and exuberant in tone. The bishop was sharing his thoughts on eternity, aiming to make the abstract more plausible, or at least imaginable by his Veronese listeners.

Were these musings part of the same agenda to underpin the doctrine of Christ's co-eternality with the Father? If not, why did Zeno depart from his standard lectionary and vocalise his inner thoughts about eternity, why did he change from preaching to philosophising? First, compare these philosophical sermons with the four polemic/doctrinal sermons on eternity tabulated above:

1:33 Sermon on Easter Sunday
1:16 Easter proclamation
2:4 On mind and body

[606] Guéranger (1870, 23-25), Bradshaw and Johnson (2010, 22-23), Connell (2006a, 57-64).

Two of the three are set at Easter, the third is in ordinary time. In title and context, this second group does not cohere like the first four above. Three of the four in the first group belong to the Paschal group of sermons set out by Jeanes and belong to the Genesis lectionary; the fourth is in the non-Paschal group but its title clearly aligns it with the other three.[607]

In these sermons, Zeno shared his thoughts on eternity itself. It is a transcendent abstraction, which even intelligent people find difficult to grasp. As with other concepts he preached about, such as the divine origin of cycles in nature (see Chapter 1), he looked for analogies in everyday life. To appreciate how he described eternity, we look first at ideas about the infinite – including infinite time – that were prevalent in the early Christian period. Modern scholars have used some of these to define general categories, and this will help us in comparing Zeno's views with those of his contemporaries.

Christian eternity: contrastive and inclusive views

Mortal man lives in a time-limited universe. This finite time span is contained within God's time, or eternity. The set and its subset were considered in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures as separate spheres or kingdoms – the human and the divine. More generally, the roots of a theology featuring a divine eternity go back to Greek and Biblical traditions. Padgett, in his synthesis of the question of eternity in theological thought, shows how two main views emerged, of God existing either in time or outside time.[608]

Various Biblical passages, indeed the Bible as a whole, indicate an everlasting God, but one with a history, one who lives in our history.[609] Origen (~185-~253) was the

[607] Jeanes (1995, 23-29).
[608] Padgett (2007, 287). In a timeless state, any temporal language about God can only be metaphorical, not indicative or predictive.
[609] Indicative passages include Gen 1:1-3, Prov 8:22-26, Titus 1:2, 2 Tim 1:9.

first to ascribe a new concept to the Christian God: timelessness. Augustine later expanded this notion, which became the standard view in Christian theology. Rogers argues that a reason for the predominance of this standpoint was the imperative of perfection. The supreme being must be perfect in every way; any hint of temporality implied change, which is not compatible with the perfect.[610] But there is a flaw in this argument. Perfection, when applied to God's knowledge, means that he is omniscient. If he is timeless, then all moments of "now" must be identical. In other words, a timeless deity cannot know the time, and so is not omniscient.

Wallace points to a diversity of views of eternity emerging in Late Antiquity.[611] Plotinus (~204–270) in the 3rd century had an inclusive view, that is, eternity was not antithetical to the change associated with life, while Augustine (354–430) saw a clear distinction between time as measured on earth and the eternity that pervaded the heavenly kingdom: the latter was, in effect, timeless, without change. It may be argued that God is timeless in that he has, in the words of Leftow, no "typically temporal properties", whereas man is temporal.[612] Boethius (~477–524) tried to avoid the dichotomy of two separate eternities by defining eternity as "the whole, simultaneous, and perfect possession of everlasting life" and to reconcile eternal wisdom with human ethics.[613]

Writing in the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* on an inclusive concept of eternity, William W. Young refers to contemporary thinking on eternity.[614] A recent axis of debate has been along the line between a static and divine timelessness and a more active engagement, from both human and divine points of view. He identifies protagonists on both sides and cites Augustine's position that eternity is atemporal. Most religious thinking on this subject has been influenced by Augustine's view of eternity. He described very plausibly our own experiences of time and its fleeting nature. According to Young, Augustine's account of eternity is "contrastive" in that it

[610] Rogers (2000, 54-70).
[611] Wallace (2003).
[612] Leftow (2001).
[613] Boethius, *Consolation* V.VI; Young (2021). Wilberding points to the etymology of the Greek word for eternity, αιών, which was used to denote "life" in poetry and tragedy. He quotes from Plotinus and Boethius, among others, giving instances of this link. Wilberding (2016, 15-16).
[614] Young (2021).

is defined by contrast with time – eternity is timeless. Eternity's fixity stands in contrast to the flux and loss of time. This is like the contrast between God and creation/the world.[615] It identifies God as the supreme and perfect being. Eternity is transcendent, incomparable; if it were not, this could compromise God's perfection. Eternity is timeless and so rules out any inclusion (of worldly time, of music, for instance). Nothing can happen, nothing can change. For Augustine, this does not preclude God from being aware of, and involved in, time. But he still contrasts the two, eternity and time.

Plotinus was an advocate of a more dynamic eternity. Young calls the two positions, respectively, contrastive (eternity stands in contrast to time) and inclusive (eternity transcends time but can incorporate and include elements of time). The contrastive view, represented as it was by one of the most authoritative Christian teachers, was the dominant version from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages and beyond. This was despite the more reconciliatory version of Boethius, who wrote that eternity does not negate time but embraces it all in simultaneity. In this way time, which he regarded as a *sine qua non* in the afterlife, as in this world, was preserved.

To which of Young's categories, contrastive or inclusive, did Zeno's eternity belong, or could it be classified in some other way? As seen above in 2:12, a sermon to the catechumenate, the bishop did say that eternity excluded old age:

> *Subiicit se gradibus aetatis, cuius aeternitas in se non admittit aetatem. Totum contra conscientiam suam, ut homo infirmus patitur, ut homini mortis lege consumpto immortalitas tribuatur.*[616]
>
> He whose eternity excludes the concept of old age submits to the degrees of old age. Contrary to his (divine) consciousness, he takes like a weak man all suffering on himself; he does it so that immortality may be bestowed on man who was subject to the law of death.

[615] Young (2021, 173-176); August. *Conf.* XI, XI.
[616] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:12.2).

More succinctly, he said in Sermon 2:4:

> *cum immortalitas in se ordinem temporis non recipiat, mortalitas capiat.*[617]
>
> for immortality excludes the concept of time, but mortality comprehends it within itself.

In ruling out the ravages of time in heaven, was the bishop asserting that it is timeless, impervious to change? Does ageing stop at the biblical milestone of threescore years and ten (or fourscore)?[618] He mentioned only human ageing and it is reasonable to argue that if body and soul are to last for eternity, the physical form cannot be subject to ageing. If the stasis were confined to the ageing process, then the denizens of paradise could be active and participatory: this is the sense conveyed in Zeno's sermon on the three virtues, faith, hope, and charity:

> *qui eum supradicti amoris male dulcibus venenis occisum, infernaeque sedi submersum, maiestatis suae sacramento vivificatum, insuper regni coelestis participatione ditavit.*[619]
>
> who, when he had succumbed to death and the throne of the underworld through the hapless sweet poison of the love previously described, called him back to life through the sacrament of his majesty and, moreover, made him rich through participation in the heavenly kingdom.

This is an inclusive manifesto, going by Young's terms. The faithful will be "rich through participation in the heavenly kingdom." Their reward will be one of active involvement in the afterlife, not a supine timelessness. Yet Zeno could also be described as contrastive, given the clear distinction he makes between the eternal and the temporal. He used them as a metaphor for the contrast between good and evil, between permanent and transitory:

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[617] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4.1).
[618] Psalm 90:10.
[619] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:36.9).

> *Quae res efficit, ut sive metu, sive incredulitate praeponantur praesentia futuris, mala bonis, fragilia solidis, falsa veris, terrena coelestibus, temporalia sempiternis.*[620]
>
> As a result, whether through fear or lack of faith, the present is preferred to the future, the bad to the good, the fragile to the solid, the false to the true, the earthly to the heavenly, and the temporal to the eternal.

In a more extended sermon, *De eo quod scriptum est: "Cum tradiderit regnum deo et patri*" (2:5), Zeno tried to explain the verse in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

> Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.[621]

This seems to imply that the Son is subservient to the Father, that his reign comes to an end at the end of the world. Zeno argued that there are two kingdoms, the worldly and the divine, the temporal and the eternal. At the end of (worldly) time, Christ hands back the earthly kingdom to God the Father, not as a subordinate but as a matter of due reverence, and maintains parity with the Father in power, majesty, and as coeternal:

> *Denique inquit: Ego et Pater unum sumus. Unde non diminutiva, sed religiosa, ut dixi, subiectione est Filius Patri subiectus; cum quo originalis perpetuique regni una possessio, coaeternitatis omnipotentiaeque una substantia, una aequalitas, una virtus maiestatis augustae, unico in lumine una dignitas retinetur.*[622]
>
> Finally he said: "I and the Father are one." So then, as I said, the son is subject to the father not in an inferior position, but due to pious reverence, and he retains with him the one possession of the original eternal kingdom, the one essence of the same eternity and to the same omnipotence, the one

[620] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:4.7).
[621] 1 Cor 15, 24.
[622] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5.4).

> equality, the one power of sublime majesty in the one light, the one dignity.

The sermon has a citation from John: “I and the Father are one”, but it also includes Zeno’s development of the mutual inter-presence of the two:

> *quia Pater in Filio, et Filius manet in Patre, cui affectu, non conditione, caritate, non necessitate, decore subiicitur, per quem Pater semper honoratur.*[623]

> because the Father abides in the Son, and the Son abides in the Father, and is subject to him, not because of rank but because of affection, not out of necessity, but out of love, in an honourable manner, and so that the Father is always honoured.

The bishop described a similar interdependence in a sermon on Genesis, 1:27, this time between Christ and man. God made man in his own image. This image is a spiritual one, given to those who are baptised in the name of Christ. Christ is within man, man in Christ, the temporal within the infinite. This counterpoint between Christ and man echoes that between eternity and the temporal, as in 2:12.1 in which Christ walks in eternity and borrows life from time:

> *In hominem coaptatus, in tegumento carnis includitur Deus; humanamque vitam mutuatur de tempore, qui praestat temporibus aeternitatem.*[624]

> Adapted as a man, God is included in the covering of flesh; and he who walks the ages in eternity borrows human life from time.

And in 1:45, the bishop again cited John’s Gospel to underscore the inclusive doctrine of Christology:

> But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.[625]

[623] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:5.4); John, 10:30.
[624] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:12.1).
[625] John, 10:38.

In Sermon 1:7, we saw Zeno dismantling the *nihil ex nihilo* argument (see page 156). He concluded that God alone was the force of creation, conscious of his own nature. He alone was eternal, the master of immortality. He could create things anew. The implication could be that only God is unchangeable, but that the immortality reserved for the faithful comes with change and renewal.

Finally, returning to one of his favourite motifs of the olive groves and vineyards of the Veronese hinterland, in Sermon 2:11 Zeno said:

> *Similiter Christianus monitis divinis praecinentibus obsecundando, in quibus aeternae fructus est vitae, et defenditur pariter, et nutritur.*[626]
>
> In the same way, the Christian, by obeying the precepts of divine premonitions, in which is the fruit of eternal life, is both protected and nourished.

The message is that there is agency in eternity, there is growth. This is an inclusive image of the eternal life, embracing the seasonal fruits familiar to his congregation.

The relationship between God and man is reciprocal, according to Zeno. At the Creation, God made man in his own image. Later, to save mankind, the Son of God was incarnate in human form. The divine is to be found in the human, and the human in the divine. A similar inter-relationship applies to time, in which the bishop invited his congregation to see the eternal within the temporal. Instead of trying to use ordinary time to calibrate eternity, the bishop presented both as concepts that are independent of each other, yet fundamentally interconnected. This duality is to be found throughout the ages in philosophy, poetry, and mathematics, and Zeno's insight has echoed in the science and literature of the modern era.

[626] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 2:11.5).

Eternity in a day

The German playwright Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) wrote that the infinite has a sublimity, a superiority, due to its lack of limits. Physically, we fall far short of the infinite, the eternal, but morally we feel our imagination can raise above them.[627] His contemporary, the English poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827), showed how the poetic imagination could contemplate the infinite in the everyday world. In his *Auguries of Innocence,* he wrote:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And Eternity in an hour.[628]

Zeno knew that man could not be compared with divine concepts, but he too used his imagination to offer a way in which eternity could be treated meaningfully by showing its presence in the world. His thinking was reflected by the later Romantic poets, and more recently by T. S. Eliot. He contemplated the notion of eternity in the everyday, but with less sanguine results:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.[629]

Zeno's thinking on eternity fits within a long tradition. Considering the infinite in terms of the limited world recurred as a literary metaphor. It was given mathematical expression in the 19th century. Georg Cantor (1845–1918) showed how infinity could be treated as a property of sets of objects. It could be subjected to mathematical operations such as addition, multiplication, and exponentiation, and could be used in

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[627] Schiller (1992, XX, 171/E 22).
[628] Blake (2010). See also *Ode to the Intimations of Immortality* by William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850), an English Romantic poet, and *L'infinito* by Giacomo Leopardi (1798 – 1837), an Italian philosopher and poet.
[629] From *Burnt Norton*; see Eliot (1943).

equations. His idea that there were multiple infinities, starting with $\aleph_0$ (aleph zero) or "the smallest transfinite cardinal number" caused heated debate in scientific circles at the time, but is now accepted as part of set theory. In his lemma §9, Cantor proved that the set of all natural numbers can be uniquely mapped to points on the interval (0,1) of the number line.[630] This idea of infinity being contained within a bounded interval or closed space was expressed 1500 years previously by Zeno in his Easter vigil Sermon 1:33:

> *Saeculorum haeres, et pernici cursu procurrens atque recurrens, solemni motu rotatus in sese, proferens sibi de fine principium, natalitia infinita de occasu, dies sempiternus eluxit.*[631]
>
> The heir of the ages, running back and forth with spritely pace, turning by itself in a solemn movement, bringing forth the beginning from its own end, the infinite birthday from the setting sun, the everlasting day shone.

Moving from the day to the year, Zeno used the four seasons as metaphors for the life cycle of a Christian (darkness, awakening, prayer, the renewal of baptism), and for the upward trajectory of Christianity. Thus, autumn was a time to enjoy the fruits of the grain and the vine, but it was also the era of martyrdom of the Church. The four seasons became the four gospels which proclaimed Christ as saviour. The twelve apostles were the twelve hours of the day. The sermon was delivered on Easter Sunday: it was the Lord's day, and he is the eternal day:

> *Dies vero ad sacramentum pertinet resurrectionis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui in omnibus omnia est: qui vere aeternus est, ac sine nocte dies; cui duodecim horae in Apostolis, duodecim menses serviunt in Prophetis; quem Evangeliorum salutaria quatuor praedicant tempora; cui non anniversarii, sed quotidiani fructus respondent, hymnum canentes Deo credentibus populis, qui omni immortalitatis semine propagantur in saecula.*[632]

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[630] Cantor and Jourdain (1955, 122-128, 103-110). See also Wallace (2003, 123-125) for a geometrical presentation of Cantor's proof.

[631] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:33.1). This sermon also refers to the annual cycle of the four seasons, which De Paoli reminds us is a metaphor for all of Christian life. De Paoli (1986).

[632] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:33.3).

> But the day itself belongs to the sacrament of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is all in all: who is truly eternal, and day without night; whom the twelve hours serve in the form of the Apostles, the twelve months as the Prophets; whom the beneficial Gospels proclaim four times over; to whom not just annual but daily harvests respond, singing a hymn to the people who believe in God, who are propagated by every seed of immortality for centuries.

This intimation that Christ was the nexus between time and eternity is to be found in Augustine's *Confessions*, written at the end of the 4th century:

> Your today is eternity; therefore, You begot the Co-eternal, to whom You said, This day have I begotten You. You have made all time; and before all times You are, nor in any time was there not time.[633]

More recently, Christ as the linchpin that makes sense of time and eternity is to be found in the theology of Karl Barth (1886–1968). He wrote that there is no quantitative basis for comparing time and eternity. The qualitative difference between the two echoes the chasm between man and God. The problem can only be resolved, according to Barth, by reference to Christ, who is both temporal as man and eternal as God.[634]

Zeno brought to bear his wide reading in Roman literature and in the Scriptures in this sermon. He used a popular reference to engage the Veronese congregation in his sermon. In the first sentence, he spoke of the *meta* (a turning point or marker of a lap on a racetrack) to liken the course of a day to the circuit of a racetrack. There was nothing inconsistent in a Christian bishop acknowledging pagan authors by using idioms from their works. This was to be expected of a learned person like Zeno and would have flattered some of his more well-read audience. Thus, *mustulentus autumnus* (autumnal must) is from Apuleius and *oderem divinum*

[633] August. *Conf.* 11:13.
[634] Barth and Allen (2021), Cassidy (2016, 119).

spirantes (breathing a divine fragrance) is from Virgil.[635] He combines the cyclical with the eternal to make the latter comprehensible. The day and the year are familiar repetitive periods of time. When personified by Christ, they become eternal. The mathematics is compelling: twelve apostles, twelve hours; twelve prophets, twelve months; four seasons, four gospels. Numbers had significance in the Jewish tradition. Many early patricians interpreted scripture in this fashion.[636]

Is this contrastive or inclusive? Zeno inverts the perspective. Instead of looking for aspects of the temporal world – such as change and participation – in the realm of eternity, he finds eternity in the natural world. Unlike Augustine, he does not regard time and eternity as mutually exclusive. In fact, the two are closely interwoven. Boethius defined eternity as: "*interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*" (full and perfect possession of interminable life).[637] This definition is not inconsistent with Zeno's description of the eternal God, in sermons to the catechumenate and to fully baptised Christians: God is alive, has neither beginning nor end, and is perfect and complete in every way.

Zeno returned to this theme of the eternal within the temporal in his Easter sermon six years later. The day had arrived, self-contained but part of an eternal train. According to the bishop, in its hours it becomes the Son, whose Father is the God of all ages:

> *Perpetis anni pernicem cursum in bissenae mutationis augmentum, una eademque, nec ipsa, sed ipsa orbita circumducens, dies magnus advenit, suo sibi semper novellus occasu. Quod praeterit, sequitur: quod futurum est, antecedit. In omnibus novus est; et tamen in omnibus vetus est. Punctis omnibus commutatur, non natura, sed numero. Fit filius horarum, qui pater est omnium saeculorum.*[638]

[635] Apul. *Met.* 2:4.8; Virg. *Aen.* 1:403-4-4.
[636] These included Paulinus of Nola, Augustine of Hippo, and Gregory I. Trout (1995), Scully (2013), Nazzaro (2013)
[637] Boethius, *De Consol Phil*, V, 6.
[638] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:16).

> With the unending annual cycle in the nimble course of a double change, one and the same, yet not the same, but following its own orbit itself, the great day arrives, always fresh in its own sunset. That which is in the past follows: that which is in the future precedes. In all things it is new; and yet it is old in all things. At every instant, it is changed not in its nature, but in number. It becomes the son of hours, who is the father of all ages.

Zeno returned again and again to the notion of eternity – a living God without beginning or end, and a Son with similar infinite timeline. It was a matter of concern to the bishop, one he shared with both the catechumenate and the fully baptised Veronese. His care and apprehension for his congregation were caused by a variant of Christianity known as Arianism which had exercised the hierarchy of the Church throughout the 4th century. From his sermons, we can see the salient features of Arianism as the bishop saw them, and the threat he saw in them to the doctrine of Christian redemption. But in Sermons 1:33 and 1:16, Zeno went above and beyond the defensive and the polemical. In an imaginative *tour de force*, he showed us an eternity that was at once quotidian and majestic, plausible yet full of wonder.

A summary of preaching and philosophising

In this Chapter, Zeno's sermons on eternity were examined and put in context. His thoughts were compared with those of his contemporaries and with categories used by modern scholars. I will summarise the outcomes of this study under four headings:

- the risk to eternal salvation as seen by Zeno in the doctrine of Arianism;
- Zeno's Christology supporting eternal salvation, based on Christ's co-eternity with the Father;
- the bishop's stance on the eternality of God – see the question posed on page 151;
- Zeno's contribution to religious philosophy in his framing of eternity within the everyday.

The Arian–Orthodox dispute of the 4th century was punctuated by several Councils of Bishops. Their debates and decisions invariably centred on the substance of Christ *vis-à-vis* that of the Father. Bishops either repeated this theme in their sermons or they condemned the Arians, as well as other non-orthodox beliefs and Jews, in a formulaic manner. Zeno identified the real threat of Arianism in its watchword – "There was a time when he was not". We saw how Zeno robustly countered this assertion and, with evidence from Scripture, showed Son and Father to be co-eternal.

In Zeno's Christology, there were two nativities, different in their nature and in their explicability to humans. Father and Son were co-eternal – this was key – while their substance was less important. He showed how Christ had promised to reward the faithful with eternal life after death. Such a promise could only be valid if it was made, and delivered, by a supreme and eternal being. Christ was uniquely such a being and thus the key message of Christianity was authenticated.

In Sermon 1:7, as we have seen, Zeno's explicitly said that God was eternal. As to God's temporality, he does not say that God is everlasting or immortal, but that he is <u>master</u> of immortality, meaning that he is the gatekeeper to the everlasting reward of paradise. To answer the question about Zeno's stance on God's temporality, we may recall Sermon 1:33. This shows us a divinity engaged with his creation through all time. So we have an answer to the question as posed above: God is eternal and is in time; he is located at every point in spacetime.

Finally, the bishop considered eternity itself. The doctrine he preached provided a suitable metaphor. In Christ, a human form embodied the Son of God – man in God. Equally, man, made in the image of God, carried God within him if he was a believer. In the same way, as time is in eternity, eternity is in the temporal. Young's criterion seeks to gauge time in eternity. Zeno turned this around and asked us to observe the eternal in ordinary time. In terms which foreshadowed the works of Blake, Schiller, and Cantor in the 18th and 19th centuries, Zeno showed how the infinite can be seen in the everyday, eternity in the quotidian.

We have seen Zeno's view of time shaped by observations of the regularity of nature (cyclical time) and by man's preference for the immediate to the deferred, of the temporal to the eternal (historic or linear tie). His understanding of eternal time is connected to a Christian cosmogony, documented in the Bible and developed by creational and eschatological enquiry.[639] It is from these sources that the bishop preaches about a perfect God, with superlatives applied to all his attributes, including his eternal age.

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[639] Wood (2022) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Conclusion

Zeno was honoured as a martyr by Pope Gregory I and by prelates of the time, yet there is no evidence that he made the supreme sacrifice for his faith.[640] As for his ministry, he was described as a learned and eloquent speaker, as humble, friendly and cheerful, and as a strong advocate for the spiritual wellbeing of his congregation. There is evidence from his sermons to support these characteristics. His absence from Jerome's hagiography and from the bishops' synods may help to explain why he is often overlooked by modern scholars. While distanced from the conciliar circuit, Zeno was close to his own people, aware of their concerns, and capable of giving them helpful and affirmative guidance, positive options rather than hieratic condemnations in relation to their problems. His ideas about time seem to transcend his own era, to belong to a different age, but he used them to good purpose in explaining a new belief system which would define, for the next millennium, what it was to be a western European.

This is the first study of Zeno's work which uses time to interpret the intellectual framework of his preaching. It is clear from the sermons that the topic informs the bishop's Christology. I have shown that it underpins his doctrine of salvation which is at the core of Christian theology. My research also reveals the bishop's interest and original thinking in the philosophy of time and eternity. His sermons adopt a consistently Nicene line on doctrine, comparable with the views of his learned contemporaries in northern Italy, such as Ambrose, Chromatius, and Gaudentius.

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[640] The *Roman Martyrology* has an entry for Zeno on 12th April: "At Verona, the martyrdom of the bishop St. Zeno, who governed that Church with great fortitude amidst the storms of persecution, and was crowned with martyrdom in the days of Gallienus." This erroneous dating of Zeno to a time when the Church was not at peace accounts for his assignment to the ranks of the martyrs. Eusebius praises the peaceful reign of this emperor, while Jerome notes that Christians were persecuted during his reign. This was during the earlier years, when he shared the empire with his father Valerian. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. VII, 11, 13, 23; Jer. De vir. Ill. 67. The main think about Gallienus as far as the story of Zeno is concerned is that he spent some time in Verona; his construction of a defensive wall is recorded on the Porta Borsari, but that was in 265 – he was in the right city, but a century too early for Zeno. Ambrose, in a letter to Zeno's successor in Verona, wrote of him as a "bishop of holy memory." Gregory VII described him as a holy martyr and attributed a posthumous miracle to him. In 589, the river Adige overflowed its banks and flooded Verona. The people sought refuge in the basilica of San Zeno and were spared, despite its doors being open. Ambrose, Ep. 5 *Ad Syagrium*, Gregory, *Dial*. 3:19. See also Humphries (1997b).

However, his positive manner and his agenda for change set him apart from his contemporaries.

The bishop operated within the norms of society in the western empire of the 4th century. These included the cycles of the week as well as the liturgical and consular years. Since the introduction of the Julian calendar in 45 BC, the Romans had accurately numbered the days and the months in a solar year. The regulation of time was now based on observation and calculation: it belonged to the empirical realm of mathematics and astronomy rather than being under the exclusive control of a priestly caste. The Church used this standard, which provided a suitable framework for a fixed liturgical calendar.[641]

The framework Zeno used to describe time and eternity had three distinct concepts:

- Cyclical time: the day and the year are objectively defined by the regular apparent movements of Earth and Sun. Similarly, a clock can measure time based on its own cycle of oscillation;
- Linear time: subjectively defined by people for narrative and other purposes, it includes past, present, and future time. For example, the contents of history;
- Eternity: without beginning or end, eternity is outside of time.

The first of these has many instances – diurnal, monthly, annual, for example – and provides the means by which elapsed time is calibrated and measured. Cycles may repeat, often indefinitely, but each is bounded: it has a start and a finish. Linear time is cognitively different and is, in theory, unbounded; it can stretch to infinity in the past and in the future. That is not to say that time and eternity differ only quantitatively. Time is a sequence and any period of time has a start and an end. Its elements, whatever units are chosen (seconds, days, years, …) are countable. Eternity has neither a start nor an end, and its elements are not countable. Thus, it differs both qualitatively and quantitatively from time. This qualitative distinction lies

[641] The exception was the Paschal season, as the events of Christ's death and resurrection were dated according to the lunar cycle of the Jewish calendar. Hence Easter and associated events such as Ascension Thursday and Whit Sunday are moveable feasts.

at the core of the Christian doctrine of salvation. God always was and always would be and had promised immortality only to those who kept his commandments. Throughout his sermons, Zeno said that time – all time - was maintained by God. It was a Christian concept – there was no concession to mythic time, the prehistory of classical historians, beyond the time "where factual history can find a firm foothold."[642]. Lateral thinking and a willingness to explore topics such as time and astrology were not as easy to find in the sermons of his contemporaries in adjacent dioceses. In his comparison of the three bishops Chromatius, Gaudentius, and Zeno, Truzzi notes that the first two had been connected since youth to the internal life of the Church. They had had close relationships with Valerian and Filastrius, their predecessors in the sees of Aquileia and Brescia, respectively. This, he argues, goes some way to explaining their sermons' almost exclusive connection to the Bible. Zeno, on the other hand, was as likely to talk about nature and human life as he was to interpret readings from the Old Testament. The influence of literary classics was another distinction between Zeno and his colleagues. Stepanich confirms Zeno's familiarity with both sacred and profane literature, including the works of authors such as Cicero, Ovid, and Virgil.[643]

Use of cyclical time in preaching, in liturgy

In his preaching, the bishop of Verona often referred to closed cycles of time. This periodicity is pervasive and powerful, so much so that it stands as a benchmark of permanency and immutability. Zeno exploits this understanding of time to emphasise the almighty and eternal nature of God and of his son, Jesus Christ. Closed temporalities have been internalised and he uses them to underpin core Christian teaching. The cycles of nature, familiar to those involved in the cultivation of the vine and the olive in the hinterland of Verona, are found everywhere. They serve as a metaphor for the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The bishop's bias towards the cyclical led him at least once to contradict the evidence: in Chapter 1, we saw how he said that meteorites which had crashed to earth were

[642] Plut. *Thes.* 1. See also Feeney (2007, 78-79).
[643] Truzzi (1985, 93), Stepanich (1948, 24-25).

able to resume their orbits unscathed and to maintain their everlasting regularity, to support his assertion that almost everything lives by dying.[644]

In Chapter 1, I have also shown that in Zeno's sermons the Church calendar is used to abstract linear episodes and to celebrate them as regular singularities. The lives of saints are treated in this way, while the seasons of Advent and Easter map out the earthly life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The resurrection, according to Zeno, is the roadmap for Christ's followers to eternal life and to sharing in the timeless mystery of God. We have seen how highly the bishop rates this tenet of Christology through his numerous refutations of the Arian belief in the generation of the son of God at the Creation, rather than father and son being co-eternal.

Dealing with old traditions, superstitions: adaptation and alternatives

The zodiac was a well-established tradition in Late Antiquity. It was frequently condemned by emperors and churchmen who enjoyed picking holes in the flawed logic of horoscopy based on the astral symbols. Hegedus categorises six such philosophical arguments and cites the many early Christian writers who used them to dismiss the zodiac.[645] The condemnation grew more extreme as it became less rational, and horoscopy came to be described as the work of demons. Zeno's sermon on the zodiac is in marked contrast to this hostile confrontation.[646] It is the first example of a Christian sermon which interprets the signs of the zodiac, and it is delivered in a tone of accommodation, wry humour, compromise, and progress; Chapter 2 is devoted to this sermon.

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[644] Zeno cites, but does not attribute, what he calls the law of revived light (*luminis redivivi lex*) to explain this phenomenon. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.8).

[645] These include Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, Tertullian, Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, Eusebius. Hegedus (2007, 29-124).

[646] Zeno was careful to distance himself from outright condemnation of horoscopy. At most, he said that people would soon be deprived of divination, fortune-telling, and the linking of astronomical configurations to human fate. This was a veiled hint of more state measures to outlaw such practices. These aspects of astrology were illegal and at odds with the Christian tenet of free will, but were still practiced by senior figures, including churchmen. Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:38.1), Nauert (2006, 124).

The sermon on the zodiac (1:38) is *sui generis*, yet it conforms to the template of sermons *Ad neophytos post baptisma* (to the newly converted Christians after their baptism). The zodiac belonged to the old life and, as Zeno hinted, was soon to become a thing of the past. Baptism had given converts a new life, an alternative birthday, and a Christian horoscope of eternal happiness. He used the liturgical context – the sermon was delivered at Easter to those in the cohort of catechumens who had completed the sacrament of baptism – to offer a paradigm shift from an old belief system to a new one. Rather than referencing their biological birthdays, Christians now had a rebirthday. Zeno's alternative, the idea of a rebirth to coincide with baptism, was universally propitious, and with eternal salvation as its ultimate reward. While his christianised signs of the zodiac did not enjoy much success, the idea of associating baptism with a rebirth was subsequently repurposed by the Church and is still honoured as name-days in parts of Europe, all from the original idea of Zeno of Verona.

In a cycle of symbols that dates to centuries before Christ, Zeno's ascription of Christian symbols appears to be anachronistic. Gemini as the two testaments of the Bible, Virgo as the Virgin Mary, Pisces as the Jews and Gentiles united in one baptism – these concepts are products of the Christian story of the Son of God, incarnate as man. They sit uncomfortably in a tradition that predates Christianity by centuries.[647] Are they replacements of older symbols, or was the Passion of Christ foreseen in the Zodiac, as it had been foreseen in the Old Testament? Zeno paid no heed to the historic origins of the zodiac. His synchronic approach was simply to replace its symbols with ones from the Christian repertoire.

[647] The Chaldeans, inhabiting a region between the lower Tigris and Euphrates rivers, were using symbols cognate with the signs of the zodiac in their astrological practices in the mid-first millennium BC.

Historiography: man-made epochs managed by God, the principles of temporal phenomena

Zeno may have been overzealous in finding closed cycles everywhere. However, he identified an important distinction between the cyclical time that pervades God's creation and the linear and unidirectional schedule that man uses to gauge elapsed time. The distinction parallels that between God and man, between the spiritual and the secular, between good and evil. His Christian view of historic time, whether spoken directly or read from the subtext, brings home some basic principles of this temporal phenomenon:

- it proceeds in one direction – there is an arrow of time, to use Eddington's term;
- people can know what happened in the past but cannot see into the future;
- people cannot stop time, let alone reverse it;
- linear time is part of the Creation, a consequence of the Fall of Man;
- God alone has absolute control over time.

The bishop's sermons convey his opinion that historic or linear time was not conducive to the rhythms of nature. The built environment of Verona, replete with reminders of the classical past, did not daunt Zeno. His sermons show a resolve to advance the Church physically, numerically, and doctrinally. The rise and fall of civilisations were unpredictable, though inevitable because of man's God-given free will. These aperiodic epochs could be constructed only by an almighty God. This concept of aggregates of time, of varying length, is of a piece with the contemporary historiography of Eusebius and Jerome. As we saw in Chapter 3, Zeno's description of God managing simultaneous but different tracts of time sits well with the historians' paratextual treatment of civilisations in synchrony. Zeno maps the difference between the cyclical time of nature and the linear time of mankind onto the contrast between patience and impatience. In sermon 1:4 he extols patience as a paramount virtue, one without which the other virtues could not exist. This was the prime example set by the martyrs, to undergo suffering and death in the short term for the sake of their eternal reward. He contrasts this, together with several case

studies from the Bible, with the vice of impatience, which is peculiar to mankind. "Man alone is hasty, he is impatient, takes pleasure every day in perverse inconstancies, devotes himself to change."[648] Human impatience is at variance with divine order which sets the cycles of nature to govern the rhythms of life.

The power of the Church, central, universal, uniform. Reasoned opposition to Arianism.

The Arian–Orthodox dispute of the 4th century was punctuated by several Councils of Bishops. The debates and decisions invariably centred on the substance of Christ *vis-à-vis* that of the Father.[649] Bishops either repeated this theme in their sermons or they condemned the Arians, as well as other non-orthodox beliefs and Jews, in a formulaic manner. Zeno identified the fundamental threat of Arianism in its watchword – "There was a time when he was not". In Chapter 4, we saw how Zeno robustly countered this assertion and, with evidence from Scripture, showed Son and Father to be co-eternal. Arguably, he was more aware of the threat of Arianism than his contemporaries, many of whom had attended bishops' councils to discuss the matter. His aim at the central tenet of the variant belief was accurate and consistent.

In Zeno's Christology, there were two nativities: Christ's first birth was from the Father, while in the second nativity, he was born again of the Virgin Mary. These differed in their nature and in their explicability to humans; this was also the view of Lactantius, whose works the bishop had read.[650] Father and Son were co-eternal – this was key – while their substance was less important. He showed how Christ had promised to reward the faithful with eternal life after death. Such a promise could only be fulfilled if it was made, and delivered, by a supreme and eternal being. Christ was such a being – there was no distinction of time between him and the

[648] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:4.3).
[649] This can be seen in the terminology used to describe a spectrum of doctrines, ranging from the orthodox or Nicene position of *homoousis* (from the ancient Greek ὁμοούσιος, meaning 'of the same substance or consubstantiality'), through a compromise position called *homoiousis* (meaning 'of similar but not identical substance'), to the full Arian doctrine of *anhomoiosis* (meaning 'of unlike substances').
[650] Lactant. *Div. Inst.* Book IV, 8. See Stepanich (1948).

Father, as we saw from sermon 2:8 in Chapter 4 - and thus the key message of Christianity was confirmed.

Religious philosophy on time and eternity: epochal comparison with the Romantic era

Eternity, an abstract quantity, had tested the minds of philosophers since before Plato's time. Having established Christ's eternal nature and his credentials as saviour of mankind, Zeno went further and tried to explain an eternal God and eternity itself. Contemporary questions about eternity tended to be based on the temporal – whether it is timeless or not, or if and how change occurs within eternity. The bishop started with the reciprocal relationship between man and God: the divine is to be found in the human, and the human in the divine. Similarly, time and eternity are interconnected. But then he inverted the prevailing methodology. Instead of using ordinary time to calibrate the eternal, he invited his congregation to see the eternal in the temporal. In Chapter 4, page 148, we saw Zeno's advancement of the liturgical calendar. He signalled the sanctoral cycle of the calendar with the celebration of the feast of St Arcadius in 1:39. Sermons 2:8, 1:54, and 2:12 celebrated the birth of Christ, an event that would become part of the season of Advent in the temporal part of the Church calendar. We also saw how he foreshadowed poets and scientists of a later era by describing the infinite within a closed interval. In this way, he showed time and eternity as concepts that were independent of each other, yet fundamentally interconnected. He offered a way in which eternity could be treated meaningfully by showing its presence in the world. His thinking was reflected by poets and artists in the Romantic era, such as Blake, Schiller, and Wordsworth, and in the world of mathematics – Cantor proved that a transfinite quantity can be mapped to a finite section of the number line. In his sermons, Zeno went above and beyond the homiletics expected of a suffragan bishop. His intellectual achievement was to show us an eternity that was at once quotidian and majestic, plausible yet full of wonder.

What was out of scope, the next steps

In this study of Zeno's sermons, comparisons have been made with those of other prelates of his period in northern Italy. In Chapter 4 Zeno's treatment of the Arian sect was contrasted with those of bishops in the dioceses of Milan and Aquileia. A more rigorous methodology, based on comparison with a standard template or set of criteria could yield more objective results. For example, such a template could help us to evaluate Zeno's contribution to ideas on eternity, relative to those of Plotinus, Augustine, Boethius, and others. It could also provide a more detailed picture of the religious and intellectual climate of the period.

In Chapter 2, I noted that Zeno's replacement of zodiac symbols was anachronistic. The zodiac predates the New Testament, from which some of Zeno's mollified Christian symbols are taken. Was this a deliberate or an unwitting choice by the bishop? How sensitive to such aberrations were other exercises in Christianising pagan symbols? A wider study of the literature and art of the period would be needed to answer these questions.

The various critical editions of Zeno's sermons have been replete with biblical references. Forty-four of the ninety-three sermons have explicit biblical references in their titles, and the bishop often cites other sources from the Old and New Testaments. Editors have identified Scriptural sources in the content of the sermons and scholars have analysed their use by the bishop.[651] Stepanich has shown the influences, often conflicting, of Lactantius, Novatian, Tertullian, and Theophilus of Antioch in particular, and he also identifies some references to non-Christian texts in the sermons, while Palanca has looked for Classical influences on the style of the sermons.[652] In this dissertation, I have looked at Zeno's worldview, particularly at his ideas about time and space. This has foregrounded his Christology and his ideas about cyclical time and eternity. His thinking, while consistent with Nicene

[651] See, for example, Banterli (1981), De Prisco (2001), Gerzaguet (2017), Jeanes (1995), and Jeanes (1986).
[652] Stepanich finds influences from others such as Cyprian and Hilary. Stepanich (1948), Palanca (1972); Palanca (1970).

doctrine, was imaginative in giving “intimations of immortality.” The question is, what Classical sources, literary and scientific, helped to form his worldview? Research in this area would help our understanding not just of Zeno, but also of the Church and the doctrine he helped to form within it. It could link Classical civilisation, through the Christianity in Late Antiquity, to the Romantics of the 19th century to the religious philosophy of the present day.

The legacy of Zeno

Sermon 1:38, the first Christian interpretation of the zodiac, marks Zeno as a courageous and innovative thinker. His apparent concession in giving a Christian horoscope really undermined the zodiacal apparatus. His alternative, the celebration of baptism as a good horoscope for Christians, was taken up in the Middle Ages as name-days, and the practice is still found in many Catholic and Orthodox countries. He showed the way forward with his use of the liturgical calendar, both sanctoral and temporal cycles. The feast of St Arcadius and the sermons on the Nativity are examples. Zeno was more practical than ideological. His Christology was logical and internally consistent, not dogmatic or catechetical. Jeanes finds evidence in several of Zeno’s sermons for early forms of the Eucharistic prayer, which was not formally adopted by the Church until the 7th century.[653] This would not be out of character for someone who devoted his life to enhancing the lives and hope of salvation for the people of Verona and who left a legacy in Church liturgy. He had a propensity to be positive: if he rejected something, he usually found a favourable alternative – see 1:38 and the positive use of “same day”; as Hegedus puts it, the sermon was a substantial and positive use of the zodiac in Christian preaching.

Zeno, a transnational within a multi-ethnic empire, was influenced by several cultures. His worldview reflected a knowledge of multiple civilisations and their serial and parallel existence. This was shared by Christian historians in Late Antiquity; their historiography embraced empires both sequential and concurrent. The bishop’s description of God managing simultaneous but different tracts of time aligns well with

[653] Jeanes (1986).

the historians paratextual treatment of civilisations in synchrony. In the philosophy of religion, he provided an inclusive view of eternity, closer to that of Plotinus and the Neoplatonists than to Augustine's contrastive view. Eternity and a state in which only the present exists are not the same thing. Defined in two dimensions, one is duration in which a being is changeless, the other is the ontological proximity to its cause (God). Zeno inverted the standard framing of time in eternity to an eternity within the earthly cycle of one day or the solar cycle of a year. He brought ineffable eternity within the range of human imagination.

In Chapter 2, we saw how Zeno explained the zodiac in Christian terms. Acknowledging the resilience of traditional beliefs, he replaced the pagan signs with Christian imagery. But he was not averse to using pagan symbols when they suited his purpose. In sermon 1:2 he explicitly referred to the fable of the phoenix to illustrate the resurrection of Christ:

> *Non invita, non imprudens moritur, sed cum maturum lethi tempus advenerit, a semetipsa invitatis sacris iginibus libentissime concrematur. Sepulcrum nidus est illi, favillae nutrices, cinis propagandi corporis semen, mors natalitius dies. Denique post momentum festo exsultat in tumulo, non umbra, sed veritas, non imago, sed Phoenix, non alia, sed quamvis melior alia, tamen prior ipsa.*[654]
>
> He does not die against his will, nor unconcerned, but when the right time has come for his death, he burns with the greatest joy in the flames that he himself has summoned to this end. But the grave becomes his nest, the embers his wet nurse, his ashes the seed to propagate his body, the anniversary of his death his birthday. Then after a short time he rises again from his joyous grave, not as a shadow but in reality; not as an image, but as the phoenix; not another, but if better than the other, still the same as before.

Ironically, Zeno himself would, in death, parallel the legend of the phoenix. The "anniversary of his death became his birthday". Thus, 12th April marks the death of Zeno, but also the day of his birth into his new eternal life: this is his official feast day. He did not "rise from the ashes of the phoenix", but his remains were relocated

[654] Zeno and Banterle (2008, 1:2.9).

to the new basilica built in his honour in 807. This took place on 21st May and that day is a public holiday and is celebrated as his feast day in the diocese of Verona. The immigrant who mastered time and eternity in his sermons had won a small but signal victory over time: he is one of the few saints with two feast days in the Church calendar. He is celebrated by the universal Church and particularly by the people of his adopted Verona.

Finally, Zeno's sermons embodied, as they should, his role of spiritual and moral guidance. They also bore witness to his intellectual ability. As Countryman wrote about the early episcopate, the Church gave bishops the right to teach with authority, and this meant that they appointed people to these positions based on their education and intellect, as well as of their faith and morals. This authority was exercised "in a community which included 'the merely faithful' as well as the more educated and exploratory minds."[655] This is a good description of the demographic of Zeno's Verona. It also shows the trajectory as the Church institutionalised: the bishop became an intellectual and social authority in the community, as well as being the religious and moral centre.

[655] Countryman (1979, 261-263).

Appendix: figures



Figure 1 Panels from the right portal of the Basilica of San Zeno, Verona, showing (top left) the bishop with fishing rod meeting emissaries from the emperor Gallienus, (top right) Zeno exorcising a demon from the emperor's daughter, (lower left) a carter being saved from the flooded Adige, and (lower right) Gallienus presenting a crown to Zeno.

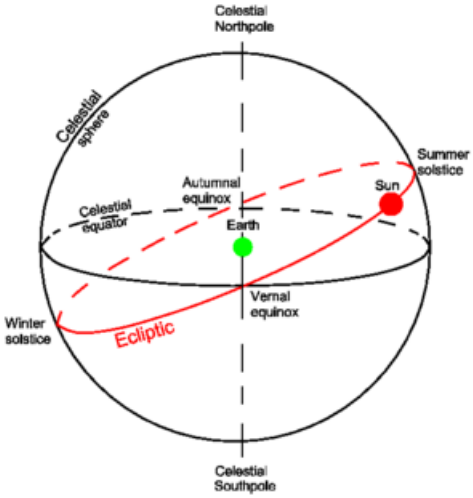

Figure 2 The ecliptic is the plane of the earth's orbit around the sun in a year. From the point of view of someone on earth, the sun's apparent orbit in a year traces out a path along the ecliptic against the background of the stars.



Figure 3 The twelve signs of the zodiac and corresponding activities from the twelve months of the year, from the floor of Otranto cathedral.



Figure 4 Statue of Zeno of Verona, in Basilica of San Zeno, Verona.

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