THE THEOLOGY OF St Cyril *of* Alexandria

A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Edited by
Thomas G. Weinandy and
Daniel A. Keating

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To Mary – Θεοτόκος

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Abbreviations

Cyril's works

Ad Cal.	*Epistula ad Calosyrium*
Ad Eul.	*Epistula ad Eulogium*
Ad Mon.	*Epistula ad Monachos*
Ad Nest.	*Epistula ad Nestorium*
Ad Succ.	*Epistula ad Succensum*
Adv. Orient. Epis.	*Duodecim Capitum Defensio Adversus Orientales Episcopos*
C. Diod.	*Fragmenta contra Diodorum Tarsensem*
C. Jul.	*Contra Julianum*
C. Nest.	*Contra Nestorium*
C. Synous.	*Contra Synousiastas*
C. Theod.	*Fragmenta contra Theodorum Mopsuestenum*
C. Theodoret.	*Apologeticus contra Theodoretum*
De Ador.	*De Adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate*
De Dogm.	*De Dogmatum Solutione*
De Incarn.	*De Incarnatione*
De Recta Fide ad Pulch. et Eud.	*De Recta Fide ad Pulcheriam et Eudociam*
De Recta Fide ad Theod.	*De Recta Fide ad Theodosium*
Dial. Trin.	*De Trinitate Dialogi*

Expl. XII Cap.	*Explicatio Duodecim Capitum*
Glaphyra	*Glaphyra in Pentateuchum*
Hom.	*Homiliae Diversae*
Hom. Pasch.	*Homiliae Paschales*
In I Cor.	*Explanatio in I Cor.*
In II Cor.	*Explanatio in II Cor.*
In XII Proph.	*Commentarius in Duodecim Prophetas*
In Heb.	*Fragmenta explanationum in Heb.*
In Is.	*Commentarius in Is.*
In Jo.	*Commentarius in Jo.*
In Joel	*Commentarius in Duodecim Prophetas*
In Luc.	*Fragmenta Commentarii in Luc.*
In Mal.	*Commentarius in Duodecim Prophetas*
In Matt.	*Fragmenta in Matt.*
In Mic.	*Commentarius in Duodecim Prophetas*
In Rom.	*Explanatio in Rom.*
In Zach.	*Commentarius in Duodecim Prophetas*
Resp. ad Tib.	*Responsio ad Tiberium*
Scholia	*Scholia de Incarnatione Unigeniti*
Quod Unus	*Quod Unus sit Christus*
Thes.	*Thesaurus de Trinitate*

Other works

ACO	*Acta Conciliorum Œcumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz
CCL	*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
FC	*Fathers of the Church* (Washington, Catholic University of America Press)
McGuckin (1994)	J. A. McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1994)

McGuckin (1995)	*St Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ,* trans. J. A. McGuckin (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995)
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, reprinted 1988)
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne
Russell	*Cyril of Alexandria*, N. Russell (London: Routledge, 2000)
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf)
SP	*Studia Patristica*
Wickham	*Cyril of Alexandria: Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. L. Wickham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983)

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Preface

When the name of St Cyril of Alexandria is mentioned, two things normally come to mind. The first is the fifth-century christological debate between himself and Nestorius that led to the Council of Ephesus in 431. During this controversy Cyril manifested not only the depth of his christological thought, which would fashion and even govern the theological conception and expression of the church's future doctrinal tradition on the Incarnation as defined by Ephesus and Chalcedon (451), but also his ecclesial shrewdness and political acumen. The second is precisely this latter aspect of his character as interlocutor in the Nestorian controversy: for many – then and now – Cyril of Alexandria is little more than an ecclesiastical thug.

This collection of essays on the theology of Cyril of Alexandria, while addressing these issues (the authors who address these concerns being almost as feisty as Cyril himself), broadens this rather narrow, and often polemical, treatment of Cyril. Cyril accomplished more, and so should be remembered for more, than simply crusading against Nestorius, prevailing at the Council of Ephesus, and so engineering Alexandria's ecclesiastical triumph over Constantinople and Antioch. It is our conviction that Cyril of Alexandria's theology is neither well understood nor fully appreciated, especially within an English speaking theological context where there exists no single volume that examines his theological thought more broadly. The topics treated in the present collection were chosen precisely to offset this theologically impoverished situation.

This volume of essays attempts, then, to examine the full range of theological topics contained within Cyril's written corpus. While

most of the contributors draw upon Cyril's biblical commentaries, often overlooked in the past, Robert Wilken in the first essay devotes himself exclusively to Cyril's Old Testament commentaries, showing that for Cyril Christ is the *skopos* of the entire Bible. In the second essay, Thomas Weinandy carefully examines Cyril's Christology within its historical setting, but also addresses contemporary issues and misconceptions. Frances Young next looks at Cyril's soteriology and shows that Mary as *Theotokos* is integral to Cyril's overarching narrative of Fall and redemption. In essay four, Marie-Odile Boulnois delineates Cyril's trinitarian thought as interconnected with his Christology and soteriology, and addresses the issue of the *Filioque* in Cyril. Brian Daley, in essay five, studies Cyril's theology of the Holy Spirit. He demonstrates that Cyril provides us with more than a re-hashing of Athanasius' teaching on the Trinity. Rather, drawing both on Athanasius and the Cappadocians, Cyril presents a richly biblical and soteriologically governed account of the Holy Spirit that is worth our renewed attention. In the sixth essay, Daniel Keating investigates the sacramental, moral, and ontological implications of Cyril's theology of sanctification and divinization. John O'Keefe next presents a study of Cyril's eschatology, underlining the crucial place of the notion of incorruptibility in Cyril's thought. John McGuckin in essay eight explores by means of several case studies Cyril's highly controverted accomplishments as bishop and pastor. And in the final essay, Norman Russell traces the legacy of Cyril after the Council of Chalcedon and up to the present day.

It became evident to the editors, when reading through these fine essays, that Cyril's theology is very much an integrated whole. Each topic when followed through – whether Trinity, Christology, soteriology, eschatology, etc. – seems inevitably to draw in the other topics as well. From many different starting points, the same 'center' is consistently reached. Thus, the reader will observe certain points of overlap within the essays. These overlaps, however, are not mere repetitions; they express in variegated fashion a fuller exposition of Cyril's inter-connected theology. It is our hope, then, that this collection of essays will provide not only a more comprehensive account of Cyril's theology, but also, very much in keeping with his own theological syllabus, a more integrated one.

The editors wish to thank all those who contributed to this volume. We believe that we could not have found a more suitable

group of scholars to contribute to a study of Cyril of Alexandria. They have all worked diligently to produce scholarly and readable essays, often amidst other pressing needs and responsibilities. Their co-operation is much appreciated. We also want to express appreciation to Nadia Thompson for translating Marie-Odile Boulnois's article. We equally want to thank Eileen McGuckin for the use of her contemporary icon of St Cyril of Alexandria in Athonite style for the front cover. For information about her Icon Studio (3041 Broadway, New York, NY 10027) visit the website at: www.saintmarymagdalen.com. Lastly, we would like to thank Stratford Caldecott and Susan Nichol of T&T Clark for their editorial assistance and encouragement.

As editors, we have found working on this volume of essays on the theology of Cyril of Alexandria not only intellectually exciting but also enjoyable and rewarding. It is always a delight to treat of a man and of his work when that man is a man of faith and his work is an expression of that faith. St Cyril of Alexandria is such a man, and what he has written bears witness not simply to his own faith but to the faith of the Christian church.

Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating
The Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, 2001

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Chapter 1

Cyril of Alexandria as Interpreter of the Old Testament

ROBERT LOUIS WILKEN

Perhaps it is that they are so long that they are not read. But Cyril's commentaries on the Old Testament sit passively (and expectantly) alongside the other volumes of the *Patrologia Graeca* (*PG*) in libraries all over the world gathering dust. Looking back over the scholarship of the last several generations it is quite exceptional that Alexander Kerrigan published *Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament* fifty years ago.[1] At the time few scholars were reading any of the biblical commentaries of the church fathers much less those of Cyril on the Old Testament. Yet if one looks over the bibliography of the last fifty years it is clear either Kerrigan did his job so well, or (more likely) that scholars remain more interested in Cyril's defense of Alexandrine Christology than his accomplishments as an exegete, except perhaps for the Commentary on the Gospel of John.[2] Whatever the reason, little has changed since Kerrigan's day. There has been an occasional article that touches on Cyril's exegesis, and one or two dissertations, but there have been no monographs dealing

[1] Kerrigan's work appeared as volume 2 of Analecta Biblica, published in Rome at the Pontificio Istituto Biblico in 1952.

[2] A. H. A. Fernández Lois, *La Cristologia et los Commentarios a Isaias de Cirilo de Alejandria y Teodoreto de Ciro* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1998); B. de Margerie, 'L'exégèse christologique de Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie', *Nouvelle Revue de Théologie* 102 (1980), pp. 400–25.

with his interpretation of the Bible, and, perhaps more significantly, few translations into English.[3]

It should be noted, however, that in the recent volume in the Routledge series The Early Church Fathers, *Cyril of Alexandria*, Norman Russell includes several lengthy passages from the Commentary on Isaiah as well as from the Gospel of John.[4] And the Italian series *Collana di Testi Patristici*, which has published translations of many patristic commentaries, has issued a volume, edited by Antonio Cataldo, with a translation of Cyril's commentaries on Zechariah and Malachi.[5] But these are exceptions.

Cyril's commentaries on the Old Testament

Cyril's first exegetical writing on the Old Testament is a large work called *De Adoratione et Cultu in Spiritu et Veritate* that fills volume 68 of the *Patrologia Graeca*. This book, written in the form of a dialogue between Cyril and a certain Palladius, is an exposition of select passages from the Pentateuch. Unlike his later commentaries that follow the biblical text verse by verse, here Cyril treats biblical texts under theological themes: the fall of humankind, justification and redemption through Christ, love of God and love of neighbor, and under topics found in the Pentateuch, for example, the tabernacle, the priesthood and festivals.

The treatise opens as Palladius is approaching Cyril with a book in his hand. Cyril asks him what book it is and Palladius replies

[3] J. J. O'Keefe, 'Interpreting the Angel. Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentators on the Book of Malachi' (Washington: Catholic University of America dissertation in facsimile, 1993) and 'Christianizing Malachi: Fifth-century Insights from Cyril of Alexandria', *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996), pp. 136–58; J. D. Cassell, 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Science of the Grammarian: A Study in the Setting, Purpose and Emphasis of Cyril's Commentary on Isaiah' (Charlottesville: University of Virginia dissertation, 1992); M. Simonetti, 'Note sul commento di Cirillo d'Alessandria ai Profeti Minori', *Vetera Christianorum* 14 (1977), pp. 303–30; S. Domenico Pazzini, *Il prologo di Giovanni in Cirillo di Alessandria* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1997); Pietro Rosa, *Gli Occhi del Corpo: Gli Occhi della Mente* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 1994).

[4] Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[5] *Cirillo di Alessandria: Commento ai Profeti Minori. Zaccaria et Malachia*, traduzione, introduzione et note a cura di Antonio Cataldo (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1986).

that he is carrying two of the gospels: Matthew and John. He has come to Cyril for help in understanding certain puzzling passages. In the Gospel of Matthew: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished' (Matt. 5:17–18). In the Gospel of John, 'But the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). The title of the book is taken from the latter text. *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate* was written to show that, with the coming of Christ, the narratives in the Pentateuch as well as the institutions and laws of ancient Israel are to be understood in light of a higher, spiritual meaning, that is, a form of worship 'in spirit and in truth', a devotion to God that is bound neither to place nor to a certain people. Using the Pauline image of the Law as a tutor, Cyril says that 'the law properly leads us to the mystery of Christ'.[6]

The second work dealing with the Pentateuch, found in volume 69 of the *Patrologia Graeca*, is entitled *Glaphyra*, 'elegant comments'. This treatise, complementary to *De Adoratione*, is also an exposition of passages from the Pentateuch, arranged, however, not according to topics, but according to the order in which they are found in the books of the Bible. Thus the first section treats Cain and Abel, the second Noah and the ark, the third Abraham, Isaac and Esau. Glaphyra includes a number of texts from Exodus, for example, the institution of the Passover in Exodus 12, the theophany on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19); as well as passages from Leviticus, for example, the cleansing of lepers (Lev. 14); Numbers, the sending of scouts into the land (Num. 13); and Deuteronomy, treatment of female captives (Deut. 21:10–11). The *Glaphyra* is more strictly exegetical than *De Adoratione* and focuses more closely on the details of the text, but the interpretation it offers is no less christological and spiritual.

Besides these two exegetical treatises on the Pentateuch, Cyril also wrote line-by-line commentaries on the prophets. Two are extant in their entirety. The first, on Isaiah, is a massive work covering the entire book of Isaiah (from 1:1 to 66:24) that fills

[6] *De Ador.* 1 (*PG* 68, 140a).

more than 700 columns in the *Patrologia Graeca*.[7] The second is a line-by-line commentary on the twelve minor prophets beginning with Amos and ending with Malachi.[8] The commentary includes an introduction to the collection of twelve prophets and a prologue for each book. In the prologue to each of the minor prophets (and also Isaiah), Cyril discusses the historical setting in which the book was written and the author's purpose or *skopos*. According to Cyril, Zechariah was composed after the exile, and was written with two different groups in mind. First, Zechariah wished to remind those who had been in exile what they had suffered because of God's wrath and, second, he addressed younger Israelites, ignorant of what had happened, to warn them that they too could fall into similar evils.[9] But Zechariah also has a christological dimension, says Cyril, for throughout the prophet treats of the 'coming redemption through Christ in its proper time'.[10]

Cyril also wrote other commentaries on the Septuagint but little remain of these works. The most extensive is a collection of fragments of a commentary on the Psalms edited by Mai and reprinted in *PG* 69. Not all these fragments, however, are authentic and they must be used with care.[11] The fragments from his other commentaries, on Numbers, Kings, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Job, Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, and Daniel are few.[12]

Interpreting Isaiah

To understand and appreciate Cyril's approach to the interpretation of the Old Testament, the best place to begin is with his

[7] Text in *PG* 70. No critical edition exists.

[8] Texts in *PG* 71 and 72. Critical edition by P. E. Pusey, *Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini in XII Prophetas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878); 2 vols. Reprinted in 1965 by Culture et Civilisation, Brussels.

[9] *In Zach.* prol. (Pusey, *In XII Prophetas*, vol. 1, p. 284, 17–21). For detailed discussion of Cyril's prologues to the books of the prophets, and comparison with other commentators, for example, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus, see Kerrigan, pp. 96–110.

[10] *In Zach.* prol. (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 184, 8–10).

[11] See Maria Assunta Rossi, 'Ancora sul Commento ai Salmi di Cirillo. A proposito di un recente lavoro sui commentari patristici al salterio', *Annali di Storie dell'Esegesi* 1 (1984), pp. 45–52.

[12] For list of fragments from Cyril's exegetical writings, see *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), 3:2–9.

interpretation of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is the prophet *par excellence* in Christian tradition, the 'fifth gospel' as it is sometimes called.[13] In the preface to his translation of Isaiah in the Vulgate Jerome said that Isaiah 'should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet, because he describes all the mysteries of Christ and the Church so clearly that one would think he is composing a history of what has already happened rather than prophesying what is to come'. Jerome had in mind texts such as Isaiah 9:6, 'To us a child is born, to us a son is given', or Isaiah 53:5, 'Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions'. Isaiah, writes Jerome, 'contains all the mysteries (*sacramenta*) of the Lord; it announces that Emmanuel is to be born of a virgin and accomplish marvelous works and signs, that he is to die, to be buried and that he will rise from the dead and become the Savior of all'.[14]

Cyril, too, considered Isaiah the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. 'It seems to me', he wrote in the preface to his Commentary, 'that the prophet Isaiah is crowned with the greatest of honor, not only in the gracefulness of his own words but also in as much as he is constantly referred to by the apostles. Their references to him inextricably link his words with the sparkling joy of the Gospel message.'[15] Like other early Christian thinkers he drew on familiar christological passages from the book of Isaiah in his theological writings.[16] But Cyril, like Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome before him, set himself the task of expounding the book of Isaiah in its entirety verse by verse. This was a more demanding task. Not only is Isaiah a very large book, it includes the most diverse kind of material: historical information on Israelite kings, oracles of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem and oracles against foreign nations, apocalyptic visions, passages calling for repentance and others offering comfort and hope, harsh words of reproof, and incomparable promises about Israel's restoration and soaring images of a city that is unlike anything on this earth. In expounding Isaiah it is one thing to single out well-known passages

[13] See John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[14] *Comm. in Esaiam*, prol. (*CCL* 73, p. 1).

[15] *PG* 70, 13ab.

[16] For example, Isaiah 7:14 in *Quod Unus* 684d (ed. Durand, p. 208), or Isaiah 60:1–2 at 753de (Durand, p. 432).

such as 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a son' (7:14), or 'Arise, shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you' (60:1), quite another thing to interpret the book in its historical setting *and* as a book about Christ and the Church.

When St Augustine was preparing for baptism he approached St Ambrose and asked what he should read to ready himself 'to receive so great a grace'. Bishop Ambrose told him to read the prophet Isaiah, because Isaiah 'more clearly' than other biblical writers foretold the gospel and the calling of the Gentiles. But when Augustine took up Isaiah he discovered that its meaning eluded him. 'I did not', he writes, 'understand the first passage of the book, and thought the whole would be equally obscure.' So he put Isaiah aside with the intention of returning to it after, in his words, 'I had more practice in the Lord's style of language (*in dominico eloquio*)'.[17] Augustine's experience was no doubt the experience of many other readers of Isaiah in the early church – and today.

The section of Isaiah that posed the greatest challenge to ancient interpreters is what is called the oracles to the nations (chapters 13–23). If one consults the indexes to early Christian literature it is evident that most Christian thinkers did not know what to make of these chapters. They are seldom cited. It is not surprising then that Cyril most often gives a historical interpretation to these oracles and only occasionally finds in them references to Christ. A good example is Isaiah 18:1–2, the beginning of an oracle to Damascus. The text reads: 'Woe to the land of ships with wings beyond the rivers of Ethiopia who sent messengers by the sea and letters written on the waters. For swift messengers will go to a lofty nation, a strange and harsh people. Who is beyond it? A nation desperate and beaten down.'

Cyril comments:

> Someone might wonder and say to himself, why does the prophetic oracle addressed to Damascus now mention the land that is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia? At certain times the Israelites foolishly abandoned God the savior of all and fell into the error of worshipping many Gods. Paying no heed whatsoever to the law given by Moses, they were chastised by God, at times through foes who rose up against them and at times by other catastrophes. Although they should have

[17] *Confessions* 9, 5, 13.

repented and been healed, ceased their wicked ways, walked in the commandments, and sought help from God, they made alliances with their neighbors, first with the kings in Damascus, then with those in Egypt. Not only this. They also embraced the gods of the nations that had come to their aid and wasted no time in emulating their ways. Hence the prophet now turns his attention to the Egyptians.

The Israelites, in particular those living in Jerusalem, had approached the Egyptians and pleaded with them to become allies. They needed their support because they were being invaded by the Babylonians. As God says in the words of the prophet: 'Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who trust in horses and chariots' [Is. 31:1]. . . . The Egyptians were zealous in their devotion to idols. Therefore he calls them a people desperate and beaten down. Desperate because they did not know the one who is by nature truly God, beaten down, because they had allowed their minds to become subject to the deceptions of demons, trodden down under their feet.[18]

Nothing in this passage suggested a christological interpretation and Cyril is content to draw out its religious significance by reference to the ancient events about which it speaks. On other oracles he does the same.

Isaiah 53

In Cyril's commentaries on the Old Testament (as well as those of other ancient authors) the historical interpretations are the least interesting. Although many today are critical of patristic exegesis for its use of allegory as a hermeneutical technique, what gives the ancients their enduring value is the spiritual interpretation, that is, their ingenuity in using the biblical language to understand and express the mysteries of the New Testament. Take, for example, the familiar passage from Isaiah 53. In the Septuagint version, the text reads: 'He bears our sins and suffers pain for us, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised on account of our iniquities . . .' (Is. 53:4–6). The connection between this passage and the passion of Christ is made explicit in the first epistle of Peter: 'Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled he did not revile in return; when he

[18] *In Is.* 18:1–2 (*PG* 70, 436d–437b).

suffered, he did not threaten. . . . He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed' (1 Pet. 2:21–25). In the mid-second century Isaiah 53:1–8 is cited in its entirety by Justin Martyr as a prophecy of Christ's passion, and in time this interpretation of Isaiah 53 was to become normative for Christian interpreters.[19]

Even though the overall interpretation of the text had been set by the New Testament, however, the details had still to be worked out. In his commentary on Isaiah 53:4, Cyril first draws attention to Hebrews 13:12, 'Jesus suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood'. His point is that Christ died *on behalf of* others. Then he cites Romans 8:32: 'He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all. . . .' This text was often seen as an allusion to Genesis 22, the sacrifice of Isaac, but what catches Cyril's eye is the prepositional phrase, '*for* us all', which is similar to Isaiah 53:4, 'wounded *for* our transgressions'.[20]

In support of his interpretation Cyril cites 2 Corinthians 5:14–15, 'one has died *for* all that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised'. It is the '*for* all' that interests Cyril: 'Rightly then the prophet says: "This one was stricken, for he knew that he was to bear our infirmities . . . and he suffered *for* us".' Some interpreters, however, who do not understand the mystery of Christ do not know to whom the passage refers and say that he underwent such torment to atone for his own sins. But, says Cyril, the prophet says explicitly that he 'was wounded *for* our sins and bruised *for* our iniquities'. It is apparent that the prophecy is speaking about the one who suffered 'for our salvation' and that the one who suffered 'did not know sin'. He suffered *for* us, and he died *on our behalf*.[21]

By the fifth century there was a well established tradition of interpreting Isaiah 53 in reference to Christ's passion. Cyril's exegesis of Isaiah 53:4 gives the received interpretation a firmer foundation in the biblical text by showing the correspondence between its words, specifically its prepositions, and prepositions used of Christ's suffering and death in the New Testament. The

[19] *1 Apol.* 50. Also see Sawyer, pp. 82–99.
[20] *In Is.* 53:4–6 (*PG* 70, 1173cd).
[21] *In Is.* 53:4–6 (*PG* 70, 1176ad).

New Testament serves as a guide for his interpretation, but Cyril's exegesis expands what is said explicitly in the New Testament.

Isaiah 25

In the case of the suffering servant the New Testament explicitly suggested the direction of interpretation. In other passages the relation between the New Testament and the words of Isaiah is more subtle. An example is Isaiah 25:1–9. The passage begins: 'O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name, thou hast done wonderful things, a faithful plan formed of old. May it be so.'[22] In this passage, says Cyril, 'the prophet announces the kingdom of Christ'. In itself that statement is noteworthy because Cyril has just completed an exposition of the oracles of the nations which do *not*, in his view, announce the kingdom of Christ. Why does he now say that the oracle speaks about Christ?

First, Cyril observes that the beginning of chapter 25 is linked closely to the end of chapter 24. In the final verse of chapter 24 we read that the 'Lord will rule in Zion and in Jerusalem and he will manifest his glory before the elders'. This passage is reminiscent of Isaiah 2 which says, 'out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem', and, following the New Testament (Heb. 1:1; Acts 2:15–16), Cyril had seen this as a prophecy of the messianic age.[23] In Is. 25:1 he notices the phrase 'a faithful plan formed of old'. This expression and the words 'wonderful things', says Cyril, refer to the 'mystery of the Incarnation of the only Son and the things that have happened all over the earth because of the Incarnation'.[24]

Cyril links Isaiah's expression 'a faithful plan (*boule*) formed of old (*archaios*)' to the Incarnation via the term 'plan' (*boule*) in Ephesians 1:11 and the phrase 'before the foundation of the world' in Ephesians 1:4, where Paul writes: God 'has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world'. Hence Cyril interprets the phrase 'a faithful plan formed of old' in Isaiah as a reference to the eternal plan of God that was revealed in the coming of Christ. Paraphrasing Ephesians he writes: 'We were saved in

[22] 'May it be so' is the LXX's rendering of the Hebrew 'Amen'.

[23] See *In Is.* 2:3 (*PG* 70, 68b).

[24] *In Is.* 25:1 (*PG* 70, 556).

Christ who was chosen before the foundation of the world and manifested at the end of the age, as most wise Paul said. The mystery of Christ is not new nor recent. God chose him before the foundation of the world, but he only appeared in his own time.'[25]

Once Cyril has established the christological referent of Isaiah 25 the way is open to interpret the verses that follow. Isaiah 25:3–4 reads: 'Therefore an impoverished people will glorify you; and cities of wicked men will bless you. For you have been a help to every lowly city, and to the needy in their distress a stronghold will deliver them from evil men . . . They will bless you as men who are fainthearted who are thirsting in Sion, and you will deliver us from the impious men to whom you have handed us over.'

Commenting on the first part of the verse Cyril writes:

> Israel was called to the knowledge of God through the tutoring of the Law, and was richly endowed with the things of God. It was delivered [from Egypt] and inherited the promised land. Although there were many other peoples living in other parts of the world, all were alien to spiritual matters and heavenly things. They had not tasted the gifts that come from God. They were as it were naked and unclothed, enjoying neither divine protection nor shelter from on high, nor the spiritual wealth that comes from virtue nor other things worthy of praise or admiration.
>
> When Christ appeared, destroying the arrogance of the devil, he led the nations to God the Father, and they basked in the splendor of the true light and shared in his glory. Enjoying the splendor of the way of life according to the gospel they offered hymns of thanksgiving to the God and Father for these gifts. Thus the text says, you have carried out a *faithful plan formed of old* O Lord, recapitulating all things in Christ and enlightening those in darkness, destroying the mighty powers of this age. That is, like *fortified cities the impoverished people will bless you* and whole cities will *glorify you*. Having become a *help to all* and *protection* to those whose ancestral traditions were impoverished, you have saved them from wicked men.[26]

Thus the first part of the verse, 'an impoverished people will glorify you, and cities of wicked men will bless you' refers to the gentiles who did not know God before the coming of Christ. Through his coming they were able to share in the inheritance of

[25] *In Is.* 25:2–3 (*PG* 70, 556–557).
[26] *In Is.* 25:3–5 (*PG* 70, 557d–560a).

Israel. But Cyril notices that the text also speaks about the 'faint-hearted' who were 'thirsting for Sion' (LXX). This he takes to be a reference to Israelites who were yearning for the coming of the Savior. As support for this interpretation he refers to the aged Simeon who was 'looking for the consolation of Israel', according to Luke 2:25:

> Perhaps this is what the prophet is referring to, those in Israel who were thirsting for the coming of the Savior. They desired to see the Savior and Redeemer of all. One such person was the righteous Simeon. When he took the infant Jesus in his arms he said: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel' (Luke 2:29–32).[27]

Then he mentions Zechariah whose song begins with the word 'blessed', the term that occurs in Isaiah 25:4, 'they will *bless* you as men who are fainthearted who are thirsting in Sion . . .'. Cyril:

> And blessed Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, being filled with the Holy Spirit, glorified God when he cried out: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the most high, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace' (Luke 1:68–79).

To which Cyril comments: 'You can see then how a *faithful plan formed of old* of our God and Father was promised to the generations of old'.[28]

[27] *In Is.* 25:3–5 (*PG* 70, 560b).
[28] *In Is.* 25:3–5 (*PG* 70, 560bc).

On the opening verses of chapter 25 Cyril had said that the prophet was announcing the coming of Christ; now in the section that begins at verses 6–7 he says that Isaiah directs the reader to life within the Church. The text reads: 'On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make a feast for all peoples; on this mountain they will drink gladness, they will drink wine. They will anoint themselves with myrrh on this mountain.' Having already said that Christ will reign in Sion and Jerusalem, says Cyril, now the prophet 'using the language of sensible things that can be seen', begins to weave a 'mystical sense' into the text. Drawing on his interpretation of Isaiah 2 where Mt Sion and Jerusalem refer to the Church, Cyril says that this text refers to the 'Church of Christ' which is lifted up like a mountain. The significant detail is that the prophet refers to a feast in which those who dwell on the mountain of the Lord will 'drink gladness and will drink wine'. 'Wine', says Cyril, refers to the 'mystical oblation', that is, the Eucharist, to 'the unbloody sacrifice' which 'we are accustomed to celebrate in the churches'.[29] 'Myrrh', on the other hand signifies 'the anointing of the Holy Spirit' mentioned in 1 John 2:20, 27, 'You have been anointed by the Holy one . . .', that takes place at Baptism. 'We were anointed with myrrh most especially at the time we received Holy Baptism, the anointing with oil serving as a sign and symbol of participation in the Holy Spirit.'[30]

The next verse reads: 'Death has prevailed and swallowed men up; but again the Lord God has wiped away every tear from every face. He has taken away the reproach of his people from all the earth; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' Here, of course, Cyril is guided by Paul's allusion to Isaiah 25 in his great chapter on resurrection in 1 Corinthians, in particular the line 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. 15:55). Yet Cyril gives the words of Isaiah an ecclesiological sense by relating them directly to Baptism and the creed:

> It is appropriate and necessary [he says] that at the time the 'mystery' is handed over, that the Resurrection of the dead is included.[31] For at the time we make the confession of faith at Holy Baptism, we say that

[29] *In Is.* 25:6–7 (*PG* 70, 561c).

[30] *In Is.* 25:6–7 (*PG* 70, 561cd).

[31] The reference is to the 'handing over' of the Apostles' Creed to those who are about to be baptized.

we expect the resurrection of the flesh. And so we believe. Death overcame our forefather Adam on account of his transgression and like a fierce wild animal it pounced on him and carried him off amidst lamentation and loud wailing. Men wept and grieved because death ruled over all the earth. But all this came to an end with Christ. Striking down death, he rose up on the third day to become the way by which human nature would rid itself of corruption. He became the first born of the dead, and the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

We who come afterward will certainly follow the first fruits. He turned suffering into joy, and we cast off our sackcloth. We put on the joy given by God so that we can rejoice and say, 'where is your victory O death?' (1 Cor. 15:55–56). Therefore every tear is taken away. For believing that Christ will surely raise the dead, we do not weep over them, nor are we overwhelmed by inconsolable grief like those who have no hope. Death itself is a 'reproach of the people' for it had its beginning among us through sin. Corruption entered in on account of sin, and death's power ruled on earth.[32]

Finally he turns to Isaiah 25:9. 'And in that day they shall say, Behold our God in whom we have hoped, and we will rejoice, and he shall save us; this is the Lord and we have waited for him, and we will exult and rejoice in our salvation.' Cyril writes:

You recognize the one who gives you joy to drink and wine in addition, anointing those in spiritual Zion with myrrh. You recognize that he is true God and son of God by nature, and although he appeared in the form of a servant, by becoming man he became the source of salvation and life for all, being in all things like those on earth though without sin. The prophet indicates that they are all but pointing [to Christ] with the finger when they say: 'Behold our God in whom we have hoped, and we will rejoice in our salvation.' I think that this text applies especially to the Israelites who were nurtured in the words of Moses and were not ignorant of the predictions of the holy prophets. They waited for the time of the coming of the Savior and redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, as I have already said, Zechariah the father of John [the Baptizer] when he prophesied in the Spirit said of Christ: 'He has raised up a horn of salvation' (Luke 1:69). And Simeon when he took the holy child in his arms said: 'Behold my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared before the face of all people'. Recognizing then what had been announced of old, the one who is the hope of all the Savior and Redeemer, they said, according to Isaiah, 'Behold our God'.

[32] *In Is.* 25:8 (*PG* 70, 564bc).

> They confess that God will give rest on this mountain. And it seems to me that mountain here refers to the Church, for it is there that one finds rest. For we heard the words of Christ: 'Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'[33]

The *skopos* of the Scripture

If, after going through Cyril's exegesis of Isaiah 25, one reads through the chapter again, it is apparent what Cyril has accomplished. The words of the text now shimmer with meanings that a reader, practiced in the Lord's style of language, discerns at once. How, after the resurrection of Christ, can one read the words of Isaiah, 'the Lord God has wiped away every tear . . . and taken away the reproach [of death]' (Is. 25:8) without thinking of the hope of the resurrection? How can one speak of a sumptuous feast for 'all peoples, a feast of wine' (25:6) and not bring to mind the Holy Eucharist? How can one say, 'This is our God. . . let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation', and not be reminded of the Nativity? On the basis of a few verses from an oracle of the prophet Isaiah Cyril establishes a link between the ancient prophecy and the Incarnation of the divine Logos and the life of the Church. The way he goes about his task is characteristic of early Christian exegesis. He focuses on certain terms in the text, most notably 'a faithful plan formed of old', and draws on passages from other parts of the Scripture, in this case Ephesians 1, to illuminate the words of Isaiah 53.

The fathers were keenly aware that the Old Testament was different from the New Testament and that it spoke in a different idiom. Yet, when it came to its interpretation they took it as axiomatic that the Bible was one book and that each part complemented the other. Cyril makes the point explicitly in his Commentary on Isaiah: 'The entire Scripture is one book, and was spoken by the one Holy Spirit.'[34] The Bible's unity came from Christ; without Christ it was not possible to see Leviticus and Proverbs and Ezekiel and Mark and Acts and 1 John as part of a single narrative. To quote Henri De Lubac: 'Jesus Christ brings about the unity of the Scripture, because he is the endpoint and

[33] *In Is.* 25:9 (*PG* 70, 564d–565b).
[34] *In Is.* 29:12 (*PG* 70, 656a).

fullness of Scripture. Everything in it is related to him. In the end he is its sole object. Consequently, he is, so to speak, its whole exegesis.'[35]

Already in the second century in the debates with the Gnostics, St Irenaeus had argued against a piecemeal approach to the Scriptures. The Gnostics had the habit of picking and choosing biblical texts that suited their own purposes and claiming that they were presenting what the Scriptures taught. They took the phrase 'god of this world' in 2 Corinthians 4:4 to mean that there was a second god who ruled this world besides the high God. Irenaeus thought that the only reason the Gnostics could believe St Paul was speaking about two gods was that they had no sense of the unity of the Bible. For it was clear that the Scriptures teach that there is only one God, the God who created this world and is the Father of Jesus Christ. Gnostic exegesis was like mosaic in which the tiles had been taken out and rearranged. Though the number and colors of the tiles may be the same, what they depict has nothing to do with the original picture. Without a sense of the whole, the central plot of the Scriptures, what Irenaeus called its aim or *skopos*, it was futile to claim to interpret any individual passage.[36]

For Irenaeus, as for all early Christian interpreters, the Scriptures did not stand alone. Not only was it impossible to interpret an individual passage without reference to the Scriptures as a whole, the Bible itself could not be understood without reference to the living tradition of the Church. For early Christian readers the Bible was a book of the Church and it was understood and interpreted within the context of the Church's faith and life, its creeds, its liturgy, its practices and beliefs. At various points in his great work against the Gnostics, *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus cites the *regula fidei*, a brief summary of the Christian teaching similar to what we know as the Apostles' Creed. It began with the confession of God as creator, briefly narrated the coming of Christ, told of his suffering, death and resurrection, the sending of the Holy Spirit, and ended by pointing to the return of Christ in glory. By presenting the story of the Bible in capsule form, the rule of faith or 'pattern

[35] *Exégèse médiévale* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1959), 1:322. ET *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), p. 237.

[36] See *Ad Haer.* 1, 9, 1 and 1, 10, 1.

of truth' defined the subject matter of the Bible, thereby offering a commentary on the whole.[37]

The church fathers have little to say about theoretical questions concerning biblical interpretation. Yet, from time to time one will come across passages indicating that they had thought about the hermeneutical framework underlying their exegesis. In his exposition of the bronze serpent fixed on a pole Cyril explains why it is not adequate simply to give a historical exposition of a biblical text. 'The letter does not satisfy the spiritually mature', he writes. 'They are satisfied only with mysteries hidden in types. By transforming the bare narrative, one moves the focus away from the particular thing [the type] to what is more general and universal, that is, to what is true, not simply historical.'[38]

It may seem obvious, especially in the Platonizing world of the early church, to say that 'truth' can never be simply historical. But Cyril's observation is not inconsequential. Even a historical account does not bear its own significance. To have meaning it must be related to something larger than itself, set within a framework of other events and statements about the events. In the case of a biblical narrative, however, more is required, because the Bible was not written to give us an account of what happened in ancient times. In Cyril's words:

> The aim (*skopos*) of the inspired Scriptures is the mystery of Christ signified to us through a myriad of different kinds of things. Someone might liken it to a glittering and magnificent city, having not one image of the king, but many, and publicly displayed in every corner of the city . . . . Its aim, however, is not to provide us an account of the lives of the saints of old. Far from that. Rather it seeks to give us knowledge of the mystery [of Christ] through those things by which the word about him might become clear and true.[39]

Only by relating what is written in the Scriptures to Christ who is the 'truth' can the interpreter discover what is 'true' in the text.[40]

[37] *Ad Haer.* 3, 4, 2.

[38] *Glaphyra* (*PG* 69, 640b).

[39] *Glaphyra* (*PG* 69, 308c).

[40] When St Augustine, for example, interpreted Psalm 73:28, 'it is good for me to cleave to God', he gave it a trinitarian exposition. Only through the gift of the Holy Spirit, he says, can the human soul delight in and love God, that is, 'cleave to his Creator'. It is not enough to discern the meaning of the word 'cleave' in biblical Hebrew, or to construct the historical setting in which the

One might argue that there is a sense in which the Old Testament of the early Christians is a different book from the Hebrew and Aramaic writings that come down to us from the ancient Near East. Christians did not rewrite the Old Testament to suit Christian taste, but they read it in a Greek translation (and other versions, e.g., the Latin, dependent on the Greek), and the interpretation that became embedded in the Church's liturgy and catechetical tradition was based on the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, not the Hebrew text. This Bible, when read as part of one book that included the Greek New Testament, shaded the meaning of words, highlighted certain images, and privileged certain persons or events. The book carried by the Christian community and read in the churches had its own unique character and required a distinctive form of exegesis. In this Bible Isaiah's 'plan formed of old' and the 'living water' of the Song of Songs had within them a layer of meaning that was not apparent on a strictly historical reading. This 'more' was not something imposed on the text, like the holiness that resides in relics; the more is present in the words themselves, the 'heavenly words' of the Bible as Cassiodorus called them.[41] The spiritual world that was latent in the words of the Scriptures was drawn from the world of the Hebrew Bible but was not identical with it. The book that was the basis for Christian interpretation was the Greek version (and translations based on it), the Septuagint.

Early Christian interpreters, no less than modern exegetes, knew that the prophets spoke to their own times. Yet they resisted a solely historical approach to the biblical text, not because they disregarded history, but because they lived in the new age, the 'latter days' that Isaiah promised (Is. 2:1ff.). In his exposition of this text Cyril notes that the prophet Isaiah introduces this oracle as a vision, what Isaiah 'saw', and that this vision is distinct from the vision that preceded it in chapter 1. In contrast to the previous

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psalm was written. If Psalm 73 was written 'for our instruction' it must be interpreted in light of what is known of God through the revelation in Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. One can no longer speak about 'cleaving to God' without recognizing that it is through the work of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit that we are united with God. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not irrelevant to the interpretation of the psalms.

[41] *Institutes* 30.

vision, this one designates a time, 'the last days'. In Cyril's view the phrase 'in the last days' is the key to understanding the text. Isaiah, argues Cyril, is speaking of a 'time' when

> the power of the devil will be cast down not in a part of the earth, not in one country, and the worship of idols will be wholly destroyed . . . This sickness and the tyranny exercised by impure demons will be eliminated in every place under heaven ['all the nations']. This will take place among those living on earth *in the last days*, that is at the end of the age when the only Word of God shined forth, being born of a woman. At this time he will present to himself the spiritual Judea or Jerusalem, that is the Church, as a pure virgin, not having spot or wrinkle or anything of that sort as it is written, 'holy and blameless' (Eph. 5:27). Concerning the church he said that in the last days the mountain of the Lord will be manifest, and the house of the God of Jacob on the height of the mountains. It is said to us that Zion in Judea is situated on the mountain will be built. But this is not to be taken to refer to sensible things, but spiritually to the church which is compared to a mountain.[42]

Several aspects of Cyril's exegesis are worth noting. First, the phrase 'in the last days' (or variants on it) is used at several places in the New Testament. The most significant is Hebrews 1:1: 'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but *in these last days* he has spoken to us by a Son . . .' (also Acts 2, Heb. 9:26, *et al.*). The use of the phrase in this context indicates that with the coming of Christ the 'last days' had begun. Hence Christian commentators drew the conclusion that one must interpret the oracles of the prophets in light of the new things that had happened in the last days, the birth of Christ, his baptism and temptation, his preaching and miracles, his suffering and death, and most important of all, his resurrection. As we shall see for Cyril, the resurrection of Christ is the key to the interpretation of the Bible.

The second thing to note is that the term 'spiritual', as used in this passage, means interpreting the text in light of Christ. Spiritual does not mean esoteric. It refers to the kind of gifts brought by Christ, forgiveness, participation in the divine life, hope of eternal salvation, that is, goods that cannot be discerned by the senses, hence spiritual. Cyril knows that the oracle, in its original setting,

[42] *In Is.* 2:3 (*PG* 70, 68bd).

was speaking of the political restoration of Jerusalem and the return of the exiles. His argument is that the things promised there have not taken place, hence the oracle cannot be interpreted to refer to such things. Something else, however, did take place: God's Word appeared in human flesh and as a human being was raised from the dead. Faced with these new and unprecedented happenings 'in the last days', the words of the prophets look different, and it is these new things that shape Cyril's interpretation of the passage. He insists on a 'spiritual' reading of the text because he is attentive to a new set of historical events.

What came about as a result of Christ's resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit was the Church, a new kind of community devoted to the worship of the one God. This community is not confined to one people or place and is spread throughout the world. It claims no city or land as its own, and its hope is not centered on the restoration of a political kingdom. It is, in Cyril's vocabulary, a spiritual community, that is, a community whose life centers on a spiritual birth in Baptism and a spiritual sacrifice in the Eucharist. As Cyril puts it elsewhere in the Commentary on Isaiah (commenting on the term 'Zion' in Is. 51:3):

> The word of the holy prophets always represents things that can be seen and actions which are known by the senses. It contains, however, reference to things that are beyond the senses and which are spiritual. Hence when it uses the word Zion, it is not speaking solely to the earthly city, it also must be understood a referring to something that is spiritual, the church of the living God. If not, how would any know that the words of the prophets lead to truth.[43]

'In Christ there is a new creation'

In Cyril's commentary on the parallel to the oracle in Isaiah 2 found in Micah 4, Cyril cites Paul's words, 'In Christ there is a new creation, the old has passed away' (2 Cor. 5:17).[44] With the coming of Christ, writes Cyril, all things are 'transformed into what is better'. 2 Corinthians 5:17 has a commanding role to play in Cyril's interpretation of the Bible. It occurs, for example, in his exposition of John 13:34: 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another . . .'. Cyril comments: 'St. Paul is surely

[43] *In Is.* 51:4 (*PG* 70, 1109b).

[44] *In Mic.* 4:1–3 (Pusey, *In XII Prophetas*, vol. 1, pp. 657 and 662).

correct . . . when he writes, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come". For Christ renews us and refashions us to a newness of life which was untrodden and unknown to others who were devoted to a way of life according to the law and persist in the precepts of Moses.'[45]

Cyril is fascinated by the theme of 'newness' in Christ. In a fragment from his commentary on 2 Corinthians 5:17 he says that the phrase 'the old has passed away' refers to the ancient curse in Genesis 3:19, 'You are earth and to earth you will return', and to the Law of Moses. All this has passed away. 'For we are justified through faith in Christ, and the power of the curse has ceased. For Christ rose from the dead for our sakes striking down the power of death . . . bringing about worship in spirit and in truth.'[46] Because all things are new in Christ, Cyril draws the conclusion that the interpretation of the Septuagint must be new. No longer can its words and stories be referred to sensible things, for example, deliverance from the Egyptians by passing through the sea, eating manna or drinking from a rock in the desert. 'All things are new', writes Cyril, hence we do not flee 'Egyptian taskmasters but the tyranny of unbelief', and 'we eat the spiritual manna and the bread from heaven'. When the ancient texts speak 'historically' their words must be 'taken in another sense'.[47]

Cyril's exegesis of the Septuagint follows directly from his understanding of Christ. If all things are new in Christ, then everything, including the Scriptures, has been transformed. The christological interpretation of the Bible does not come about through a gradual process of spiritual discernment. It comes all at once, *subito* in the term of the Venerable Bede.[48] In light of the new, everything takes on a different meaning. In ancient times things meant one thing, now they mean something else. *Aliter tunc . . . aliter nunc*, says Rabanus Maurus, an early medieval commentator.[49] If Jesus of Nazareth is the one who had been expected, as the New Testament taught, the prophecies about the Messianic age have been fulfilled, and it was the task of biblical interpretation to discover what the

[45] *In Jo.* 13:34 (Pusey, *Comm. in Jo.*, vol. 2, p. 384).
[46] *In 2 Cor.* 5:17 (Pusey, *Comm. in Jo.*, vol. 3, p. 353).
[47] *In Is.* 42:10 (*PG* 70, 860–861).
[48] *PL* 91, 1186a.
[49] *In Num.* 3:13 (*PL* 108, 631a).

scriptural promises meant in light of this new fact. Paradoxically, the spiritual sense was the historical sense, for if there had been no Christ, no Incarnation, no death and resurrection, there would be no spiritual sense.

Through history Christ transforms history, and after his coming a strictly historical interpretation of the Old Testament is anachronistic. For the Scriptures can no longer be interpreted as one interprets other documents from the past, setting things in historical context, deciding what came earlier and what later, relating things to what went before or followed afterward. Now interpretation must begin at the center which is also the beginning and the end, with Christ who is Alpha and the Omega. Christ imposes a new order on the Scriptures.

The subject of Cyril's exegesis is never simply the text that is before him, it is always the mystery of Christ. He is less interested in understanding what Moses or Zechariah or Paul or Matthew 'meant' than he is in understanding what Christ means. Exegesis is an occasion to discuss Christ as taught in the Church's creeds and worshipped in the Church's liturgy. Christ is Cyril's true subject matter. Yet without the Bible there is no talk of Christ. Cyril knew no way to speak of Christ than in the words of the Bible, and no way to interpret the words of the Bible than through Christ. His biblical writings are commentaries on Christ and only if one reads them in that spirit can one appreciate his significance as interpreter of the Bible.

Hugh of St Victor, the twelfth-century biblical scholar and theologian, observed that when interpreting the Bible one should not preserve the 'same order' in allegory (his term for theology), that one does in history. For 'history follows the order of time', whereas 'allegory belongs more to the order of knowing'. Exegesis begins with history, but its way of knowing, its way of apprehending the text can never be simply historical. For Christian exegesis sees all things through the one 'in whom all things hold together' (Col. 1:17). 'Unless', writes Hugh, 'you know beforehand the nativity of Christ, his teaching, his suffering, his resurrection and ascension, and all the other things which he did in the flesh and through the flesh, you will not be able to penetrate the mysteries of the old figures.'[50]

[50] *Didascalicon* 6, 6.

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Chapter 2

Cyril and the Mystery of the Incarnation

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Cyril of Alexandria is undoubtedly most identified with his understanding of the Incarnation, an understanding that was forged within the christological firestorm of the Nestorian controversy. His understanding, as articulated in his *Second Letter to Nestorius*, was accepted by the Council of Ephesus (431) as a true expression of orthodox belief. Moreover, while Cyril died (444) before the Council of Chalcedon (451), the Chalcedonian Creed can be interpreted properly only if it is read, I believe, through his eyes. Thus Cyril's Christology has been to the present the foundational expression of the Christian tradition's doctrinal understanding of who Jesus is. Within contemporary Christology, however, Cyril's understanding of the Incarnation has provoked immense criticism, and with it thrown into question the whole doctrinal christological tradition. In this essay, I want not only to examine carefully and to express clearly Cyril's Christology, but also, in so doing, clear it of many current misconceptions and thus liberate it from many fashionable misinterpretations.

The Christology of Cyril's early commentaries

While Cyril's conception and expression of the incarnational mystery developed and matured during the course of the Nestorian controversy, his prior christological thinking, contained within his earlier biblical commentaries, especially within his *Commentary*

on the Gospel of John, is often overlooked or even ignored.[1] In addressing christological questions and concerns already within his commentaries, Cyril began to make incarnational distinctions, to develop incarnational concepts and to employ incarnational language that he would draw upon during the Nestorian debate, and thus these would acquire deeper insight and clearer articulation as the controversy evolved. This can be seen in a sixfold interrelated manner.

1

Cyril's christological thought principally and consistently emerged from his soteriological concerns.

> It was therefore necessary that the only-begotten Word of God who brought himself down to the level of self-emptying, should not repudiate the low estate arising from that self-emptying, but should accept what is full by nature on account of the humanity, not for his own sake, but for ours, who lack every good thing.[2]

Echoing his predecessors Irenaeus and Athanasius, Cyril argued that the Son of God must become man so that humankind might become divine:[3]

> It was not otherwise possible for man, being of a nature which perishes, to escape death, unless he recovered that ancient grace, and partook once more of God who holds all things together in being and preserves them in life through the Son in the Spirit. Therefore his Only-begotten Word has become a partaker of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), that is, he has become man, though being Life by nature, and begotten of the life that is by nature, that is, of God the Father, so that, having united himself with the flesh which perishes according to the law of its own nature . . . he might restore it to his own Life and render it through himself a partaker of God the Father . . . And he wears our nature, refashioning it to his own Life. And he himself is also in us, for we have all become partakers of him, and have him in ourselves through

[1] One notable exception is the work by J. Liébaert, *La doctrine christologique de S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie avant la querelle nestorienne* (Lilles: Facultés Catholiques, 1951).

[2] *In Is.* 11:1–3 (Russell, p. 83).

[3] Irenaeus stated that the Word of God 'became what we are that he might make us what he himself is' (*Ad Haer.* 5, praef.). Athanasius stated that 'He was humanized (ἐνανθρώπησις) that we might be deified (θεοποίησις)' (*De Incarn.* 54).

> the Spirit. For this reason we have become 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4), and are reckoned as sons, and so too we have in ourselves the Father himself through the Son.[4]

Moreover, this divinizing incentive for the Incarnation was, for Cyril, closely aligned to the cross. The cause of the Incarnation was 'that being by nature God and of God, the Only-begotten has become man; namely with intent to condemn sin in the flesh, and by his own death to slay death, and to make us sons of God, regenerating in the Spirit them that are on earth unto supernatural dignity'.[5] Or again, Cyril states:

> For this cause, though he is Life by nature, he became as one dead; that, having destroyed the power of death in us, he might mould us anew into his own life; and being himself the righteousness of God the Father, he became sin for us.[6]

2

Inherent within his overarching soteriological concerns, as witnessed in the above quotations, is Cyril's conviction that Jesus must be truly God. He inherited from his predecessors, especially from Athanasius, the soteriological principle that the Son must be truly God, *homoousion* (one in being) with the Father, for only he who is truly God is able to save humankind and so allow it to partake of the divine nature.

> He that is God by nature became, and is in truth, a man from heaven; not inspired merely, as some of those who do not rightly understand the depth of the mystery imagine, but being at the same time God and man, in order that, uniting as it were in himself things widely opposed by nature, and averse to fusion with each other, he might enable man to share and partake of the nature of God.[7]

3

He likewise argued, as seen within the above quotations, that the Son must be truly and fully human, for it is our humanity that is

[4] *In Jo.* 14:20. Author's own translation.

[5] *In Jo.* 14:20. ET T. Randell, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John by S. Cyril Archbishop of Alexandria*, Vol. 2 (London: Walter Smith, 1885), p. 316.

[6] *In Jo.* 17:19 (Randell, p. 539).

[7] *In Jo.* 14:20 (Randell, p. 549).

in need of salvation and it is our humanity that is in need of divinization. Commenting on the Johannine term that the Word became 'flesh' rather than 'man', Cyril held that John proclaimed that the Son of God did assume a whole man, body and soul, but that he was here designating and so emphasizing the weakness, vulnerability and woundedness of fallen humanity, and that it was such a 'fallen' humanity that the Son of God needed to assume so as to redeem and heal it and so give it life.

> That, in my opinion, is the most probable reason why the holy Evangelist, indicating the whole living being by the part affected, says that the Word of God became flesh. It is so that we might see side by side the wound together with the remedy, the patient together with the physician, that which had sunk towards death together with him who raised it up towards life, that which had been overcome by corruption together with him who drove out corruption, that which had been mastered by death together with him who was superior to death, that which was bereft of life together with him who is the provider of life.[8]

4

Cyril consistently then, as seen above, employed the principle that what is not assumed is not saved. This meant for Cyril not only that the Son did assume a full humanity, body and soul, but also that the humanity he did assume was of the fallen race of Adam. He became, as stated above, 'sin for us'. Thus, in accord with Romans 8:3, the Son assumed 'flesh that is subject to sin' (ἁμαρτίᾳ σάρκα), and so was 'subject to corruption'.[9] Moreover, the humanity that was affected by sin and corruptibility must be restored by 'having the fallen body united in an ineffable manner with the Word that endows all things with life. And it is necessary that when the flesh had become his own flesh it should partake of his own immortality'.[10] The Son did not merely appear to be man, nor was his life a mere fiction, but being truly born of a woman,

[8] *In Jo.* 1:14a (Russell, pp. 105–6).

[9] *In Jo.* 14:20 (Randell, p. 317). See also *In Jo.* 17:18. For a fuller argument on the importance of this incarnational truth see T. G. Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

[10] *In Jo.* 1:14a (Russell, p. 105).

he experienced 'every human characteristic except sin alone. Now fear and timidity, being natural emotions in us, are not to be classified among the sins. . . . Just as he experienced hunger and weariness as a man, so too he accepts the disturbance that come from the emotions as a human characteristic'.[11] This means then that even the Son's humanity needed to be saved and sanctified. Cyril can speak of the real sanctification of Christ's humanity at his baptism.[12] Moreover, the risen Jesus himself, as the Son incarnate, experienced 'the first fruits' of salvation and 'newness of life'.[13]

5

The above exposition also testifies to the soteriological necessity that, for Cyril, the Son of God must actually *come to exist* as man. No form of Adoptionism, which allows a merely moral union between the divine Son and the man Jesus, would suffice. The incarnational concept of 'become', for Cyril, must convey an ontological union between the Son of God and his humanity, for only within such a union could the Son truly save and so divinize his and our own humanity. Thus he insisted that 'he [the Evangelist] does not say that the Word came into flesh; he says that he became flesh in order to exclude any idea of a relative indwelling, as in the case of the prophets and the other saints. He truly did become flesh, that is to say, a human being, as I have just explained'.[14]

This did not mean, for Cyril, that the Word was changed into flesh. Already in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* Cyril made a distinction that would allow him to ward off the later Antiochene accusations that he mixed and confused the natures whereby they were changed and mutated. Arguing that 'become' demands a real ontological union, Cyril nevertheless adamantly maintained that 'we do not, of course, say that God the Word who is from the Father was transformed into the nature of flesh,

[11] *In Jo.* 12:27 (Russell, p. 120). For further examples, see C. *Nest.* 1, 1 and 3, 2; *Ad Nest.* 2; *Exp. XII Cap.* 2 and 10; *Scholia* 2 and 12; and *Quod Unus.*

[12] For example, see *In Jo.* 3:5.

[13] *In Jo.* 12:27 (Russell, p. 120). See also *In Jo.* 17:20. For a fuller exposition of this theme, see D. Keating's essay in this volume.

[14] *In Jo.* 1:14a (Russell, p. 106).

or that the flesh changed into the Word. For each remains what it is by nature and Christ is one from both'.[15]

Cyril realized that the incarnational 'becoming' was not like the caterpillar changing into the butterfly where the caterpillar ceases to exist in the metamorphic change. For him the Johannine phrase 'and dwelt among us', indicated that, while the Son did actually become man, he did not change into man, for it was the unchanged Son himself who now dwelt among us as man. 'The Theologian' was distinguishing 'the subject' of the dwelling and that in which the dwelling was taking place'.[16] The 'indwelling' did not denote merely a moral union, but rather the 'becoming' established an ontological union but one that did not involve any change in the Word, for the Word can actually be said, after the 'becoming', to dwell among us as a man.

6

Within his early commentaries, Cyril already upheld the communication of idioms, which in his view manifested a true understanding of the Incarnation. Since it was truly the eternal Son of God who became and is man, then all those attributes that pertain to his divinity or humanity are predicated of one and the same Son. 'Observe how in order to show that he was truly God as well as man, the prophet [Isaiah] assigned to him attributes that were both divine and human.'[17] Thus, while human attributes can truly be predicated of the Son, since the Son actually exists as a humble man, the Son – as Cyril would argue at length in the later controversy – remained impassible as God.[18]

While I will examine this issue again later, we must briefly pause here to address a common criticism of Cyril's Christology. Because Cyril was an Alexandrian, his Christology, especially within its early form, is often simplistically labelled as an example of Logos/Sarx Christology, as if he reluctantly attributed a soul to

[15] *In Jo.* 6:54 (Russell, p. 117). It should be noted that Cyril did, nonetheless, use the ambiguous phrase – 'one from both' – which will cause confusion in the later controversy and which will in turn have to be clarified, and ultimately dropped.

[16] *In Jo.* 1:14b (Russell, p. 106). See also pp. 107–8.

[17] *In Is.* 7:14–16 (Russell, p. 79).

[18] See *In Jo.* 11:9 (Russell, pp. 125–7).

Christ, and then only perfunctorily. This designation, as the above demonstrates, is not only utterly misleading, but also entirely artificial.[19]

Similarly, Cyril is often accused of being solely concerned with upholding the divinity of Jesus and so only showed a superficial interest in his humanity.[20] The above exposition of Cyril's actual thought concerning the humanity of Christ, a humanity that is one with 'sinful' humanity and thus physically and emotionally vulnerable, needing itself to be sanctified, manifestly contradicts such a facile allegation. While Cyril may not have fully appreciated certain authentic contemporary concerns, such as Christ's historically and culturally conditioned human ignorance, yet the Son's humanity was more than a peripheral or external tool which he artificially employed as an impersonal instrument to manifest his all-powerful divinity. Because, for Cyril, the Son actually existed as man, all that he did he did as a man. In addition to what has already been observed, this is also illustrated in Cyril's understanding of Christ's miracles.

Addressing the life-giving effects of Christ's eucharistic flesh, Cyril commented on his ability to raise the dead. When Jesus raised the dead he 'is seen to be operating not by word alone, nor by commands such as befit God, but he firmly insisted on using his holy flesh as a kind of co-worker, that he might show it to be capable of giving life and already one with him. For it really was his own body and not that of another'. Being 'his own body' he not only commanded the daughter of the synagogue ruler to arise, but he also 'took her by the hand'. Thus, 'while giving life as God by his all-powerful command, he also gives life by the touch of his holy flesh, demonstrating through both that the operation was a

[19] A. Grillmeier, in his classic work, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1 (London: Mowbrays, 1975), popularized the rather unaccommodating and often simplistic classification that patristic christologies tended towards or actually were either Logos/Sarx or Logos/Anthropos. Sadly Cyril, especially the early Cyril, was chucked into the Logos/Sarx paradigm. See pp. 414–17. For a defence of Cyril, see L. Welch, 'Logos-Sarx? Sarx and the Soul of Christ in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994), pp. 271–92.

[20] Examples of such a criticism will be found later when we examine more fully the heart of this issue.

single and cognate one'.[21] The operation was one act for it was the Son of God acting as man, and thus, within this one act, both his divinity and humanity were equally engaged.

Significantly, already here in the first half of his theological career, Cyril realized (though he did not state it as succinctly as I am about to do) that a proper conception and articulation of the Incarnation, for soteriological reasons, demanded that the three following truths must simultaneously be upheld. Moreover he instinctively realized that the communication of idioms concisely embodies and expresses these three truths.

1. It is *truly God* the Son who is man. Here, the emphasis is focused upon the full divinity of the Son.
2. It is *truly man* that the Son of God is. Here the emphasis is focused upon the full and complete humanity.
3. The Son of God *truly is* man. Here the emphasis is focused upon the ontological union between the person of the Son and his humanity.

These three statements can be incorporated in the following declaration, a declaration that summarizes, even before the Nestorian controversy, Cyril's Christology: Jesus is one ontological entity, and the one ontological entity that Jesus is is the one person of the divine Son of God existing as a complete and authentic man. Thus we find already in his commentaries Cyril articulating a conception of the Incarnation that will form the basis of his

[21] *In Jo.* 6:53 (Russell, p. 115). Prior to discovering this text, I created a scenario of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead that I thought would illustrate how Cyril himself would have understood the manner in which the Son worked as incarnate. While I did not emphasize, due to my own incarnational concerns, the life-giving nature of the Son's humanity as did Cyril, yet my example is in accord with his understanding. It was indeed the Son of God who raised Lazarus from the dead, but he did so as man through the power of the Holy Spirit. The action was not the Son of God performing a divine action *in* a man, but the Son of God performing a divine action *as* a man, and thus the action was the one action of the incarnate Son. See *Does God Suffer?*, p. 205. For a excellent discussion of how Cyril understands Jesus performing divine acts as a man see S. A. McKinion, *Words, Imagery, and the Mystery of Christ: A Reconstruction of Cyril of Alexandria's Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 212–24.

critique of Nestorius and the foundation upon which he will conceive and convey his own mature Christology.[22]

The communication of idioms as a hermeneutical principle

I now want to argue that the communication of idioms is precisely the hermeneutical key for unlocking Cyril's Christology as he progressively articulated it during the course of the Nestorian controversy. In the light of his earlier christological convictions, it is not surprising that Cyril would adamantly oppose Nestorius' denial of the propriety of the title, *Theotokos*, for such a rejection, with its inherent denunciation of the communication of idioms, negated, for him, an authentic understanding of the Incarnation and so the efficacy of Christ's salvific work. It was, as I stated above, the inner christological logic embedded within the communication of idioms that propelled Cyril to grasp, conceptualize, and articulate the three incarnational truths which he realized must be maintained for a proper understanding of the Incarnation. Moreover, in the process of clarifying the mystery of the Incarnation through his defence of communication of idioms, the proper use and rendering of the communication of idioms was itself corroborated and so sanctioned.

Cyril founded his defence of the communication of idioms upon the Creed of Nicaea, which illustrated and so demanded its legitimacy. The Son who was *homoousion* with the Father was the same Son who 'became incarnate of the Virgin Mary'. Having articulated his understanding of the Creed's Christology, Cyril continued:

[22] J. J. O'Keefe argues, rightly I believe, that Cyril was more faithful to the New Testament proclamation than were the Antiochenes. Unlike the Antiochenes, he fashioned his philosophical concepts to be in conformity with the biblical narrative. 'The Antiochene position interprets the text in the light of philosophy, the Alexandrian position interprets the philosophy in the light of the text' ('Kenosis or Impassibility: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus on the Problem of Divine Pathos', *SP* 32 (1997), p. 365). In the end Cyril was not only the better theologian, but, contrary to common scholarly opinion, he was equally the better exegete. See also O'Keefe, 'Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology', *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), pp. 41–5, 55–8, and '"A Letter that Killeth": Toward a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis, or Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret on the Psalms', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000), pp. 83–104.

> This is what it means to say that he was also born of woman in the flesh though owning his existence before the ages and begotten of the Father: not that his divine nature originated in the holy Virgin . . . (to say that . . . is idle and stupid) – no, it means that he had fleshly birth because he issued from woman for us and for our salvation having personally united the humanity to himself (ἑνώσας ἑαυτῷ καθ' ὑπόστασιν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον). The point is that it was not the case that initially an ordinary man was born of the holy Virgin and then the Word simply settled on him – no, what is said is that he underwent fleshly birth united from the very womb, making the birth of his flesh his very own.[23]

For Cyril, the communication of idioms demanded that Christ be one in two ways. Firstly, it demanded that Jesus be one existing reality, being or entity, for if he were not one, then we could not authentically predicate of him divine and human attributes. Secondly, the one existential reality that Jesus is must be the one and same divine Son of God existing as incarnate, for if it were not the one and same Son existing as man then it would not be the one and same Son who was *homoousion* with the Father and who was born, suffered, died, and rose as man. It is simply this double conception of Jesus' oneness which Cyril found embedded within the very heart of the communication of idioms and which he continually attempted to conceptualize and articulate.

We already observed these incarnational notions concerning Christ's oneness within Cyril's pre-Nestorian commentaries, and they are also readily apparent at the onset of the controversy. This is most evident in his championing the *mia physis* formula, that is, that Jesus is 'the one nature of the Word incarnate' (μία φύσις τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη), for it too contains his dual concern about the oneness of Christ. That is why Cyril clung to it with such tenacity. Nonetheless, since the formula was and is still so contentious, having originated with Apollinarius, but thought by Cyril to be from Athanasius, his use of it must be carefully examined.[24]

The first question is, What does Cyril mean by *mia physis*? Nestorius and the Antiochenes were convinced that by *mia physis* Cyril meant that Christ is one nature or essence (*physis*) in the

[23] *Ad Nest.* 2, 4 (Wickham, p. 7). The translation is slightly altered.

[24] See Apollinarius, *Ad Jovinianum*, 1.

sense of one quiddity in which the divine and the human natures were compositionally united, through mixture and confusion, so as to form a common third nature (quiddity) which would be neither fully divine nor fully human. Nestorius wrote:

> You [Cyril] do not confess that he is God in *ousia* in that you have changed him into the *ousia* of the flesh, and he is no more a man naturally in that you have made him the *ousia* of God; and he is not God truly or God by nature, nor yet man truly or man by nature.[25]

I have argued elsewhere that Cyril did not employ the *mia physis* formula to espouse one nature in the sense of one quiddity, but rather he primarily used it to emphasize that Christ is one being or reality – one entity.[26] The clue to this interpretation, which I have more recently perceived, is found within the comparison Cyril made between the soul/body union and that found within the Incarnation.[27] He principally and almost exclusively drew on the soul/body union, which normally appears immediately either before or after the *mia physis* formula, to illustrate that as the soul and the body of a human being are ontologically united to form one reality or entity – the human being – so the Son of God is ontologically united to the humanity to form the one reality of Jesus.[28]

[25] *Liber Heraclidis*. ET *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, ed. C. R. Driver and L. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 16. See also pp. 26–7.

[26] See T. G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Petersham: St Bede's, 1985), pp. 46–58.

[27] See T. G. Weinandy, 'The Soul/Body Analogy and the Incarnation: Cyril of Alexandria', *Coptic Church Review* 17 (1996), pp 59–66.

[28] The soul/body relationship was employed by patristic authors in two ways with regard to the Incarnation. Firstly, they used it so as to allow them to affirm the ontological union between the divinity and the humanity. As the soul and body form the one ontological reality of a human being, so, similarly, the divinity and the humanity formed the one ontological reality of Jesus. The soul/body union merely illustrated how two diverse and distinct 'things' could become one. In this sense the soul/body relationship was used merely by way of analogy or comparison. Secondly, the soul/body relationship was also used, often simultaneously with the first, as an exact model for designing the type and manner of the relationship between the divinity and the humanity, and so how the ontological oneness of Christ was achieved. As the soul is united and so relates to the body, so the divinity is united and so relates to the humanity. I have argued at length elsewhere that it is legitimate to use the soul/body relationship as an illustrative analogy or comparison for the oneness of Christ, but that it is

> As for our Saviour's statements in the Gospels, we do not divide them out to two subjects (ὑποστάσεσι) or persons (προσώποις). The one, unique Christ has no duality though he is seen as compounded in inseparable unity out of two (ἐκ δύο) differing elements in the way that a human being, for example, is seen to have no duality but to be one (εἷς) consisting of the pair of elements, body and soul.[29]

The Antiochenes believed that, because Cyril spoke of Christ being one nature (*mia physis*) formed out of two (*ek duo*), in a manner similar to the union between body and soul, he could only mean that the divinity and humanity were united so as to form a *tertium quid*, in which the divine nature itself became passible.

With his eye on Cyril, Nestorius wrote against the Arians:

> They confuse his divine and his human (qualities), saying that the union with flesh resulted in one nature . . . even as the soul and the body are bound (together) in one nature in the body, suffering of necessity, whether he will or not, the sufferings of the nature which he took upon himself, as though he was not of the nature of the Father impassible and without needs. . . . He hungered and thirsted and grew weary and feared and fled and died; and in short they say that he naturally endured whatever appertained to the sensible nature which he assumed.[30]

While the 'out of two' is ambiguous and will be clarified by Chalcedon, it is nonetheless evident that Cyril did not mean what

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not legitimate to use it as an exact model for designating the type and manner of the relationship between the divinity and the humanity in Christ. While both the soul/body relationship and the divinity/humanity relationship are ontological in nature, they are different kinds of ontological relationships. When the soul/body relationship is used as a model for the incarnational union, both the divinity and the humanity are always jeopardized, for a *tertium quid* being is always lurking close at hand. The tendency is either to have the divinity wash into the humanity and so transform it, or to have the humanity wash into the divinity and so transform it, both resulting in a *tertium quid* being who is neither fully God nor fully man. Nonetheless, with the exception of Cyril (and probably Athanasius), the soul/body relationship became, almost universally within the patristic era, the normative model for conceiving and articulating the Incarnation. Thus, its use as a model gave rise not only to all the christological heresies, but also to many of the christological problems, conundrums and confusions within the orthodox Fathers as well. See T. G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), pp. 182–92.

[29] *Ad Nest.* 3, 8 (Wickham, p. 23).

[30] *The Bazaar*, pp. 8–9.

the Antiochenes thought he meant. Firstly, for Cyril, the Gospels bear witness that there is one subject or person in Christ. Secondly, the reason there is one subject or person is that the divinity and the humanity are united in the one person so as to form the one nature of Jesus in the sense of one entity (not quiddity), similar to the way the soul and body form the one entity of a human being. The comparison is used only to denote the oneness and not the manner in which the oneness is achieved. As Cyril states:

> For the nature (φύσις) of the Incarnate Word himself (ἡ αὐτοῦ τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένου) is immediately, after the union, conceived as one (μία). It is not unreasonable to see something similar in our own case too. For a human being is truly one compounded of dissimilar elements, by which I mean soul and body.[31]

Or again, in defending his use of the *mia physis* formula, Cyril writes:

> May we illustrate the case from the composition which renders us human beings? We are composed out of (ἐκ) soul and body and observe two different natures (δύο φύσεις), the body's and soul's; yet the pair yields a single united human being, and composition out of two natures does not turn the one man into two men but, as I said, produces a single man, a composite of soul and body.[32]

Or again:

> Take the normal human being. We perceive in him two natures (δύο φύσεις): one that of the soul, a second that of the body. We divide them, though, merely in thought accepting the difference as simply residing in the fine drawn insight or mental intuition; we do not separate the natures out or attribute a capacity for radical severance to them, but see that they belong to one man so that the two are two no more and the single living being is constituted complete by the pair of them. So though one attributes the nature of manhood and of Godhead to Emmanuel, the manhood has become the Word's own and together with it is seen as one Son.[33]

[31] *C. Nest.* 2, proema (Russell, p. 142). The translation is slightly altered.

[32] *Ad Succ.* 1, 7 (Wickham, p. 77).

[33] *Ad Succ.* 2, 5 (Wickham, p. 93). Similar citations, demonstrating the same point, can be found in *Ad Nest.* 3, 4; *Ad Succ.* 2, 2 and 3; *Ad Eul.*; *Ad Mon.* 12; *Scholia* 27; *C. Diod.* 9 and 22; *C. Theod.* 2:4; *Quod Unus* (McGuckin (1995), p. 78).

The sole point Cyril wished to make within the above quotations is that as a human being is one entity so Christ is one entity. In no way did he use the manner of the relationship between the soul/body or the mode of union established between the soul/body as a model for the manner of the relationship between the divinity/humanity or for the mode of the union established between the divinity/humanity. He is merely making a comparison in order to draw a conclusion – Christ is one.[34] Thus, to insist that Christ is *mia physis* simply affirms that he is one entity and not that he is one quiddity.[35]

[34] B. Meunier equally argues that Cyril used the soul/body union as a 'simple illustration pédagogique' and not as an exact model for the incarnational union (*Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie: l'humanité, le salut et la Question monophysite* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), p. 235. McKinion also states that Cyril 'is using this image to illustrate his christological statement that Emmanuel is one individual' (*Words, Imagery, and the Mystery of Christ*, p. 190). See also pp. 188–96.

[35] As I stated in *Does God Suffer?* (pp. 194–5, n. 43) it must be noted that on one occasion Cyril did use the manner of the relationship between the soul/body not merely to illustrate that Christ is one entity, but to portray the workings of the communication of idioms. Cyril speaks of the relationship between the two natures as ineffable, and adds that even the relationship between the soul/body is beyond our comprehension. He then states:

> I should say (although the description altogether falls short of the truth) that it is fitting to understand the union of Emmanuel to be such as the soul of a man might be thought to have with its own body. For the soul appropriates the things of the body even though in its proper nature it is apart from the body's natural passions, as well as those which impinge on it from without. For the body is moved to physical desires, and the soul which is within it feels these things too, because of the union, but in no way does it participate in these things, except in so far as it takes the fulfilment of desire as its own gratification. If the body was struck by a sword, or tortured on an iron grid, the soul would share in its grief, because it is its own body which is suffering. But in its own nature the soul does not suffer anything of these things.
>
> This indeed is how we attribute the union to Emmanuel. For it was necessary that the soul united to it should share in the grief of its own body, so that rising above these sufferings it could submit itself as obedient to God. But it is foolish to say that God the Word shared in feeling the sufferings. For the Godhead is impassible and is not in our condition. Yet [the Word] was united to the flesh endowed with a rational soul, and when the flesh suffered, even though he was impassible, he was aware of what was happening within it, and thus as God, even though he did away with the weaknesses of the flesh, still he appropriated those weaknesses of his own body. This is how he is said to have

Similarly, when Cyril states that the union is 'natural' (ἕνωσις φυσική) or 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν), he is expressing the same point. The union is 'natural' or 'according to nature' not in the sense that the divine and the human natures are

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hungered, and to have been tired, and to have suffered for our sake (*Scholia* 8). McGuckin (1994), pp. 300–1.

I have quoted Cyril at length so as to leave no doubt that, while he employs the soul/body relationship, he does so not as a model for the Incarnation, but solely as an illustrative comparison for understanding the communication of idioms. As the soul can appropriate the sufferings of the body and make them its own, so the Word, in becoming man, can make the weaknesses of his humanity his own. While I am not particularly pleased with the illustration, the reason Cyril could make such a comparison is precisely because Christ, like a human being, is one and the one that he is is the person of the Son of God existing as man. 'Accordingly, the union of the Word with humanity can reasonably be compared with our condition. Just as the body is of a different nature to the soul, still from both we say that one man results, so too from the perfect hypostasis of God the Word and from a humanity perfect in his own right there is one Christ, and the selfsame is at once God and man' (*Scholia* 8). McGuckin (1994), p. 301.

While McGuckin provides a good explanation of Cyril's use of the soul/body relationship, and rightly sees it as central to his thought, he does not appreciate Cyril's singular and proper use of it. He assumes that the above use is Cyril's primary and sole understanding. See *St Cyril of Alexandria*, pp. 198–207, and his Introduction to Cyril's *On the Unity of Christ* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Press, 1995), pp. 38, 40. For a similar understanding of the above passage see H. Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 2 (1951), pp. 159–62. B. Meunier interprets the above passages in a manner similar to my own. See *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, pp. 243–53. F. Young not only has an equal understanding of the above passages, but she also grasps that Cyril's primary use of the soul/body analogy is to illustrate that Christ is one being, and therefore should 'not be taken as an analysis of the relationship' between the divinity and the humanity ('A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971), p. 106). See also pp. 105, 112, and her *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (London: SCM Press, 1983), pp. 260–3. G. Gould has also given a clear account of Cyril on this point. See 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Formula of Reunion', *Downside Review* 106 (1988), pp. 238–43. While R. A. Norris believes that Cyril's primary christological model is that of the subject-attribute model, he nonetheless interprets, wrongly I believe, Cyril's use of the soul/body union as a way for him to espouse, in a confused and contradictory manner, a compositional model of the Incarnation whereby the divinity and humanity form one nature (see 'Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria', *SP* 13 (1975), pp. 261–7). See also R. A. Norris, 'Toward a Contemporary Interpretation of the Chalcedonian *Definition*' in R. A. Norris, ed., *Lux in Lumine* (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), p. 68.

compositionally united forming a third nature in the sense of quiddity, but in the sense that it brings about the one ontological entity of Christ. Just as the union of soul and body is 'natural' forming the one entity of man, so the union of the divinity and the humanity is natural bringing about the one Christ.[36]

While these quotations confirm that Cyril employed *mia physis* to declare Christ to be one entity and not one quiddity, it is equally clear that he used the term *physis* in two different senses. For he also simultaneously speaks of the soul and body, and the divinity and the humanity as each being a *physis* in the sense of nature or quiddity. This equivocal, and so ambiguous, use of the term *physis* obviously caused, and still causes, confusion and misunderstanding.

Assuming then that *mia physis*, for Cyril, designated that Jesus is one entity, and that he affirmed this in order to confirm the communication of idioms – for only if the Son of God *truly is* man, and so one with his humanity can the attributes of each nature be predicated of him – what then does the remainder of the formula tell us? The answer to this question bears upon Cyril's second concern about Christ's oneness and the manner of that oneness. The remainder of the formula designates who/what the one reality of Jesus is. The one reality or entity (μία φύσις) is that of the Word incarnate (τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη). Contained within the *mia physis* formula then, something Cyril instinctively realized and appreciated, but which others found too subtle to grasp, was the notion of one subject or person and the manner of the one subject's existence. The subject (the who) of the *mia physis* (of the one entity) is the Word. The manner or mode of the Word's existence as *mia physis* (as one entity) is as man. This is why Cyril could write: 'Accordingly all the sayings contained in the Gospels must be referred to a single person (ἑνὶ προσώπῳ), to the one incarnate subject of the Word (ὑποστάσει μιᾷ τῇ τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένῃ).'[37] Here the customary term *physis* has been substituted by the terms *prosopon* and *hypostasis* which acquire the more Chalcedonian sense of person or subject. The reason

[36] For examples of Cyril speaking of the union of the divinity and the humanity as 'natural' (ἕνωσις φυσική) or 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν), see *C. Nest.* 2, 1 and 13; *Ad Nest.* 3, 4–5 and Anathema 3; and *Expl. XII Cap.* 3.

[37] *Ad Nest.* 3, 8 (Wickham, p. 25).

Cyril can make such a substitution is that, for him, the one entity of Christ (*physis*) is none other than the one divine person/subject (*prosopon/hypostasis*) of the Son existing as incarnate.

Bearing on this point, Cyril actually has two readings of the *mia physis* formula. The more prevalent one is: μία φύσις τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη. The other, less common rendering, ends in σεσαρκωμένου. Is there a difference of meaning between the two? In the light of the soul/body comparison, which accompanies both, I believe that the two versions of the *mia physis* formula denote that Christ is one entity. However, this is most clearly seen within the σεσαρκωμένου rendering where it modifies the τοῦ λόγου. The translation would be: 'The one nature (entity) of the incarnate Word'. The one entity of Jesus is the Word existing as man. Where the σεσαρκωμένη modifies the μία φύσις the formula is translated: 'The one incarnate nature of the Word'. This too specifies that Christ is one entity – one incarnate entity – but now the one incarnate *physis* is that of the Word, and so hidden within the use of the term *physis* is the notion of one subject or person as well. Thus this rendering of the formula could be translated: 'The one incarnate nature/person of the Word'. This translation, it seems to me, best articulates Cyril's meaning and is one that is closest to Chalcedon's understanding. The whole problem could have been solved if Cyril had consistently used πρόσωπον or ὑπόστασις instead of φύσις.

Moreover, while I have attempted to clearly distinguish the dual oneness that Cyril wanted to uphold, that of the one entity of Christ and the one subject of the Son, he frequently conflates these two concerns within the same fluid argument. For example, in arguing against Nestorius' notion of a conjunctive union between the divinity and the humanity of Christ, Cyril insisted that the union is hypostatic (καθ' ὑπόστασιν). While I will discuss the significance of this formula shortly, he then proceeded to argue in the light of this both that Christ is one entity, as is the unity of the body and soul, and equally that Christ is one subject. As the body and soul form the one human being, 'we should think about Christ in the same way. For he is certainly not twofold. On the contrary, the Word of God the Father, together with his flesh, is the one and only Lord and Son'. Notice the dual oneness: Christ is 'not twofold' but one entity and equally Christ is 'the one and only Lord and Son'. Cyril concluded that, while he is not confusing and mixing

the natures, yet he refused to uphold 'two Christs, or [to say] that there are two Sons'. The reason there are not two Christs is that Christ is one entity and the reason there are not two Sons is because the one entity that the one Christ is is the one Son existing as man, 'because the Word of God, having partaken of flesh and blood, is still thought of as a single Son and is called such'.[38]

While I have been arguing that Cyril stressed the oneness of Christ in a twofold manner, R. A. Norris holds that Cyril actually articulated two different christological models.[39] The first, which Norris believes is Cyril's primary model, is what he calls 'a subject-attribute model'. Within this model Cyril can attribute divine and human predicates of one and the same subject – the Son. However, Norris also sees within Cyril's Christology 'a compositional model'. Here the Incarnation is seen as the act of 'putting together' two different realities (divinity and humanity), similar to the union of soul and body. Thus Christ is one composite entity. Norris believes that it is Cyril's use of this second model that causes 'such a remarkable conceptual chaos' within his Christology. Norris is correct in that Cyril did speak of the Incarnation in two different manners, but these do not denote different models. What Norris fails to grasp is that Cyril used two different sets of language or concepts not to articulate two different conceptions of the Incarnation but to state two different truths about his one conception of the Incarnation. He used the soul/body language to confirm the truth that Christ is one ontological being or entity (Norris' compositional model), and he used the subject-attribute 'model' in order to designate who and what the one Christ is – the one person of the Son existing as man. While Cyril was aware that he was attempting to articulate these two truths, I would agree with Norris that he seemed unaware at times that he was not distinguishing them in a manner that was unambiguous.

Nonetheless, the *mia physis* formula, for Cyril, embodied all three truths needed for a proper understanding of the Incarnation, and this is why he loved it. It said it all. However, as the above

[38] *C. Nest.* 2, 6 (Russell, pp. 149–50). See also *Expl. XII. Cap.* 4 (Russell, p. 182).

[39] See R. A. Norris, 'Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria', pp. 255–68.

exposition probably demonstrates, it may try to do too much. It requires a 'Cyrillian insight', something his detractors, past and present, lack.

'Becoming' as personal/existential

In the course of expounding, and so clarifying, the meaning of the *mia physis* formula, Cyril conceived and formulated a major christological innovation concerning the true character of the incarnational 'becoming' and the ensuing union between the Son/Word of God and his humanity. This is why he was willing, in the end, to set the formula aside. Cyril's insight was in designating that the union of the natures takes place within the person of the Word. The incarnational 'becoming' and ensuing union is 'according to the person' (καθ' ὑπόστασιν). 'We affirm this: that the Word personally [according to the person] united to himself flesh (σάρκα ... ἑνώσας ὁ λόγος ἑαυτῷ καθ' ὑπόστασιν)'.[40] This was the heart of his beloved formula, but now stated more precisely, more explicitly and more accurately. Here we witness a true christological breakthrough, one that springs from the communication of idioms and, simultaneously, precisely defines it.

I have noted in a number of instances that I have slightly altered Wickham's translation of Cyril. In the light of my above interpretation, I believe my alteration is, nonetheless, significant. Wickham makes an equivalence between Cyril's saying that the union is 'natural' (ἕνωσις φυσική) and that the union is καθ' ὑπόστασιν giving the meaning 'substantial union' to both. While both do designate a substantial union, Cyril used 'natural' to emphasize that the union establishes Christ as one entity, and he used καθ' ὑπόστασιν ('according to person' or 'personally') to designate the distinctive and singular type of substantial union it is. The incarnational act does not bring about a union of natures, but rather it is the act by which the humanity is united substantially to the person (ὑπόστασις) of the Word. Moreover, when Cyril spoke, as quoted above, of 'the one incarnate subject (ὑποστάσει μιᾷ σεσαρκωμένη) of the Word, Wickham interprets ὑποστάσει μιᾷ

[40] *Ad Nest.* 2, 3 (Wickham, p. 5). Translation slightly altered. See also *Ad Nest.* 2, 4 and 3, 11.

as equivalent to μία φύσις. While the ὑποστάσει μιᾷ is contained within the μία φύσις, the nuance is quite significant. The μία φύσις is emphasizing the one entity of Christ. The ὑποστάσει μιᾷ is highlighting who the one subject is within the one entity of Christ – the one Word/Son.[41]

Thus, in designating the incarnational 'becoming' as *kath' hypostasin* Cyril clarified and established three points concurrently.

1. He distinguished between the person (the who) and the person's nature (the manner of the who's existence). It is one and the same person, who existed eternally as God, who now exists as man.
2. He clarified the exact nature of the incarnational 'becoming'. The Incarnation does not involve the changing, mixing, or confusing of natures (as in the soul/body model), but rather the person of the Word taking on a new mode or manner of existence, that is, as man. There is a change or newness in the mode of the existence of the Son, though not a change or newness within the natures. The Son now newly exists as man. Commenting on the meaning of 'manifested in the flesh', Cyril wrote:

   > It means that the Word of God the Father became flesh, not by a change or alteration of his own nature, as we have already said, but because having made the flesh taken from the holy Virgin his own, one and the same subject is called Son, before the Incarnation as Word still incorporeal and after the Incarnation as the same Word now embodied. That is why we say that the same subject is simultaneously both God and man, not dividing him conceptually into a human being with a separate individual identity and God the Word also with a separate identity, that we may exclude any idea of two Sons, but acknowledging that one and the same subject is Christ and Son and Lord.[42]

3. By correctly conceiving and articulating that it is the one person of the Son who exists as man, Cyril, as we will fully examine momentarily, equally has validated the communication of idioms.

[41] See Wickham, p. 4, n. 6 and p. 25, n. 16.
[42] *Expl. XII Cap.* 2 (Russell, pp. 179–80).

Cyril's understanding of the Incarnation is what I have come to refer to as a personal/existential conception. Jesus is the *person* of the Son *existing* as a man.[43] While the Incarnation remains a mystery, Cyril, in accordance with authentic doctrinal development, has clarified more exactly what the mystery is – it is truly the person of the divine Son who truly exists as a true man.

Cyril and the Council of Chalcedon

Because of both Antiochene concerns and Leo's Tome written in response to Eutyches' Monophysitism, the Council of Chalcedon (451) decreed that the Son was 'made known in two natures' (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν) as opposed to stating that the Son was composed 'out of' (ἐκ δύο) two natures. This clarified the lingering ambiguities within Cyril's Christology. Nonetheless, Cyril's stamp on the Council's Creed is unmistakable, and it is his understanding of the Incarnation that bears its *imprimatur*. To read the Chalcedonian Creed other than through the eyes of Cyril is to misread it.

Three times the Council employs the Cyrillian phrase 'one and the same' (ἕνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν) and five times speaks of 'the same' (τὸν αὐτὸν). Who it is who is 'one and the same' and 'the same' is none other the person of the Son. It is one and the same Son who is 'perfect in Godhead' and 'perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man ... consubstantial (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial (ὁμοούσιον) with us in manhood'. It is the same Son, who existed eternally with the Father, who came to exist as man. In so speaking the Council thoroughly endorsed Cyril's personal/existential understanding of the Incarnation.

Moreover, the Council declared that the two natures were united 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation' (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως). Why are the natures not confused and changed? Why are they undivided and unseparated? Is the Council here merely making negative statements in order to ward off various heresies, or did it also have a positive theologically informed conception of the Incarnation which authorized it to do so? I believe it is the latter. The

[43] On the personal/existential understanding of the Incarnation, see Weinandy, *Does God Change?*, pp. 53–5.

Council grasped, in agreement with Cyril, that the natures are not confused and changed because the incarnational act, the 'becoming', is not the compositional union of natures which would demand change and confusion. Rather, the incarnational act, the 'becoming', equally in agreement with Cyril, is the person of the Son uniting to himself a human nature so as to exist personally as man. Thus the natures are not divided or separated, but find their unity in the one person of the Son. As the Council states: 'the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union [the reason being that the union is not a union of natures], but the property of each nature being preserved and harmonized (συντρεχούσης) in one *prosopon* and one *hypostasis*'. This too testifies to the Council's personal/existential understanding of the Incarnation.

It is this understanding of the Incarnation which provided, at last, the christological justification for and a proper reading of the communication of idioms. However, as I have argued, it was not a proper understanding of the Incarnation which gave rise to the communication of idioms, for it was used long before a proper understanding was fully articulated, but rather it was the communication of idioms, as pre-eminently exemplified within Cyril's Christology, which gave rise to a proper understanding of the Incarnation.

Before concluding this essay with an examination of Cyril's understanding of the communication of idioms, it is here that we can briefly address a further criticism leveled against his (and thus Chalcedon's) understanding of the Incarnation. The critics argue, in keeping with their accusation that Cyril minimizes the significance of Christ's humanity, that if Christ is a divine person and not a human person, then he is not fully human, for something that is essential to being fully human, that is, human personhood, has now been discarded. According to John Macquarrie, Cyril's Christology then is 'surely to be rejected as undermining the true humanity of Christ', and in the end 'is repeating in a slightly different form the heresy of Apollinarius'.[44] However, under the

[44] J. Macquarrie, *Christology Revisited* (London: SCM Press, 1998), pp. 50, 51. Macquarrie totally misconceives and misrepresents Cyril's Christology. See pp. 43–60. See also his *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 162–3. For a sampling of others who make the same criticism, see D. M. Baillie, *God Was In Christ* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), pp. 85–

pretence of attempting to assure the full humanity of Jesus, what the critics are most anxious to refute and so deny – which they always do – is his full divinity, that is, that it is actually the divine Son of God who exists as man. To state this more bluntly, the actual source of disquiet among Cyril's critics, it seems to me, is not so much that they fear the demise of Christ's full humanity, but that they frantically want to dismiss his full divinity. In their misguided criticism of Cyril, they are in fact exploiting, for the sake of their own denial, the legitimate contemporary concern that Christ be indeed fully human. Nonetheless, to such a criticism and denial a twofold response can be made.

Firstly, in defining that Jesus is the Son of God existing as man nothing is denied as to the manner of his human existence. As the subsequent doctrinal history will clarify and confirm, the Son of God possesses a human intellect and will, and more recently, a human self-consciousness. Whatever pertains to being a human being pertains to Christ.[45] What Cyril and the Chalcedonian tradition do demand is that who it is who is this man, that is, the identity of this man, is the Son of God. The term 'person' is not then to be understood as some kind of distinct component or part that when absent or separated renders the humanity less that what it would be if the component called 'person' were attached. The term 'person' is merely, but very significantly, identifying who the subject is who is this man, that is, his identity as the Son of God. Only if the identity of the man Jesus, that is, who this man is, and in this sense the 'subject' or 'person', is the divine Son of God can one speak of an authentic and true Incarnation.

Secondly, in denying that Jesus is truly the divine Son of God, *homoousion* with the Father, the critics of Cyril and the christo-

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93; R. Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), pp. 263–6, 285–92; J. Knox, *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 63–5; and J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (London: SCM Press, 1973), pp. 40, 102–16.

[45] I have argued, in what I believe to be in accordance with Cyril and Chalcedon, that, as incarnate, the Son of God even possesses a human 'I'. The identity of this human 'I', who it is who is this 'I', is the person or subject of the Son. See T. G. Weinandy, 'The Human "I" of Jesus', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 62 (1996/97), pp. 259–68.

logical tradition depreciate the significance of the very thing they want to enhance – the humanity. One never enhances the import of Jesus' full humanity, in all its authentic historicity, by denying that it is truly the divine Son who is man. It is precisely his wholly otherness as God which gives significance to the Son's incarnate existence. If it were not truly the Son, *homoousion* with the Father, who became man, then the whole impact of his being man, *homoousion* with all men, is forfeited.

Similarly, it could be argued, and Cyril would passionately agree, it would be incongruous to uphold that Jesus is truly the divine Son of God at the expense of his full humanity, for, within the Incarnation, the only reason one does want to uphold the full divinity is to assure that it is truly the Son of God who actually is an authentic man. Within the Incarnation, if the Son of God is not fully and truly man, then the whole point of Jesus being the Son of God vanishes. For Cyril, it is precisely the communication of idioms that accentuates and intensifies these truths.

Cyril and the communication of idioms

The patristic tradition had long employed and the Creed of Nicaea sanctioned, as Cyril grasped, the communication of idioms. What neither had ever clearly achieved, as witnessed in the Antiochene rejection, was a proper theological rationale for its use, and thus a precise understanding of the manner in which these attributes were predicated of the Son. In providing the christological basis for its use, Cyril equally clarified the manner in which it was used and he did so in two ways.

Negatively, Cyril perceived that the human attributes were not predicated of the divine nature, nor, in turn, that the divine attributes were predicated of the human nature. To understand the communication of idioms in such a manner would require that the natures be confused and mixed and so changed within the incarnational 'becoming'. This was how Nestorius interpreted its use, and if it had been the correct interpretation, his rejection would have been justified.

Positively, Cyril comprehended and explicitly stated, for the first time, that the attributes were predicated not of the natures, but of the person, for the Incarnation is not the compositional union of natures but the person of the Son taking on a new manner

or mode of existence.[46] Because the incarnational 'becoming' is *kath' hypostasin*, according to the person, it can actually be said then that the person of the Son of God is truly born, grieves, suffers and dies, not as God, but as man for that is now the new manner in which the Son of God actually exists.

R. A. Norris, in his interpretation of Cyril, misses the significance of this crucial point. He rightly argues that Cyril's primary christological model is that of the subject-attribute model (though I am not pleased with the term 'model'), yet he interprets such an understanding not as a metaphysical statement about the ontological constitution of Christ, but merely as a linguistic or grammatical tool to govern christological language.[47] What Norris fails to appreciate is that Cyril's (and Chalcedon's) insistence that the divine and human attributes be predicated of the one and same subject of the Son is founded upon their metaphysical understanding of how Christ is ontologically constituted. While the communication of idioms was the catalyst that gave rise to such an understanding (that Christ is the one person/subject of the Son *existing* as God and as man), yet it was this same understanding that, in turn, provided the metaphysical warrant for the use of such language (that divine and human attributes must therefore be predicated of the one Son). Christological grammar and logic, as Cyril well knew, is dependent upon christological ontology.

R. Siddals also interprets Cyril's use of the communication of idioms from within a faulty understanding of his Christology. She argues that underlying Cyril's use of the communication of idioms is a subject-accident christological model, that is, that while the Son, being by nature God, actually does possess the divine attributes as part of his being, he acquires, within the Incarnation, the human attributes as 'virtual accidents'. Cyril 'treats humanity etc. as mysteriously inhering within the Word as an *accident* inheres

[46] In fairness it should be noted that Athanasius grasped that the divine and human attributes were predicated of one and the same Son. However, what Athanasius failed to achieve, although his understanding of the communication of idioms placed him on the brink, was the precise and comprehensive conceptual understanding of the Incarnation which could properly justify such predication.

[47] See R. A. Norris, 'Toward a Contemporary Interpretation of the Chalcedonian *Definition*', pp. 71–9.

within a subject'.[48] However, for Cyril, being a man is what the Son of God *is*, and thus the use of the communications of idioms is not the mere espousal of accidental predicates to the Son, but statements about his actual mode of being or manner of existing.[49]

Thus for Cyril, to call Mary *Theotokos* does not mean that she gave birth to God as God, 'no, it means that he [the Son] had fleshly birth because he issued from woman for us and for our salvation having united humanity to himself personally (ἑνώσας ἑαυτῷ καθ' ὑπόστασιν τὸ ἀνθπώπινον)'. Equally, when it is said that the Son of God suffered and died, it is not meant

> that God the Word suffered blows, nail-piercings or other wounds in his own nature (the divine is impassible because it is incorporeal) but what is said is that since his own created body suffered these things he himself 'suffered' for our sake, the point being that within the suffering body was the Impassible (ὁ ἀπαθὴς ἐν τῷ πάσχοντι σώματι). We interpret his dying along exactly comparable lines.[50]

In the twelfth of his infamous anathemas Cyril provocatively declared:

> Whoever does not acknowledge God's Word as having suffered in flesh, being crucified in flesh, tasted death in flesh and been made first-born from the dead because as God he is Life and life-giving shall be anathema.[51]

Here again scholars are frequently critical of Cyril, especially those who wish to espouse a passible and so suffering God. R. Haight, commenting on traditional Christology, which is exemplified by Cyril, writes that 'the problem in this tradition is that it is a christology of only one subject, and, that subject being

[48] R. Siddals, 'Logic and Christology in Cyril of Alexandria', *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 38 (1987), pp. 351, 356. See Siddals' entire argument, pp. 242–67, and her 'Oneness and Difference in the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria', *SP* 18 (1985), pp. 207–11.

[49] For a similar criticism of Siddals, see B. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, pp. 276–9.

[50] *Ad Nest.* 2, 4 and 5 (Wickham, p. 7). For Cyril 'all the sayings contained in the Gospels must be referred to single person (ἑνὶ προσώπῳ), to the one incarnate subject of the Word (ὑποστάσει μιᾷ τῇ τοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένῃ)' (*Ad Nest.* 3, 8; Wickham, p. 23). See also *Ad Nest.* 3, 9–11.

[51] *Ad Nest.* 3, Anathema 12.

impassible, it leaves no other subject who can suffer'.[52] Initially it may seem that what Cyril was attempting to articulate is indeed contradictory and thus meaningless. If the Impassible is truly impassible, how can the Impassible truly and authentically suffer and die? However, for Cyril, the entire point of ensuring a proper understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation is not only to allow but more so to warrant, for soteriological reasons, the truth that the Impassible did indeed suffer and die. Therefore, what Cyril was articulating within his understanding of the communication of idioms must be clearly understood.

Firstly, who, for Cyril, is it who truly experiences the authentic, genuine, and undiminished reality of human suffering? None other than the divine Son of God! He who is one in being (*homoousion*) with the Father. Secondly, what is the manner in which he experiences the whole reality of human suffering? As man! It is actually the Son of God who lives a comprehensive human life, and so it is the Son who, as man, experiences all facets of this human life, including suffering and death. The Son is the exclusive active subject in what he experiences and in what he does, and the manner or mode under which he experiences and acts is as man.

However, this is precisely the problem the critics protest. After all is said and done, Cyril's understanding of the Incarnation and the communication of idioms that ensues from it forbids that suffering be experienced by the Son of God within his divinity, and so falls short of allowing God truly to suffer. Here again many scholars miss the logic of Cyril's Christology. For example, J. Hallman judges that, because Cyril insisted that the Son of God remains impassible as God and yet truly suffers as man, he is simply illogical.[53] For Cyril what is truly at issue is not that the Son of God suffers as God in a divine manner, but that the Son of God suffers as man in a human manner. Moreover, behind Hallman's accusation that Cyril was illogical lies the erroneous premise that the incarnational process is a compositional union of natures modelled after the soul/body union. This is how Hallman ultimately wants to conceive the incarnational union for it then

[52] R. Haight, *Jesus Symbol of God*, p. 265. For similar criticisms, see my discussion in *Does God Suffer?*, pp. 14–19.

[53] See J. Hallman, 'The Seed of Fire: Divine Suffering in the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5 (1997), pp. 384 and 391.

would allow God to suffer as God. However, since Cyril's understanding of the Incarnation is radically different – being a personal/existential understanding – he is not illogical at all. The person of the Son, within his existence as God, is impassible. Within his existence as man, the Son is passible. While not fully comprehensible, this is the rational, intelligible, and coherent logic that the mystery of the Incarnation demands. As Cyril explicitly stated, almost as if he had Hallman in mind:

> He (the Son) suffered without suffering. . . . If we should say that through conversion or mutation of his own nature into flesh, it would be in all ways necessary for us even against our will to confess that the hidden and divine nature was passible [Hallman's wish]. But if he has remained unchanged albeit he has been made man as we, and it be a property of the heavenly nature that it cannot suffer, and the passible body has become his own through the union: He suffers when the body suffers, in that it is said to be his own body, he remains impassible in that it is truly his property to be unable to suffer.[54]

Such criticisms are postulated upon the false premise that the Son of God must suffer within his divine nature in order for the suffering to be theologically and soteriologically significant. However, because of these mistaken assumptions, this criticism actually ignores the inner christological and soteriological logic contained within Cyril's understanding of the communication of idioms, and so neglects its true import.

The communications of idioms, as understood by Cyril, does wish to uphold that the fully divine Son of God did indeed suffer and die. This is precisely what Nestorius wanted to deny and Cyril wanted to vindicate. This is exactly why Cyril asserts that he who is impassible as God actually is passible as man. The Impasssible suffered.[55] To say, in accordance with Cyril, that 'the Impassible

[54] *Scholia* 37. Cyril earlier states: 'He suffers humanly in the flesh as man, he remains impassible divinely as God' (*Scholia* 36). See also 33–5. In *Quod Unus*, he writes: 'So, even if he (the Son) is said to suffer in the flesh, even so he retains his impassibility insofar as he is understood as God' (McGuckin (1995), p. 117). References to Cyril speaking of the Son being impassible as God and passible as man could be multiplied, but especially see, *Ad Succ.* 2, 2 and his three defences of the twelve anathemas: *Adv. Orient. Epis.*, *C. Theodoret.* and *Expl. XII Cap.*

[55] I concur with J. Hallman that, as far as I can also ascertain, this exact phrase (ἀπαθῶς ἔπαθεν) is not found in Cyril's Greek. See 'The Seed of Fire', p. 383, n. 57. Nonetheless, it is Cyrillian in tone and meaning. Cyril did state 'that

suffers' is not, then, to be incoherent, but to state the very heart of the incarnational mystery. Firstly, the term 'the Impassible' guarantees that it is actually God, in all his wholly transcendent otherness as God, who suffers, and not 'God' in some mitigated or semi-divine state. The fact that God does not lose his wholly transcendent impassible otherness in so suffering enhances to the extreme, as Cyril well knew, the import of the suffering, for it means that the Son who is incapable of suffering as the wholly other God is precisely the same one who is actually suffering as man. Secondly, we perceive here, in contrast to Nestorius and the Antiochenes, just how important the humanity of Christ was for Cyril. While Cyril was concerned with upholding the impassible divinity of the Son as God, his interest in this was primarily for incarnational and soteriological reasons. He wished to assure that it was actually the divine Son who lived a full human life and so the Son who was impassible as God is the same Son who could truly experience human suffering and death. The communication of idioms ensures that it is truly human suffering that the Son of God experiences and endures, and thus the Son's authentic and genuine humanity is the absolute prerequisite for establishing the truth of the communication of idioms.

Even if one did allow the Son of God to suffer in his divine nature, as some critics of Cyril wish to do, this would negate then the very thing Cyril wanted to preserve and cultivate. For if the Son of God experienced suffering in his divine nature, he would no longer be experiencing human suffering in an authentic and genuine human manner, but instead he would be experiencing 'human suffering' in a divine manner which would then be neither genuinely nor authentically human. If the Son of God experienced suffering in his divine nature, then it would be God suffering as God *in a man*. But the Incarnation, as Cyril well understood, which demands that the Son of God actually exists as a man and not just dwells in a man, equally demands that the Son of God suffer *as a man* and not just suffer divinely in a man. If one wishes to say in

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within the suffering body was the Impassible' (ἦν γὰρ ὁ ἀπαθὴς ἐν τῳ πάσχοντι σώματι) (*Ad Nest.* 2, 5), and that 'he [the Son] was in the crucified body claiming the sufferings of his flesh as his own impassibly' (ἦν ἐν τῷ σταυρωθέντι σώματι, τὰ τῆς ἰδίας σαρκὸς ἀπαθῶς οἰκειούμενος πάθη) (*Ad Nest.* 3, 6).

truth, as Cyril did, that the Son of God actually experienced and knew what it was like to be born, eat, sleep, cry, fear, grieve, groan, rejoice, suffer, die, and most of all, love *as a man*, then the experience and knowledge of being born, eating, sleeping, crying, fearing, grieving, groaning, rejoicing, suffering, dying, and again most of all, loving must be predicated of the Son of God solely and exclusively *as a man*. Because Cyril gloried in the biblical drama of the Incarnation, that is, that it truly was the impassible Son of God who did actually suffer as man, he was not afraid to use language that appeared to be incoherent, yet was logically coherent in the light of his christological ontology.[56]

Nonetheless, if the Son of God suffers as man, why does this suffering not affect his divinity given that the Son of God is equally God? While Cyril did not explicitly address this issue, we here more deeply enter into the heart of the incarnational mystery. The answer lies, and I believe Cyril would agree for his Christology implicitly contained it, in the fact that, as God, the Son was not deprived of any good which would have caused him to suffer as God. However, as man the Son of God was deprived of human goods which did cause him humanly to suffer. Cyril instinctively realized that one must maintain the unchangeable impassibility of the Son of God as God so as to guarantee that it is actually the divine Son of God who truly suffers as man. Only if the Son remains immutably God in becoming man can one guarantee that it is actually the divine Son who exists as man, and equally, only if the Son remains impassible and so truly God within his incarnate state can one guarantee that it is actually that same impassible divine Son who is passible as man.

For Cyril this is the marvellous truth of the Incarnation. God from all eternity may have known, within his divine knowledge, what it is like for human beings to suffer and die, and he may have known this perfectly and comprehensively. But until the Son of God actually became man and existed as a man, the Son of God, who is impassible in himself as God, never experienced and knew suffering and death as man *in a human manner*. In an unqualified manner one can say that, as man, the Son of God had experiences

[56] For similar views see S. A. McKinion, *Words, Imagery, and the Mystery of Christ*, pp. 212–24; B. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, pp. 243–75 and J. J. O'Keefe, 'Impassible Suffering?, pp. 46–51.

he never had before because he never existed as man before – not the least of which are suffering and death. This is what, for Cyril, a proper understanding of the Incarnation requires and affirms, and this is what the communication of idioms so remarkably, clearly, and even scandalously safeguards, advocates, and confesses. The eternal, almighty, all-perfect, unchangeable, and impassible divine Son, he who is equal to the Father in all ways, actually experienced, as a weak human being, the full reality of human suffering and death. What was an infamy to the Docetists, to Arius, and to Nestorius was for Cyril and the subsequent Christian tradition the glory and grandeur of the Gospel. Even among those today who advocate a suffering God, the Incarnation is still a scandal, for while, with the best of intentions, having locked suffering within God's divine nature, they have, in so doing, locked God out of human suffering.

Conclusion

I trust that at the end of this essay readers will have come to a greater understanding and appreciation of the scope and depth of Cyril's Christology. While he may at times be difficult to read and understand, yet, as has hopefully become evident, he was a man who possessed profound insight into the mystery of the Incarnation, insight that the church has continually contemplated to this day. I have attempted in this essay, through an examination of his writings, to place the reader inside Cyril's mind, so that in coming to think as Cyril thought, we could not only grasp what he was thinking and saying, but also perhaps think it and say it more clearly than even he himself thought it and said it, and so ultimately be truly faithful to Cyril himself. Thus, my primary goal in this essay was to expound and to clarify Cyril's christological thought. In so doing we have seen that his pre-Nestorian biblical commentaries already expressed an understanding of the Incarnation that he would subsequently develop during the course of the Nestorian controversy. I have also endeavoured to demonstrate, even in the midst of his ambiguity and sometimes infelicitous expressions, that, while Cyril never deviated from the central truths that he thought necessary for upholding an authentic understanding of the Incarnation, he did mature in his christological conception and did improve in his

articulation of these truths. I hope then that my rendering of Cyril's Christology has been both clear and accurate and thus fair to his multifaceted thought and versatile expression. In the midst of attempting to express, explain, and clarify Cyril's christological thought in a logical and comprehensible manner, I have also, in so doing, tried, as my secondary aim, to defend his work against what I believe to be often unwarranted attacks. I have made such a defence not merely for the sake of defending Cyril but more so for the sake of defending what Cyril himself defended – the truth of the Incarnation.

Chapter 3

Theotokos: Mary and the Pattern of Fall and Redemption in the Theology of Cyril of Alexandria

FRANCES YOUNG

Cyril is known for his defence of the title *Theotokos* for Mary. What I want to suggest in this chapter is that the position Cyril adopted in the controversy was fundamentally grounded in a reading of the Bible that generated an overarching story of Fall and Redemption. This can be traced in Cyril's pre-controversy biblical exegesis and links his fundamental approach to Christian theology with predecessors such as Irenaeus. The focus on Mary as antitype to Eve is of crucial importance as the broader context for patristic attitudes to women, but even more significant as a vital element in what can be seen as the core narrative constituting the common Christian account of human existence. Cyril's theology not only reflects this tradition but in key ways enables a more profound grasp of its typological roots, its biblical character and its fundamental significance for any truly Christian theology.

Theotokos in the Nestorian controversy

It is universally acknowledged that the Nestorian controversy was fundamentally christological, but because of the occasion which originated it, Mary figured large in the dispute. Nestorius, recently appointed bishop of Constantinople, had reacted to a sermon in which Mary was celebrated as *Theotokos* (i.e., the one who gave birth to God) by saying that such a designation had to be balanced by the term *Anthropotokos* (i.e., the one who gave birth to man):

in fact, strictly speaking, God did not take origin from a creaturely human being, and *Christotokos* would be better all round. Hearing of this Cyril leapt into action with letters all over the place, to the bishop of Rome, to the monks, to Nestorius himself. The controversy had begun. It was the year 429. One of the more notorious things Cyril did was to draw up 12 Anathemas, and the first provides another indication of how *Theotokos* was core to the debate:

> If anyone does not acknowledge Emmanuel to be truly God and therefore the holy Virgin to be *Theotokos* (for she gave birth according to the flesh to the Word of God made flesh), let him be anathema.[1]

These Anathemas formed the basis of treatise and counter-treatise as the battle developed. But the controversy is treated elsewhere. This will suffice as a reminder of the place of the Holy Virgin, *Theotokos*, at the heart of the debate.

Cyril's position as evidenced in the literature associated with the controversy has been well worked over. What I propose to do is to seek the undergirding theological perspective which produced his response, and to do that by looking at some of his pre-controversy biblical exegesis.

Fall and Redemption as key

The text to focus on first is Cyril's massive treatment of the Pentateuch known under the title, *On Worship in Spirit and in Truth*.[2] The work is a dialogue, Cyril responding to an interlocutor called Palladius. The opening question is this: how is the statement in St Matthew's Gospel that not a jot or tittle of the law will pass away to be reconciled with that in the Gospel of St John that the Father will not be worshipped in Jerusalem but in spirit and in truth? This conundrum becomes the occasion for working through the law to show that it is a *typos* (type), a foreshadowing of the proper shaping of devotion to God: the beauty of truth is hidden within it.[3]

[1] Cyril's *Explanation of the Twelve Chapters* is found in Russell, pp. 176–89. Anathema 1 appears on p. 178. In order to facilitate students in following up relevant texts, wherever possible quotations are given in the English translation by Russell.

[2] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68). Quotations given in the author's English translation.

[3] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 137).

The law is a pedagogue – leading infants to maturity, using metaphors and types, delivering truth through stories and pictures which we need to understand spiritually.[4] This general approach becomes specific as the story of humanity's Fall provides the clue to one subsequent narrative after another. It is not just that in later books Cyril will turn Leviticus into spiritual sacrifices and passages on the priesthood into types of Christ and the Church, seeing the bloodless sacrifice of the eucharist and the roles of bishops and presbyters prefigured in the law, but also that the movement from fall into sin, through repentance, to renewal through God's grace becomes a universal paradigm, traced out in particular in one narrative after another and applied to 'us'; for each of us are instances of the universal story of the human race. It is not hard to see that what happened to Adam, happens to each of us, Cyril suggests.[5]

Abraham becomes the first exemplar. Cyril wanders back and forth over the biblical narrative a little so as to construct the Fall and Redemption pattern. He begins with the way Abraham was caught in Egypt by Pharaoh because of Sarah's beauty. The whole story is a paradigm of spiritual enslavement, the physical representing the spiritual, Pharaoh representing the father of sin, who treats us well as long as he can distract us with pleasure. Only God and the divine grace could rescue Abraham.[6] Like Abraham those with Jacob went to Egypt because of famine and suffered God's anger through the yoke of slavery – they were tempted by worldly food when they should have been hungry for God's Word.[7] All through the discussion is a profound intertextuality with allusions and quotations from across the prophets and the New Testament.

The point Cyril leads to is that we, like Abraham, are called to follow God, to leave behind everything in which we take pleasure, homeland, kindred – after all, Jesus spoke of leaving father and mother to follow him. Abraham leaves what is worldly to build an altar in the Promised Land.[8] So we receive no grace so long as

[4] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 140).
[5] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 148).
[6] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 152–3).
[7] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 160–1).
[8] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 168).

we are wedded to the world; but we are called too, and if obedient will journey to the high country, to knowledge of God, and will stand before God as a living sacrifice well-pleasing to God. Yet the story of Sodom and Lot demonstrates the problem for us all of falling from this state of grace.[9] With immense detail Cyril traces the symbols in the Lot story which point to the progress of the soul and its gradual ascent back to where it was.

Cyril eventually returns to Abraham in Egypt: he escapes rich to build an altar and call on the name of the Lord.[10] Here is a changed life. Enigmatically, or in riddles, his journey shows the importance of changing wholeheartedly, of loving the desert, that is, the purity of mind and heart which humanity enjoyed in the beginning. And the same basic idea is to be traced in the story of the Exodus.

So now, from Abraham, Cyril moves to this second great exemplary story. Both descents into Egypt are seen as the result of a free choice, but the consequent enslavement is oppression from Pharaohs who stand for the devil. Human souls are oppressed and put to hard and useless labours, just like the Israelites. But God took pity on those harassed by Egyptian excesses, and he lavishes grace on those dragged into sin. For the Israelites he appointed Moses, and now writes the law on the heart through the Mediator who brings free life to us.[11]

That is enough, without further detail, to show basically how Cyril works. The thrust of his treatment is that God is the Liberator and Saviour, but we need to go out into the desert to prepare a holy feast for God apart from the Egyptians, removed from worldly darkness.[12]

> We are all called to freedom through faith in Christ and ransomed from the tyranny of the devil, . . . this being prefigured (*proanatupoumenou*) in those of old, especially Moses and Aaron, so that by reason of God's gracious arrangements (*oikonomikos*) you may discern that Emmanuel is in similar fashion, lawgiver, high priest and apostle.[13]

[9] *De Ador.* (PG 68, 169–70).
[10] *De Ador.* (PG 68, 184–5).
[11] *De Ador.* (PG 68, 188).
[12] *De Ador.* (PG 68, 192).
[13] *De Ador.* (PG 68, 200).

Cyril means us to understand, then, that not a jot or tittle of the law is taken away, but the whole matter concerns worship in spirit and in truth. God's intentions are graciously set out in Scripture if we only read the Scriptures aright. But that reading is shaped by a universal paradigm of Fall and Redemption. We have reached the end of Book I, and Books II and III follow a similar pattern, developing Moses as type of Christ, the law as pedagogue, and so on. Let me highlight just one passage[14] to show how Cyril plays with the symbolic connections.

In Exodus 4, Moses expresses his fear that the Israelites will not believe him. He is told to throw his staff on the ground and it becomes a snake. He runs from it. But the story goes on that God then told him to catch it by its tail, and it reverted to a stick. Cyril comments that God provides a 'wonder' to counter disbelief, but the form of the 'wonder' is a figure of salvation in Christ, of our transformation from the condition in which we were in Adam.

Pressed to explain by Palladius, he elucidates. The staff, or sceptre, is a symbol of kingship. Adam was to rule the earth, but through the snake he was deprived of kingship and of his original glory, falling from paradise. Moses fled from the snake, and Cyril quotes from the book of Wisdom 1:5: the Holy Spirit of wisdom will flee from deceit and back off from foolish thoughts. Holiness and impurity, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness are incompatible, he comments. The fact that the staff fell from the hand of Moses would signify that in the beginning there was a sprig of paradise made in God's image, in the glory of kingship, in the hand of the Creator, but he fell to the ground and in the eyes of God was like a snake. But the result of Moses catching him by the tail was reversion into a sceptre, a sprig of paradise. When God was pleased to recapitulate everything in Christ, and create anew what he had made in the beginning, he sent to us the Only-Begotten, his right-hand, the Creator and Saviour of all, Cyril proclaims. He took our humanity, transformed our wildness, our sin, and through sanctification, brought us to royal honour and the tameness that leads to virtue. (The domestication of wild animals provides the metaphor, doubtless because the story focuses on the snake.)

[14] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 240–5).

Cyril expands the theme with many intertextual references, insisting on finding significance in the tail and the head. But his focus is on the transformation through grace of the whole human race, including the head, Adam. Christ died and rose so that he might rule over the living and the dead.

Adam and Eve: 'type' and recapitulation

Throughout the work which we have been considering, Cyril exploits the traditional 'types'. It is easy, though not very subtle, to characterize his exegesis as allegorical. To understand what Cyril was doing, two features of early Christian use of 'types' are important.[15] The first is the discernment of exemplars, a common characteristic of ancient use of literature: in drama and literary texts it was thought possible to see a morally instructive *mimesis* of life, which means more than an 'imitation' – rather a 'representation'. Everything we have said so far is evidence of Cyril's commitment to this approach to Scripture. The other feature is the notion that prophetic 'types', images or patterns were etched into the narratives of what had become the Old Testament, symbols of what was to come. Cyril, like his predecessors, exploited key examples, so that, for example, the crossing of the Red Sea signified baptism, Moses' arms raised in the battle with Amalek signified the cross, and so on. For our purposes we need to dig a little deeper into Cyril's typological understanding of Adam and Eve.

Near the beginning of *On Worship* Book I, as Cyril sketches the themes of the work, he provides an outline of the Adam story, but he never uses the name, nor does he follow the motifs of the Genesis narrative; rather the presentation is almost abstract.[16] He speaks of 'humanity' (*anthropos*) and refers to James 1:13–15: each is tempted, not by God, but by one's own desire, lured and enticed by it, and that generates sin. The woman is a 'type' of pleasure. Satan compounds the problem by his deceit. The soul which had been *atreptos* (unchangeable) and *aphthartos* (immortal) was changed, corrupted by the act of disobedience. The story

[15] See further the author's discussion in *Patristic Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[16] *De Ador.* (*PG* 68, 145–9).

Genesis told has given way to this generalized account of the human condition of which Abraham and Moses then become the exemplars, while later reference to Adam constitutes a kind of shorthand for this undergirding theory.

Some would look to contemporary philosophy to explain this approach to anthropology. The Neoplatonic pattern of descent and return is easily pressed into service in discussing the theology of Cyril's near contemporaries, the Cappadocians and Augustine. Assumptions about the immortality and unchangeability of the soul are suggestive of such influence. Cyril's mind was, like the minds of the rest of us, shaped by the intellectual culture in which he had matured. But his self-conscious understanding indicates another significant source, namely the Bible. Doubtless the key scriptural texts were read through the spectacles of a particular mind-set – that is always inevitable. But that the Bible was key to Cyril's thinking is evident. Indeed his direct exegetical engagement with Scripture was key in ways that not even Athanasius' was. For Cyril rarely describes the Fall, in the way Athanasius does in the *De Incarnatione*, as a falling back into the nothingness from which we created; and he tends to speak of salvation less as a restoration of the Logos to humanity, more as a refilling with the Spirit.[17]

If we turn to the *Glaphyra*, Cyril's 'Elegant Comments' on Genesis, we find his more explicit treatment of the Adam story, and what is now striking is the Pauline basis of Cyril's reading of Genesis.[18] Ephesians 1:10 provides the word *anakephalaiosis*, 'recapitulation'. 2 Corinthians 5:17 points to renewal: 'Behold, I make all things new', and 'if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation'. Galatians 5:24 indicates that the flesh is crucified with Christ, so indicating how the old is done away. For Cyril re-creation in Christ is the thrust of Paul's message, but also the meaning of the Genesis narrative.

So he goes on to describe the original creation, in which humanity was a *mimema*, a copy, of the highest glory, a kind of clay statuette endowed with the living spirit so as to be a rational

[17] For this observation I am indebted to Daniel Keating's unpublished D.Phil thesis, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria' (Oxford University, 2000).

[18] *Glaphyra* (*PG* 69, especially 16–32).

and immortal *zoon* ('animal' or 'living being'). Humanity was the image of the divine substance on earth, and sin's deviation did not yet exist. A lengthy exposition of the story of Adam follows, beginning with his loss of 'singleness' with the creation of woman from his side, continuing with the devil's temptation and his expulsion from Paradise. But then Cyril is back to Paul: the grace of salvation was given before the ages began (quoting 2 Tim. 1:8–10 in full), and everything was preordained so that all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28–30 also quoted in full). God knew he would send his Son, and the manner of the incarnation was foreknown. Redemption (*apolutrosis*) would come through the *anakephalaiosis* – the recapitulation.

In elucidating what that recapitulation was Cyril again exploits Paul. 1 Corinthians 15 is key, with cross-reference to Galatians 3:13 and Romans 5. Christ is the last Adam, recapitulating and reversing the fall of the first. By being a 'type' of Christ, Adam is prophetic of the mystery of the Incarnation, of Emmanuel, God with us. The first Adam brought us to death, the curse, judgement; the second to life, blessing and righteousness. Adam brought the woman to himself so as to become one flesh and was destroyed through her; but Christ saves, drawing the Church to himself through the Spirit. Here is an oblique hint that Eve and Mary will become vital to the Fall and Redemption pattern in Cyril's theology.

Apart from his acknowledged debt to St Paul, Cyril owed much to theological traditions of long standing, and in this tradition the typological relationship between Eve and Mary was as crucial as that between Adam and Christ. It was first introduced in the second century by Justin Martyr:

> Christ became man by the Virgin in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her . . . and she replied: 'Be it unto me according to thy word.'[19]

[19] *Dialogue with Trypho* 100 (ET *Ante-Nicene Fathers*).

The one born of her was the one by whom God destroyed the serpent, and so reversed Eve's conception of the false word by conceiving the true Word of God.

This typological parallel was developed in further ways by Irenaeus, for whom recapitulation was the key to his anti-gnostic polemic. Adam's creation from the virgin earth was a type of Christ's formation from the Virgin Mary. Mary's obedience undid the knot of Eve's disobedience, so that Mary becomes the cause of salvation for the whole human race, and Eve's advocate.[20] The dissemination of this way of thinking is evidenced in the vivid Syriac poetry of Ephrem (fourth century):

> Just as from the small womb of Eve's ear
> Death entered in and was poured out,
> So through a new ear, that was Mary's,
> Life entered and was poured out.[21]

Restoration to Paradise is the focus of Ephrem's vivid parallels between Fall and Redemption, Adam and Christ.

Given this older and wider tradition it would be surprising if Mary did not come to play a crucial role in Cyril's development of this crucial theme for his theology. Many of Cyril's references to the theme of Fall and Redemption in the pre-controversy exegetical works remain in abstract form, Adam being named no more than Eve. In the *Commentary on John*, for example, we find comments such as the following:

> There was no other way for us who have borne the image of the man of dust to escape corruption, unless the beauty of the image of the man of heaven is imprinted upon us through our having been called to sonship (cf. 1 Cor. 15:49). . . . For scarcely do we thus recover the ancient beauty of our nature, and are conformed to that divine nature, than we become superior to the evils that arose from the Fall.[22]

But Adam is a shorthand – indeed it has been noted that even though Adam appears nowhere in the text of John's Gospel, Cyril's *Commentary on John* is saturated with allusions to Christ as the

[20] *Adv. Haer.* 3, 21, 22; 5, 19; *Demonstratio*, 32–4.

[21] *Church*, 49, 7. ET and further discussion in Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Placid Lectures, Rome: C.I.I.S., 1985).

[22] *In Jo.* 1:12 (Russell, p. 100).

second Adam.[23] As we were all in Christ, so we were all in Adam, we might say.

> The common element of humanity is summed up in [Christ's] person, which is also why he was called the last Adam: he enriched our common nature with everything conducive to joy and glory just as the first Adam impoverished it with everything bringing gloom and corruption.[24]

Interestingly it is in this context that the Virgin comes into play. She is the one from whom he took his 'temple':

> You should not think that the Word was transformed into flesh but rather that he dwelt in flesh, using as his own particular body the temple which is from the Holy Virgin.[25]

How important this is is evident also in the *Commentary on Isaiah*, especially with regard to Cyril's comments on 7:14–16. He insists, against Jewish exegetes, that the text does not refer to the birth of Hezekiah, but is a prophecy of the Holy Virgin:

> For he who is from above, and is by nature the only-begotten Son of God the Father, emptied himself and was brought forth from a virginal womb according to the flesh . . . you will call his name Emmanuel, that is, you will acknowledge that God has appeared in human form. For it was when the only-begotten Word of God appeared like us that he became 'God with us'.[26]

The voluntary self-emptying and enduring of birth for us is emphasized again when Cyril discusses the prophecies of Messiah in Isaiah 11.[27] Thus the *kenosis* involved in birth from a Virgin has become a significant element in Cyril's understanding of the recapitulation. So prior to the controversy, the Virgin already had a vital role in the overarching narrative that was foundational for Cyril's reading of Scripture and for his theological thought.

[23] By, for example, Robert Wilken in *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), and Lars Koen, *The Saving Passion: Incarnational and Soteriological Thought in Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel according to St John* (Uppsala: Graphic Systems, 1991).

[24] *In Jo.* 1:14b (Russell, pp. 106–7).

[25] *In Jo.* 1:14b (Russell, p. 106).

[26] *In Is.* 7:14–16 (Russell, p. 79).

[27] *In Is.* 11:1–3 (Russell, pp. 82–3).

Kenosis and the importance of *Theotokos*

Three features of Cyril's theology in the conflict with Nestorius are worth recalling. My argument is that these features derive from the theological reading of Scripture we have outlined, explain the defence of the title *Theotokos* for Mary, and hold together in a single pattern the divine story of incarnation and the human story of Fall and Redemption.

(1) The first feature to note is a characteristic aspect of his argumentation, namely, his refusal to assign different phrases of the Nicene creed to different subjects: it was the same one who was eternally begotten of the Father who came down from heaven and was crucified. Cyril is determined to hold onto a narrative of descent by keeping the unity of subject.

The second and third we have already observed in Cyril's pre-controversy exegesis, but they are repeatedly pressed at the time of the controversy; they are (2) his appeal to the title *Emmanuel* – 'God with us', and (3) his emphasis on *kenosis*. How to interpret Philippians 2:5–11 was much debated, the Antiochenes emphasizing the phrase 'he *took* the form of a servant' as a way of avoiding the implication of change when 'he became flesh', Cyril focussing on the fact that it was the Word, the one in the form of God, who emptied himself. *Kenosis* was a keynote of his theology. Noticeably all three of these features emphasize the motif of descent and ascent, mirroring the overarching pattern of Fall and Restoration. Incarnation and redemption together lie at the root of Cyril's theology, and we can find this long before the controversy erupted.

In his *Commentary on John* Cyril had celebrated the 'deep mystery' by which we are all in Christ: 'the Word dwelt in all of us by dwelling in a single human being'. With a battery of scriptural quotations and allusions, Cyril shows that

> 'in Christ' that which is enslaved is liberated in a real sense and ascends to a mystical union with him who put on the form of a servant, while 'in us' it is liberated by an imitation of the union with the One through our kinship according to the flesh. [28]

That was why Christ had to be made like his brethren in every respect (Heb. 2:16–17). Cyril speaks of him 'giving us himself as a

[28] *In Jo.* 1:14b–15 (Russell, pp. 106ff.).

gift, "so that we by his poverty might become rich"' (2 Cor. 8:9). The ascent of redeemed humanity depends upon the descent, the emptying, of the one who is full of grace and truth.

Later in the commentary, Cyril speaks of 'the blending of two elements into a single reality'.[29]

> For his ineffable generation from God the Father raises him up, in that he is Word and Only-begotten, to the divine essence and to the glory that naturally accompanies it, while his self-emptying draws him down somewhat to our world.

He hastens to say that this self-emptying is not sufficient to overwhelm his divinity – indeed it was self-chosen out of his love for us: he humiliated himself voluntarily. It is only because he humbled himself willingly that we may become sons of God by grace. Though Cyril would probably have shied away from expressing it quite that way, we may almost speak of a chosen 'fall' to our level. He does dare to speak of him 'appearing to fall short of God's majesty by becoming a fully human being', while insisting that the Godhead is in no way diminished by this chosen path of humiliation. 'He brought himself down to that which he was not for our sake.'

These thoughts are perhaps most sharply expressed in the *Commentary on Isaiah*.[30] Cyril is sure that it is a property of human nature to have no trace of the heavenly graces of its own will or nature. Rather humanity was enriched from outside. So it was necessary

> that the only-begotten Word of God who brought himself down to the level of self-emptying, should not repudiate the low estate arising from that self-emptying, but should accept what is full by nature on account of the humanity, not for his sake but for ours, who lack every good thing.

I take that to mean that although full of the Spirit by nature, he had to empty himself in order to receive the Spirit for our sake. So, according to Cyril, he received the Spirit while being the supplier of the Spirit, and that receiving was proportionate to the self-emptying. In the beginning the Spirit was given to Adam; but he was careless and sank into sin. So the Spirit had no resting

[29] *In Jo.* 17:11 (Russell, pp. 125–6).
[30] *In Is.* 11:1–3 (Russell, pp. 83ff.).

place among human beings, until the Word of God became man. Cyril makes much of the loss of the Spirit through the Fall in other texts, such as his discussion of the baptism in his *Commentary on John*; redemption was a re-rooting of the Spirit in the human race.[31] Here he goes on:

> Since he was not consumed by sin even though he became as we are, the Holy Spirit rested once again on human nature . . . That grace was not bestowed upon him as a particular gift, in the way that the Spirit is said to have rested on the saints, but that it was the fullness of the Godhead which took up residence in his own flesh as if in his own temple . . . the prophet makes clear when he says, 'the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill him' (Is. 11:3).[32]

Already in this commentary Cyril is insisting that it is the 'Lord of all' who was born of the Virgin when he 'made the limitations of humanity his own'.

So the pattern of Fall and Redemption is mirrored in Christ's descent and ascent. Self-indulgence is reversed through self-humiliation. For Cyril this narrative movement is fundamental, and he will defend it through thick and thin against the apparently fragmenting analysis of a Nestorius. Our human destiny depends on the truth of the universal pattern whereby Christ redeems Adam, whereby God liberates from enslavement to the world, the flesh and the devil. Willing submission to God is the converse of that *hybris* which brought about the Fall, and is supremely played out in the *kenosis* whereby the Word was made human that we might be made divine.

Now if obedience and humility provide the key to our redemption, the receptivity of Mary as she becomes *Theotokos* is crucial. She is the one through whom God is formed within humanity. She is the 'type' of the Church, of the humanity which is God-receptive and therefore in process of being redeemed. Once the controversy was under way, Cyril would, of course, acknowledge that the Word pre-existed the birth of Christ from Mary – this birth was not, as he puts it, 'the beginning of his being'.[33] But if he is Emmanuel, God with us, then Mary must properly be called

[31] This point is made by Koen, *The Saving Passion*; and discussed further in Keating, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria'.

[32] *In Is.* 11:1–3 (Russell, pp. 83–4).

[33] *Expl. XII Cap.* 7 (Russell, p. 179).

Theotokos. Mary is the vehicle of the new creation. This is the thinking that underlies Cyril's response in the controversy, and clear continuities are traceable.

Of course, the Lord could have just created a body for himself, just as he did for Adam. But Cyril knows that that would easily encourage docetism. So in his work *Against Nestorius* he comments thus: [34]

> He therefore necessarily observed the laws of human nature, and since his aim was to assure everybody that he had truly become man, he took to himself the seed of Abraham (cf. Heb. 2:16) and with the blessed Virgin acting as a mediator to this end, partook of flesh and blood in the way we do (cf. Heb. 2:14). For this was the only way in which he could become 'God with us'.

He goes on to emphasize the fact that 'if he had not partaken of the same elements as we do, he would not have delivered human nature from the fault we incurred in Adam', and proceeds to rehearse the story of the Fall once again. The Holy Virgin is blessed along with the fruit of her womb because 'in Christ we see human nature, as if experiencing a new beginning of the race, enjoying freedom of access to God'.

At the same time Cyril is adamant that we are talking about 'God the Word who was with his Father before all ages', insisting that the one who came 'to be with us according to the flesh' was truly the divine Logos. 'Emmanuel, the second Adam, did not come forth for us from the earth like the first, but from heaven', he asserts, basing his point on Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47). Nor did he simply descend on some human individual. Rather he 'recapitulated human birth in himself', having 'made his own the body which was from a woman, and having been born from her according to the flesh'. This is why Mary is *Theotokos*. He berates Nestorius: just because you are scared stiff that people will think 'the Word brought forth from God had the beginning of existence from earthly flesh', he charges, 'you destroy utterly the mystery of the economy of the flesh by saying the Holy Virgin should not be called *Theotokos* by us'. Thus Cyril's concern to defend the title *Theotokos* for the holy Virgin Mary is deeply founded on her role in the overarching story of Fall and Redemption.

[34] *Adv. Nest.* 1, Proem (Russell, pp. 134ff.).

Container of the Uncontained

The homily on *Theotokos* that Cyril is purported to have preached at Ephesus, Quasten calls 'the most famous Marian sermon of antiquity'. It consists largely of an incantation of honorific epithets – here is some of it:

Mary is
the sacred treasury of all the world
the unquenchable light
the garland of virginity
the mirror of orthodoxy
the indestructible temple
the container of the uncontainable
mother and virgin.

Moreover, she is the one
through whom the Trinity is sanctified
through whom the Cross is called precious and is worshipped throughout the world
through whom heaven rejoices
through whom angels and archangels are glad
through whom demons are made to flee
through whom the tempting devil falls from heaven
through whom the fallen creature is received into the heavens
through whom all creation, held back from idolmania, comes to knowledge of truth
through whom holy baptism came for those who believe
through whom came the oil of gladness
through whom churches were founded in all the world
through whom the Gentiles came to repentance
through whom the only-begotten Son of God gave light to those in darkness and the shadow of death
through whom the prophets prophesied
through whom the apostles preached salvation to the Gentiles
through whom the dead are raised
through whom kings rule through the Holy Trinity
The Virgin Mother – O marvel![35]

At first sight one might be forgiven for imagining that here we have a baptized version of some ancient Hymn to Diana of the

[35] *Hom.* 4, *PG* 77.

Ephesians. There are many examples of how Christianity was becoming enculturated in the world of ancient Mediterranean religious patterns as well as contemporary philosophical rationalizations. Here in Ephesus the Holy Virgin naturally replaces the worship of Artemis as Christianity comes to dominate through imperial patronage. A 'History of Religions' account of the development of Mariology would exploit all such parallels with much plausibility. But if we set this Homily in the context of Cyril's theology as outlined in this chapter, we must surely conclude that the matter is more complex. Doubtless all kinds of sociological and psychological factors reinforced the popular propensity to 'divinize' the Mother of God, and Nestorius saw the dangers. But it is unlikely that Cyril had much truck with idolatry given his track record of opposition to surviving paganism in Alexandria and his great apologetic work, *Against Julian*. His veneration of Mary has deeper theological roots.

Again, at first sight one might be tempted to think that Mary has usurped the functions of Christ. She is now the one through whom demons are cast out and the devil falls from heaven; through her 'the fallen creature is received into the heavens', through her 'all creation ... comes to knowledge of truth' and through her 'the dead are raised'. Even more extraordinary, she is the one 'through whom holy baptism came for those who believe', the one 'through whom churches were founded in all the world'. She is even the one through whom prophets prophesied and apostles preached – as if the Holy Spirit or the pre-existent Logos had been outfaced! One might with plausibility propose that after Nicaea Christ had become so remote, so immortal, invisible, incomprehensible and impassible that a new mediator of salvation was required, and Mary filled the gap. But such an assessment would be untrue to the overall theological perspective we have been tracing, and to the overarching perspective of the homily itself.

Mary is essentially 'the temple' which allows the presence of God the Word to dwell within creation, the essential medium of the Word's *kenosis*. Rarely does Cyril explicitly draw out the Eve–Mary typology, but undergirding his whole understanding is the reversal of the Fall. Where Eve facilitated the entry of sin into the world, Mary allowed herself to be the 'container of the Uncontained' and so the one 'through whom the only-begotten Son of God gave light to those in darkness and the shadow of

death'. What is necessary for salvation is the birth of Christ within humanity. So Mary becomes both the unique medium of salvation, the one through whom all is made possible, and also 'type' of each believer, 'type' of the Church. Thus it is that through her 'the Trinity is sanctified' and 'the Cross called precious and worshipped throughout the world'. She is the 'mirror of orthodoxy' because she is inseparable from her son: if you challenge her right to be venerated as *Theotokos* you cannot possibly give due honour to Christ.

Some feminist scholars have dwelt upon the negative views of women found in the majority of patristic writers, tracing these to the widespread acceptance that Eve was the cause of the Fall, a 'type' of the way men are tempted and misled by women. But such a critique only notices half the story. The fact that Protestants have lost the ancient traditional practice of venerating Mary while Catholic women have felt oppressed by the impossible ideal of virgin and mother has meant that feminist theologians have overlooked the profound significance of Mary in the structure of the overarching story of Redemption. Cyril's defence of *Theotokos*, grounded as it is in this core narrative, and enhanced as it is by a sense of Mary's vital necessity for humanity's appropriation of the divine life through Christ, might prove the starting-point for a better appraisal of Mary as a feminist symbol. Indeed the Eastern Orthodox way of honouring Mary as *Theotokos* provides a potentially important critique of Western Mariology.

The crucial thing for Cyril is that the Word dwelt in flesh, 'using as his own particular body the temple that is from the holy Virgin'. And this particular dwelling meant a dwelling in all of us, in the whole of humanity. So

> 'in Christ' that which is enslaved is liberated in a real sense and ascends to a mystical union with him who put on the form of a servant, while 'in us' it is liberated by an imitation of the union with the One through our kinship according to the flesh.[36]

It is time we considered more carefully how Cyril envisaged our reception of this redemption which was achieved by the Word dwelling in the flesh he took from the Holy Virgin.

[36] *In Jo.* 1:14b (Russell, p. 107).

Receiving Redemption

Essentially Cyril, like Athanasius before him, believed that what humanity needed was the restoration of divine life and that the incarnation effected this. But particular human beings had to appropriate this and this was made possible through the sacraments.

It has been widely recognized that Cyril's christological position was designed to preserve the reality of divine assimilation through feeding on the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist.[37] Cyril's commentary on the sixth chapter of John's Gospel is crucial. Here he speaks of 'the eucharistic reception of the holy flesh and blood which restores man wholly to incorruption'.

> Accordingly the holy body of Christ endows whose who receive it with life and keeps us incorrupt when it is mingled with our bodies. For it is . . . the body of him who is Life by nature, since it has within itself the entire power of the Word that is united with it, and . . . is filled with his energy, through which all things are given life and maintained in being.[38]

His holy body is life-giving because it is united with the Word that is from God:

> For after the incarnation they are not divisible, except insofar as one knows that the Word that came from the Father and the temple that came from the Virgin are not identical in nature.[39]

So the flesh of the Saviour is life-giving, and 'when we taste of it we have life within ourselves, since we too are united with the flesh of the Saviour in the same way as that flesh is united with the Word that dwells within it'. The Eucharist 'will certainly transform those who partake of it and endow them with its own proper good, that is, immortality'. Cyril again sets this resurrection to life through Christ's flesh against the corruption, decay and death which came through the Fall. The Eucharist dispels both death

[37] See Henry Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 2 (1951), pp. 145–64; and Ezra Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing: An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria* (Uppsala: Borgströms, 1977).

[38] *In Jo.* 6:35 (Russell, pp. 110–11).

[39] *In Jo.* 6:53 (Russell, p. 115).

and the diseases that are in us, for Christ comes as a doctor to tend us, his patients.[40]

> It is as if one took a glowing ember and thrust it into a large pile of straw in order to preserve the vital nucleus of the fire. In the same way our Lord Jesus Christ hides away life within us by means of his own flesh, and inserts immortality into us, like some vital nucleus that destroys every trace of corruption in us.[41]

There are many indications that the flesh is vital as the medium of this eternal life. So Mary *Theotokos* is essential as the vehicle of the Word's enfleshment.

The *Commentary on John* shows that baptism is as significant as eucharist. For Cyril redemption is couched in terms of the restoration of the Spirit to human nature; it is by the Spirit that the Pauline move from slavery to sonship (Romans 8) is effected. That is how human beings are born of God (Cyril is commenting on John 1:13) and become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). 'The gift of the indwelling Spirit is the means by which Christ now accomplishes our cleansing and sanctification and imparts to us new life.'[42] Although closely linked to circumcision, for Cyril discusses at length the New Testament phrase 'circumcision in the Spirit', Christian baptism has never been an exclusively male rite. Cyril simply takes for granted that the whole human race is sanctified and renewed.

For Cyril the appropriation of divine life is twofold, both physical and spiritual, for a double healing is required. A person has to be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom. Keating has summed up his perspective as follows: 'We receive Christ into ourselves, participating in him and his life, and thus in the divine nature, through a twofold means: through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, normally related to baptism, and through the partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.'[43] None of this would be possible without Mary *Theotokos*. Later Keating draws out the significance of Christ as 'type' or pattern in the process of our sanctification, and the way in which human beings become

[40] *In Jo.* 6:56 (Russell, p. 119).
[41] *In Jo.* 6:54 (Russell, pp. 117–18).
[42] Keating, p. 64.
[43] Keating, p. 95.

participants in the process through imitation. This is possible because of his kinship with us as human being. Christ becomes the pattern of our reception of divine life, the pattern of obedience.

So the pattern of Fall and Redemption undergirds Cyril's biblical exegesis and his stance in the controversy. We can pull the whole argument together with a fuller version of a passage already quoted from the *Commentary on John* where Cyril makes recapitulation in Christ explicit, and the necessity of Christ participating in our nature so that we might participate in his:

> There was no other way for us who have borne the image of the man of dust to escape corruption, unless the beauty of the image of the man of heaven is imprinted upon us through our having been called to sonship (cf. 1 Cor. 15:49). For having become partakers of him through the Spirit (cf. Heb. 3:14, 6:4), we were sealed into likeness to him and mount up to the archetypal form of the image in accordance with which divine scripture says we were also made (cf. Gen. 1:27). For scarcely do we thus recover the ancient beauty of our nature, and are conformed to that divine nature, than we become superior to the evils that arose from the Fall.
>
> We, therefore, ascend to a dignity that transcends our nature on account of Christ . . .[44]

[44] *In Jo.* 1:12 (Russell, pp. 100–1).

Chapter 4

The Mystery of the Trinity according to Cyril of Alexandria: The Deployment of the Triad and Its Recapitulation into the Unity of Divinity

MARIE-ODILE BOULNOIS

APPROACHES TO CYRILLIAN THOUGHT

Reflections on the Trinity in the work of Cyril

The name Cyril of Alexandria is inseparably linked with the Nestorian controversy, to the extent that posterity has mostly concentrated on the study of his Christology, which was the source of many controversies which arose at the time of the Council of Chalcedon. Less attention has thus been paid to his thoughts on the Trinity, the essence of which was worked out before the beginning of the Nestorian crisis in 428. An examination of his work, however, shows that Cyril considered the subject of the Trinity to be of the greatest importance, since he devoted to it three major pieces of writing: the *Thesaurus*, the *Dialogues on the Trinity*, and the *Commentary on John*.[1]

The first two concentrate exclusively on the question of the Trinity. The *Thesaurus*, in which he largely depends on his master,

[1] I base this on more detailed analyses developed in M.-O. Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Institut des Études Augustiniennes, 1994).

Athanasius, proceeds through an exposition and refutation of the Arian or Eunomian theses. The *Dialogues* are a more personal work and are characterized by their carefully chosen style, in particular the use of the dialogue itself. The *Commentary on John*, which is a continuous exegesis of this Gospel is, for that reason, not exclusively devoted to the Trinity, but accords it an important place. To see this one has only to read the preface, in which Cyril presents his exegesis as being 'dogmatic', which is confirmed by the choice of chapter headings largely focused on questions of the Trinity.[2] This close link between exegesis and theology seems to be one of the fundamental features of the Cyrillian corpus. Apart from its distinctly theological nature, the *Commentary on John* also has a polemical aim.[3] As Cyril repeats throughout his commentary on the Prologue, the evangelist foresaw the heresies that would later be developed by dissidents and refutes them as would a good gardener zealously uprooting thorny weeds.[4] Thus the first book counters the two main contradictions of which one should beware: Sabellianism and Arianism.

This leads us to search for the reasons that impelled Cyril to devote so much effort to refuting the errors of Arius and his followers. We may consider that Cyril sensed that the opportunity had come, after a century of discussion, to present the results of bitter arguments on the delicate question of Divine unity and plurality. For that reason he thought it useful to borrow the framework of exposition and of Trinitarian thought from Athanasius and the Cappadocians, who had been in direct confrontation with the Arian crisis, so that the opponents quoted perhaps act as a foil, a theoretical presence, rather than a reality. It is true that we have very little historical information on the

[2] *In Jo.* Praef., vol. 1, p. 7. *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini in d. Joannis Evangelium*, 3 vols., ed. P. E. Pusey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872).

[3] The heretics named and quoted are Arius (*In Jo.* 1:1, Pusey, vol. 1, p. 31; *Thes.* 15, *PG* 75, 252c), the Arians (*In Jo.* 1:1, Pusey, vol. 1, p. 40; 8:19, Pusey, vol. 1, p. 728; 10:28–30, Pusey, vol. 2, p. 254; *Thes.* 4, 52c; 13, 208c; 14, 233a; 15, 284d; 16, 296c), Aetius (*Thes.* 11, 132b, 133b), Eunomius (*In Jo.* 1:2, Pusey, vol. 1, p. 45 and *passim* in this chapter; *Thes.* many instances), the Anomoeans (*In Jo.* 14:23, Pusey, vol. 2, p. 499; *Thes* 11, 156a), Sabellius (*In Jo.* 14:28, Pusey, vol. 2, p. 519; *Thes.* 12, 181d).

[4] See *In Jo.* 1:2 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 23).

possible resurgence of heresy in Alexandria in Cyril's time, and he himself says nothing explicit on the matter.[5] Nevertheless *Festal Letter* 12, dated 424, cannot be ignored, being entirely devoted to a technical refutation of the Eunomian theses. Furthermore, if we examine the other letters, all dated, which announce the date of Easter, we notice that on several occasions Cyril mentions events which have affected Alexandria during the year in question.[6] Moreover, he otherwise rarely makes such detailed expositions, or even such complex ones, in his letters, being as they are pastoral in purpose (excepting, of course, *Festal Letter* 17 of 429 which is precisely framed to warn against a new danger: the Nestorian heresy). May we then deduce from this *Letter* 12 a resurgence of Arian danger in 424?[7] In this we are reduced to hypothesizing. On the other hand, the *Dialogues on the Trinity*, showing as they do a certain stylistic effort on Cyril's part as well as a recourse to the procedures of Greek philosophy, are perhaps intended for cultivated pagans who have inevitably heard about the debates on the Trinity. For their benefit Cyril would have chosen to shed a positive light on discussions which had often been derided in pagan circles at the height of the polemics.[8] This concern to present an apologia seems even more plausible if we consider the scope of his *Against Julian*, which was also intended to rehabilitate Christianity in the face of criticism from pagan intellectuals. In it we find in fact two long statements on the Trinity. The first, in Book 1, has recourse to a vast array of documents drawn from the Greek philosophers, even before Cyril starts to respond to Julian's criticism. This shows to what extent he feels it necessary to give a solid presentation on the Trinity. The second, in Book 8, is a reply to the objection that Christians cannot claim to be the true Israel, since instead of adhering to the monotheism laid down by Moses,

[5] See G. M. de Durand, *Dial. Trin.*, vol. 1 (*SC* 231, pp. 20–1).

[6] See *Hom. Pasch.* vol. 1 (*SC* 372, pp. 115–16). Without there being any direct reference to the events at the beginning of his episcopacy, we can trace his preoccupation with these in his first letters as bishop. See also *Hom. Pasch.* 7 which touches on the demands exacted in 418, and *Hom. Pasch.* 8, which mentions certain natural disasters having started a famine.

[7] In the previous letters, in particular *Hom. Pasch.* 9, 6, Cyril had already started to defend faith in the Trinity against Arian errors.

[8] See M. Simonetti, *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 33 (1997), pp. 414–15.

they maintain that there are two or three gods, as stated in the Prologue of John.[9]

Whatever the reasons are behind Cyril's synthesis of the dogmatic advances of the preceding century, this theological question occupies a major place in his work. It seems to us, then, that in reflecting on the questions of unity and plurality as regards the Trinity, Cyril forged the basic conceptual tools necessary for the fight against Nestorius. We shall try to give some examples of them.

According to Cyril, belief in the Trinity is the first article of faith, followed by belief in the resurrection.[10] In giving such importance to the Trinity he bases his position on sacramental and liturgical practice. In fact, baptism is characterized by its Trinitarian formula. 'We say that the kerygma of the church is simple. We have been baptized in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and believing that the Holy Trinity is consubstantial, we worship in the Trinity one sole Divinity.'[11] We already have there the basic points of Cyril's doctrine: the baptismal formula gives the names of the three persons (deployment of the divinity in three hypostases), and the consubstantiality is the guarantee of a true monotheism (recapitulation of the three in one unity). Apart from the baptismal formula, there is a notable recurrence of Trinitarian doxologies punctuating several of his works. Prayer itself, therefore, must be Trinitarian, a practise newly in fashion in comparison with that of the Jews. Basing himself on Ephesians 2:18, Cyril declares that it is through the Son and in the Spirit that we have access to the Father.[12]

Cyril's insistence on speaking of the Trinity as such or of the three persons as being indissolubly linked to one other comes from his idea that the Trinity is fundamentally one unity, so that it is impossible to speak of one of the three without also speaking of the others. Because of this faultless unity, man has been created in the image of the Trinity as a whole and not just in the image of the

[9] See *C. Jul.* 8 (*PG* 76, 901).

[10] See *In Jo.* 20:26–27 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 143).

[11] *Hom. Pasch.* 12, 6, 29–33.

[12] See *In Jo.* 16:23–24 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 646): 'If our prayers are formulated in the name of Christ, who is our freedom of speech with the Father, then he will grant them more easily.'

Son, as maintained by his Alexandrian predecessors, Origen and Athanasius. 'For the marks of the whole consubstantial Trinity shine in him (the man), in so far as the Divinity by nature which is in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is unique.'[13]

The conditions for knowledge

Before approaching the question of the Trinity, Cyril is always careful to emphasize the extreme difficulty of the subject: the Mystery of the Trinity surpasses both our capacity to comprehend and our means of expression.

> What could be as arduous and difficult to comprehend, or as hard to explain as a correct account of the Holy and consubstantial Trinity? ... For human intelligence is very weak or rather totally powerless and as far as language itself is concerned, it is deficient, already having difficulty expressing what is within our reach. The beauty of truth is difficult to understand and it is not in its nature to be revealed to a great number, but rather to those alone who, having searched out its traces with righteous thought and a sincere spirit, are able to dig up, dare I say, a heavenly treasure.[14]

This opening of the *Thesaurus* is not just a standard clause – the obligatory preamble at the start of every discussion – but a polemical argument. In contrast with the Eunomians, who claim to know God as perfectly as he knows Himself, Cyril underlines the deficiencies not only of language, but of human thought itself.[15] Ultimately, it would be better to keep silent, according to the advice in Proverbs 25:2 ('The glory of the Lord conceals the word'), of which Cyril is particularly fond.

Nevertheless, Cyril's consciousness of being a pastor makes him step over his own reticence and speak.[16] An honest discourse on the Trinity should thus comply with several conditions. First, it should not be the result of any misplaced research or indiscreet curiosity, that is, it should not be concerned with what is inaccessible. Thus, drawing on Hebrews 11:6, Cyril makes a distinction between, on the one hand, knowledge we can have of

[13] *De Dogm.* 4 (Pusey, *In Jo.* vol. 3, p. 558). See also *C. Jul.* 1, 32 (*SC*, 322).
[14] *Thes.* Praef. 9a. See also *In Jo.* Praef. (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 7).
[15] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 73).
[16] See *In Jo.* Praef. (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 1).

'the fact' (ὅτι) that God exists and, on the other, research into the 'how' (πῶς) of it.[17] Of course, our knowledge is not limited only to his existence, but Cyril maintains that only the inherent attributes of God are knowable, not the essence.[18] There again, his aim is to refute the exaggerated importance given to the term 'unbegotten' by the Eunomians since, according to Cyril's contention this term designates, not the substance of the divinity, unknowable as it is, but one of the inherent properties of God. Misplaced curiosity consists in wondering about the intimate behaviour of the divine nature and how the Trinity is. The opposite – piety – consists in considering in a fair-minded way the means to worship the one divine nature of the Trinity.[19] In other words, in order to worship properly, we must have a correct understanding of the relationship of the Trinity to divine unity and that is what the Cyrillian view tries to establish.

The second condition is that in order for the teaching on the Trinity to be correct, it must be subtle (ἰσχνός), as if chiselled (κατερρινησμένος) and polished (ἀπεξεσμένος).[20] Nevertheless, no matter how precise our arguments may be, they are always inadequate, for our earthly way of understanding, unlike the vision of the world beyond, is obscure and limited. That is why Cyril favours illustrating his explanations and has a preference for the use of metaphors such as 'spring' and 'root' rather than an abstract concept such as the concept of cause in reference to the Father.[21] Illustrations have the advantage of not seeming to be the whole truth; rather, because of their very status as images they in effect admit to their own inadequacy and permit us to go further. It is also worth noting that Cyril is not satisfied with one illustration, but uses a whole collection: this is not a coquettish gilding of the lily; rather, this multiplicity itself is the consequence of a reflection on the conditions for knowing God.

> By contemplating, over and over again, and not without sweat and tears, we gather a knowledge which appears as if in a mirror

[17] See *Dial. Trin.* 4, 511c.

[18] See *In Jo.* 8:55 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 124–5).

[19] See *Dial. Trin.* 3, 466a.

[20] See *C. Jul.* 1, 25, 529d and *In Is.* 25:6–7 (*PG* 70, 561b); *Glaphyra* 65d; *C. Jul.* 4, 725c.

[21] See *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 727): 'The Father is like the root and the spring of his offspring.'

(1 Cor. 13:12). Through very subtle conceptual imagery (ἰσχνός) which is chiselled out, (κατερρινησμένος) so to speak, we assemble in our minds a vision which is like a riddle and through this somehow acquire a solidity of faith. But since among creatures or beings subject to generation and corruption nothing has been structured to resemble exactly and exclusively the supreme nature and glory, it is with effort that we comprehend that which is connected with it. We would do well to snatch from any creature any contribution to revelation.[22]

Aware that 'our human mind is surely limited in its understanding of what is beyond any mind's understanding', Cyril advises us to overcome the impossibility of defining God in adequate terms by bringing together in a sort of prism a multiplicity of qualities and by drawing from each analogy a portion of the truth.[23]

This 'cumulative method of partial approaches' is one of the main features of Cyril's theology.[24] The role of the exegete is to aid the acquisition of a high degree of knowledge 'through a synthesis of what has been contemplated in a variegated manner (ποικίλως) and by leading it to a single goal and a single meaning', just as a busy bee constructs sweet honeycombs.[25] Theological discourse should therefore spring from collective, multiple approaches which then correct each other while affirming the permanent transcendence of the Trinity in relation to any image.[26]

To be sure, comparison with any example is inadequate, but it is capable of raising our minds to a level which is beyond our reason. Indeed, everything brought to being is inferior to the glory of the substance which is superior to all substances, and there is nothing which totally resembles that glory and is exactly similar (ἀπαραλλάκτως) to it. Thus we are quite right to solicit (ἐρανιζόμεθα) the use of examples; for assembling from among many one single illustration – admittedly very small! – shows up in an albeit unclear and mediocre fashion the object of our search. As Paul very wisely puts it, 'We now see an obscure reflection as if in a mirror' (1 Cor. 13:12).[27]

[22] *Dial. Trin.* 5, 558ab.
[23] *Dial. Trin.* 5, 558ab.
[24] See G. M. de Durand, *Dial. Trin.*, vol. 1, p. 85.
[25] *In Jo.* (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 13).
[26] See *De Dogm.* 4 (Pusey, p. 557).
[27] *C. Jul.* 8, 905bc.

Since the Trinity is beyond any image on our earth and only the Son is the perfect image (ἀπαράλλακτος) of the Father, we have to rely on the Son to reveal to us what is beyond our speech and understanding.[28] According to Cyril's interpretation of Isaiah 8:1, when we attempt to plumb the depths of the mystery of the Trinity we need a stylet – a sharp instrument unlike ourselves which is not human in origin. What means of expression could explain what is beyond our speech and intellect? On the other hand, when discussing the Incarnation, we should, according to Isaiah, use a human stylet, since in that case the subject is a question of humanity.[29] Thus the Father is only known by his only offspring, the Son, for 'only the Holy and consubstantial Trinity knows itself, only the Trinity, which is beyond all human words and understanding. But the Son through the Holy Spirit unveils the Trinity'.[30]

Our access to the Trinity has to be through the word of God, that is, Holy Scripture, which has to be properly interpreted (hence the need for appropriate exegetical rules for discovering the *skopos* of God). Moreover, our minds must be enlightened by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. 'On condition that we do not distance ourselves from dogmatic precision but follow the intention of Holy Scripture which is divinely inspired, we possess a knowledge which is not imperfect but can only be acquired through being enlightened by the Holy Spirit.'[31] We shall see that this part played by the Holy Spirit, which is to give us access to the knowledge of God, is linked in turn with the Spirit's place in the Holy Trinity, a place which puts the Spirit in touch with humanity. Thus, it is through the Spirit that the Trinity reaches its fullness and also through him that this fullness dwells in us.[32]

As long as theological research keeps within these limits, it does not spring from idle curiosity, but is life-giving, since 'the

[28] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 72): 'God will be above this example, because he is super-substantial and there is no created being exactly like him to the point of being taken to be an image of the Holy Trinity, without appearing to be at all different from the exacting viewpoint of dogma.' See also *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 68).

[29] See *In Is.* 8:1–2 (*PG* 70, 220ab).

[30] *In Luc.* 10:22 (*PG* 72, 673a).

[31] *In Jo.* 16:23–24 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 645).

[32] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 25) and *Quod Unus* 750b (*SC* 97, p. 421).

nourishment of minds is true, faultless knowledge', and this knowledge, which is given to us, is 'the Son revealing to us the Father in himself and giving us faith in the Holy and consubstantial Trinity'.[33] This, then, is how humankind draws near to the knowledge of God given to the seraphim which they demonstrate in their glorification of the Trinity in the trisagion (Is. 6:1–3).[34] Unlike the heretics who tend to complicate everything, to ignore the meanings of words and to indulge in verbosity, the *kerygma* of the Church is simple (ἁπλοῦς): it consists in belief in the consubstantial Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and adoration of the Trinity's one sole Divinity.[35]

A recurrent pattern

The fundamental movement to be found in this approach to the mystery of the Trinity follows three phases which correspond to three refutations of three errors: (1) the affirmation of monotheism (against polytheism); (2) the real and not purely aspectual deployment (διαστέλλεται) of the one sole Divinity in three hypostases (against Sabellianism); (3) and the recapitulation (ἀνακεφαλαιοῦται) of the three Persons in one sole divine nature (against Arianism).[36] In fact, the first phase is the least developed and Cyril concentrates his thought on the two others. The definition of the Trinity by means of the two images – deployment and recapitulation, diastolic and systolic – allows us to avoid two stumbling blocks: confusion, which leads to a henad rather than a triad, and fragmentation, which leads to tritheism.[37] These two extreme positions are treated as methodological limits placed back

[33] *Glaphyra Ex.* 2, 3 (*PG* 69, 456d–457a). See also *In Jo.* 16:23–24 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 645): 'We say that perfect knowledge is knowledge which is right, not perverted, which does not tolerate the discordant in thought or word, and which has a true understanding of the holy and consubstantial Trinity.'

[34] See *In Is.* 6:1–3 (*PG* 70, 176a).

[35] See *Hom. Pasch.* 12, 6, 692, 29–33.

[36] These three errors are refuted in the first book of *In Jo.*: against the polytheists (1, 3, pp. 65–73), against the Sabellians (1, 1, pp. 23–30), and against the Arians and the Eunomians (1, 1, pp. 16–22, 31–64). See also *In Jo.* 14:1 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 401).

[37] See G. M. de Durand, 'Textes triadologiques dans la correspondance d'Isidore de Péluse', *SP* 17 (1985), pp. 119–25.

to back by Cyril, in the sense that neither the one nor the other maintains a correct view of the concept of number in the Trinity. This concept has to keep within two paradoxical criteria: distinction without separation and union without confusion.

> We will not follow the Jewish practice of contracting the nature of the Divinity to one sole God and Father; on the contrary, we will stretch it, so to speak, into one Holy and consubstantial Trinity; and while expanding (διαστέλλοντες) it by the quality of the Persons and the property of the hypostases we will once more contract (συστελοῦμεν) it as one sole God because of the sameness of substance.[38]

The Trinity must not be a henad nor must it be plural in its nature. Cyril also uses the metaphor of the Royal Way, which must be followed without deviation to right or left.[39] We must not think of the Father or the Son as being two separate beings, so as to avoid the concept of two gods, nor must we think of each one (συναμφότερον) as being one, so as not to contract (συστέλληται) the Father into the Son or vice versa; instead we should imagine them as being light and a ray issuing from the light.[40] We note that the use of analogy aims to get round the difficulty of the concept represented by the paradox of one and many. This complementarity of deployment and recapitulation is present right from the first verse of the Gospel of John, for 'The Word was with God' (John 1:1b) implies the distinction of the two hypostases, while the 'The Word was God' proves their consubstantiality and unity.[41]

We shall now study these two phases while keeping to the order which Cyril always follows when he uses the pattern: deployment then contraction.

DEPLOYMENT: UNION WITHOUT CONFUSION

Intuitions of plurality in Jewish and pagan thought

Before approaching the idea that God 'unfolds' himself, we first need to affirm our faith in one sole God; but in a certain way, this

[38] *De Ador.* 6 (*PG* 68, 412d).
[39] See *Hom. Pasch.* 21, 4 (*PG* 77, 856, 1. 32–3).
[40] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 71).
[41] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 32).

first stage is 'by unanimous consent' accepted by Jews and many pagan philosophers.[42] For Cyril this act of faith is insufficient and we cannot content ourselves with Jewish teaching as Christ proved when he said that no one could go to the Father except through the Son.[43] That is why we should not 'follow the Jewish way of contracting the Divine nature' and maintain only the idea of the 'monarchy', because 'the children of Israel had no notion of the Holy and consubstantial Trinity'.[44] They had been led by Moses to abandon polytheism and to worship the One True God, but they did not yet possess the perfect understanding spoken of by Christ in John 17:3: 'Eternal life is to know you, the one true God, and the one you have sent, Jesus Christ.'[45] An understanding which limits itself to stating that God is God, without affirming that he is also Father and without including the Spirit, is imperfect.[46]

Nevertheless, Cyril shows that the enlargement of the Divinity into three hypostases was not entirely unknown: even before the Incarnation there had been some divine pedagogy aimed at both Jews and pagans. In the case of the Jews, we see Abraham receiving this apprenticeship during the theophany at Mamre (Gen. 18). 'The book states quite clearly that God appeared to Abraham, but also that he saw three people', 'three men who represented the type of the Holy and consubstantial Trinity'.[47] We shall see that this episode not only shows us the Trinity, but also teaches us its recapitulation according to its consubstantiality thanks to Abraham's use of the singular (μοναδικῶς) to address the three. This mystagogy is also transmitted by the instructions given to Noah for the construction of the Ark (Gen. 6:15–16): the length of 300 cubits and the upper assemblage within only one cubit are for Cyril images of the lengthening and the recapitulation of the Trinity.[48] More generally speaking, the mystery of this fullness is hinted at (ὑπεμφαίνει) each time the plural is used in referring to God (Gen. 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, 19:24).[49] God is not

[42] *C. Jul.* 1, 27, 533a.
[43] See *In Jo.* 14:7 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 411–12).
[44] *De Ador.* 412, 48 seq. and *In Jo.* 12:20 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 309).
[45] *In Jo.* 17:3 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 670).
[46] See *In Jo.* 17:6–8 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 682).
[47] *C. Jul.* 1, 26, 532d and *C. Jul.* 8, 912a.
[48] *Glaphyra Gen.* 65, 44.
[49] See *C. Jul.* 4, 725, 40 and *C. Jul.* 3, 648a; 4, 725ad; 8, 909c–912a.

speaking to angels – the text is describing in each case a deliberation of the Trinity.[50]

Thus, in opposition to Julian's accusations against Christians, they are not traitors to the Jews, since even when Moses exhorts them to monotheism, they still have a certain sense of the plurality of God.[51] Moreover, Cyril's refutation of Julian shows that even the philosophers of whom Julian boasts of being a disciple had a suspicion of the sole nature of the Divinity being enlarged into three hypostases. In this way the Alexandrian turns his adversary's own authorities against him, by invoking precisely the evidence of Platonist philosophers in favour of the Trinitarian doctrine. The élite of Greek philosophers, unlike Julian, recognize the existence of 'three principal hypostases' according to the title given by Porphyry to Plotinus' *Enneads* 5.1: because they 'affirm that the substance of God has moved towards three hypostases, sometimes using even the term triad, they are in agreement with Christian teachings'.[52] To support this thesis, Cyril quotes a passage from Porphyry's *History of Philosophy* which, moreover, is known to us only through Cyril: 'In explaining Plato's teachings, Porphyry claims that "the substance of the divinity has proceeded towards three hypostases. The Supreme God is Goodness, after him is the Demiurge and in third place is the soul of the world, because the divinity has proceeded to the soul".'[53] Numenius and Plotinus had further intuitions approaching the Mystery of the Trinity, by speaking of the indivisible unity of the three and the immediacy of the hypostases between which nothing can be introduced, or by using the same comparisons of which Cyril is fond – such as the spoken word or heat given off by a flame.[54] Nevertheless, this understanding is not beyond reproach, to the extent that the 'three' are positioned in a hierarchy and divided: a state of affairs which prefigures the Arian heresy:[55]

[50] See C. *Jul.* 3, 648a.

[51] C. *Jul.* 8, 888a.

[52] C. *Jul.* 8, 913d.

[53] C. *Jul.* 1, 47, 533b and 8, 916b.

[54] See Numenius, frag. 11 and 12. C. *Jul.* 8, 917c; Plotinus, *En.* 5, 1, 6, 50–3. C. *Jul.* 8, 920c and Plotinus, *En*, 5, 1, 3, 4–10. C. *Jul.* 8, 924b.

[55] See C. *Jul.* 1, 48. 553d and 9, 953a. See M.-O. Boulnois, 'Platon entre Moïse et Arius selon le *Contre Julien* de Cyrille d'Alexandrie', *SP* 32 (1997), pp. 264–71.

> Nothing would be lacking in their understanding of the subject if only they were willing to attribute to the three hypostases the concept of consubstantiality, which aids the conception of one sole divine nature without this tripling which leads to a change in the nature of each and to an inferiority in one of the hypostases in relation to the others.[56]

In other words, Platonist doctrine falls short in so far as the phase of deployment is not followed by that of recapitulation. Note that Cyril is not content with compiling records contributed by other authors; he also knows how to find them himself and knows how to build his own argument, starting from quotations of pagan sources and using them against his opponent, revealing in the process his own critical sense.

The number three

In order to understand the fullness of the divinity we must, therefore, state not only that God is one, but also that he is three.[57] This insistence on plurality is always based on the baptismal formula:

> We affirm that we believe in God the Father, in His only-begotten Son and in the Holy Spirit. That is moreover the reason why the Saviour himself gave the following order to this own disciples: 'Go and teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28:19). Thus, if the difference between each name adds nothing to our understanding, and if, in saying Father, we mean Son and if, in naming the Son we also mention the Father himself, why did he not rather give the order to baptize believers into a henad rather than a triad?[58]

Wanting to refute Sabellian teaching which stated that the distinction in the Trinity was purely nominal rather than real, Cyril warns against a confusion of the three persons in a henad.[59] The use of the plural (πληθυντικῷ ἀριθμῷ) as in Genesis 1:26, 'Let us make man in our own image', confirms that 'the numbering of the Holy Trinity goes beyond the henad'.[60] Cyril invokes several texts from Scripture which use a grammatical plural or suppose a

[56] *C. Jul.* 8, 913d.
[57] See *Dial. Trin.* 6, 618d; *Thes.* 32, 528a; *C. Jul.* 1, 24, 33, 47.
[58] *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 27–8).
[59] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 24).
[60] *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 27).

distinction between two beings.[61] This statement by Cyril on the number is not aimed only at the Sabellians, but also at the Eunomians who maintained that consubstantiality created a confusion of Father and Son. If the Trinity is contracted into a henad, everything is confused from then on and the persons have no further existence of their own.[62] However, a comparison with human consubstantiality clearly shows that (1) the identity of nature between Adam and his son does not, consequently, entail a confusion, and that (2) each one keeps his own individuality. Otherwise, we would end with the absurd, not to say sacrilegious, situation of mixing the sacred and the profane (Ezek. 22:26), in not distinguishing between Peter or Paul and Judas.[63] 'Since the concept of the divine nature goes to the number three, it is obvious to all that each of the numbered persons is in his own hypostasis, and that it is not at the expense of a change in nature that each one ascends to one sole divinity and merits the same adoration.'[64] Paradoxically, the unity of divine nature does not mean that Father and Son are one in number. In other words, if we want to maintain, against Arianism, unity and common adoration, we should not, even so, lapse completely into the opposite excess of mixing. We need to be able to give the paradoxical affirmation of union without confusion, which is why the term henad is completely proscribed, being too precise in its negation of plurality, unlike the term unity (ἑνότης).

One substance in three hypostases

If God is plural, we still have to point out that the number only applies to the hypostases, while the substance remains one. Cyril uses his predecessors' formula 'one substance in three hypostases', a formula which had been progressively worked out in the fourth century, thanks especially to the work of the Cappadocians. 'The substance is one, that is to say that the true, natural divinity is

[61] In John 1:1, if the Word is turned towards God, then he is not the same in number with him.

[62] See *In Jo.* 1:2 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 54).

[63] See *In Jo.* 1:2 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 53–6): 'What is of the same nature cannot possibly be changed or mixed (ἀνάκρασις) from one to the other, to the extent that the things thus signified may be contracted (συσταλῆναι) from plurality to henad, or, for example, from dyad to monad' (p. 53).

[64] *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 28).

conceived as being in three hypostases, I mean in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'[65]

However, he makes this formula his own in a flexible manner by laying emphasis now on the distinction between the hypostases, now on the unity of substance. Moreover, he uses φύσις as the equivalent of οὐσία and πρόσωπον next to ὑπόστασις. In Trinitarian theology, Cyril clearly defines four terms: nature and substance to indicate what is in common, and person and hypostasis to describe the proper existence of each of the three.

> Substance is one thing and hypostasis is another. There is therefore a great difference, which sets them apart, since substance embraces individual traits. . . . So then, substance seems to designate a common reality, while the term hypostasis is predicated and is used of each of the beings who are subsumed in that common reality. . . . Hypostasis is preferably used to mean one individual without excluding what it says about community, but at the same time not confusing and obscurely mixing up what is individual and proper (τὸ καθέκαστόν τε καὶ ἰδικῶς).[66]

The contrast between what is common and what is proper to the individual constitutes the keystone of Trinitarian teaching. We must distinguish between features common to the whole divine substance which guarantee its unity, such as divinity, eternity and holiness, and the properties which define the proper existence of each person and thereby are incommunicable, such as fatherhood and sonship. One of the challenges in making this distinction is that of showing, in contrast with Eunomius' teaching, that the term 'unbegotten' cannot provide a definition of God, since it is a term proper to the Father alone and not to the substance of the divinity in general, excluding, therefore, the Son. In order to understand what characterizes the properties of each person of the Trinity we have to turn to the names.

The properties of the hypostases as revealed through the names

Father and Son

'In saying Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are no longer indicating them from what is indivisibly the whole nature of the divinity, but

[65] *In Jo.* 15:1 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 537).
[66] *Dial. Trin.* 1, 408d–409b.

from what allows us, in the identity of substance of the Holy Trinity, to distinguish the hypostases proper; the language distributes to each of the conceived beings the name which suits it.'[67] These names take their authority from the baptismal formula and define the mode of existence (ὁ τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως) proper to each. The first two Persons are easily defined by the properties of fatherhood and sonship. One of the main characteristics of these names 'Father' and 'Son' is that they are not used in any derivative or improper (καταχρηστικῶς) way, but in the full and proper sense. In other words, only the Father is father in the full sense since he is *only* Father and similarly only the Son is truly son. It is this full sense which gives the Father a fatherhood which is the source of all human fatherhood (Eph. 3:15). Our human relationships are indeed far from being a model for this divine relationship; it is the opposite which is true. Hence we have Christ's prohibition, 'Call no man father on this earth, for you have only one, your heavenly Father' (Matt. 23:9). It is also because the Son is only Son and that he has been begotten by nature, and not elevated to the dignity of sonship, that his sonship is the foundation of our own adoption as sons of God. If men have the right to call God their Father it is because they have received the grace of adoption as sons – through the intermediary of the only Son of God, who became their brother by becoming a man. Cyril's insistence on the proper meanings of these names helps to prove the consubstantiality of the Father and Son and disprove Arian teaching: if the Father has truly begotten the Son, the Son must therefore have the same nature. Analysis of the name 'Father' shows then not only that he is the principle of the Son, but also that he has no principle (ἄναρχος), since, being only Father, he is no one's son.[68] There is, therefore, no origin before the Father. 'Neither the Father nor the Son have been begotten through a pre-existing principle, in the sense that we would have to consider them as brothers, but the Father is the principle of the Son and begets Him; he remains Father and is not himself the Son of any other.'[69] Moreover, the term 'Father' is, in a way, more appropriate than the word 'God' for describing God:

[67] *Dial. Trin.* 2, 422d.

[68] See *Dial. Trin.* 2, 501a and 5, 558d: The Son 'has the Father as spring and root of his own hypostasis'.

[69] *Thes.* 4, 41c.

> In a certain way, the name Father is a more suitable name for God than the name God. In fact, the one signifies dignity, the other indicates his substantial property. In effect, in saying God we indicate the Lord of the universe, but in calling him Father, we touch on the expression of his property, since he has revealed that he has begotten.[70]

Another characteristic of these names is that they belong to the category of relative nouns (τὰ πρός τί πως ἔχοντα), which strongly supports the affirmation of their eternal coexistence: in order to be a Father from all eternity he must have begotten from all eternity. 'We cannot conceive that he is truly Father if he does not possess the Son as the fruit of his own nature. In fact, in accordance with the main feature of relative things, we cannot have a son without assuming the existence of a father; just as we cannot imagine a father without a son.'[71] Father and Son cannot, therefore, be deprived of convergence (συνδρομή).[72] Cyril uses a more technical vocabulary (τὰ πρός τι, τὰ πρός τί πως ἔχοντα, σχέσις, ἀναφορά) than do his predecessors Athanasius or Didymus, and brings to bear analyses of the grammatical and philosophical origins of relative nouns, such as those of Porphyry who takes Father and Son as examples of relatives who are simultaneous in being.[73] Apart from their existential correlation, relative nouns also give a mutual understanding of each other. By the simple fact of showing himself to be a Son, the Son reveals the Father in himself, and vice versa. 'How is it possible for the Son not to be truly God, he who introduces, with himself, a knowledge of the Father, and who, in an inverse manner, is also introduced as Son thanks to the name of the Father? In effect, they must necessarily be in one another, since this characteristic appertains to relative nouns.'[74] Thus, it is together that we understand who the Father is and who the Son is.[75]

Holy Spirit

In the case of the Father and Son, their names alone are enough to show their proper character and the relationship which joins them.

[70] *In Jo.* 17:6–8 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 681).
[71] *C. Jul.* 8, 905c.
[72] *Dial. Trin.* 2, 460c.
[73] See *Dial. Trin.* 4, 509d and Porphyry, *In Cat.* CAG IV, 1, p. 87, 25.
[74] *Thes.* 32, 485b.
[75] See *In Jo.* 17:3 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 667–8).

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is, in a sense, deprived of a proper name, anonymous, since all three Persons are Spirit and Holy. Cyril is forced to resort to a multiplicity of formulae to try to capture the particularity of the Holy Spirit. This research work constitutes, probably, his most personal contribution. The term Spirit (πνεῦμα) conveys simultaneously the image of breath and spirit. John 20:22 supports the picture of the Spirit as being breathed on the disciples: 'You shall name Holy Spirit the one who, by his nature, flows from the Father through the Son and who, in the image of breath coming out of the mouth, reveals his own existence to us.'[76] In the manner in which the human mind understands the depths of humanity (1 Cor. 2:10–11), the Spirit is also the proper Spirit of the Father and the Son. 'As for the Spirit, he issues from God the Father and is also proper to the Son, a spirit like our human spirit, even if our conception of him endows him with a hypostasis and a real subsistence: that, indeed, is what is indicated in his naming.'[77] However, the Father and the Son are also Spirit, since 'God is Spirit' (John 4: 24) and 'The Lord is the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:17). In the same way, holiness is a substantial property common to all three. What, therefore, is the manner of existence proper to the third person of the Trinity? In order to have some idea, we have to consider the role of the Holy Spirit. In fact, even if all the *ad extra* activities of the Trinity are common to the three, the Spirit is the person with the specific role of sanctifying humanity. It is he who, according to Cyril's exegesis, is breathed over creation in Genesis 2:7 and sent again in John 20:22, to re-fashion man according to his original beauty.[78] And the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the means by which man is put in contact with the Son and through the Son with the Father. The Spirit's real mission is therefore to lead man to perfection, a mission which corresponds to his place in God, where he 'completes' the Trinity. Cyril calls Him 'the completion' (συμπλήρωμα) of the Trinity and the 'quality' (ποιότης) of the divinity.[79] In order to describe this fine point of the divinity, Cyril has recourse to several comparisons

[76] *Dial. Trin.* 2, 423a.

[77] *Dial. Trin.* 7, 640e.

[78] See M.-O. Boulnois, 'Le souffle et l'Esprit: Exégèses patristiques de l'insufflation originelle de Gen. 2:7, en lien avec celle de Jn. 20: 22', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 24 (1989), pp. 3–37.

[79] See *Thes.* 34, 608b and *In Jo.* 14:23 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 499).

which appeal to the senses of taste, smell and touch. The sweetness of honey, the heat of fire, the scent of a flower, all play a part in putting us in touch with the basic quality of what they emanate from and of which they express the essence. In so far as the Spirit is the 'completion' of the Trinity, he sums up in himself the quintessence of the divine nature.

Images

We can see to what extent Cyril uses images to explain how the three persons are at the same time distinct and linked between themselves by a necessary and non-interchangeable relationship. These illustrations, therefore, have the purpose of making explicit the necessary coexistence of the hypostases. 'A spring cannot exist without making something flow from it'; the sun cannot shine without emitting the rays which coexist with it.[80] This coexistence is contrasted with the Arian formula according to which there was a time when the Son did not exist. Apart from the idea of continuity between two separate terms, these illustrations are also used to make clear the function in revelation fulfilled by the Son and the Spirit in relation to the Father. The Son makes known the Father, just as speech has the function of revealing our inner will to others, and the Spirit transmits the knowledge of divine nature as a perfume emits the features of the aromatic herbs from which it emanates.[81] It is often the case that, in conformity with his methodology, Cyril uses a whole gamut of images, which then proceed to correct each other. Thus, the picture of the sun and its rays demonstrates, in the first instance, unity of substance, but is a less clear illustration of the distinction between two subsisting realities, whereas the analogy with the human subject allows the subsistence of distinct persons to be clearly established, while providing, however, a less clear notion of unity, by the very reason of this bodily separation of individuals.

This thinking on the analogies is also an opportunity for Cyril to reflect on the limitations of illustrations which present distinct

[80] *Thes.* 4, 49a and see *C. Jul.* 8, 904–905.

[81] See *In Jo.* 17:6–8 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 685) and *In Jo.* 16:14 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 635).

elements in thought, but not in reality. In fact Cyril always points out that in the case of the fire and its heat, the intellect and speech, the flower and its perfume, the difference only exists in thought (ἐπινοίᾳ), which is not the case with the Trinity: in contrast with Sabellian doctrine, the divine persons are not, for Cyril, merely different modalities of the same reality; they are distinct in both thought and in hypostasis.[82] Cyril takes these categories from the Neoplatonist commentaries on Aristotle. Plotinus, for example, shows that moving can only be distinguished from being through thought and not in reality.[83] Thus it seems that this idea in the context of the Trinity may have prepared Cyril to use it in his Christology. For in Christ, in fact, there exists equally a mysterious paradox of distinction and union. Christ is one from two and we can distinguish the natures in thought. Unlike the Trinity, however, the distinction between Christ's natures after the union is only conceptual. If Cyril takes so many precautions in order to limit this distinction to a notional one, it is precisely because he wants to avoid making distinct hypostases out of the natures, in contrast with the distinction found in the Trinity:

> And we will not suppress, because of what unites supremely, the elements dissimilar in nature, that is, the fact of truly being the radiance of the Father and, on the other hand, another element which is earthly and carnal, that is to say, the perfection of humanity. On the contrary, having discerned the elements and distinguished, solely in concept (μόναις ταῖς ἐννοίαις), the reason for each, we will bind them again into a unity without interval (ἀδιαστάτῳ).[84]

This text is all the more interesting in that we once more see the same trend of thought as can be found in the diastolic/systolic movement used by Cyril to describe the Trinity: he starts with affirming that we must not suppress the distinction between elements, even if this distinction is only conceptual, and finishes with the phase of binding into unity. This theory of the notional distinction of natures, already found earlier in pre-Nestorian writings, is to be taken up throughout the discussion with the Orientals, which shows to what extent the fundamental intuitions

[82] See *Thes.* 12, 184ab; *In Jo.* 16:15 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 639); and *Dial. Trin.* 7, 640e.

[83] See Plotinus, *En.* 6, 2, 7, 19–20.

[84] *Hom. Pasch.* 8, 5, 569cd.

in his Christology were worked out from Cyril's first writings onwards and at the same time as his thinking on the Trinity.[85]

While insisting on the plurality to be found in God, Cyril continually affirms that this does not destroy our faith in one sole God, as long as we hold on to the paradox of the hypostases being at the same time different and not different. The phase of recapitulation allows the three to ascend once more into unity.

RECAPITULATION: DISTINCTION WITHOUT SEPARATION

Fullness and consubstantiality

Distinct as the hypostases are, they are not, for all that, torn apart and separated, since the phase of deployment is followed by the phase of recapitulation.[86] Paradoxically, Cyril insists that the distinction must be real in order for the unity to be perfect. 'If the Father is in concept and in reality truly Father, and if the Son in his turn is in concept and in reality truly Son, the Holy Spirit being obviously added to them, the number of the Holy Trinity ascends (ἀναβαίνει) towards one and the same sole divinity.'[87] This verb, ἀναβαίνω, is often used with the term, πλήρωμα, and expresses the return from plurality to unity and the accession to the fullness of the Trinity. 'The fullness of the Holy and consubstantial Trinity ascends, as we have already often said, towards one sole nature and glory of divinity.'[88] We cannot have a return (πάλιν) to unity, or systole, without beforehand having a diastole.[89] Unity is thus reached by an ascent from multiplicity; and even the very perfection of divinity supposes this elevation of the triad to unity. 'The one sole divinity is made perfect by the Holy and consubstantial Trinity.'[90]

It is this mystery that Moses wished to convey in a perceptible way (αἰσθητῶς) in the episode of the oak at Mamre when Abraham addresses the three individuals as one, which, for Cyril, proves that he considered them as one sole divinity united by

[85] See *Ad Succ.* 1, 6 (Wickham, pp. 74–6).
[86] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 27–8); 8:29 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 53).
[87] *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 69).
[88] *In Jo.* 5:44 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 387).
[89] See *De Ador.* 412, 49–53.
[90] *Thes.* 32, 528a.

consubstantiality.[91] If Moses uses the singular one moment and the plural the next, this is really because the singular denotes, not oneness, but the union of a plurality of persons.[92] They are not one in number, but in substance.[93] Cyril inherits from Athanasius and from the Council of Nicaea the term 'consubstantial', which had been applied to the Son, but he goes further in applying it to the Trinity in its entirety. Together with the adjective 'holy', it is, in fact, his most frequent qualification of the Trinity:

> God is one, that is to say, the one sole nature of the divinity is worshipped in the Holy and consubstantial Trinity, I mean in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for even if we believe that each of them as named is who he is in his own person and his own hypostasis – the Father is Father, the Son is Son and the Spirit is Spirit – even so, the identity of substance brings them into union.[94]

This unity of substance allows us to avoid their dispersion into a number, that is, to escape polytheism.[95] 'How can God be thought of as being totally one, if each of the persons named retreats into an absolute particularity and is called God while being completely separated from any substantial relationship?'[96] In saying identity of substance we also mean unity of operation and of will, which allows Cyril to reject all the Arian objections based on a distinction between the different operations within the Trinity, made by them in order to prove the inferiority of the Son or of the Holy Spirit.[97] In order that the divine Persons should be able to dwell in each other, as we shall see, they need to act together and not separately.[98]

Within the deployment phase, Cyril spoke of a union without confusion, and similarly, for the recapitulation phase, we must maintain a distinction without separation, both of these being paradoxes which we also find in Christology. In fact, there should be no confusion (ἀνάχυσις) – neither of the hypostases in the Trinity, nor of the natures in Christ, in the sense that the Father does not transform into the Son or vice versa, nor does the

[91] See *C. Jul.* 1, 24, 529c and *C. Jul.* 1, 26, 532c.
[92] See *C. Jul.* 4, 725c.
[93] See *Thes.* 7, 100d.
[94] *C. Jul.* 4, 725ab.
[95] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 33).
[96] *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 69).
[97] See *In Jo.* 6:38–39 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 489).
[98] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 68–9).

Word transform into flesh, as each remains what he is.[99] Besides, this distinction does not imply division. The same adjective, ἀδιάστατος, 'without interval', is used both to describe the union in the Trinity and the union of Word and flesh.[100] Unlike accidents, which can be separated from their subject without the subject disappearing, the presence of attributes inherent to human substance is necessary to the existence of a human being. We can compare the persons of the Trinity to this type of properties: they cannot be separated from each other, for their coexistence is implied by definition in their very being.[101] They are bound to coexist, since each is necessary to the existence of the other:[102]

> In fact, the unique nature of the divinity can be conceived in three hypostases, in Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but it is not at all divided by us into different natures. Those who are named do not move away from each other substantially towards something foreign, but the same – unique – definition extends over the Holy Trinity in its entirety, drawing its nature into one sole divinity, even if we conceive each one subsisting in its own subsistence. Thus, even if someone can say that God is unique, he can never think of the Father without his own offspring or without the Spirit who proceeds from him by nature and is precisely his own [Spirit]. In fact, someone speaking about man is bound also to mention the substantial attributes inherent to humanity, which make him a man. When these are absent, there is no more human being; so, in my opinion, the significance of these other names is bound to lead us to consider the realities. Therefore when we speak of God as a Father, we are also mentioning his own Son, issuing from him, and in him by nature.[103]

These relationships of provenance (the Son issues from the Father) and immanence (the Son is in him) explain, therefore, how this unity is possible.

Provenance and immanence

In reading Cyril's work we are struck by the recurrence of formulae which characterize the relationships between the persons, formulae

[99] In the Trinity see: *In Jo.* 1:2 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 54); *Dial. Trin.* 1, 408c; in Christ, *Ad Succ.* 1, 6 (Wickham, p. 74).

[100] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 70–1) and *Hom. Pasch.* 8, 5, 53.

[101] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 18–20).

[102] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 69–70).

[103] *C. Jul.* 8, 904d.

based on two prepositions: 'from' (ἐκ) and 'in' (ἐν). The Son and the Spirit are 'from' and 'in' the Father:

> The Son who is in him and issues from him by nature [is] both distinct and of the same nature, by virtue of a natural union. He is distinct, on the one hand, because he is conceived as having his own existence – the Son is Son and not Father. On the other hand, he is of the same nature, because the one who comes from the Father by nature accompanies in every way the existence of the One by whom he is begotten.[104]

In order to clarify this paradoxical relationship between two beings who are outside and inside each other, Cyril uses the analogies of the sun and its rays and the fire and its heat.[105] However, the paradox is even stronger in the case of the Trinity, since the 'going out' is not just in thought but also in reality. Besides these comparisons, Cyril also has recourse to the human analogy, which errs because of the opposite shortcoming. The son of Abraham is in the substance of his father, so that in seeing the son one sees Abraham. But with mankind there is a break which isolates each person in his own individuality and prevents him from being bodily inside another. The Son of God, on the contrary, does not retreat (ἀναχωρεῖ) into his otherness; he is not outside his Father, but both issues from him and is in him.[106]

What will later become the perichoresis (or circumincession) undergoes here a phase of elaboration. How to understand this mutual immanence? First we should set aside erroneous interpretations. We are not at all dealing with material containment: the Son is not contained inside the Father as one utensil would be within another, as asserted in a heretical book which Cyril once happened to have in his hands.[107] This immanence is not limited either to a purely moral linking, as would be any unity existing in a human context, nor is it an indwelling by grace as occurs in the union of God with men, for in that case the relationship is extrinsic rather than substantial.[108] When we read that the Son is 'in the

[104] *In Jo.* 17:3 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 668).

[105] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 70).

[106] See *Resp. ad Tib.* 2 (Wickham, p. 144).

[107] See *In Jo.* 14:11 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 434–6) and *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 43–4).

[108] See *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 732) and *In Jo.* 14:11 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 437–8).

bosom of the Father' (John 1:18) we should not therefore believe the heretical exegesis, based on Luke 16:22 (Lazarus received into the bosom of Abraham), which seeks to reduce the meaning of the expression merely to the assertion that the Son is in the Father's love.[109] In other words, this immanence is not only a moral unity. It enables us to understand how the three hypostases become distinct in the phase of expansion without however withdrawing in their own individuality, since they remain united in dwelling within each other. To say that the Son is in the Father or the Father is in the Son supposes that they are totally united both in identity of substance and that they are persons distinct in number, for a thing cannot be placed inside itself.[110] 'To be in' implies therefore both distinction and conjunction.[111] Therefore it is both because of consubstantiality and relationships of origin that the persons subsist mutually in one another.

Nevertheless, the terms are not interchangeable, for the Son is in the Father as in his source, while the Father is in the Son as in his perfect expression. This reciprocal immanence has, therefore, a structure which is rooted in a relationship of origin. Their being numbered together is in obedience to an immutable order described by Cyril as the relationship which joins an image to its model. 'The Son is in the Father and issues from the Father both in an inseparable and distinct way, being in him on the one hand, in that he is an imprint of him, and being conceived in his own existence as an image is in relation to its archetype.'[112] Thus we can compare the relationship of the Father to the Son to that of a

[109] See *In Jo.* 1:18 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 157). This word means 'in him and of him', just as in Psalm 109:3, 'From my bowels before the dawn I begot you', means both that the bowels of the Father begot the Son in a visible way, and also that they keep him since the offspring proceeds from the Father without interval or corporeal separation. See also the exegesis of John 16:27 – 'I have come from God'. This phrase means 'I am born of the Father and I have appeared by coming from his substance, according to a process which means that I am and am conceived as subsisting in a proper way, without, however, being at all separated. For the Father is in the Son and the Son is reciprocally in the Father by his nature' (*In Jo.* 16:26–27, Pusey, vol. 2, p. 649). See also *In Jo.* 1:18 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 158).

[110] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 25).

[111] See *In Jo.* 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 69).

[112] *In Jo.* 6:27 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 450).

king to his portrait.[113] This analogy emphasizes not only continuity and resemblance, but also knowledge of the king, which can be obtained through the portrait. Similarly, the Father and Son are one 'to the extent that one can be seen in the other without any difference'.[114]

These relationships of co-immanence and of image must be understood in a dynamic way, as movements of mutual giving: the Son and the Spirit receive everything from the one of whom they are the image and in return glorify their archetype. 'The Father is glorified in the Son as in the image or likeness of his own form. In fact, the beauty of a model always appears in its imprint.'[115] We are far from a situation where the act of receiving implies inferiority in the Son or the Spirit, as was taught by the Arians, for, if they receive *everything*, that means they are totally equal.[116] If the Son's glory is necessary to the Father (John 17:1), that proves their consubstantiality.[117] The double movement of giving between the archetype who gives everything to the image, and the image which manifests its model consists, finally, in an exchange of glorification. The Father is glorified by the Son and the Son by the Father because they reveal in their very selves the greatness of the other. 'Just as the pride and glory of the Son consists in his natural possession of such a begetter, so, in my view, the Father's glory equally consists in his own begotten Son being just what he is.'[118]

The concept of the proper

In a relationship where one being comes out of another and receives everything from the other, the 'coming out of' is not, thereby, incompatible with the fact of remaining in the other. This immanence is also expressed in the term 'proper' (ἴδιος, ἰδιότης) used by Cyril:

> We can imagine in the following way the fact that the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son: the Son comes out of the Father's

[113] See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 43–4) and *In Jo.* 14:12–13 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 456–7).
[114] *In Jo.* 10:28–30 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 254).
[115] *In. Jo.* 17:6–8 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 680).
[116] See *In Jo.* 3:35 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 254–5).
[117] See *In Jo.* 17:1 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 661–2).
[118] *In Jo.* 8:54 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 123).

> substance, without being led out of nothingness into being as are creatures, nor somehow drawing from the outside the constitution of his being. He is proper to the substance which engendered him, just as a ray of light comes from a light, or a river from a spring. So, for those who see the Son, it is possible to see the substance of the Father and to have in mind, from him, what is proper to the one who engendered him. Indeed it is because the whole being of the Son comes from the substance of the Father that he is in the Father, and, vice versa, the Father is in the Son since, what he is himself by nature, that is what the Word of God coming out of him is.[119]

Let us note that the term 'proper' conceals an ambiguity, since according to the context it can indicate either what characterizes properly each of the hypostases (often in the adverbial form ἰδιοσυστάτως) and which is incommunicable, or the properties which unify the divinity and are transmitted by the Father to his Son and to his Spirit. It is because the Son is the Father's own Son that he has received the properties of the Father's nature.[120] We can see that this relationship must be expressed not only in terms of possession, but also of being. Not only do the Son and the Spirit *have* what is proper to the Father, but they *are* also proper to the Father. Thus, what is proper to the Father is revealed by the Son who is in him. 'In effect, what is proper to the Father appears very well and very clearly in the Son and (the Son) depicts so to speak, in his own nature, the one who has begotten him. He is himself in the Father and he is one with him by identity of nature, only differing by the fact that he is the Son.'[121] In identifying the whole property of one of the Persons with the being of the other, Cyril shows that nothing is outside the common being of these three.

But we must not limit the meaning of the word 'proper' to signify the simple equivalent of 'consubstantial', for if Cyril insists on that term, together with other formulae where he says that the Son and the Spirit belong to the divine substance, it is because the notion of property says a lot more about the relationship between

[119] *Thes.* 12, 181a. See also *In Is.* 51:6 (*PG* 70, 1117).

[120] See *Dial. Trin.* 3, 498c, 499b; *In Jo.* 3:16 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 227–8). A. Louth, 'The use of the Term ἴδιος in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril', *SP* 19 (1989), pp. 198–202.

[121] C. *Jul.* 8, 908a.

the Persons. In fact we frequently find this adjective linked with the expression 'from him and in him'.[122] However, even if Cyril's usage does not completely correspond to the Aristotelian concept of proper – to the extent that what is proper does not have any subsistence outside the substance it is proper to, unlike the divine hypostases which subsist by themselves – nevertheless this concept helps us to link unity with distinction. What is proper is both different from the substance to which it is attached and inseparable from the subject to which it is proper:

> Thus we can say that the perfume which reaches our sense of smell by coming from aromatic herbs is different, so to speak, from them – on condition we admit it in thought and conceive that the smell does not come from some other source than by receiving, in order to be perceived, the virtue of these herbs. Nevertheless, this perfume is not different, since it naturally comes from them and is in them. There you have an idea of how to imagine God and the Holy Spirit – or rather your idea will go well beyond this example.[123]

The perfume proper to the herbs is at the same time different from them in that it comes out of them, and not different in that it remains in them. This note is also based on the study of certain verses of Scripture such as John 14:16, where the Spirit is called the 'other Paraclete', meaning that the Spirit is not different from the Son, inasmuch as we do speak of identity of substance, since he is his own Spirit, but he is different in the sense that he exists in his proper way (ἰδίως ὑπάρχειν), being Spirit rather than Father or Son.[124] It is interesting to note that the same picture of the perfume is taken up in the christological context to express a similar paradox. The flower's perfume is both different from the flower and proper to the flower, being, by its nature, in the flower without separation. Similarly, divinity and flesh are different by their nature, but the body is proper to the Word and the Word, which is united to the body, is not separated from it.[125]

[122] See *C. Jul.* 8, 904d.

[123] *In Jo.* 16:15 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 639).

[124] See *In Jo.* 14:18 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 471).

[125] See *C. Nest.* 2, pr. 32de (*ACO* I, 1, 6, p. 33, 41–34, 4). This image, drawn from Songs of Songs 2:1, is completed by the comparison with the burning coal taken from Isaiah 6:6–7 and by the analogy of the body and soul in man.

Nevertheless, if the term 'proper' is used in the theology of the Trinity and in Christology to indicate a profound union, Cyril distinguishes the natural belonging in the case of the Trinity from the belonging through appropriation in the case of Christ. 'We say that the body is proper to the Word, not in the sense that laughter is proper to man or neighing to the horse, but because the body has become that of the Word in accordance with a real union.'[126] In Christology the notion 'proper' allows us to uphold an intermediate position between the property of nature, which is the relationship of the divine persons with each other, and simple participation or conjunction, which is the type of the union of God and man.

The relations of the Spirit to the Father and the Son

In order to understand completely how the Trinity reaches its fullness, we must pause to consider the relationship which unites the Spirit to the other two Persons. On the one hand, this relationship is less easy to define because of the absence of a human analogy like generation; on the other, it obliges us to consider the three Persons together and not just as binomial. Finally, pneumatology seems to be the field where we can see most clearly how Cyril brings to the question a truly personal synthesis in giving a major role to the relationship of the Spirit to the Son both in theology and in the economy.

The Holy Spirit is proper to the Father and the Son

When Cyril affirms that the Spirit is proper to the divine substance, or proper to the Father, his aim is first to establish his divinity by nature rather than by participation, in contrast to the Pneumatomachians. Alongside these formulae, however, he also says that the Spirit is proper to the Son as well as to the Father:

> The Spirit belongs properly to God the Father, and just as properly to the Son, not in the sense of two distinct substances, or one [substance] thought of and existing separately in each of the two; but because the

[126] *Scholia* 27 (Pusey, vol. 6, p. 551). See B. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie: L'humanité, le salut et la question monophysite* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), p. 266.

> Son is by nature from and in the Father, true fruit of his substance, he takes as a natural attribute the Spirit of his Father.[127]

Thus it is by virtue of his being begotten by his Father that the Son properly possesses the same Spirit. This common possession of the Spirit appears thus as a particular case of the general rule by which everything that belongs to the Father also belongs to the Son:

> Thus since the Son is the fruit and the imprint of the hypostasis of the one who begot him, he possesses by its nature everything which belongs to the begetter. That is why he says, 'Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said to you that he will take what is mine to make it known to you' (John 16:15). He is obviously speaking of the Spirit who exists through him and in him.[128]

This assimilation of the Spirit with the properties common to the Father and to the Son enables us to understand why Cyril presents the Spirit as the one who expresses the quality of divinity. In that perspective, Cyril presents the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and to the Son as that of a singleton belonging jointly to a dyad. This approach, however, carries two risks: on the one hand, that of considering the existence of the Holy Spirit in the Father as coming before the begetting of the Son (through which begetting the Son receives the Spirit); and on the other, that of reducing the Holy Spirit to the status of being simply a property of substance without a subsistence of His own. This is why Cyril completes this first approach by showing that the Holy Spirit is in equal measure proper to the Son, because he depends on him and receives all that he has from him, as stated in John 16:14. The Trinitarian relations no longer appear, then, to be like the belonging of a common element to a dyad, but more like the articulation of two dyads. The Father gives everything to the Son and the latter gives everything to the Spirit. Thus, the Son is the image of the Father and the Spirit is the perfect likeness of the Son. This model too, however, presents difficulties. The dyad Son–Spirit is not strictly symmetrical vis-à-vis the dyad Father–Son, in the sense

[127] *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 718). See *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 35): 'The Son possesses, as his own natural property, the living and hypostatic Spirit of the one who has begotten him, exactly as the Father himself possesses him.'

[128] *In Jo.* 16:15 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 639).

that the dependence of the Spirit in relation to the Son does not exclude the original link which unites the Spirit to the Father. In consequence, even if the Spirit is proper to the Son as he is proper to the Father, the relationship of the Spirit to the Son is not the same as that of the Spirit to the Father.

The Holy Spirit is proper to Christ

This eternal relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Son remains even after the incarnation and, here, economy confirms theology. Thus the breathing of the Spirit over his followers in John 20:22 demonstrates, physically, that the Son can give the Spirit of the Father as if it is his own:

> Will not one be strongly disposed to believe, that since the Son is a partaker in a substantial manner of the natural excellences of God the Father, he possesses the Spirit in the same way as one would conceive of the Father possessing him, that is, not as something added on, or of external origin? For it is foolish or rather mad, to think in this way. A suitable analogy is how each of us has his own breath inside himself and sends it forth from the depths of his being. That is why Christ also breathed on the disciples physically (John 20:22), demonstrating that just as breath issues from the human mouth in a physical way, so the Spirit of God pours forth from the divine substance in a manner befitting God.[129]

In this text, Cyril begins to speak about the intra-Trinitarian relationship, and about the original relationship of the Spirit as being possessed naturally by the Father and the Son, and then goes on to the level of economy. He demonstrates very clearly in this way a continuity between theology and economy and invites us to see in the physical gesture of the breathing of the Spirit by Christ over his disciples an economic translation of an eternal relation. But theology also throws a necessary light on certain episodes of the life of Christ and helps us to understand, for example, his baptism. In contrast to what was maintained by the Arians and Pneumatomachians, the anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit does not prove that he did not possess the Spirit beforehand, nor that he partook of the Spirit in an adventitious manner. In so much as he is God, he gives the Spirit to himself become man in order to root the Spirit in

[129] *In Jo.* 14:16–17 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 468) (Russell, pp. 123–4, translation slightly altered).

a definitive way in human nature. The one who knows no sin has received the Holy Spirit 'in order to preserve for human nature the grace which was lost, by receiving this grace as a man, and in order to make it take root in us again . . . so that the Spirit might grow accustomed to dwell in us, without having the occasion to withdraw'.[130]

When Christ receives the Spirit, it is not for him but for us, for the Spirit belongs to him and is in him and by him.[131] Thus, when Cyril argues against Theodoret about the Ninth anathema pronounced against Nestorius, he is only going back to the same idea: that the Holy Spirit is Christ's own Spirit and not a foreign power.[132] We can thus see that Cyril does not totally separate the eternal relations from the temporal missions. That now leads us to consideration of the difficult question of the *Filioque*.

The question of the Filioque

The problem of the procession of the Holy Spirit is, without a doubt, one of the factors chiefly responsible for commentators' interest in Cyril's Trinitarian teaching. Each camp has tried to enrol him for or against the '*Filioque*', by means of quotations grouped in anthologies. These constitute a rich, indirect tradition in themselves, but have been rarely analysed for their own sake or in their own context.[133] Cyril went further than many of his predecessors in affirming the dependence of the Holy Spirit on the Son. Amongst the reasons for this position we can underline the importance for him of the continuity between

[130] *In Jo.* 1:32–33 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 184).

[131] See *In Jo.* 7:39 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 692).

[132] See *Ad Nest*, 3 (Pusey, vol. 6, 77ab); (*ACO* I, 1, 1, p. 41): 'If anyone says that the one and only Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, by using the power which is exercised through him as if it was an alien power, and that he receives from him the power to expel impure spirits and to accomplish divine miracles for men, and if he does not say rather that the Spirit, by which he has accomplished these signs, is his own Spirit, let that person be anathema.'

[133] See B. Meunier, 'Cyrille d'Alexandrie au concile de Florence', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 21 (1989), pp. 147–74. See, however, also A. de Halleux, 'Cyrille, Théodoret et le "filioque"', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 74 (1979), pp. 597–625.

economy and theology, as well as the development contributed by him of the analysis of the relationship between the Spirit and the incarnate Christ. We must also mention his conviction that we can only defend divine unity by pointing out the links joining the Persons together, not just two by two, but in a threefold way.

It is undeniable that several statements exist which declare that the Spirit issues from the Father and the Son.[134] However, they are fleeting and this is not the only way that Cyril expresses the relationship of the Spirit to the Son, since he also declares that he issues from the Father through the Son.[135] The Spirit 'issues substantially from (ἐκ) both, that is he flows from the Father through (διά) the Son'.[136] So we have to balance the texts which mark out a dependence of the Spirit on the Son by using the preposition ἐκ with those which use the preposition διά. 'Just as the Holy Spirit comes *from* the Father, being his by nature, so exactly does he come *through* the Son himself, being naturally his and being consubstantial with him.'[137] What does seem typical of his thinking is precisely the fact that these different but complementary statements can coexist. They correspond to different mechanisms for the joint articulation of the Persons of the Trinity, mechanisms which break up the simplistic opposition between the Latin schema of the triangle and the Greek model of the straight line. Therefore it is impossible to classify Cyril unilaterally by applying to him a later conflict which, besides, is largely alien to him. Since the Spirit is both the Spirit of the Father, from whom he proceeds, as well as the Spirit of the Son, from whom he draws all that he has, his procession comes from the Father without excluding the Son's mediation. The Son receives from the Father a participation in the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit only comes from the Son because the Son receives from the Father the possibility of giving all to the Spirit. Cyril thus insists on the

[134] See *Thes.* 34, 576ab; 585a. See also *In Joel* 2, 28, 228a (Pusey): 'Since the Son is God and comes from God by his nature, for he really has been begotten by God the Father, the Spirit is proper to him and is in him and comes from him (ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ).'

[135] See *De Ador.* 1, 148a; *Dial. Trin.* 2, 423a: *In Jo.* 14:20 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 487); 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 727); 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 131).

[136] *De Ador.* 1, 148a.

[137] *C. Nest* 4, 3, 105d (*ACO* I, 1, 6, p. 82, 13–15).

movement of giving which goes from the Father through the Son up to the Spirit and is transmitted by the Spirit to men.

THE TRINITY AS MODEL AND FERMENT FOR THE UNION OF MEN WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH GOD

Mankind, being made in the image of the Trinity and thanks to the Trinity, is also called to participate in this fundamental movement which goes from multiplicity to a unity.

The union of men with each other

According to John 17:22 ('that they all may be one as we are one'), the unity of the Trinity is a model of the unity which should exist between men. 'By his very nature, the Son is one with God his Father, he is in the Father, and the Father is in him, by virtue of their bond and the substantial manner of their unity. Similarly, we too, in receiving our faith in him, are united to each other and to God physically and spiritually.'[138] Even if the unity between the Father and the Son is far superior to the unity between men, we can see that it is not just of a moral order; this unity exists in a physical way through our participation in the Eucharist, and in a spiritual way through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:[139]

> Although we are many, when we are taken separately and although Christ has caused the Father's and his own Spirit to dwell in each one of us, there is, nevertheless, only one indivisible Spirit. He gathers into unity all those who are disunited with each other – at least in so far as they have a proper existence – and, by his own power, the Spirit makes them appear to form, in him, one single spirit. Just as, by its virtue, the Holy Body of Christ brings into one body those who receive it, so, in my view, the Spirit of God, one and indivisible, which comes to dwell in all, leads them all to spiritual unity.[140]

The presence of the Trinity in man thus realizes among men the paradox of unity in spite of difference.

Union with God

The way in which we are united with God is also marked by a tension inherent in the Trinity. Because of their unity, all action

[138] *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 729).
[139] See *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 733).
[140] *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 736–7).

ad extra of the Trinity is common to all three; there is not, for all that, a total lack of distinction. Also, any operation performed by one person can be said to be performed by the whole substance of God, as well as by each hypostasis in particular.[141] There is one common act of creation, but each has his own role within it. 'We say that God the Father through the Son in the Spirit is the creator of all things.'[142] 'In consequence, the Father acts, but through the Son in the Spirit; the Son also acts, but as the power of the Father, conceived as coming from the Father, and present in him with his own existence; the Spirit also acts, for he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the craftsman of all things.'[143]

In order to explain these two sides of the paradox, Cyril adopts a formula which constitutes something like the key to his Trinitarian doctrine: 'Everything is from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.'[144] Corresponding to this descending order of mission, there is the inverse movement of man's ascent towards God:

> Everything is from the Father through the Son in the Spirit and in all operations, it is the Holy and consubstantial Trinity which is glorified. In fact, consider how everything begins with the Spirit, in so far as he is in us and operates the distribution of the divine charisms; then, when we turn our attention towards the Son, who is Son by nature, we thus reach the Father, and it is to him that we attribute the operation carried out initially by the Spirit through the intermediacy of the Son.[145]

Even in the case of Christ incarnate himself, the manner of union with God does not take another way. 'Through a union to the Spirit, according to the ineffable manner of the bond, the flesh is evidently sanctified, and thus ascends itself towards a union without confusion with God the Word, and through him with the Father: a union obviously through relationship, not nature.'[146] Whether it be on the gnoseological or ontological plane, the presence in mankind of the Holy Spirit is always the condition for the possibility of access to God:

[141] See *Dial. Trin.* 6, 620e.
[142] *C. Jul.* 3, 648, 55.
[143] *Dial. Trin.* 6, 618c.
[144] *In Jo.* 17:1 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 661).
[145] *In 1 Cor.* 12:7ff. (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 287–8).
[146] *In Jo.* 17:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 2).

> Union with God cannot be granted to anyone without participation in the Holy Spirit who inserts in us the sanctification which is his own property, and who remodels our nature which has fallen into corruption according to his own life. In this manner he brings back to God and conforms to him what has been deprived of this glory. For the Son is the perfect image of the Father and his Spirit is the natural likeness of the Son. That is why, in refashioning the souls of men according to himself, he imprints in them the conformation to divinity and affixes a seal-like model of the substance superior to all substances.[147]

By being marked with the seal of the Spirit, man obtains a privilege well above his nature; he is 'almost transformed into another nature'.[148] Because of the immanence of the divine persons, according to which the Spirit is in the Son, who is himself in the Father, the man who has within himself the Spirit of God, thus has the Son and, through him, the Father. 'The Holy Spirit is what attaches us and, so to speak, unites us firmly to God. In receiving him, we participate and are in communion with the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), for we receive him through the Son and in the Son we receive the Father.'[149] For Cyril, it is clear that the whole of the divine plan is aimed at bringing mankind into participation in the life of the Trinity through the gift of the Spirit. That is why two gestures have laid the foundations of the history of salvation: in Genesis 2:7, when God breathes his Spirit on the man's face, and in John 20:22, when Christ breathes his Spirit once more over men in order to give back to them the Spirit which had been lost through the fault of Adam. The Spirit, therefore, is the one who makes possible this union of mankind with mankind and of mankind with God, as well as being the one who perfects the Trinity.

Finally, it is unity itself which appears as the key concept of Trinitarian theology, so long as we can point out that this unity is not simple, but paradoxical and differentiated, since it integrates the notion of distinction into itself: it is a 'monad conceived in a

[147] *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 731). See also 17:11 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 694–5); 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 720).

[148] See *In Jo.* 1:14 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 138–9) and *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 737).

[149] *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 722).

triad'.[150] This reflection on the Trinity founds and builds in its turn Cyrillian Christology and soteriology.

[150] *In Jo.* 17:3 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 670).

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Chapter 5

The Fullness of the Saving God: Cyril of Alexandria on the Holy Spirit

BRIAN E. DALEY, SJ

One of the strange twists of modern patristic studies is the lack of attention paid by scholars to Cyril of Alexandria's theology of the Trinity, despite the relatively large place that Mystery occupies in the bulk of his writing. The reason, of course, is that the study of early Christian theology in both East and West, since the time of the Reformation at least, has been dominated by *Dogmengeschichte*: by the investigation of how the classic shape of Christian orthodoxy developed in the controversies and arguments that paved the way for the creeds, canons, and conciliar definitions accepted as normative by the mainstream Christian Churches. In that theological narrative, as it is usually told, Cyril is mainly remembered for his conflict with Nestorius of Constantinople and his Antiochene ally Theodoret of Cyrus over the proper way to conceive and describe the person of Christ – a debate that began with their polemical exchange of letters in 429 and 430 over the use of the Marian title *Theotokos* and which led to the abortive Council of Ephesus (431), to the so-called 'Formula of Union' of 433, and ultimately to the more expansive christological formulation of Chalcedon (451).[1] But it is also generally assumed that by the time the personal unity and ontological

[1] The standard modern narrative of this controversy in English is Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, second edn (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), pp. 443–568; or more briefly, J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, fifth edn (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 310–43.

structure of the Savior came to be a subject of controversy in the late fourth century, the general outlines of Christian orthodoxy concerning the Triune God were more or less agreed on: an orthodoxy first defined in the creed and anti-Arian canons of Nicaea (325); gradually received by the Churches of East and West during the five decades that followed, thanks to the stubborn campaigning of Athanasius and the terminological and conceptual clarifications of the three great Cappadocian Fathers; and given full and final expression, in response to later, 'Eunomian' Arianism and the various attempts made in the 360s and 370s to deny the full godhead of the Holy Spirit, in the creedal formula associated with the First Council of Constantinople (381).[2] Against the background of this narrative, Cyril's reflections on the Trinity, despite their length and intricacy, seem to most modern scholars derivative and uninteresting, even doctrinally anticlimactic, because they seem to show a closer kinship with the theology of his Alexandrian predecessors Athanasius and Didymus than with the now-classic formulations of the Cappadocians and Constantinople I.[3]

[2] See, for example, the classic summary of J. N. D. Kelly: 'The climax of the developments we have been studying [that is, the theological approaches to Father, Son and Spirit by Athanasius and the Cappadocians] was the reaffirmation of the Nicene faith at the council of Constantinople in 381. At this the consubstantiality of the Spirit as well as of the Son was formally endorsed. The theology which prevailed, as exemplified by the great Cappadocians themselves ... may be fairly described as in substance that of Athanasius' (*Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 263–4). The creed attributed to the synod of Greek bishops that met in Constantinople, at the summons of the Emperor Theodosius, in June and July, 381, is only known from its incorporation in the Christological definition of Chalcedon, seventy years later.

[3] So E. P. Meijering remarks of Cyril's *Thesaurus* and *Dialogues on the Trinity* that they are 'hardly relevant to the understanding of the development of Christian theology, since they are traditionalist writings, reflecting the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian apologetics [*sic*], especially Eusebius of Caesarea': 'Cyril of Alexandria on the Platonists and the Trinity', *Nederlands theologisch Tijdschrift* 28 (1974), p. 17, n. 7a. Otto Bardenhewer, in his still-influential handbook of Patrology, quotes Matthias-Joseph Scheeben in characterizing Cyril's *Thesaurus* as a kind of *Summa contra Gentiles* of fourth-century Trinitarian theology (*Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur* IV [Freiberg: Herder, 1924; repr. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1962], pp. 44–5); cf. the recent work of John McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 15–16,

Although there have been a few exceptions to such a dismissal of Cyril's Trinitarian theology through the years,[4] it is really the achievement of Marie-Odile Boulnois, in her recent magisterial study of Cyril's approach to the Mystery of the Trinity,[5] to have shown in painstaking detail both the subtlety and the originality of this aspect of the great Alexandrian's thought. Far from being simply a repetition of anti-Arian arguments and conceptions already developed by Athanasius and Didymus, Cyril's Trinitarian theology, Mme Boulnois' analysis reveals, is a personal yet comprehensive synthesis of both Alexandrian and Cappadocian approaches to the divine Mystery, which also has its own characteristic emphases and themes; perhaps even more than the theology of his predecessors, it is solidly biblical in its language and normative underpinnings, richly imaginative in its analogies and metaphors, and sophisticated in its use of the philosophical techniques of debate. As such, Cyril's Trinitarian theology looks both backward to fourth-century debates and forward into the orthodox future, offering what Mme Boulnois calls 'un point de jonction entre la patristique et la scolastique'.[6]

Like all theological reflection on the Mystery of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Cyril's Trinitarian theology is also centrally soteriological: a scheme for unifying the Christian biblical proclamation that the God who is transcendent, absolute Truth is

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which also characterizes the *Thesaurus* and the later *Dialogues* as presenting simply a digest of the Trinitarian theology of Athanasius's *Orations against the Arians*.

[4] The scholarly Patriarch Photius, for instance, regarded Cyril's *Thesaurus* as his clearest theological work, 'especially for those able to grasp the meaning of his logical arguments' (*Bibliotheca*, cod. 136). More recently, N. Charlier characterized Cyril's theology of the Holy Spirit in the *Thesaurus* as 'riche et fort nuancée', and challenged scholars to study his Trinitarian doctrine more thoroughly: 'La doctrine sur le Saint-Esprit dans le "Thesaurus" de Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie', *SP* 2 (Texte und Untersuchungen 64; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), p. 193.

[5] *Le Paradoxe Trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie: Herméneutique, analyses philosophiques et argumentation théologique* (Paris: Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 143, 1994). As will no doubt be apparent, this essay is heavily indebted to Mme Boulnois' research and to her analysis of Cyril's argument.

[6] Boulnois, p. 16.

actually present in history, in the humanized divine person of his Son and in the personal gift of his Spirit to human creatures, precisely to enable them to experience God directly and to share personally in God's inner life. More than any of his Greek theological predecessors, Cyril constantly emphasizes that the core of what Christians have to say about God is the paradoxical affirmation of a radical divine unity and simplicity capable of integrating into itself real and abiding distinction; as Boulnois puts it at the end of her study:

> Whether in Trinitarian theology or in Christology, Cyril did not wish to spare speculative reason from the obligation of submitting to the paradox of distinction in unity. The coherence of Cyril's thought never gives in to the temptation of rationalizing fundamental contradictions. Cyril affirms that 'the unique nature of the divinity is in three distinct hypostases, yet of a single form and of identical essence, coming together into a unique, transcendent beauty', and that it is communicated to the human creature from the Father as source, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit, so that the human who is created in the image of the entire Trinity might receive the adoption of a son or a daughter. The scope of the whole divine economy is rooted in the paradox of the Trinity.[7]

It is in the context of this style of thought, and of his broad concern for affirming the full reality of the salvation worked by Jesus Christ, that we must situate Cyril's attempts to speak of the role and the distinctive character of the person of the Holy Spirit, and of the manner in which the Spirit takes his origin within the Mystery of God.

As is true of his Trinitarian theology as a whole, Cyril's pneumatology cannot simply be identified with the positions taken by either his Alexandrian or his Cappadocian predecessors in the controversies just prior to Constantinople I; it must be seen as part of a larger conception of God's life-giving activity and presence in the world, which also became the driving idea behind his struggle against the Antiochene conception of the person of Christ and which seems to have remained consistent throughout his theological career. Nor does his understanding of the relation of the Spirit to Father and Son, in the course of salvation-history and

[7] Boulnois, p. 599, citing Cyril, *Dial. Trin.* III, 491d (here and elsewhere, translations from Boulnois' work are my own).

within the eternal Mystery of God, fit easily into the categories of either side in the later, still unresolved debate over the personal origin of the Spirit. Although he would be invoked as an authority by both Eastern and Western theologians in the medieval controversies over the *Filioque*,[8] Cyril is, in fact, no more concerned than his fourth-century predecessors had been to determine the precise role of the Son in the procession of the Spirit, or to comment on the relationship of eternal procession and temporal mission; rather, his purpose is both to affirm the full divinity of the Spirit and to reflect, as far as biblical revelation will allow, on the significance of the Spirit's personal presence, as the gift of both Father and Son, in the believer and the Church.

Cyril's antecedents

To understand what is distinctive in Cyril's understanding of the origin, person and work of the Spirit, it is important to be aware of the theological context in which he was writing. For roughly a century, the Churches of both the Greek-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West had been increasingly preoccupied with a fierce debate over the place of Jesus, the Savior, within the eternal divine Mystery: what we refer to, perhaps simplistically, as 'the Arian controversy'.[9] In 325, a gathering of bishops from

[8] For a summary of the origins and later development of this long-standing dispute between the Eastern and Western Churches, and of some recent Roman Catholic attempts to reconceive the issues in a way that will move ecumenical discussion forward, see my recent two-part article, 'Revisiting the Filioque', *Pro Ecclesia* 10 (2001), pp. 31–62; 195–212. For the use of Cyril as a resource by both sides in the medieval discussion of the *Filioque*, particularly at the Council of Florence, see André de Halleux, 'Cyrille, Théodoret et le "Filioque"', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 74 (1979), pp. 597–625; Boulnois, pp. 494–500. For a brief reflection on the importance of Cyril's pneumatology for the *Filioque* controversy, see George C. Berthold, 'Cyril of Alexandria and the *Filioque*' *SP* 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), pp. 143–7.

[9] Scholarly literature on this controversy abounds. The most recent and most comprehensive survey, despite some fairly obvious biases in judgment, is R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988). For a first step towards a more complex view of fourth-century debates on the unity of God and the divinity of Jesus, see Michel R. Barnes, 'The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon', in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (eds), *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 47–67.

throughout the Roman Empire at Nicaea had condemned the position of Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, that the Son of God is simply the first of creatures, formed by a transcendent Father to be mediator and instrument in the creation and redemption of the world. Modifying a traditional baptismal creed, the Fathers at Nicaea approved a profession of faith which declared the 'one Lord Jesus Christ' to be 'Son of God, uniquely begotten of the Father – that is, from the substance (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας) of the Father – God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of the same substance (ὁμοούσιος) as the Father': a radical affirmation of Jesus' divine identity that to the ears of most Greek Christians would at first sound dangerously close to modalism. By the late 350s, three decades of controversy and imperial intrigue had convinced most independent-minded bishops – with the help of the tireless theological campaigning of Athanasius of Alexandria – that there were no doctrinally acceptable alternatives to the formula of Nicaea: if the Savior is not seen to be 'substantially' one with God, the salvation he offers humanity must be something less than a share in God's life, the existence of the Christian disciple something less than 'a new creation'. And although variants of the Arian view of Christ continued to be espoused – the moderate, 'homoean' subordinationism of the newly-Christianized Germanic tribes, which endured in parts of the West into the late sixth century; and the more radical, philosophically sophisticated ontological subordinationism of Eunomius of Cyzicus and his associates, dominant in Constantinople and other Eastern cities until the accession of the Emperor Theodosius in 379 – the new focus of debate, which suddenly appeared in orthodox circles in the late 350s, was the status of the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus on his disciples at Pentecost, and promised to his Church.

Although the precise details of late-fourth-century controversy over the Spirit remain somewhat vague,[10] it seems clear that both in Alexandria and in Asia Minor even some of those who were ready to accept the full divinity of the Son, in Nicene terms, hesitated to affirm the same divinity of the Spirit, despite the

[10] For a survey of this second phase of the fourth-century Trinitarian controversy, see Hanson, pp. 738–90 and the literature cited there. A useful summary is also the introduction to C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius concerning the Holy Spirit* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), pp. 18–34.

'triadic' formula, derived from Matthew 28:19 and used in baptism since earliest Christianity, which implied equal divine status for Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the earlier stages of the Arian debate, even in influential earlier works on the Trinity such as Tertullian's treatise *Against Praxeas*, little attention had been paid to the Spirit's distinctive personal character or to the precise character of his divinity; shortly before 360, however, these things suddenly became problematic. In Egypt, a group referred to as 'Tropici' – apparently because of their assumption that many biblical references to 'spirit' or 'wind' are 'tropes' or allegories for God's power – argued from a number of Old Testament passages that the Spirit mentioned in Scripture is simply a mediating force, created by God to carry out his will.[11] In his four letters to Serapion of Thmuis, written sometime between 356 and 362,[12] St Athanasius argues earnestly that, given a Christian understanding of redemption and sanctification through baptism and the life of the Church, faith in the full divinity of the Son implies the confession that the Spirit through whom he continues to act is also fully divine, also ὁμοούσιον with Father and Son.[13] His reasoning is that the picture of God's activity presented in the Christian Scriptures and the Church's liturgy implies an inseparable unity of operation, and therefore of being, among the three Persons mentioned in the Triadic formula. Drawing on an abundance of New Testament passages that identify the work of the Spirit in terms of our contact and union with Christ and our adoption as sons and daughters of God, Athanasius asks: 'But if there is such co-ordination and unity within the holy Triad, who can separate either the Son from the Father or the Spirit from the Son or from the Father himself?'[14]

Athanasius's argument for the full divinity of the Spirit is mainly to draw the analogy with earlier arguments for the full divinity of

[11] See Hanson, pp. 748–52; Shapland, pp. 18–34.

[12] For dating and circumstances, see Shapland, pp. 16–18. Although four letters to Serapion have come down in the tradition, the first is by far the most important from a doctrinal viewpoint; letters 2 and 3 are now generally thought to be a single work and mainly repeat Athanasius's earlier arguments for the full divinity of the Son, while letter 4 is largely a summary of the arguments of letter 1.

[13] *Letters to Serapion* 1.27; 2.6. For a concise summary of Athanasius's theology of the Holy Spirit in these letters, see Shapland, pp. 34–43.

[14] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20 (Shapland, p. 113).

the Son; as a result, his normal pattern of conceiving Father, Son and Holy Spirit is perhaps less Trinitarian than doubly dyadic: as Son is to Father, so Spirit must be to Son, and through Son to Father. If, as Paul and John suggest (e.g., Rom. 8:9–11; John 17:21), when the Spirit is in us the Son is in us, and when the Son is in us the Father is in us, then all three of them must be a single God.[15] So just as the Spirit is said to glorify the Son (e.g., John 16:14), the Son glorifies the Father (John 17:4);[16] as the Son declares to the world what he has heard from the Father (John 8:26), the Spirit will 'take from what belongs' to the Son and declare it to the disciples (John 16:14).[17] Athanasius even goes so far as to insist that the Spirit is the 'image' of the Son, just as the Son is the 'image' of the Father; therefore the Son is 'in' his image the Spirit as the Father is 'in' the Son.[18] So Jesus' statement in the Fourth Gospel that 'the Spirit of Truth . . . proceeds from the Father' (John 15:26) is only true 'because it is from the Word, who is confessed to be from the Father, that it [the Spirit] shines forth and is sent and is given'.[19] So it is clear that the Spirit 'is distinct from creatures, and is shown rather to be proper (ἴδιον) to the Son and not alien (ξένον) to God'.[20] Or to put the argument in more clearly analogous terms:

> If, in regard to order (τάξις) and nature (φύσις), the Spirit bears the same relation to the Son as the Son to the Father, will not he who calls the Spirit a creature necessarily hold the same to be true also of the Son? For if the Spirit is a creature of the Son, it will be consistent for them to say that the Word is a creature of the Father.[21]

[15] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20 (Shapland, p. 113).

[16] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20 (Shapland, p. 113).

[17] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20 (Shapland, p. 113).

[18] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.21 (Shapland, p. 119).

[19] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20 (Shapland, p. 117). See also 1.2: 'If they [the 'Tropici'] thought correctly of the Word, they would think soundly of the Spirit also, who proceeds from the Father, and belonging to the Son, is from him given to the disciples and all who believe in him' (Shapland, pp. 64–5).

[20] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.25 (Shapland, p. 128). For a brief discussion of Athanasius's use of the term ἴδιος, to denote 'intimacy and inseparability' in the Trinitarian relationships, see Andrew Louth, 'The Use of the Term ἴδιος in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril,' *SP* 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), pp. 198–202, esp. 198–9.

[21] *Letters to Serapion*, 1.21 (Shapland, pp. 118–19).

For Athanasius, the way one conceives of the third member of the baptismal Triad clearly is implied in one's conception of the second; the Spirit Jesus sends must share in his own divine being, if he is to bring Jesus' work of salvation to full realization.

Athanasius's younger Alexandrian contemporary, the exegete Didymus the Blind (c. 313–398), likewise insists that the role of the Spirit in achieving Christ's work of salvation in us implies he is substantially one with both Son and Father. Didymus, however, is more inclined to argue for the divinity of the Spirit on the basis on the simplicity of the divine substance and the unity of God's saving will, than by Athanasius's analogies. Commenting on John 16:13 (the Holy Spirit 'will not speak on his own authority'), for instance, in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, Didymus finds in the verse an affirmation of the substantial unity of the Spirit with both Father and Son:

> that is, [he will not speak] without me, or without my approval and that of my Father, because he is inseparable from my will and from the Father's, since he is not from himself, but from the Father and from me. For the fact that he subsists and speaks is given to him by the Father and me.[22]

For Didymus, the implication of this divine communion (Jerome's word is *consortium*; Greek: κοινωνία?) of substance and will is that the Spirit must be said to receive both his mission and his being from the Father and the Son:

> As we understood above when we were discussing the nature of incorporeal beings, so now we must recognize that the Holy Spirit receives from the Son what we saw belongs to his nature; and this does not suggest a giver and a receiver, but one substance – if indeed the Son, too, is said to receive from the Father these same things as the basis of his subsistence. For the Son is nothing else but what has been given him by the Father, and the Spirit is no other substance besides that which is given him by the Son. The point of what we are saying is that we might believe that the nature of the Holy Spirit, within the Trinity, is the same as that of Father and Son.[23]

[22] Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, 153 (*SC* 386 [Paris: Cerf, 1992], pp. 284–6); cf. 117, 160, 162. This treatise, which probably dates from about 375, now only survives in the Latin translation of Jerome, made sometime after 385.

[23] *On the Holy Spirit*, 165–6 (*SC* 386, pp. 294–6).

So Jesus speaks, in John 14:26, of the Spirit 'whom the Father will send in my name'. Didymus argues, perhaps with an exaggerated literalness, that since the proper 'name' of the Savior is 'Son', and since names signify 'the proper character of the persons (*proprietas personarum*)', then one must identify the Spirit as pertaining closely to the Son, even as being of the same rank: 'he is understood not to be a slave, not alien or separated from the Son'.[24] A few paragraphs later, Didymus clarifies the point: just as servants who are 'sent in the name of the Lord' indicate their servile status by bearing their Lord's name, and just as the Son reveals his own distinctive relationship to God by his own name of Son, so the Spirit, in being sent 'in the name of the Son', reveals both his identity and his mission:

> Since, then, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of the Son, having the proper character of the Son insofar as he is God – but not the character of Sonship, in such a way that he would be *his* Son – he reveals that he is joined to the Son in unity. Therefore he is called 'Spirit of the Son', making those who are willing to receive him into children by adoption: for Scripture says, 'Because you are children of God, the Father has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba, Father!"'[25]

Laborious as his argument here is, Didymus's point is clear enough: New Testament language about the Holy Spirit ascribes to him a permanent, integral share in both the being and the operations of God, precisely by the way it speaks of his relationships to Father and Son.

These same points are made, if more summarily, in the longer treatise *On the Trinity* ascribed to Didymus – a work that is largely a collection of biblical passages grounding the Christian understanding of God, and which appears to come at least from the same time and milieu as the blind Alexandrian, even if it is not actually by him.[26] Here the author remains carefully within the

[24] *On the Holy Spirit*, 133 (*SC* 386, p. 268).

[25] *On the Holy Spirit*, 139 (*SC* 386, p. 272).

[26] For a discussion of the pros and cons of ascribing this work to Didymus himself, see Louis Doutreleau, 'Le 'De Trinitate' est-il l'oeuvre de Didyme l'Aveugle?' *Recherches de science religieuse* 45 (1957), pp. 514–57; L. Béranger, 'Sur deux énigmes du "De Trinitate"', *Recherches de science religieuse* 51 (1963), pp. 255–67; C. Bizer, *Studien zu den pseudoathanasianischen Dialogen* (Bonn,

limits of biblical language when speaking of the origin of the Son and the Spirit, but lays his emphasis on the underlying unity of substance implied in divine 'begetting' and 'proceeding':

> For all begetting and proceeding are realized by beings that are equal and like each other. But in the most distinctive way, generation and procession from the one Father take place according to the unity of his divinity.[27]

The author concludes, on the basis of this unity, that the begetting of the Son and the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father must be eternal and unvarying,[28] and argues also that the Spirit who renews our hearts in baptism, who brings about in us the new creation, must be understood, along with the Son, as 'God's co-creator' (συνδημιουργὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ),[29] sharing eternally in the reign of Christ,

> because of the common nature (τὸ ἐπίκοινον) of the divinity and the successionless character of the one kingdom. For how is it possible that the one should rule and the other – as among humans – should do nothing, since the Father abides in the Son and the Son in the Father, and since the Spirit proceeds from the Father and abides divinely with the Son?[30]

More important than the biblical terminology that implies distinct modes of origin for Son and Spirit, even distinct relationships

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1970) – all arguing against Didymus's authorship; and L. Koenen, 'Ein theologisches Papyrus der Kölner Sammlung', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 17 (1960), pp. 80–105, and Alasdair Heron, 'Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind: his Authorship of the Adversus Eunomium IV–V and the De Trinitate' (Diss. Tübingen, 1972), both of which argue for Didymus as author. In Doutreleau's edition of Didymus's *On the Holy Spirit*, he changes his mind and accepts Didymus's authorship: see his note, *SC* 386, pp. 204–5.

[27] *On the Trinity* II, 2.22 (ed. Ingrid Seiler: Meisenheim: Hain, 1975, p. 28). Cf. *Ibid.* 5.10: 'Being single is characteristic of the divine nature, which lacks all plurality. And just as it is written that the Son was begotten – and he bears witness, saying, "I came forth (ἐξῆλθον) from the Father" (John 16:27–8) – so it is written that he himself said, "The Spirit of Truth, who proceeds (ἐκπορεύεται) from the Father", or more precisely, who has proceeded (ἐξεπορεύθη).'

[28] *On the Trinity* I, 15.42 (ed. Jürgen Hönscheid: Meisenheim: Hain, 1975, p. 60); *Ibid.* 15.77 (p. 74).

[29] *On the Trinity* II, 7.3.6–7 (Seiler, p. 201).

[30] *On the Trinity* I, 31.16 (Hönscheid, p. 210).

between each of them and the Father, is the biblical implication that all three together share the same divine reality because they work the same divine transformation within creatures.

The approach of the three great Cappadocian Fathers to the divine Triad, although similar in many respects to that of their contemporaries Athanasius and Didymus, has its own distinctive points of emphasis. For one thing, it was they who began to develop and define what was to become the standard Greek theological vocabulary for distinguishing what is single and unique in the Mystery of God from what is irreducibly multiple: God is one simple, infinite, transcendent divine 'being' or 'substance' (οὐσία), known only to created intellects through the 'external' operations (ἐνέργειαι) which they work as one; and the three unconfused 'individuals' (ὑποστάσεις) or 'persons' (πρόσωπα), which we name Father, Son and Holy Spirit – revealed in the course of God's saving history in the world as making the one God present in creation, and distinguished from each other only by the relationships of origin revealed in their names and in the words of Scripture.[31] As a result, it is really in their writings that the comprehensive shorthand for the Christian understanding of God's being and activity, which we think of as 'the doctrine of the Trinity,' began to emerge with some clarity for the first time.[32]

[31] Although Basil's way of speaking about the unity of God and the Trinity of the divine persons shows considerable variation, this classic terminology appears most clearly in his *Ep.* 210, to the people of Neocaesarea; in his *Homily on the Faith* (*PG* 31, 464–72); and also, with modifications, in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38. It is used by Gregory of Nazianzus (e.g., *Or.* 34.8; *Or.* 39.11), but is most clearly articulated and explained by Gregory of Nyssa: see especially Ps.-Basil, *Ep.* 38 (a letter included among the letters of Basil in most manuscripts and editions, but now generally acknowledged to be addressed by Gregory to his younger brother, Peter of Sebaste: see Reinhard Hübner, 'Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. Ep. 38 des Basilios', in Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser [eds], *Epektasis: Mélanges Jean Daniélou* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1972], pp. 463–90); *Refutation of the Confession of Eunomius* 6 (Gregorii Nysseni Opera [GNO] I/2, 314–15); *To Eustathius, on the Holy Trinity* (GNO III/1, 13.24–16.21); and *To the Greeks, from Common Notions* (GNO III/1, 19–33). For a nuanced and somewhat critical account of the Cappadocian effort to develop a standard vocabulary for speaking of God as one and three, see Hanson, pp. 676–737.

[32] Hanson, however, justly observes: 'There never has been a single formula adopted by the majority of Christians designed to express the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Cappadocians never imagined that there could be one' (p. 677).

Within this framework, the Cappadocians also take pains to emphasize that the three divine hypostases are not simply peas in a pod, interchangeable members of a single, highly restricted species; Scripture also reveals to us an irreversible order among them, a dynamic set of relationships by which one brings forth or gives to the other, without rupturing the transcendent unity of the One Being who stands alone beyond the realm of creation. Basil, following Origen,[33] tries to distinguish the role played by each hypostasis, identifying the Father as the original source and cause (ἀρχή) of all things, the Son as the instrument or 'creative cause' of creatures, and the Spirit as their 'perfecting cause'.[34] Although he speaks eloquently of the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the creative and divinizing work of God within human creation, Basil also stops short of naming the Spirit 'God' in so many words, or asserting that he is 'consubstantial' with Father and Son – presumably because such assertions would have sounded radical and shocking to many contemporary Christians in Asia Minor.[35]

Gregory of Nazianzus, who insists strongly on the substantial identity of the three Persons,[36] also strongly emphasizes the

[33] See especially *On First Principles* I, 3.5–8; *Commentary on John* II, (6) 73–86 (*SC* 120, 252–62). Although Origen clearly conceives of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as a single Triad which together works the creative and redemptive activity of God, he just as clearly understands them to be unequal in both the scope of their operation and the ontological rank of their being: see esp. *Commentary on John* II, (6) 75–6.

[34] *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38; cf. 16.37, where Basil attempts a similar distinction on the basis of 1 Corinthians 12:4–6.

[35] See Gregory of Nazianzus's famous *Ep.* 58, in which he claims to have defended Basil's 'economy' – in plain words, his diplomatic equivocation – on this subject.

[36] See, for instance, the famous dictum of his 'Fifth Theological Oration' (on the Holy Spirit: *Or.* 33.16): 'Each of these Persons possesses unity, not less with that which is united to it than with itself, by reason of the identity of essence and power' (trans. C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow: *NPNF*, ser. 2, 7.323). See also a passage in Gregory's Epiphany Oration, *On the Holy Lights*: 'For "there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things" (1 Cor. 8:6), and one Holy Spirit in whom are all things; yet these words "of", "by", "in" do not denote a difference of nature . . . , but they characterize the personalities of a nature which is one and unconfused . . . There is then one God in three, and these three are one, as we have said' (*Or.* 39.12; trans. Browne and Swallow [alt.] 356).

sequence of origin by which one is differentiated from the other,[37] and chooses to speak of this more or less exclusively in the biblical terms of 'begetting' or 'generating', for the Son, and (drawing simply on John 15:26) of 'proceeding' for the Spirit. For Gregory, this way of denoting the Spirit's origin simply indicates that the Spirit is not a second Son, or a daughter or grandchild, within the divine Mystery, and that he is 'between the Unbegotten and the Begotten' and therefore also God. But the Johannine term, he suggests, is designedly vague, and cannot be parsed further:

> What, then, is 'procession'? [Gregory ironically asks] You tell me what is the unbegottenness of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God! Who are we to do these things, we who cannot even see what lies at our own feet . . . ?[38]

Gregory of Nyssa, who also uses the Johannine word 'proceed' as the specific designation for the Spirit's origin,[39] prefers to analyze the distinctiveness of the three divine hypostases in terms of *causation* (αἰτία): as ultimate, transcendent 'fountain' of all being, the one whom Jesus calls 'Father' is, within the being of God, the 'cause' of being for Son and Spirit, albeit in different ways. Yet Gregory of Nyssa, in fact – somewhat astonishingly, considering the influence the Cappadocians exercised on later Greek Trinitarian theology, which so opposed the idea of the *Filioque* – also sees the

[37] Near the beginning of the Theological Oration on the Spirit, Gregory uses the Johannine image of light, as well as a verse from the Psalms, to illustrate both the unity of the divine substance and this sequence of origin: 'The Father was "the true light which enlightens everyone coming into the world" (John 1:9). The Son was "the true light which enlightens everyone coming into the world". The "other Comforter" (John 14:16) was "the true light which enlightens everyone coming into the world". "Was" and "was" and "was", but *was* one thing! "Light", three times repeated – but one light and one God! This was what David represented to himself long before, when he said, "in your light we shall see light" (Ps. 35:9 [LXX]). And now we have both seen and proclaim, concisely and simply, the doctrine of God the Trinity, understanding: out of light, light, in light!' (*Or.* 33.3; trans. Browne and Swallow [alt.]).

[38] *Or.* 33.8 (trans. Browne and Swallow [alt.]). Cf. *Or.* 39.12, where Gregory apologizes for coining an adverb (ἐκπορευτῶς) out of the Greek word for 'procession', to be able to speak of the distinctive way in which the Spirit comes to be within God.

[39] Ps.-Basil, *Ep.* 38.4.

causal origin of the Spirit in the Father as being 'mediated' by the Son; so he writes in his treatise *To Ablabius*, as a way of avoiding the charge of confusing the three persons:

> While we confess the invariable character of the nature [of God], we do not deny the difference between a cause and that which is caused, by which alone we apprehend that one Person is distinguished from another – by our belief, that is, that one is the cause, and another is caused. And again, in that which is caused, we recognize another distinction: for the one is directly from the first cause, and the other through that which is directly from the first cause. So that the attribute of being only-begotten abides without doubt in the Son, and there is no ambiguity about the Spirit's being from the Father; and the intermediate position of the Son, while it guards his attribute of being only-begotten, does not shut out the Spirit from his relation by way of nature to the Father. But in speaking of 'cause' and 'of the cause', we do not by these words denote nature – for no one would give the same definition of cause and of nature – but we indicate the difference in how they [that is, the hypostases] come to exist.[40]

These features of the Cappadocians' approach to the Trinity, and to the particular character of the Spirit's origin within the mystery of God, clearly had a decisive influence on the revised version of the Nicene creed approved by the Council of Constantinople in 381. Faced with persistent forms of Arianism, the bishops assembled at Constantinople – who included both Gregories and a number of their close associates – seem to have wanted to reaffirm the Nicene formula, in slightly simplified terms, as the Church's normative way of speaking about the Son's relationship to the Father, but they also considerably expanded the older creed's language about the Spirit: stopping just short (as Basil had done) of calling him 'God' or 'consubstantial', but describing his place in Christian worship as being on a par with Father and Son, and emphasizing his role in the origin of charisms, and in the life and hope of the Church. Although the Council's intent was clearly not to make an exclusive, precise definition of

[40] Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius* (GNO III/1, 55.24–56.14; trans H. A. Wilson; *NPNF*, ser. 2, 5.336 [alt.]). Here and in other translations from Greek texts in this essay, I have referred to the Spirit as 'he', even though the word and its corresponding pronouns and adjectives are grammatically neuter in Greek.

the Spirit's mode of origin within the divine Mystery,[41] the creed follows Gregory of Nazianzus's preference for the language of John 15:26 in asserting his divinity, saying simply that the Spirit 'proceeds from the Father'. And while there is also no direct affirmation of the Trinity itself, within the text of the revised creed, in formal terms of substance and persons, a letter from a local synod in Constantinople, held the following year, to Pope Damasus and the Italian bishops gathered in 'old Rome', makes the Council's theological position, and its generally Cappadocian character, clear. Speaking of the 'evangelical faith' formulated at Nicaea and reexpressed in their own creed the year before, they urge:

> You, we, and all who are unwilling to subvert the word of the true faith should give this [profession of faith] approval, as being most ancient and fully consistent with our baptism. It instructs us to believe in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – that is, [in the name] of the one godhead and power, in what is believed to be the one substance of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in their sameness of rank and honor and their co-eternal reign, in three most perfect hypostases or persons . . .[42]

This is a somewhat different approach to the reality of the Holy Spirit, and to the consequences of his divine identity for the entire Christian understanding of the divine Mystery, than the approach Athanasius and Didymus had taken – more technical, more synthetic, less explicitly dependent on the exegesis of particular passages in Scripture; yet what the Council affirms of the Spirit clearly complements and harmonizes with the work of its Alexandrian contemporaries.

Cyril's conception of the Spirit

It was the role of Cyril of Alexandria, in the early decades of the fifth century, to develop a Trinitarian theology, and specifically a pneumatology, that would draw on both the earlier Alexandrian

[41] See Boris Bobrinskoy, *Le mystère de la Trinité* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), p. 280: 'La formule du Symbole de Nicée-Constantinople, . . . loin de définir la mode d'origine de l'Esprit, souligne son caractère mystérieux'.

[42] Synodal letter of bishops in Constantinople, 382: in G. Albergio *et al.* (ed.), *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 1973); repr. with trans., ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) 1.28 (here: trans. mine).

and the Cappadocian approaches in a way that was synthetic, balanced, and philosophically sophisticated, yet even more explicitly rooted in biblical texts than theirs had been. The central concern of Cyril's reflections on the Trinity, the rhetorical goal of most of his discussion of biblical passages that suggest the relationships of Father, Son and Spirit, is both to continue his predecessors' resistance to any theological position that would weaken the identification of Jesus or the Spirit with the transcendent God – the positions of various schools of 'Arians' and 'Spirit-fighters' – and to emphasize the saving, life-giving, immediate presence of that God, through Jesus and the Spirit, within history and at the heart of the Church's daily life. It was this emphasis on the immediacy of God which was to set Cyril on a theological collision-course with the Antiochene school, and which would lie at the heart of his quarrel with Nestorius: not only Cyril's christological intuition that the ability of God to take on human suffering, through the 'self-emptying' of the Son, was central to his ability to rescue and transform an alienated humanity,[43] but also his sense that the Trinitarian conception of God, so distinctive in Christian faith, must begin not with the classical philosophical understanding of the divine attributes (as Antiochene theology tended to do)[44] but with the scriptural proclamation of a God who, precisely as God, is 'with us'.

Cyril's understanding of the person and the origin of the Holy Spirit constantly reflects this wider sense of the present reality of the saving God. As a result, although he is clearly influenced by the language and thought of both his Alexandrian and his Cappadocian predecessors on the Spirit, he seems considerably less inclined than they are to consider the distinct and characteristic

[43] See John J. O'Keefe, 'Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology', *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), pp. 39–60.

[44] See Silke-Petra Bergjan, *Theodoret von Cyrus und der Neunizänismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), esp. pp. 192–5. On the general understanding of the relationship of God to the world in the work of the Antiochene theologians, see Günther Koch, *Die Heilsverwirklichung bei Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Munich: M. Hueber, 1965); *Strukturen und Geschichte des Heils in der Theologie des Theodoret von Kyros: Eine dogmen- und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Frankfurt: J. Knecht, 1974); Joanne McWilliam Dewart, *The Theology of Grace of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1971).

role of the Spirit within salvation history, or to define the Spirit's relation to Father or Son, in terms of causation (αἰτία) – in fact, as Boulnois has pointed out, the personal origin of the Spirit within God, in itself, is normally not one of Cyril's direct concerns.[45]

How, then, does Cyril tend to speak of the person and role of the Spirit, both in relation to the whole divine Mystery and in relation to the persons of Father and Son?

We can identify six aspects.

1

In many passages of his works, Cyril speaks of the Spirit's role in the saving presence and activity of God in creation in somewhat impersonal, even abstract terms. Concerned above all to insist that the Spirit is not simply God's created instrument for the sanctification of other creatures, but is 'proper' (ἴδιον) to God in every way,[46] Cyril speaks more than once of the Spirit as a 'quality (ποιότης) of the divinity'[47] or a 'quality of the divine substance'.[48] Discussing the crucial passage John 16:13–15, for instance, especially Jesus' statement 'He will take of what is mine and declare it to you', Cyril insists, in the sixth book of his *Dialogues on the Trinity*:

> Just as [the Spirit] is holy by nature, since he is the Spirit of a holy Father, so he is also wise, since indeed he is the spirit of Wisdom – and the Son is Wisdom; and we never say that the Spirit is holy or wise in virtue of some extrinsic relationship or participation, but rather that he is so substantially, and as a kind of natural quality (ποιότης φυσική) of the holy and wise godhead, which is understood to belong to the Spirit in the same way as it is in Father and Son.[49]

Arguing, in a passage of his *Commentary on John*, that the Spirit is not a creature, because creatures partake of him in being made holy, Cyril concludes:

[45] Boulnois, p. 500.

[46] See Louth (above, n. 20); Ruth M. Siddals, 'Oneness and Difference in the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria', *SP* 18/1 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985), pp. 207–11, esp. 209.

[47] *Thes.* 34 (*PG* 75, 596a; 604b).

[48] *Thes.* 34 (*PG* 75, 617b).

[49] *Dial. Trin.* 6, 593d.

> No being escapes from the glory of having been created, except for the one who alone is by nature God; coming forth from him in a way beyond description, the Spirit dwells in us, as does the one from whom he comes. For he is proper (ἴδιον) to his substance, and is, as it were, a quality of his holiness.[50]

The Holy Spirit, in Cyril's view, is most properly understood as the way in which God acts intimately within creatures; for this reason, the Spirit himself must be fully divine. For if one takes the divine simplicity seriously, then one must understand that God's nature (φύσις) and God's activity (ἐνέργεια) are 'a single reality' (ἕν τι), and therefore that

> if one were to say that the activity that is proper to the divine reality – that is, the Spirit – is created and made, then surely the Divinity itself must be a creature, since its operational principle (τὸ ἐνεργὲς αὐτοῦ) is not something other than itself.[51]

2

In a few passages, Cyril uses the image of the fragrance emanating from a perfume to suggest how the Spirit is both distinct from Father and Son, yet intrinsically, essentially one with them and revealing them concretely to the experience of creatures. In his *Commentary on John*, for instance, he writes:

> Just as if we were to say (if we were simply to yield to analytical thought) that the fragrance which strikes our sense of smell from some perfume is, as it were, *something else* than the perfume, one would still realize, doubtless, that it only issues forth so that it might receive from its source the ability to reveal itself, and is surely *not other* [than the perfume], in the sense that it has come to exist from it and in it – this is the kind of thing, or rather something above and beyond this, that we should imagine in the case of God and the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit is, as it were, the fragrance of God's substance, living and perceptible, providing creation with the things that come from God, and through himself endowing them with a share in that substance which is above all things. And if the fragrance of a perfume

[50] *In Jo.* 14:23 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 499). The argument that creatures participate in God, but that it is characteristic of the divine Persons only to be participated in, is strongly presented by Athanasius in some of his anti-Arian works: see for example, *Oration I against the Arians* 5.15–16; *On the Decrees* 9–10.

[51] *Dial. Trin.* 7, 651cd.

> stamps its own peculiar force on the senses, and in a certain way transforms into itself the receptors it enters, how could the Holy Spirit – since he naturally is from God – not be able to make those in whom he dwells into sharers in the divine nature, by its own activity?[52]

The point of the image is not simply to emphasize the paradoxical unity-in-distinction that is one of the main themes, as Boulnois shows,[53] in Cyril's Trinitarian theology, but also to suggest that the distinctive role of the Spirit is to be even more intimately present in the experience of the creatures God calls to salvation than is the Father or the Son: to be precisely the point of living contact between God and the creature, the active means by which the whole Trinity dwells in us. So Cyril writes pointedly, a little earlier in this same passage:

> God the Father has his own Spirit, who is from him and in him: the Holy Spirit, through whom he dwells in the saints and reveals mysteries to them. He is not involved in this work in a subordinate role – do not think anything of the sort! – but he is in [the Father] by way of substance (οὐσιωδῶς) and comes forth from him without division or separation, interpreting the reality in which and from which he exists as that which is his own. For God does not associate (ὁμιλεῖ) with creation in any other way but through the Son, in the Spirit. But this Spirit is also proper (ἴδιον) to the Only-begotten, for he [= the Son] is consubstantial with the Father.[54]

3

This emphasis on the distinctive role of the Spirit in making the whole Trinity present to creatures seems, in turn, to influence the way Cyril understands the relationships of the three hypostases among themselves. Unlike Father and Son, whose very names provide the believer with some concrete image of their mode of existence, the Holy Spirit is for us at once more anonymous and less personal, precisely because he is so immediately present to us as our means of experiencing and sharing in the divine being.[55] Yet the fact that it is in the Holy Spirit that humans come to know

[52] *In Jo.* 16:15 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 639). For this same image, applied to John 16:13–15, see *In Jo.* 16:14 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 635–6); *Dial. Trin.* 6, 593bc.

[53] Above, n. 7.

[54] *In Jo.* 16:15 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 638).

[55] See Boulnois, pp. 442–4.

Father and Son – that the Spirit is, in Gregory Nazianzen's terms, the 'light' in which we see Son and Father as 'light from light' – itself suggests the Spirit's distinctive personal role, within the history of salvation and even within the inner life of God, as being 'the one who brings the Trinity to its completion (συμπληρωτικόν)'.[56] Using this term familiar from Neoplatonic philosophy, where it is applied to the proper, essential qualities that 'fill out' the substance of a thing,[57] Cyril applies it to the Spirit's role both in the work and in the substance of the Trinity:

> One must recognize that the Spirit is from the substance of the Son. In fact, since he comes forth naturally from him and is sent by him into creatures, he brings the renewal of creation to fulfillment, for he is the completion (συμπλήρωμα) of the holy Trinity.[58]

So Didymus, too, had argued that although Scripture calls the Spirit 'Paraclete' or 'consoler', it gives abundant witness that the Father and the Son can also be called by this name, and where the Spirit dwells in the human heart, Father and Son also dwell.[59] It is the most distinctive personal characteristic of the Spirit, it seems, in the eyes of these Alexandrian theologians, that he should make the differentiated but substantial unity of all three persons present and palpable in the experience of the saved.

4

This conception of the intense personal involvement of the Spirit, as a divine person, with the activity and the persons of Father and

[56] *Thes.* 34, 608d.

[57] See, for example, Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.6.1.30; 6.2.15.9; Simplicius, *In Categorias*, ed. Karl Kalbfleisch, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1907), 48.22–49.13. See Boulnois, pp. 439f., for these and further references.

[58] *Thes.* 34, 608b. See also *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 25): '. . . so when the Holy Spirit is added to the number [of Father and Son] and is called God along with them, the holy and adorable Trinity possesses its own proper fullness (πλήρωμα)'; *Ibid.* 14:25–26 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 507): like the human will that accomplishes the purposes of the mind, the Spirit of God is 'not other by nature, but a kind of part that brings the whole to completion and exists within it.'

[59] *On the Holy Spirit* 122–5. For a similar argument for the unity of nature among the three divine Persons, without confusion of individual properties, because all work salvation together, see Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Lord's Prayer*, *Or.* 3 (GNO VII/2, 39.15–43.15).

Son, gives a particular coloring to the way Cyril articulates the relationship of the Spirit to them both. Although he is generally careful to follow the Cappadocian usage, based on John 15:26, in restricting the language of 'procession' (ἐκπορεύεσθαι) to the Spirit's coming forth from the Father, Cyril often asserts that the Spirit also 'comes forth from' (προίεναι) or is 'poured forth by' (προχεόμενον) the Son, precisely as a result of the substantial unity and hypostatic order of the persons of the Trinity. Cyril summarizes his position in one of the terse anti-Arian theses that occupy chapter 3 of the first book of his *Commentary on John*:

> There is but one Holy Spirit, one perfect sanctification, bestowed naturally from (παρὰ) the Father through (διὰ) the Son. For the one who shares the same operation as the Father [that is, the Son] is not less than the Father in perfection, and possesses the Spirit of the one who begets him as the living and hypostatic resource of his own nature, even as the Father also does.[60]

Cyril develops this somewhat schematic statement more fully in a number of later passages. In the sixth book of his *Dialogues on the Trinity*, probably written in the late 420s just after the *Commentary on John*, he makes a clear statement of how he conceives this aspect of the Trinitarian relationships:

> Since the nature [of God] is one, the Spirit, too, is unique, and is poured forth from the Father as from a spring. At the same time, he is not alien to the Son: for the Son is begotten as having in himself all the particular characteristics of the Father, and since he is the fruit of the highest deity, how could he be imagined as lacking any of the resources of divinity? But sanctification is proper to the divinity, and this is what the Spirit reveals. For he is holy by nature, and is the one who makes all creation holy.[61]

Or more fully still, if more densely, in the eleventh book of the *Commentary on John*:

> The Spirit is proper to God the Father, but he is no less proper to the Son himself: not as if they were two different things, each understood and existing singly as an individual (ἐνυπάρχον), but since the Son is by nature from the Father and in the Father, being the true fruit of his

[60] *In Jo.* 1:1 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 35).
[61] *Dial. Trin.* 6, 592de.

> substance, the Spirit naturally proper to the Father is bestowed by being poured forth from the Father and bestowed on creation through the Son himself, though not in some servile way, understood as a kind of subordination. Rather, as we have said before, the Spirit emerges (προκύπτον) from the substance of God the Father and is poured out on those worthy to receive him through the Word, who is consubstantial with the Father and has revealed him from the Father – in a revelation, namely, that allows the Spirit to exist for himself – while the Son abides and exists in the Father always, at once continuous with and distinct from him. For we say that the Son exists as a distinct individual, yet has his existence in the one who begot him and has his begetter in himself. And since the Father's Spirit is also revealed as the Spirit of the Son, with the Father sending him or commissioning the Son to bestow him on the saints, the Son in turn gives him as his own, because of the identity of substance which binds him to the Father, and because the Father acts towards every one of his creatures through him . . .[62]

In another passage in the same commentary, Cyril reverses the direction of his argument, reasoning from the Son's role as giver of the Spirit to that of the Father as ultimate origin:

> As he is by nature the proper Spirit of the Son, existing (ὑπάρχον) in him and coming forth (προϊόν) through him, so he is proper to the Father; and if the Spirit is common to them, surely the other aspects of their substance will not be divided. And let not the habitually impious use the arguments of ignorance to lead us toward what it would be wrong for us even to think: that the Son is playing some subordinate role when he supplies creation with the Spirit who comes from the Father – for some, in their ignorance, have not been afraid to say even this! The consistent thing, rather, is to believe that it is because [the Spirit] is proper to him, as of course he also is to God the Father, that [the Son] sends him on his holy disciples for their sanctification.[63]

Cyril's main concern, it seems, is to avoid reading the relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit, mirrored in Scripture, as implying any

[62] *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 718–19). For the same point, put more concisely, cf. *In Jo.* 16:12–13 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 628): 'The Holy Spirit is understood not to be alien to the substance of the Only-begotten, but comes forth (πρόεισι) naturally from it, not existing as another alongside him, as far as identity of nature is concerned – even though he is understood, surely, as existing in his own hypostasis.'

[63] *In Jo.* 15:26–27 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 607).

personal or ontological subordination of one to the other. Because all three persons share the same substance and accomplish the same creative ends, even the personal ordering that exists among them does not imply that the Spirit is less proper to the Son than he is to the Father, or that his origin is to be sought in the Father in any way apart from the Son.[64]

5

Cyril's understanding of the distinct, yet substantially unified relationship of the Spirit to both Father and Son seems to be rooted not so much in abstract reasoning, or in the tradition he inherited from his Alexandrian and Cappadocian predecessors, as it is in a few key New Testament scenes to which he repeatedly returns: scenes which function for him as icons that reveal the dynamic relations of Father, Son and Spirit within the drama of the life of Jesus.

(a) One of these revelatory events is the *baptism* of Jesus, at which, according to all four Gospels, the Spirit descended on him visibly, while the Father's voice was heard from heaven, acknowledging Jesus as beloved Son.[65] Strenuously rejecting any interpretation of this famous episode in an adoptionist or Arian sense – any suggestion that Jesus himself actually advanced to a higher level of divine Sonship through this descent of the Spirit – Cyril instead repeatedly stresses the soteriological meaning of the scene: as one of us, as the new Adam, the Son receives the Spirit in his assumed humanity, so that the 'prophetic Spirit' once possessed by the first Adam but lost in the fall might be bestowed on the human race again as the beginning of its renewal. In a well-known passage from his *Commentary on Joel*, for instance (commenting on Joel 2:28f., the promise of an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord on 'all flesh'), Cyril writes:

> The grace once given to humanity had lost its validity, but it was renewed in Christ, who is also the second Adam. In what way was it renewed? In that the Son is God, and by nature from God (for he is

[64] For further references and discussion, see Boulnois, pp. 520–2.

[65] For a fuller discussion of Cyril's treatment of the soteriological and Trinitarian implications of this event, see Daniel Keating, 'The Baptism of Jesus in Cyril of Alexandria: the Re-creation of the Human Race', *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (1999), pp. 201–22; see also Boulnois, pp. 463–73.

> begotten of God the Father), the Spirit is properly his, and in him and from him, just as he [= the Spirit] is understood to belong to God the Father. But in that he became human and came to be with us, the Spirit is said to be given to him as something new. So he descended upon him in the form of a dove, because having come to be as we are, he was baptized as one of us according to the divine plan of salvation (οἰκονομικῶς); then, too, his own Spirit is said to have come down on him as a gift from above, because of his humanity. This is what his self-emptying means![66]

In the *Commentary on John*, Cyril comments on the same scene in a more directly Trinitarian way:

> How did he receive [the Spirit]? What we have said must be elaborated further. Was it as something he did not possess? Far be it from us to say that! For the Spirit is proper to the Son, not something given from outside, as God's gifts are showered on us; [the Spirit] exists naturally in him and in the Father, and through him comes forth (πρόεισι) upon the saints as is fitting for each of them, given from the Father's store. But he [= the Son] is said to have received him insofar as he had become human, and as it was fitting for a human to receive him . . . [The Father also] says that the one who is begotten from him as God before the ages has been begotten 'today', so that he [= the Father] might receive us for adoption in him. For all of humanity was in Christ, in that he was human. So, too, his own Spirit is said to be given again to the Son who possesses him, so that we, in him, might receive the Spirit for ourselves.[67]

In his sixth *Dialogue on the Trinity*, Cyril reflects still further on the essential connection between the paradox of the person of Christ and the descent of the Spirit at his baptism – sanctifying him, anointing him King, proclaiming him Son of God, though he was all these things eternally:

> It was necessary that when he had become human he should receive the Spirit, so that – even though he was and is the one who 'knew no sin' (2 Cor. 5:21) – the Spirit should delight from then on to dwell in him and to rest on him, as on the first-fruit of our race (James 1:18) and its second root. This, I imagine, is what the Baptist meant to indicate when he cried out concerning the Spirit that he had seen him descending from heaven in the form of a dove (John 1:32), and he said that [the Spirit] 'remained on him': for he had not remained among

[66] *In Joel* 35, 228ab (Pusey, 337–8).
[67] *In Jo.* 7:39 (Pusey vol. 1, pp. 692–3).

> us because of our transgression, but he has remained in Christ. [The Spirit], after all, by his nature cannot bear to endure the stain of sin. And though [the Son] always exists as King, sharing the throne of God the Father, he is said to have been appointed king when he came to be human like us, and receives his royal rule as a gift from above. And though he always exists alongside the Father, he is proclaimed Son through the Spirit, because he has, in his flesh, been made like [God's] adopted children; and since he has been formed like us, who are subject to God, he calls the Father his own 'God' (John 20:17), even though he himself exists as God. So, too, he is said to have been 'sanctified' (John 17:19), with sanctification coming to the human sphere, indeed involving this very flesh: for human nature is unable to possess sanctification as something coming from within itself.[68]

(b) The second key episode for Cyril's understanding of the role of the incarnate Son in the giving of the Spirit is the scene in John 20:19–23, in which *the risen Jesus* appears in the midst of his astonished disciples on Easter night and *breathes the Holy Spirit upon them.*[69] In a number of his works, Cyril links this scene with the Creator's breathing of the breath of life into the newly-formed Adam, in Genesis 2:7. In his fourth *Dialogue on the Trinity*, for instance, he writes:

> At the same time that human nature was brought into existence by the inexplicable decrees of the divine Craftsman, it was also made beautiful by a relationship to the Spirit. For 'he breathed into his face the breath of life,' since it was impossible for the living creature to have the splendor that comes from holiness and intimacy with God, if he were not made beautiful by sharing in the Holy Spirit. And for that very reason, when the Only-begotten became human, finding human nature bereft of its ancient, original blessing, he was eager to transform it again into that state; and drawing, as it were, from the spring of his own fullness, he said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:22), clearly illustrating by the visible breath of his flesh the nature of the Spirit. The restoration to what was from the beginning, then, will be parallel to that first entry into being . . .[70]

[68] *Dial. Trin.* 6, 591b–d. For other instances of the same argument, see also, *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey vol. 2, pp. 726–7); 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 734–5).

[69] For further references and discussion, see Boulnois, pp. 478–82.

[70] *Dial. Trin.* 4, 532de. See also *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 719–20), where Cyril links Genesis 2:7 and John 20:22 with the 'conformity to the image of the Son' mentioned by Paul in Romans 8:29. Cf. also *In Joel* 35 (Joel 2:28–29:

The significance of Jesus' gesture on that first Easter night, for Cyril, was not only to show the holiness and prophetic power with which the Apostles were necessarily endowed in order to carry out their mission,[71] nor simply to anticipate the bestowal of the Spirit on people of every nation, through the Apostles' witness, at Pentecost,[72] but also to reveal that the risen Jesus is himself the giver of the Spirit, breathing from his own transformed flesh the divine Spirit who eternally 'belongs' to him as divine Son, who 'comes forth' from him because of their shared divine nature:

> Observe, then, dear friend, as a result of this, that the Son is sending forth on us, 'from his own fullness' (John 1:16), the Holy Spirit who is proper to him, who is naturally in him in a way that can never be lost – the Spirit from whom comes 'every good gift' (James 1:17). For when he had risen, having destroyed corruption and shown himself stronger than the bonds of death, he brought us back to a state of holiness and bestowed on the apostles, as the first-fruits of our race, the original beauty of our nature, breathing into their faces and saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:22). But even if 'every perfect gift is from above' and 'from the Father' (James 1:17), still the Son achieves the distribution of these gifts not as a servant, but rather with a power befitting God. How, then, will he afterwards cease from naturally being all the One is who begot him – that is, true God – not simply acquiring illegitimate honors, as a kind of painted image?[73]

In his interpretation of John 20:22, Cyril emphasizes the text's importance precisely as a revelation of the unity and the relationships of the divine Persons:

PG 71, 375c–380a; Pusey, 335–41). In assuming that the first human, in his own nature simply an animal (ζῷον), originally shared in the immortal life of God by the gift of the Spirit and was said, in virtue of that gift, to be made 'in the image of God', and that after humanity lost that gift and image through its own sin, God the Word restored it by becoming human himself, Cyril draws on a theological tradition first elaborated at length by Athanasius in *On the Incarnation*, esp. cc. 4–6, 11–16. It is characteristic of Cyril's theology, however, to refer to that original gift in terms of the bestowal of divine beauty on the human creature.

[71] So, for instance, *In Jo.* 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 131–2); *In Joel* 35 (*PG* 71, 376d–377a; Pusey, 335–6).

[72] *In Jo.* 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 137); *In Joel* 35 (*PG* 71, 376d–377a).

[73] *Dial. Trin.* 3, 494c–e.

> When he revealed the magnificent dignity of the Apostles' mission and of their sacred altars, as I have just said,[74] showing them to be stewards and priests (ἱερουργούς), he immediately sanctified them by giving them his own Spirit through the visible act of breathing, so that we, too, might firmly believe that the Holy Spirit, who is from the Father, is not foreign to the Son, but consubstantial with him, and comes forth (προϊόν) through him.[75]

In fact, Cyril argues later against the Nestorians that one of the key signs that Jesus, as a human who breathes human breath, is himself a divine person, is his ability to give the Spirit to his disciples, 'not by measure' (John 3:34) but in the fullness of bestowal that belongs only to God:

> For he was God by nature, and his Spirit was not alien to him. So we say that the activity of the Spirit was not given to him from without, or as something added to him, as it is in our case or indeed in that of the holy Apostles. For Christ 'gave them authority over unclean spirits' (Matt. 10:1), so that they might drive them out, and he commanded them to heal all kinds of disease and weakness in the people. But his Spirit belongs to him and comes from him. A clear proof of this would be his power to bestow the Spirit on others, 'and not by measure', as the blessed Evangelist says. For the God of all things measured out grace to the saints through the Spirit, and gave to one 'the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge' (1 Cor. 12:8), and to another the gift of healing. And I think this is what it means to say that those who share this activity have power 'by measure'. But our

[74] In the previous section, commenting on John 20:21 ('As the Father has sent me, so I send you'), Cyril has pointed out that the Apostles are chosen by the risen Lord, in this episode, to be 'guides and teachers of the whole world and stewards of his sacred mysteries' (1094a; Pusey, vol. 3, p. 130). The celebration of the Eucharist is clearly central in his understanding of how they and their successors were to fulfill their vocation to make the world holy.

[75] *In Jo.* 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 131–2). A little later on in the same exegetical passage, Cyril makes much the same point again: 'It was necessary that the Son be shown to be the bestower of the Spirit, the one who gives him along with the Father; it was necessary that those who believe in him understand this, since of course he himself is the power of the Father, the creator of this universe, the one who brought the human person from non-being into being. For it was God the Father, through his own Word, who in the beginning took mud from the earth, as it is written, and formed the living being – in other words, the human person – and enlivened him in a way only he knows, and made him beautiful by a share in his own Spirit: "For he breathed into his face the breath of life", as Scripture says' (*Ibid.* 1097bc; Pusey, vol. 3, p. 134)

Lord Jesus Christ, sending forth the Spirit 'from his own fullness' (John 1:16) just as the Father himself does, gives him 'not by measure' to those worthy to possess him.[76]

6

As we have been attempting to show, Cyril's main concern in dealing with the person of the Holy Spirit is to show his natural and substantial unity with both Father and Son, and the consequent ability of Jesus, as the Son of God who has 'emptied himself' to take on human 'flesh' and assume substantial unity with the whole of humanity, to bestow the Spirit in fullness as belonging properly to him. This was the point of the ninth anathema of his challenging 'third letter' to Nestorius,[77] and of Cyril's extended defense of this thesis in the bitter controversy that followed.[78] Although the immediate focus of the controversy was how rightly to conceive and express the personal and natural identity of Christ the Savior, the issue was as much Trinitarian and soteriological, even ecclesiological and anthropological, as it was 'simply' a matter of Christology. At stake for Cyril was a right understanding of just what it means for humanity that Jesus, named at his baptism 'beloved Son', received the Spirit at that moment, and breathed the Spirit forth on his disciples on Easter night: by actually becoming one of us, by receiving the Spirit into our flesh

[76] *C. Nest.* 4.1, 99a (Pusey, 181). The five books against Nestorius seem to have been written during the early part of Cyril's controversy with him, in the spring of 430. They are, at any rate, a few years later than the *Thesaurus* and the *Dialogues on the Trinity*, as well as the biblical commentaries.

[77] The full text of this passage runs: 'If anyone says that the one Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, as making use of an alien power that worked through him, and received from him [the Spirit] the power to prevail over unclean spirits and to accomplish divine wonders among us, and does not rather say that it was his own Spirit, through whom also he worked the divine wonders, let him be anathema' (*ACO* I, 1, 1.41.17–20; Pusey 6, 36–38; trans. Edward R. Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers* [Library of Christian Classics 3; Westminster: Philadelphia, 1954], p. 354).

[78] In defense of these anathemas or 'chapters', Cyril wrote an *Explanation of the Twelve Chapters* (*ACO* I, 1, 5.15–25); an *Apology* directed against the 'Oriental' bishops (principally Andrew of Samosata) who had attacked them (*ACO* I, 1, 7.33–65), and another *Apology* against the critique of Theodoret of Cyrus (*ACO* I, 1, 6.107–146). All seem to have been composed during the year 431, and all are contained in the edition of Pusey, vol. 6.

and communicating it to the founders of the Church in which we live and worship, God the Son has made it possible for humanity once again to share – by participation, yet genuinely, even substantially – in the life of God.[79] Cyril includes the following exchange in his seventh *Dialogue*:

> A: Is the Spirit, then, consubstantial with the Father and the Son?
>
> B: Certainly, since it is not otherwise possible for the holy ones to be enriched by participating in God than by receiving the Spirit. For we are made perfect by becoming 'sharers in the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4), as Scripture says. Does this mean being bound together by some created, generate nature, or rather is it truly gaining a share, as far as possible, in the divinity, and so being called the race of God?
>
> A: If one cannot catch fire apart from fire, how could one share in the divinity except by means of God?[80]

By receiving God's own Holy Spirit from Christ, in other words, the believer becomes himself or herself not simply a transformed creature, but a participant in God; and the effect of this astonishing gift is not simply individual but ecclesial: all those who receive the Spirit are 'bound together' with Christ as a new race, a new humanity, a new Body.

Cyril develops his broad view of the implications of the Incarnation, including this gift by Christ of his Spirit, in an extended and powerful passage in his *Commentary on John*, commenting on Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples in John 17:20–21:

> Come, then, let us consider again how it is that we, too, find ourselves to be one, both in body and in spirit, with each other and with God. Shining forth for us from the very substance of God the Father, the Only-begotten, who possessed completely within his own nature the one who begot him, 'became flesh', in the words of Scripture, mingling himself, as it were, with our nature through the ineffable conjunction and union with this very body made from earth; so it is that he who is God by nature came to be called, and truly was, 'the heavenly man' (1 Cor. 15:47) – not just a 'God-bearer', as some would have it who do not correctly understand the depth of the Mystery! He

[79] For a detailed consideration of Cyril's understanding of divinization, see Daniel Keating, 'Divinization in Cyril: the Appropriation of Divine Life', in this volume.

[80] *Dial. Trin.* 7, 637bc.

came to be at once God and a human being, so that by joining together in himself things that are widely separate in nature and have diverged from all kinship with each other, he might reveal humanity as a participant and 'sharer in the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4). And the presence and 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor. 13:14) has also come upon us, taking its beginning through Christ and first of all in Christ, when he was recognized as one of us – that is, as a human being – and was anointed and sanctified [that is, by the Spirit], even though, as he appeared from the Father, he is God by nature; he sanctified his own temple with his own Spirit, along with the whole of nature which had come into existence through him – something that stood in need of sanctification. So the Mystery of Christ has come into being as a kind of beginning, a way for us to share in the Holy Spirit and in unity with God: all of us are made holy in that Mystery, in the way I have already outlined.

That we might, then, come together into unity with God and each other, and might ourselves be mingled as one, even though we stand apart individually in our souls and bodies by the differences we recognize in each of us, the Only-begotten contrived a way, devised by the wisdom that is his own and by the will of the Father: blessing (εὐλογῶν)[81] those who believe in him, by a single body – namely, his own – through sacramental sharing, he made them into members of a single body (συσσώμους) with himself and with each other. For who could separate, or drive out of natural unity with each other, those who are bound through the one holy body into unity with Christ? For if 'we all share in the one bread' (1 Cor. 10:17), we have all been made into one body, since it is impossible that Christ should be divided. For this reason, the Church is also named 'the body of Christ, and we individually are its members' (1 Cor. 12:27), according to the understanding of Paul. For all of us are unified with Christ through his holy body, since we take him, undivided, into our own bodies, and our own members belong more truly to him than to ourselves.

[Cyril then quotes several passages from Paul at length.]

If all of us form one body with each other in Christ – and not just with each other, but also with him, because he comes to be in us through his own flesh – how is it that we are not all yet clearly one, in each other and in Christ? For Christ is the bond of unity, being at

[81] This word, whose primary meaning is 'bless', is also, by Cyril's time, the technical term for the consecration of the Eucharistic elements; Cyril sees the institution of the Eucharist as the primary means by which Christ 'blesses' his people with unity, both with each other and with the Trinity.

> once God and a human being! And as for unity in the Spirit, we will quickly follow the same path of reasoning and say once again that having all received one and the same Spirit – the Holy Spirit – we are mixed together, in a certain way, both with each other and with God. For if, though we are individually many, Christ has made the Spirit of his Father, who is also his own Spirit, to dwell in us, yet he [= the Spirit] is one and undivided, then the Spirit will, through his own action, bind into a unity of existence spirits that are cut off from unity with each other as far as their being goes, and will make all of them appear as one thing in him. For just as the power of the holy flesh[82] forms into a single body those in whom it comes to be, so in the same way, I think, the one Spirit of God, dwelling undivided in them all, brings all into unity of spirit.[83]

It is precisely the unity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son – even with the incarnate Son – in the Mystery of the Triune divine being, in Cyril's understanding, that makes possible the human unity with God and with each other that is the fullness of Christ's gift.

Cyril on the origin of the Spirit

In the Middle Ages and even more recently, as we mentioned before, Cyril has been invoked as an authority by defenders of both the Eastern and Western theologies of the personal origin of the Spirit. As we have seen, however, Cyril never treats this question extensively or in isolation; more importantly for later debates, he never directly considers the precise question of just what personal and ontological role the Son plays in that eternal origin, as distinguished from his role as bestower of the Spirit in the history of salvation. Although, as we have pointed out, he is usually careful to restrict his use of the word 'proceed' (ἐκπορεύεσθαι) to the Spirit's ultimate origin in the Father, who is the 'spring' of the godhead[84] – doubtless because he is aware of the influential choice of the Cappadocians and the Fathers at Constantinople in 381 to restrict themselves to the language of

[82] That is in the Eucharist.

[83] *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 734–7).

[84] *Dial. Trin.* 7,656b; *Epistle on the Creed* (*Ep.* 55: *ACO* I, 1, 4.60; *PG* 77, 316d–317a), in which Cyril is commenting on the Nicene creed, but seems to interpret it in the light of the formula of Constantinople, even though he makes no mention of the latter.

John 15:26 – Cyril in fact rarely uses this term at all, and spends much more time insisting that the Spirit 'comes forth' (πρόεισι) – a less precise, or at least a less technical term – *from* the common *substance of God*,[85] *from* the *substance of the Father*[86] or of the *Son*,[87] *from* the Father *and* the Son,[88] *from* the Father *through* the Son,[89] *through both* Father and Son,[90] or simply *through the Son*.[91] As Boulnois observes, Cyril is not primarily interested in developing a precise theological description of the personal or hypostatic origin of the Spirit, let alone of the mutual relations of the hypostases in the Trinity; he is, instead, concerned to insist, against Arians and Antiochenes, that the Spirit truly comes from, and shares, the divine substance which Father and Son possess as their own, and that the Spirit therefore properly 'belongs to' the Son, even in his incarnate state, and so is both received and sent forth by Jesus as 'his own'.[92] Because his concerns are at once more soteriological and more christological than they are 'Trinitarian' in an isolated sense, Cyril can sound vague and even can appear to contradict himself, when speaking of relations within the Trinity; Boulnois speaks of the 'fluid', even 'ambiguous' character of Cyril's language about the origin of the Spirit, despite the fact that he discusses the role and status of the Spirit perhaps more extensively, and with greater attention to scriptural detail, than any other of the Greek Fathers.[93]

Nevertheless, Cyril's greatest concern seems to have been to oppose any conception of the Spirit's origin that would so emphasize the Father as implicitly to relegate the Son to an auxiliary or subordinate role in the work of salvation, which the Spirit brings

[85] For example, *Thes.* 34 (*PG* 75, 585a).

[86] For example, *In Jo.* 15:26–27 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 607).

[87] For example, *In Jo.* 14:12–13 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 628).

[88] *Thes.* 34 (*PG* 75, 585a).

[89] *In Jo.* 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 131); *C. Nest.* 4.3, 105d.

[90] *De Recta Fide ad Pulch. et Eud.* 172c.

[91] *In Jo.* 15:26–27 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 607); 14:12–13 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 629); 14:14 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 635, 636). For these and other references to Cyril's use of 'come forth' for the origin of the Spirit, see Boulnois, p. 525.

[92] Boulnois, p. 527. On Cyril's terminology in the question of the origin of the Spirit, see also Berthold (above, n. 8).

[93] Boulnois, p. 527. Speaking of Cyril's formulations of the Spirit's origin, Boulnois writes that they tend to have 'un caractère lapidaire qui rend difficile leur interprétation et incite à la prudence. Ce sont des amorces, des intuitions esquissés' (*Ibid.*).

to full realization. So in his *Commentary on John*, precisely in the course of his exegesis of John 15:26 ('the Counselor whom I will send you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father'), Cyril, in a unique usage, goes out of his way to emphasize the unity and parallel status of Son and Spirit by speaking of the *Son's* 'proceeding' from the Father, also:

> For if the Son bestows (χορηγεῖ) the Spirit completely from (παρὰ) the Father, and is considered to be in the position of some subordinate [in doing so], how can we escape confessing that the Spirit is completely foreign to his [= the Son's] substance, perhaps even superior to him and much more powerful, if that is the way things are, according to your ignorance? For if the Son does not, in your view, proceed (ἐκπορεύεται) from the Father – that is, from his substance – how could the Spirit not be reckoned to be superior in comparison with the Son? What then shall we say, when we hear him [= the Son] saying of him [= the Spirit], 'He will glorify me, because he will take of what is mine and will proclaim it to you' (John 16:14).[94]

Cyril seems to be deliberately using the now-canonical terminology for the Spirit's origin to denote the Son's origin, as well, and so to identify both in terms of unity of substance and equality of status within the divine Mystery. In doing so, he shows concern about the negative implications of what would later be called a 'monopatrist' position on the origin of the Spirit: in the terms of the debates in which he was engaged, it could be taken to suggest that Son and Spirit participate in different degrees in the one saving Mystery of God, which flows from the Father.

In another passage of the same commentary, explaining Jesus' words in John 14:26 ('[the Spirit] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you'), Cyril even steers surprisingly close to Augustine's famous 'psychological analogy' for the unity-in-trinity which is God:

> For since he is the Spirit of Christ and his 'mind', according to Scripture (1 Cor. 2:16), in that he is not some other thing alongside him, he knows all that is in him [= Christ] according to the principle of natural identity (κατά γε τὸν ἐν ταυτότητι φυσικῇ λόγου), even though he is understood to be, and does exist, on his own. Paul bears witness to this when he says, 'Who knows a person's thoughts, except the spirit of the person which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts

[94] *In Jo.* 15:26–27 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 628).

> of God except the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. 2:11). So then, since he knows what is in the will of the Only-begotten, he proclaims it all to us. He does not acquire his knowledge by learning, lest he should appear to be playing the role of a servant – carrying the messages, perhaps, of another – but as his [= Christ's] own Spirit, as we have just said; and knowing without being taught everything from which and in which he exists, he reveals the divine mysteries to the saints, just as the human mind, too, surely knows everything that is in it, and conveys outwards – perhaps through an uttered word – the wishes of the soul of which it is the mind. It is regarded by our thought, and spoken of, as something other, alongside the soul; it is not different in nature, however, but is a constituent part (μόριον συμπληρωτικόν) of the whole, existing within it and understood to issue forth from it.[95]

Yet Cyril's point here, once again, is not so much to suggest a possible comprehensive model for conceiving God as a radically simple spiritual substance which – like our own inner selves – is irreducibly threefold, as to drive home, on the basis of a text from 1 Corinthians as well as of the Johannine text on which he is commenting, the substantial unity of the divine Persons and their constant dynamic interaction in the work of salvation, as a way of resisting any Arian or subordinationist theological schemes.

While not being a 'filioquist', then, in the precise sense of the later controversies, Cyril does show a tendency, unusual in the Greek theological tradition, to stress the Son's role, alongside that of the Father, in being genuinely the source of the Holy Spirit. The reason for this role of the Son, Cyril often repeats, is his unity of substance with the Father, a fully divine status which the Son has himself received in being begotten.[96] Nor is it helpful to apply to Cyril's thought on the Spirit a distinction often found in Greek

[95] *In Jo.* 14:25–26 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 506–7).

[96] See for example, *In Jo.* 16:15 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 638): 'God [the Father] does not associate with creation in any other way but through the Son in the Spirit. But this Spirit is also proper to the Only-begotten, for he is consubstantial with the Father.' Cf. *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 718–19): 'the Spirit is proper to God the Father, but is no less proper to the Son . . . Since the Son is naturally from the Father and in the Father, being the true fruit of his substance, he brings forth (ἐπάγεται) the Spirit that is proper to the Father; he [the Spirit] is poured out from the Father, but bestowed on creation through the Son himself, not in some subservient way . . . but as we have just said, issuing forth from the substance of God the Father and poured on those worthy to receive him through the Word, who is consubstantial [with the Father?] and has caused [the Spirit] to appear

theology since Photius: that the Spirit can rightly be said to come 'from the Son' with regard to his mission in sacred history, even though within God he proceeds 'from the Father alone'. As we have seen repeatedly here, Cyril avoids and even outright rejects any way of thinking or speaking about God that might appear to drive a wedge between God's being in itself and God's action in history, through Christ and the Spirit, to create, to save, and to sanctify. The rhetorical force of his argument, both against Arian views and against the more overtly orthodox conceptions of his Antiochene opponents, is rather to emphasize that the single, divine, transcendent being is one with his historical manifestation in the person of Jesus and the Mysteries of the Church – that God acts in history as God is.[97] For this reason, as Mme Boulnois observes, 'it is impossible that the missions of the Son and the Spirit in the divine economy should not reveal, at least partially, their own proper mode of being'.[98]

In the midst of his rich and complex reflections on the divine Trinity, radically anchored as they are in his powerfully realistic understanding of God's saving and active presence, through Christ and the Spirit, in human history and in the life of the Church, Cyril provides us with no direct solutions to the long debate between Eastern and Western theology about the proper way to conceive of the Spirit's origin within the Mystery of God. He does, however, offer us a breadth and depth of perspective that leads us well beyond that quarrel, towards a livelier and more concrete understanding of the intimate working of the Spirit in the human heart, as God's presence brought to its fullness. Perhaps it might have been better for both branches of the later theological tradition if they had simply remained within the complex, ambiguous richness of Cyril's Trinitarian thought.

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from himself, in a way that reveals him to exist on his own, yet remaining and always existing in him [the Son], at once both continuous and, as it were, distinct.'

[97] See Boulnois, pp. 504–11, esp. p. 505: 'La manière dont chacune des personnes de la Trinité entre en contact avec l'homme correspond à son mode d'existence propre ... Pour conserver un sens à l'adoption filiale et à la divinisation de l'homme, il est nécessaire de considérer que cette économie divine s'ancre dans les relations éternelles intra-trinitaires et qu'elle les révèle.'

[98] Boulnois, p. 505: '... il est impossible que les missions économiques du Fils et de l'Esprit ne révèlent pas, au moins partiellement, leur mode d'être propre'.

Chapter 6

Divinization in Cyril: The Appropriation of Divine Life

DANIEL A. KEATING

Cyril of Alexandria has often been identified as the theologian *par excellence* of what is variously termed 'divinization', 'deification', or '*theosis*'. One survey of this doctrine in the early church concludes that 'the doctrine of divinization in Cyril of Alexandria appears, in fact, as the sum of all that the previous Fathers wrote on this subject'.[1] Another study favorably cites the view that 'Cyril brings the doctrine of deification ... to full maturity'.[2] Other scholars have judged that Cyril 'probably represents the pinnacle in the development of teaching on *theosis*',[3] and that 'Cyril's magnificent doctrine on sanctification and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the justified souls recapitulates the whole Greek theology of *theopoiesis*, deification'.[4]

These claims, however, must be reconciled with the surprising fact that Cyril only rarely employs the technical terminology of divinization (θεοποιέω/θεοποίησις) which was so well established in the Alexandrian theological tradition and was widely employed

[1] J. Gross, *La divinisation du chrétien d'après les Pères grecs* (Paris: Gabalda, 1938), p. 297.

[2] N. Russell, 'The Concept of Deification in the Early Greek Fathers' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, 1988), p. 436.

[3] P. B. T. Bilaniuk, 'The Mystery of *Theosis* or Divinization', in *The Heritage of the Early Church*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 195 (1973), p. 351.

[4] Peter Phan, *Grace and the Human Condition* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), p. 152.

by Athanasius before him.[5] If Cyril is such a master of the doctrine of divinization, why does he so cautiously and infrequently employ its technical vocabulary? I will offer below a proposal for resolving this incongruity, but it would appear that an investigation into Cyril's doctrine of divinization requires a different starting point than his use of the technical vocabulary. As an entrée into Cyril's account of divinization, I have identified – and propose to trace – what may be termed Cyril's 'narrative of divine life'. The following selections exhibit the manner in which Cyril employs this narrative of divine life to link the inter-Trinitarian life of God with our reception of that life through the Incarnate Word and in the Spirit:

> For God the Father is Life by nature, and as alone being so, he caused the Son to shine forth who also himself is Life; for it could not be otherwise with the Word that proceeds substantially from Life. For he must, I say must, also himself be Life, as being one who sprang forth from Life, from him who begat him. God the Father therefore gives life to all things through the Son in the Holy Spirit. And everything that exists and breathes in heaven and on earth, its existence and life is from God the Father by the Son in the Holy Spirit. Therefore neither the nature of angels, nor anything else whatsoever that was made, nor aught that from non-existence was brought into being, possesses life as the fruit of its own nature. But on the contrary, life proceeds, as I said, from the substance which transcends all, and to it

[5] In a survey of Cyril's works which may well be incomplete, I have located – with the help of N. Russell and a computer search – only eighteen texts in Cyril's entire corpus which employ the characteristic vocabulary of divinization, nine of which apply in some sense to our divinization in Christ: *Thes.* 25 (*PG* 75, 45a); *Thes.* 168 (*PG* 75, 284b); *Thes.* 196 (*PG* 75, 333a); *Thes.* 197 (*PG* 75, 333c); *Thes.* 251 (*PG* 75, 428c); *Thes.* 289 (*PG* 75, 492b); *Thes.* 335 (*PG* 75, 569c); *Dial. Trin.* VII, 640a (G. M. de Durand, *Dialogues sur la Trinité*, vol. 3, p. 166); *Dial. Trin.* VII, 644c–d (Durand, p. 180); *In Is.* 40:23–24 (*PG* 70, 816c); *In Is.* 44:13–20 (*PG* 70, 933a); *In Matt.* 5:33–35 (J. Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, p. 172); *Hom. pasch.* XIII (*SC* 434, p. 114); *In Matt.* 22:34–40 (Reuss, pp. 238–9); *C. Nest.* 2, 8–11 (*ACO* 1, 1, 6, pp. 44, 46, 48, 49); *Scholia* 12 (*ACO* 1, 5, p. 192); *Ep.* 50.7–8 (To Valerian) (*ACO* 1, 1, 3, pp. 92–3); *Quod Unus* 742d (G. M. de Durand, *Deux Dialogues Christologiques*, p. 396). See Russell, 'The Concept of Deification', for an excellent treatment of the characteristic Christian vocabulary of deification (pp. 14–43), and of the use of this vocabulary in the Alexandrian tradition, inclusive of Clement, Origen, Athanasius, Apollinaris and Didymus (pp. 221–360).

only [Life] belongs, and is possible that it can give life, because it is Life by nature.[6]

It was not otherwise possible for man, being of a nature which perishes, to escape death, unless he recovered that ancient grace, and partook once more of God who holds all things together in being and preserves them in life through the Son in the Spirit. Therefore his Only-begotten Word has become a partaker of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), that is, he has become man – though being Life by nature, and begotten of the Life that is by nature, that is, of God the Father – so that, having united himself with the flesh which perishes according to the law of its own nature, . . . he might restore it to his own life and render it through himself a partaker of God the Father. . . . And he wears our nature, refashioning it to his own life. And he himself is also in us, for we have all become partakers of him, and have him in ourselves through the Spirit. For this reason we have become 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4), and are reckoned as sons, and so too have in ourselves the Father himself through the Son.[7]

Within these densely constructed sentences we find a compressed account of the Trinity, of creation, of the Incarnation of the Word, and of the sanctifying work of the Spirit, all put at the service of the transmission of divine life to the human race. I call this a 'narrative' of divine life because of the sense of the movement or passage of life itself within the narrative of salvation: a movement first from the Father to the Son and the Spirit (who each possess this life *by nature*), and then through the Son and the Spirit – in creation and in the Incarnation and redemption – to the human race. This narrative not only depicts salvation as the outworking of the life of the Triune God; it also casts the goal and end of salvation in terms of participation in this same divine life. Cyril can describe salvation under many forms, and he employs the full panoply of biblical language to express what the human

[6] *In Luc.* 22:17–22, *Commentary on the Gospel of St Luke by Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, trans. R. Payne Smith ([n. pl.], Studion, 1983), p. 569 [first published by Oxford University Press, 1859].

[7] *In Jo.* 14:20, *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini in d. Joannis Evangelium*, vol. 2, ed. P. E. Pusey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), pp. 485–6. English translations of Cyril's *Commentary on John* are my own.

race has attained in Christ.[8] But perhaps his most characteristic way of depicting salvation – and the way most comprehensive of his whole theology – is through this 'narrative of divine life'.[9]

The study here will follow the logical structure of Cyril's narrative of divine life, beginning with the appearance of that life in the Incarnate Word and proceeding to the full human appropriation of the divine life. Towards this end, I will examine in turn: (1) the shape of the divine plan of salvation in Cyril; (2) the means by which the gift of divine life is appropriated to us by Christ; (3) human reception of, and progress in, the divine life; and (4) the ontological implications of Cyril's repeated claim that in Christ we have become 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4). In order to illustrate the biblical grounding of each stage of the narrative in Cyril's account of divinization (and additionally to show Cyril's capacity as a biblical exegete), I will discuss in some detail selected texts from Cyril's *Commentary on John*.

The divine plan of salvation

We will take Cyril's exposition of the baptism of Jesus in John's Gospel as our starting point.[10] This event uniquely captures and reveals for Cyril the entire economy of salvation.[11] The baptism of Jesus, in Cyril's hands, comes to signify the re-creation of the

[8] See J. L. McInerney, 'Soteriological Commonplaces in Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel of John', in *Disciplina Nostra*, ed. D. F. Winslow (Philadelphia: Patristic Foundation, 1979), pp. 179–85.

[9] Cyril's characteristic emphasis on divine life is neatly displayed in his commentary on Hebrews 1:3 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 367), where he appends a parallel statement on 'life' to his paraphrase of the article from the Creed of Nicaea: 'For he is true God from true God, light from light, *and equally life from life* (ζωή τε ὁμοίως ἐκ ζωῆς)' (emphasis added).

[10] *In Jo.* 1:32–33 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 174–90).

[11] Marie-Odile Boulnois, 'Le souffle et l'Esprit: Exégèses patristiques de l'insufflation originelle de *Gen* 2,7 en lien avec celle de *Jn* 20,22', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 24 (1989), p. 33: 'The exegesis of the baptism of Christ is one of the keystones of Cyrilline theology, at the junction of his anthropology, his Christology, and his trinitarian theology.' For a more thorough discussion of Cyril's treatment of the baptism of Jesus, see Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 127–42; and my article, 'The Baptism of Jesus in Cyril of Alexandria: the Re-Creation of the Human Race', *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (1999), pp. 201–22.

human race, pointing back, as it were, to the creation of Adam, and pointing forward to the completion of the re-creation of humanity in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Cyril's exposition of the baptism of Jesus also presents the Incarnate Word as both agent and recipient of salvation, and establishes the central place of the gift of the Spirit in the narrative of divine life.

The baptism of Jesus already possessed a long and varied interpretative history in patristic theology, which Cyril draws upon and develops in his own characteristic manner. The particular theological problem surrounding the baptism of Jesus, especially for the post-Nicene Fathers, was an 'adoptionistic' reading of this text. According to the adoptionist account, Jesus' anointing by the Spirit was interpreted as the event in which he *came to be* the Son of God. This by implication denied his eternal divine sonship. Given such a theological climate, it is all the more remarkable that Cyril emphasizes the centrality of the baptism of Jesus, even as he defends it against adoptionist readings.

Cyril begins his exposition by underlining the reliability of John's witness to the events surrounding the baptism of Jesus. His use of the perfect tense of the verb, 'to remain' (μένειν), in his paraphrase of the text already hints at the direction his exposition will take. The Spirit did not merely descend (ἔμεινεν) upon Jesus, but importantly *has remained* (μεμένηκεν) upon him.[12] The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus, as Cyril will expound it, is not simply a single past event; rather, it has inaugurated an ongoing state of affairs, one which has great significance for the human race.

The exposition is interrupted at this point by the voice of an Arian opponent, who seeks to make use of the descent of the Spirit on Jesus at his baptism in order to demonstrate that the Son required sanctification, and so is not fully divine. Cyril's anticipation of the Arian objection here, prior to the exposition of the event of the baptism itself, is not a tangential matter. If he is to explain the text in a way consistent with Nicene orthodoxy, against an adoptionist reading, this Arian objection must be decisively refuted. The substance of Cyril's rebuttal is that the baptism reveals the Son receiving the Spirit 'as man' for our sake, according to the economy. What the Son eternally possesses as God he now receives for us as man. If, Cyril argues, Jesus is first sanctified at the Jordan,

[12] Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 174–5.

then his emptying as recorded in Philippians 2:7 is rendered void. Instead of being emptied in the Incarnation, he would have actually gained something by receiving as man what he did not have before. But for Cyril this would reverse the point of 2 Corinthians 8:9, 'that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich'.[13] The adoptionist interpretation clearly contradicts the biblical revelation of the Incarnation and must be rejected.

Cyril then exposits Jesus's baptism itself by appealing to two aspects of the creation in Genesis 1–2. First, Cyril reminds us that the human race was made 'in the image and likeness of God' (Gen. 1:27). Secondly, he interprets Genesis 2:7, 'And he breathed into his face the breath of life', as the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit. The first man was sealed in the divine image by the Spirit who was at the same time 'putting life' into the first man, and stamping him with his own 'features' in a divine manner.[14] Cyril seemingly has in mind a two-stage process here, or at least two distinguishable aspects of the one creation: (1) the first man is made in the image and likeness of God; (2) the Spirit breathes life into him, impressing his own divine characteristics upon him.[15] Although the relationship between these two actions is not further specified here, a selection from his commentary on John 14:20 clarifies Cyril's conception of the creation of Adam and the divine inbreathing:

> No one, I deem, rightly minded would suppose that the inbreathing which proceeded from the divine essence became the creature's soul, but that after the creature was ensouled, or rather had attained to the distinctive property of its perfect nature by means of both – I mean of course, soul and body – then like a seal of his own nature the Creator impressed on it the Holy Spirit, that is, the breath of life, through which it was being moulded to the archetypal beauty, and was being perfected according to the image of the one who created it, being established for every kind of excellence, by virtue of the Spirit given to dwell in it.[16]

The recovery of the divine image in us is, therefore, not simply the recasting of our deformed nature, though this is also an integral

[13] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 181.
[14] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 182.
[15] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 182.
[16] *In Jo.* 14:20 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 485).

part of Cyril's conception. It necessarily involves the re-acquisition of the divine *life* through the Spirit.[17]

Cyril then identifies a third aspect of the original creation, the giving of 'the commandment which preserves' to the 'reasonable living creature'. The mention of the commandment underlines the moral element of the created order, and so the moral capacity and responsibility of the first man. Cyril presents Adam in Paradise, 'still carefully guarding the gift, and illustrious in the divine image of the one who made him, through the Holy Spirit given to dwell within'.[18] The divine image is in this sense a gift, properly granted and guaranteed by the indwelling Holy Spirit, a gift which requires an ethical preservation lest it be squandered.

An account of the Fall follows: the man, tricked by the deceits of the devil, despises his creator, and by trampling on the law marked out for him, impugns the grace given to him and hears the sentence, 'Dust you are and to dust you shall return', as the penalty for his sin. The divine likeness, curiously, is not in Cyril's view forfeited all at once. Rather, through the inroads of sin it loses its brightness, becoming fainter and darkened over time. This detail of Cyril's treatment of the Fall is unusual. As the human race multiplies and sin comes into dominance, 'nature is stripped of the ancient grace' and 'the Spirit departs altogether'.[19] Corruption and death follow directly upon Adam's transgression, but the complete loss of the original gift of the Spirit occurs only by stages. And crucially, the final stripping of grace is marked by the decisive departure of the Holy Spirit. It is noteworthy that the creation and Fall are cast here in terms of the gift of the Holy Spirit and its subsequent loss. Other traditional elements are included, but the decisive feature of Cyril's account is the acquisition and forfeiture of the Holy Spirit.

It comes as no surprise that the re-acquisition of the Spirit figures prominently in Cyril's account of the redemption. God in his

[17] See Marie-Odile Boulnois, 'Le souffle et l'Esprit', pp. 3–37, for a monograph on the interpretation of Genesis 2:7 in the Church Fathers. She shows that Cyril's position, though not unique, is certainly in the minority, and she concludes that Cyril is more interested in this text than any other ancient Christian writer, and therefore that 'we are then in the presence of a major theme in the anthropology of Cyril' (p. 30).

[18] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 183.

[19] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 183.

goodness determines to transform human nature anew through the Spirit, 'for it was not otherwise possible for the divine features to shine out in him again, as they did previously'. And in order to show how 'the Spirit was again rooted in the human race, and in what manner human nature was renewed to that of old', Cyril re-tells the story of the creation and Fall, positioning the baptism of Jesus within the narrative as the decisive event for the re-acquisition of the Spirit. The incarnate Word receives the Spirit at the Jordan, Cyril assures us, not for himself, but for us and 'as one of us'. The very one who is 'the supplier of the Spirit', receives it as man, so that 'he might preserve' the Spirit 'for our nature', and so that the original grace might once again be rooted in us.[20] For Cyril, the 'remaining' of the Spirit on Jesus is more than just the anointing of an individual, even the promised Messiah. The descent of the Spirit on Christ represents *the* decisive return of the Spirit to the human race, now abiding in one who can reliably 'preserve it'. The Spirit 'flew away' (ἀπέπτη) from the human race in the first Adam because of sin, and now, in the form of a dove, settles back upon the human race in the second Adam. The use of the verb, ἀποπέτομαι ('fly away'), for the departure of the Spirit, playing on the figure of a dove, allusively links the two narratives, showing the descent of the Spirit on Jesus as the reversal of the flight of the Spirit from Adam and his descendants.[21]

Structurally, Cyril's exposition of the baptism of Jesus is built around a central soteriological frame (the descent of the Spirit and its significance for manifesting the plan of redemption through the Incarnation), flanked on either side by properly Trinitarian issues. From Cyril's perspective, these Trinitarian questions must be clarified if the text is to be rightly interpreted, and in this sense the baptism of Jesus manifests inter-Trinitarian relationships and the united working of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the 'economy' of redemption. But the central frame of the baptism is not concerned with a revelation of the Trinity as it might be in traditional liturgical celebrations for the feast of Epiphany. For Cyril, the centerpiece is the plan of redemption and especially the

[20] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 184.

[21] In *Scholia* 1 (*ACO* 1, 5, pp. 219–20), Cyril employs the neat parallelism of the metaphor: the Spirit 'flew away' (ἀπέπτη) from Adam, but 'alighted' (κατέπτη) upon Christ.

re-creation of the human race through the re-acquisition of the Spirit in and through the Incarnate Word. Cyril makes this descent of the Spirit the focus of his exposition, drawing on the Johannine mention of the Spirit 'remaining' on Jesus as the key notion that unlocks what he understands to be signified in the text, namely, the decisive return of the Spirit to the human race.[22]

Cyril plainly reads this text in the light of Paul's Adam–Christ typology (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:20–22, 44–49), enabling him to accomplish two ends at once. First, by viewing Christ as a representative man, Cyril resolves the exegetical *crux* of why Christ submitted to baptism: he did so not for himself – for being the Son of God he required nothing – but for us, as the firstfruits of the 'new' human race. Secondly, the Adam–Christ typology also enables Cyril to unfold from this one event the overall scope of the plan of redemption. By viewing the baptism of Jesus in this light, Cyril transfers the significance of the text from Jesus's own career *per se* to a revelation of the redemption of the human race. Cyril envisages the Adam–Christ typology in such a way that Christ becomes, in his capacity as the Second Adam, not only the *agent* but also the *recipient* of redemption, though it is the latter role which predominates here. On this view, the Incarnation is more than a means whereby God has access to the human race and can accomplish a work of salvation in us. Christ also carries out the work of redemption and re-creation upon himself, as representing in himself the new humanity.[23]

[22] This feature of Cyril's interpretation of Jesus's baptism is found also in his commentary *In Is.* 11:1–3 (*PG* 70, 313a-d) and *In Jo.* 2:28–29 (Pusey, *In XII Proph.*, vol. 1, p. 338). In the former, Cyril explicitly correlates Is. 11:2, 'The Spirit of God shall rest upon (ἀναπαύσεται) him', with John 1:32, 'and [the Spirit] remained [ἔμεινεν] on him', in order to explain Jesus's economic reception of the Spirit for us. In the latter commentary, Cyril cites John 1:32, again with the perfect form of the verb, μεμένηκεν, to describe how Christ, the Second Adam, has preserved for us the Spirit which the First Adam impugned.

[23] Cyril's exposition of the baptism of Jesus in Luke (Payne Smith, pp. 78–81) offers a useful comparison to his treatment of the baptism of Jesus in John. Here Christ as pattern for us in our baptism dominates the first part of Cyril's exposition. But in the second part, when treating of the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Spirit and the address of the Father to the Son, Cyril returns to the Adam–Christ parallel in which Christ acts as representative man for the human race. In Cyril's handling of Luke, we see Christ as pattern for us and Christ as representative of the human race standing side-by-side in one exposition.

If the baptism of Jesus displays in a particularly poignant way the divine plan of salvation in Cyril, other events in the life of Christ are essential for the completion of that plan. In Cyril's view, our human nature, which received the Spirit in Christ at his baptism, is only fully renewed in Christ's resurrection.[24] Cyril's commentary on John 20:22–23 – Jesus breathing the Spirit upon the disciples on Easter day – exhibits with particular clarity this progressive restoration of human nature:

> And how did the Son restore [humankind]? By slaying death through the death of his holy flesh, and raising up the human race to a mounting incorruption. For Christ was raised for our sake. Therefore, in order that we might learn that it is *this* one who was the creator of our nature in the beginning, and who sealed us by the Holy Spirit, the Savior again for us bestows the Spirit through a visible inbreathing on the holy disciples, as on the firstfruits of our renewed nature. For Moses writes concerning our creation of old, that he breathed into his face the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). As therefore from the beginning he was fashioned and came to be, so too is he renewed. And just as then he was formed in the image of his creator, so too now, through participation in the Spirit, he is re-fashioned to the likeness of his maker.[25]

As Christ in his baptism is the firstfruits of our sanctification, this select number of apostles on Easter day become the firstfruits of the reception of the Spirit. The one who featured as the *recipient* of the Spirit in the baptism at the Jordan is now displayed prominently as the *giver* of the Spirit. As the Spirit was breathed into Adam, so the Spirit returns upon the Second Adam at the Jordan, Christ receiving it as a firstfruits for us. But as the Second Adam, Christ is also a 'life-giving Spirit' (1 Cor. 15:49), and so gives the Spirit to the disciples.

The divine plan of salvation is not complete for Cyril, however, without Christ's ascension and enthronement in heaven in bodily form:[26]

[24] Cyril's commentary on John 7:39 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 690–8) shows that the resurrection of Christ is required for the full transformation of human nature and for the gift of the Spirit to be given to us.

[25] *In Jo.* 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 135).

[26] For a defense of a concrete, biblically-grounded universal humanity in Cyril's view of Christ, against the reading that interprets Cyril's view of Christ's humanity according to a Platonic universal, see my thesis, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria' (Oxford University, 2000), pp. 46–52.

> It was necessary, then, to lead human nature up to the summit of all good, and not only to set it free from death and sin, but to raise it already even to the heavens themselves, and to display man a sharer and fellow worshipper with the angels. And just as by his own resurrection he opened a new way for us to be able to escape from corruption, so it was necessary to open for us the passage heavenwards too, and to set in the presence of the Father the one who had been expelled from his countenance because of Adam's transgression. . . . He places us in the presence of the Father, having departed into heaven as the firstfruits of humanity. For just as, being himself Life by nature, he is said to have died and risen again for our sake, so too, ever beholding his own Father, and in turn also being seen by his own Father, he is said to be manifested now (that is, when he became man, not for his own sake but for us) as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος). And therefore this one thing was seen to be lacking in his dispensation towards us, our ascension into heaven itself, as in Christ, the firstfruits and the first [of all].[27]

The ascension and enthronement of Christ, then: (1) brings the divine plan of salvation in Cyril to its completion in Christ the firstfruits; (2) reveals the end intended for the whole human race; and (3) inaugurates a renewed human life on earth through the gift of the Spirit.

We may draw several conclusions regarding the divine plan of salvation in Cyril.

1. The locus of our salvation is the Incarnate Christ himself in his saving actions. He is not only the source and means of our salvation; he accomplishes that salvation first in his own assumed humanity. Christ is himself the essential reference point for our pursuit of Cyril's understanding of what our divinization will look like.

2. Cyril's development of the Adam–Christ typology portrays Christ as both *agent* and *recipient* of salvation. As the Second Adam, Christ sums up the new humanity, now sanctified in the Spirit, raised in bodily and spiritual incorruptibility, and seated in the presence of God the Father. But as the Second Adam who is also 'the life-giving Spirit', Christ imparts the Spirit and is the source of the divine life now made available to us.

[27] *In Jo.* 16:7 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 618–19).

3. Within the narrative of divine life, we can also discern the special attention Cyril pays to the 'narrative of the Spirit'.[28] The stages in this narrative include the original gift of the Spirit to Adam, the gradual loss and final flight of the Spirit due to sin, the re-impartation of the Spirit to Jesus at his Baptism, the breathing of the Spirit upon the disciples by Jesus on Easter Day, and the pouring out of the Spirit upon all the disciples made possible by Christ's ascension and enthronement.

It is now our task to inquire how Cyril understands the passage of the divine life from the Incarnate Christ to us, that is, to inquire how the gift of divine life is appropriated *to* us and *by* us.

The gift of divine life

Cyril offers a fundamentally sacramental account of our union with Christ. It is pre-eminently through baptism and the Eucharist that the gift of divine life now perfected in the Incarnate and glorified Christ is made available to us. Cyril frequently presents a twofold path for the reception of divine life, captured by the paired terms, πνευματικῶς and σωματικῶς or their equivalents, νοητῶς and αἰσθητῶς, but his use of these terms (and of the notion of a twofold means more generally) is not univocal; he applies them analogically to different realities.

Cyril's commentary on John 3:3–6 opens up for us his understanding of baptism and the gift of the Spirit.[29] He begins his commentary on v. 3, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God', by drawing directly upon another text, Matthew 7:21, 'but he who does the

[28] *In Jo.* 7:39 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 690–8) most fully displays this narrative of the gift, loss, and re-acquisition of the Spirit, but the following texts also exhibit this 'narrative of the Spirit' in part or in full: *In Matt.* 24:51 (Reuss, p. 249); *In Luc.* 4:1–2 (Payne Smith, pp. 85–8); *In Jo.* 1:32–33 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 174–90); 14:20 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 482–8); 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 717–28); 20:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 131–41); *In II Cor.* 5:3–5 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 350–1); *C. Nest.* 3, 3 (*ACO* 1, 1, 6, pp. 67–8); *Scholia* 1 (*ACO* 1, 5, p. 219); *Quod Unus* 752b–d (Durand, *Deux Dialogues Christologiques*, p. 428); *De Dogm.* 2 (Wickham, pp. 186–90).

[29] Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 217–20.

will of my Father in heaven', which in turn shapes the direction of the exposition. Cyril writes: 'But it is the will of my Father that man be exhibited a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and having been born anew to an unaccustomed and strange life, that the citizen from the earth be called a citizen also of heaven.' Such a statement reveals the theological priority of the gift of the indwelling Spirit in Cyril's theology of sanctification and divinization. In its own context, Matthew 7:21 would seem to point to works of human response and obedience, but in his use of that text here Cyril positions the gift of the Spirit as the first and fundamental element of God's will for the human race, presumably as the basis for all other works of obedience which follow.

Cyril interprets v. 5 as Jesus making explicit what was hinted at in v. 3. Interpreting the term, ἄνωθεν, as 'from above', since this new birth comes from the Spirit who is 'from above', Cyril delineates the consequences of baptism through a collection of related expressions: we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4); we are formed anew (ἀναμοφούμενοι) to the ancient beauty through and in the Spirit; we are regenerated (ἀνατικτόμενοι) to newness of life; and we are remoulded (ἀναπλαττόμενοι) to divine sonship.[30]

Cyril next explains the phrase, 'of water and the Spirit', in terms of the correspondence between a duality in human nature and a twofold agency in baptism. To the spiritual aspect of human nature corresponds the Holy Spirit, and to the bodily aspect the water. Baptism effects a twofold sanctification, the Spirit sanctifying and healing the human spirit, the water sanctifying and healing the body. For Cyril the water itself is efficacious, at least in the role of sanctifying the body, but only because 'through the working of the Spirit the sensible water is transformed to a certain divine and ineffable power'.[31] Two key principles of Cyril's theology are illustrated here. First, sanctification in the sense intended here is always a work of God, and can only be a work of God. The act of

[30] Cyril typically groups together as the characteristics of baptism into new life what later theology has at times more clearly distinguished: justification by faith, sanctification of body and soul, elevation to the status of divine sonship, and participation in the divine nature. While these are distinguishable in Cyril, he does not order these elements sequentially, either temporally or theologically, in the description of our entrance into new life through baptism.

[31] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 219.

sanctifying can also be a human work, for example the act of dedicating something to God, or of purifying oneself for service to God. But when the term is used in the context of baptism and the reception of divine life, it is reserved for divine action alone, because only God can sanctify in this sense.[32] Only the triune God can truly make something holy. Secondly, the divine power is made effective in us in part by and through a material medium, the water of baptism. There is a parallel here between the efficacious power of the water of baptism to cleanse and sanctify, and the life-giving power which Cyril sees invested in Christ's flesh (and therefore in the Eucharist) – but the parallel would appear to be analogical, not identical. The power granted to the water in baptism appears to be limited to the sphere of the body, and to the initial cleansing work of sanctification. The scope of the Eucharist, as we shall now explore, is much broader.[33]

Cyril's magisterial treatment of the Eucharist is found in his commentary on John 6, of which only a schematic summary can be offered here. In treating this text, it is imperative to view Cyril's commentary on the miracle of the loaves and fishes and the subsequent bread of life discourse as one unit, and to resist the temptation to seize upon the specifically eucharistic texts which make up the last part of the commentary, without recognizing the overall shape of his treatment.

In the first part of the exposition, the miracle of the loaves and fishes (vv. 10–14) is interpreted in terms of a spiritual feeding upon the Scriptures. The five loaves signify the five books of Moses and the two fishes the gospels and apostolic writings: 'The Savior, having mixed the New with the Old, by the law and the teaching of the new covenant, nourishes the souls of those who believe in him to life, plainly eternal life.' Given the more explicit eucharistic references later in the commentary, it is all the more striking that

[32] In his commentary on John 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 720–1), Cyril explains the various possible senses of the term 'sanctification', and he concludes: 'For to be able to sanctify through participation in the Spirit belongs alone to the nature ruling all.' See Walter Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1957), pp. 65–83, for an excellent study of sanctification in Cyril.

[33] For especially rich accounts of baptism and the gift of the Spirit in Cyril, see *In Jo.* 1:12–14a (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 132–42), and *In Jo.* 7:24 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 628–44).

Cyril identifies the feeding of the multitude here exclusively with nourishment through the divine Word in Scripture.[34]

In the first instalment of the bread of life discourse (vv. 27–37), Cyril speaks both of a spiritual feeding upon Christ and a nourishment for both body and soul, a plain reference to the Eucharist. But he notes that the Eucharist is more properly the subject of the latter part of the commentary.[35] The topic of these verses is, for Cyril, Christ himself, the bread of life. The true bread from heaven is not the manna, 'but the Only-Begotten Word of God himself, who proceeds from the essence of the Father, since indeed he is Life by nature, and gives life to all things'.[36] This section of the commentary, then, is dominated by Christ himself as the prime gift of the Father, who nourishes us by various means, and notably imparts *life* to us through each of them (and here the Scripture, the gift of the Spirit and the Eucharist all appear).

The second instalment of the bread of life discourse (vv. 48–63), in which Christ speaks more provocatively of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, is the occasion for Cyril's most extensive exposition on the Eucharist. Cyril's theology of the Eucharist appears to be quite straightforward: by eating the consecrated bread, we in fact partake of the flesh of Christ, and so receive into ourselves the life that is in Christ through the medium of his very flesh, flesh which has become life-giving by virtue of the ineffable union of the Word to this flesh.[37] In his commentary on v. 51,

[34] Cyril consistently interprets the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in terms of the spiritual food of the Scripture, Old and New Testament, both in Matthew (*In Matt.* 14:13–21; Reuss, pp. 209–10) and in Luke (*In Luc.* 9:12–17; Payne Smith, pp. 213–16).

[35] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 440.

[36] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 458.

[37] For a summary of the scholarly debate over Cyril's teaching on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, see Ezra Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing* (Uppsala: Borgströms, 1977), pp. 75–89. He concludes persuasively that those who argue for only a spiritual/dynamic presence of Christ in the Eucharist refuse to apply Cyril's own doctrine of the Incarnation to the Eucharist. In fact, Cyril's entire argument for the efficacy of the Eucharist is based upon the reality of Christ's flesh mingling with ours in a natural (φυσικῶς) union. Cyril himself nowhere offers an explanation for how the elements in the Eucharist are transformed, or in what manner the consecrated bread and wine may be understood as Christ's body and blood. He simply regards the consecrated Eucharist as the body and blood of Christ.

'And the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world', Cyril writes:

> For since the life-giving Word of God was living in the flesh, he transformed it to his own proper good, that is to life, and according to the manner of the inexpressible union, suitably rendered it wholly life-giving, as he is himself by nature. For this reason the body of Christ gives life to those who partake of it. For it expels death, whenever it comes to be in those who are dying, and expels corruption, bearing in itself perfectly the Word who abolishes corruption.[38]

Here we see a special quality of Christ's flesh alone, based upon the unique union between the Word and the flesh he assumed. By this union, the flesh obtains the capacity to give life, not from itself, as possessing a property that now pertains to it by nature, but only on account of the ongoing union it has with the Word.

In eucharistic communion, Cyril underscores the mingling of 'like to like', the flesh of Christ under the form of bread becoming 'mingled' with our bodies, and so passing on to them the life it possesses by virtue of its union with the life-giving Word. The life-giving power of the Word is in his own flesh like a 'spark buried amid much stubble', giving to that flesh a life-giving power, which will also serve as the seed of immortality in us, causing us to rise on the last day. Our participation in the Eucharist, the eating of Christ's flesh and drinking of his blood (v. 56), is likened to 'wax joined to wax'; we become intermingled with Christ through the mingling of his flesh with ours. At times, Cyril speaks of the Eucharist as primarily destined for giving life to our flesh, in apparent distinction to the soul: 'For it was indeed necessary, not only for the soul to be re-created to newness of life through the Holy Spirit, but also that this material and earthly body be sanctified through the more material and kindred participation, and called to incorruption.' Does Cyril then envisage a separate pathway for the re-creation of the soul on the one hand, and that of the body on the other, the former through the Holy Spirit, the latter through participation in the Eucharist? In a text just three verses following (v. 56), however, Cyril speaks of the healing power of the Eucharist in us, expelling the law of sin in our flesh and the passions which dwell there. It would appear from the

[38] Pusey, vol. 1, p. 520.

latter text that the life-giving power of the Eucharist pertains to the restoration of the soul as well.

Cyril's commentary on John 6 is multifaceted, meandering, and at times repetitive. It does not make for easy summary and synthesis. Still I would like to suggest that the basic structure of the liturgy may provide a framework for integrating the various parts of his commentary. Cyril speaks first of the nourishment which comes from the written word of the Old and New Testaments, and then of the eucharistic feast in which the faithful feed upon the body and blood of Christ. It is suggestive that he makes no mention of the Eucharist in treating of the feeding of the five thousand (vv. 10–14), which he interprets strictly in terms of nourishment on the written Word in Scripture. The initial bread of life discourse (vv. 27–37), which speaks of the bread from heaven, is then focused on Christ himself as the prime gift of the Father, who nourishes us by various means. These verses function as the interpretative center of the commentary, linking the first and last parts around the figure of Christ, who is himself the true manna from heaven. The second bread of life discourse (vv. 48–63), developed at some length, completes the exposition: nourishment through Christ, the bread of life, culminates in the Eucharist. If this assessment is accurate, Cyril's commentary on John 6 not only offers us a developed treatment of his views on the Eucharist; it also places the Eucharist in a wider, liturgical context, through which Christ, the true life-giving bread from heaven, nourishes the faithful through the divine word in Scripture, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and through his life-giving flesh.

In summary, we can express in the following statement the means by which the divine life in Christ is appropriated to us: we receive Christ into ourselves, participating in him and his life, and thus in the divine nature, through a twofold means: through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, normally related to baptism, and through partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.[39] Yet this initial statement requires further elaboration

[39] The modality of the spoken word in Cyril approaches the status of a means of divine life, but Cyril stops short of simply according it this rank. In addition to his comment on John 6:10–13 noted above, see also *In Jo.* 4:15 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 271–2); 7:24 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 631); 15:3 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 554); *In Luc.* 12:49–53 (Payne Smith, pp. 377–8); and 13:21 (Payne Smith, p. 395) for Cyril's assigning to the spoken word the power of sanctification, healing, and making

in order to handle potential inconsistencies in Cyril's account, and to draw out the implications for the shape of Cyril's theology of divinization.

1. Cyril's emphasis is plainly on the means by which Christ comes to dwell *in* us. Christ dwells in us, first of all, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and secondly through his flesh and blood, which by eating we take *into* ourselves. The theological principle at work here is that only God himself can truly sanctify, vivify, justify and cause us to be adopted 'sons of God' through participation in his divine nature. The presence of God dwelling in us, and conversely our participation in him, is the *sine qua non* of newness of life in Christ, and a characteristic mark of Cyril's thought. It is only by means of Christ dwelling in us, through the Holy Spirit and through his own flesh, that we can be conformed to the image of the Son and bear the fruits of the Spirit.

2. The terms σωματικῶς-πνευματικῶς and αἰσθητῶς-νοητῶς are in a majority of instances applied by Cyril to the twofold reception of Christ in baptism and the Eucharist respectively. But Cyril also uses these terms to refer to a dual manner of reception *within* the Eucharist, and he applies the same idea of a dual corporeal-spiritual sanctification to baptism. In this latter case, Cyril clearly sees a symmetry between the dual aspect of Christ, human and divine, and the dual constitution of human nature, body and soul, and he can speak as if the operations are neatly distinguished, the 'flesh' of Christ, or the baptismal water, operating on our corporeal nature, and the Spirit of Christ operating on our intellectual or spiritual nature. Indeed, Cyril tends to identify the fruits of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with the spiritual and moral domain, and the fruits of the eucharistic indwelling with more somatic characteristics, such as life and incorruption. Yet if this neat parallel is pressed, it does not stand up to Cyril's own account of the dual effect of both the indwelling Holy Spirit and the flesh of Christ. For Cyril, the indwelling Spirit operates not only upon our spiritual nature, accomplishing a moral

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one spiritual. The power of the spoken word, often mentioned in connection with Hebrews 4:12, is typically described as an instrument either of Christ (*In Jo.* 15:3) or of the Spirit (*In Luc.* 12:49–53). It is a means by which either Christ or the Spirit acts upon or within the human heart.

purification and renewal, but also upon our corporeal nature, preserving us for incorruption and resurrection.[40] Likewise, the Eucharist affects not only our corporeal nature, but transforms the whole of our nature, body and spirit, and accomplishes as well our moral healing.[41] Is Cyril incoherent here, or at least inconsistent in his explanation of the means by which we are, body and soul, made alive and united to Christ? Cyril is at times, I believe, tempted to press the anthropological duality too far, and to speak in terms of strict lines of correspondence between the somatic manner of indwelling and the *effects* on our bodies on the one hand, and the pneumatic manner of indwelling and the *effects* on our spirits on the other. Such expressions are not fully consistent with his aim elsewhere expressed to show that each manner of indwelling brings the full fruit of Christ's life to both body and soul.

This is not to suggest, however, that in the end the σωματικῶς-πνευματικῶς distinction is either meaningless or simply incoherent. His primary use of these terms distinguishes the mode of *Christ's* indwelling, spiritually by the Holy Spirit, and somatically by his flesh and blood, and the manner of reception by us; that is, that we receive the somatic mode of Christ's presence in our bodies in the Eucharist, and receive the Spirit of Christ in our spirits through baptism. In this primary use of the σωματικῶς-πνευματικῶς distinction, then, Cyril's use is coherent and consistent with his overall theological approach. The twofold modality is designed to express the point of union and the manner of union between Christ and the believer, and the goal is to show that the whole of human nature, corporeal and spiritual, receives a fitting remedy in the Incarnate Christ.[42]

[40] The activity of the Holy Spirit in terms of either corruption/incorruption or life/death is shown in the following texts: *In Jo.* 1:12 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 133); 6:40 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 499); 7:24 (Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 634–6, 639, 641); 7:39 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 694); 14:20 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 487); 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 725); *In Rom.* 8:11 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 214–15). For the relation of the Spirit to the bodily resurrection, see *In Jo.* 10:10 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 220); *In Luc.* 7:11ff (Payne Smith, pp. 153–5) and 20:27–38 (Payne Smith, pp. 540–3).

[41] For the spiritual, as well as somatic, effects of the Eucharist in Cyril, see *In Luc.* 4:38 (Payne Smith, pp. 99–101); *In Luc.* 22:17–22 (Payne Smith, pp. 568–71); *In Jo.* 13:27 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 369); 19:23–24 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 88); and *In Rom.* 8:3 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 213).

[42] For a detailed study of the σωματικῶς-πνευματικῶς texts in Cyril, see my thesis, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria', pp. 78–94.

3. This understanding of the twofold means of union with Christ brings a corrective to certain readings of Cyril which emphasize the somatic, eucharistic mode of union and indwelling to the diminution or exclusion of the pneumatic mode.[43] For Cyril, each manner of indwelling has its own distinctive and particular characteristics, each its own virtue and excellence. When viewed together – as Cyril himself wants to view them – they display a remarkably well-balanced, if not fully integrated, account of the gift of divine life through the Incarnate Christ.

The indwelling of Christ through participation in the Eucharist possesses a certain excellence for Cyril because of the 'natural participation' (μέθεξις φυσική) it establishes. Baptism and the Eucharist each have both a somatic and spiritual effect, that is, they each bring the divine life to the whole of human nature, but the unique character of the Eucharist for Cyril is that it bonds Christ with the believer according to a common nature, that is, according to the flesh. In the eating of Christ's flesh and the drinking of his blood, Cyril perceives a particularly apt means of union, made possible by the Incarnation of the Word, and expressive of that 'enfleshment'. The parallel union between the Spirit of Christ and our spiritual nature is only analogous to this, because our spiritual nature is not of the same nature as the divine Spirit, and the union achieved is rather of a created spiritual nature with the divine Spirit. This 'natural participation', obtained by the commingling of Christ's life-giving flesh with our bodies, captures in the most profound way for Cyril, the true *kenosis* of the Word and the reality of the Incarnation, and so gives to the eucharistic manner of indwelling a virtue and particularity of its own.

The eucharistic manner of indwelling also possesses a certain *sacramental* priority on two counts. First, it is the event towards which baptism leads, the fulfillment of the Passover made possible by the crossing of the mystical Jordan and spiritual circumcision. There is a sacramental order and progression which culminates in the Eucharist. Secondly, the Eucharist is a repeatable reception of Christ, and so is a renewable event of union with Christ, for the

[43] For a critique of contemporary somatic readings of Cyril's theology, see my article, 'The Two-Fold Manner of Divine Indwelling in Cyril of Alexandria: Redressing an Imbalance', *SP* 37 (2001), pp. 543–9).

healing of sin, the taming of our passions, and participation in the One who is life. Cyril is not unwilling to berate his congregation for failing, out of misplaced reverence, to participate in the life-giving power of the Eucharist.[44]

Yet the indwelling of Christ through participation in the Holy Spirit in baptism also possesses its own distinctive virtue and importance in Cyril's theology of sanctification and divinization. On the sacramental level, if the Eucharist is the summit to which baptism leads, baptism marks the point of transfer, that initial indwelling of God which makes us in truth, for Cyril, new creations, 'children of God', and partakers of the divine nature. There is a complementarity, then, in the sacramental order, a certain bi-polarity of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, each essential and each possessing its own distinctive qualities.

But the indwelling of the Spirit through baptism is not simply 'a beginning and way' of new life which leads to the Eucharist. It possesses for Cyril a *theological* importance, representing the endpoint and culmination of Christ's redeeming work. The return of the Spirit to the Incarnate Word brings to fulfillment the work of creation, and expresses most precisely God's intention for the human race. As we have seen, it is significant that in Cyril's view the original manner of divine indwelling at the creation was the gift of the Holy Spirit to Adam. No other patristic writer places so much emphasis upon this initial in-breathing of the Spirit in Genesis 2:7. And indeed the most common soteriological narrative in Cyril moves from the Creation and gift of the Spirit to Adam, through the Fall and the loss of that Spirit, to the re-acquisition of the Spirit through the Incarnate Christ. The return of the Spirit to the human race is the fulfillment of God's intention in creation, now made stable in the Word made flesh, who has given the Spirit a secure anchor in human nature. The Spirit is *the* mark of the new covenant, defining the difference between the greatest representative of the old covenant, John the Baptist, and those who are least in the kingdom of God through possession of the Spirit.[45] And significantly, Cyril presents

[44] *In Jo.* 6:35 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 476).
[45] *In Jo.* 7:39 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 696).

eternal life in heaven in terms of the fullness of the Spirit dwelling in us.[46]

As the eucharistic manner of indwelling most aptly and fully expresses the enfleshment of Christ and our union with him according to the flesh, so the indwelling of the Holy Spirit most aptly and fully exhibits God's purpose for the human race and the restoration which brings us to our final goal. When the eucharistic manner of indwelling and union is viewed as the chief or exclusive means to our divinization, Cyril tends to be read as teaching a physicalist soteriology governed by a quasi-automatic transfer of divine life through contact with Christ's flesh. But when the return of the Spirit and the pneumatic mode of indwelling is accorded its proper place in Cyril's thought, in complementarity to the somatic means of union, then we are enabled to see the *telos* of Cyril's theological perspective more clearly: the full spiritualization of human nature, accomplished in Christ first through his reception of the Spirit, and encompassing the whole of our nature, spiritual and corporeal.

It would indeed be a mistake to set one manner of divine indwelling against the other in Cyril's theology. Certain of Cyril's texts, read on their own (e.g., *In Jo.* 6:53–54), appear to indicate the dominance of the eucharistic manner of indwelling. Others, however (e.g., *In Jo.* 17:18–19), give the same sense of priority to indwelling through the Holy Spirit. Cyril seems at times to be aware of this potential discrepancy, and attempts to place the two side-by-side as equal and complementary means by which Christ dwells in us (e.g., *In Jo.* 17:20–21). He does not, unfortunately, present us with any theological account of how the two are to be integrated, and I have attempted to draw certain conclusions about their distinctiveness and complementarity grounded in a reading of his statements taken together. In the end, the catechetical and sacramental ordering of baptism and Eucharist may have been sufficient for Cyril to bind the two together as distinctive, ordered and complementary means by which the divine life in the Incarnate Christ is appropriated to us.

[46] See *In Zach.* 14:8–9 (Pusey, *In XII Proph.*, vol. 2, p. 522); *In Mal.* 4:2–3 (Pusey, *In XII Proph.*, vol. 2, pp. 621–3); and *De Dogm.* 5 (Wickham, p. 200) for Cyril on eternal life as characterized by the full and complete dwelling of the Spirit in us.

The reception of divine life

Any account of the appropriation of divine life in Cyril must include the human reception of, and progress in, this divine life. Human response and the moral life are not merely tacked on to a theological account that begins and ends with divine action through the Word. Though divine initiative possesses both temporal and theological priority, human response is essential to Cyril's narrative account of salvation.

Human reception of divine life is first of all grounded in an aspect of Cyril's doctrine of creation, namely that human beings are given the faculty of free will and self-determination as a constitutive element of the image of God.[47] But human reception of divine life is also rooted in Cyril's understanding of God's nature and justice. Cyril bases this view on his reading of Scripture, especially the opening chapters of Genesis, and a synthesis of key texts such as Exodus 34:6ff. and Ezekiel 18:1–24.[48] The dominant note of our human response, however, is sounded in the contrast Cyril untiringly sets forth between the old and the new covenant. Following a Pauline line of thought, the chief mark of our response is faith, the 'mother of eternal life' and source of all good things for us. If human free will is grounded in Cyril's doctrine of creation, the attainment of 'true freedom' is consequent on faith and new life in Christ.[49]

[47] The relation of free choice to the image of God is seen with special clarity in Cyril's commentary on John 14:20 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 485). When describing the fall of Adam, the 'living creature', Cyril writes: 'But since, being free of will (αὐτοπροαίρετος), and entrusted with the reins of its own purposes – for this also is a part of the image (εἰκόνος), for God exercises authority over His own purposes – it turned and is fallen.' Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man in Cyril of Alexandria*, p. 45, concludes that Cyril 'pays far more attention than any of his predecessors to the will precisely in the context of divine resemblance'. See Marie-Odile Boulnois, 'Liberté, origine du mal et prescience divine selon Cyrille d'Alexandrie', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 46 (2000), pp. 61–82.

[48] For this, see *In Jo.* 13:18–20 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 356–62) where Cyril maintains that Judas was free to decide not to betray Christ, but misused that freedom and so impugned the grace of apostleship which was offered to him by Christ.

[49] The tension between 'free will' and 'true freedom' in Cyril is perhaps best exemplified in his understanding of the Incarnate Christ, who voluntarily offered himself and obeyed the Father as man, and yet was incapable of sin even as man (e.g., *In Jo.* 7:39, Pusey, vol. 1, 693–4; *In 2 Cor.* 5:20–21, Pusey, vol. 3, p. 355).

Cyril was plainly not unaware of the apparent contradiction between James and Paul regarding faith and works, nor of the tension between divine grace and human response in the reception and preservation of the divine life.[50] He does not pursue the logical tensions between divine grace and human response as Augustine does, yet in a straightforward and impressive manner, Cyril orchestrates the key biblical texts in the arrangement of a coherent synthesis.[51] A rightly directed faith is the primary means of reception of all that Christ brings, but this faith is necessarily ordered to and demonstrated by works of obedience (or it is no faith at all). The place of human free will as co-worker in the receiving or rejecting of divine grace is firmly upheld at every point in the divine–human interaction. Yet the gift of God precedes all and is rightly seen as the source of all things, even of faith.

Cyril's account of the human reception of divine life is also exceptionally well christologically grounded and centered. He presents what may be termed a twofold 'kinship' (συγγένεια) with Christ. Cyril employs one term, συγγένεια, to describe both the ontological grounding of our kinship with God through the Incarnation, and the moral kinship with God which results from genuine likeness in thought and action.[52] The Incarnation, the first level of kinship, is the irreplaceable ground for the possibility of our full kinship with God, and the necessary means by which we can become 'partakers of the divine nature'. But faith and obedient imitation of Christ are required on our part for this kinship to be made actual. Our moral conformity to Christ through imitation is

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His human obedience was voluntary, that is, truly free, but because it is the Word who is flesh, the possibility of sin is disallowed.

[50] For Cyril's attempt to reconcile James and Paul regarding faith and works, see *In Rom.* 3:21 – 4:2 (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 178–81).

[51] Cyril's lengthy fragment, *In Rom.* 9:14–24 (Pusey 3, pp. 226–33), squarely addresses the relation of divine election and human free choice, interpreting the hardening of Pharoah's heart and the vessels made for ignoble use by means of the potter/vessel parable in Jeremiah 18:2–10. For Cyril, it is not God's design, but human misuse of free will, which produces the 'vessel made for destruction'.

[52] For the integration of these two senses of kinship (συγγένεια) in Cyril, see *In Jo.* 8:37 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 71–4), *In Jo.* 10:14–15 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 230–5), and *In Jo.* 10:26–28 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 251–3).

grounded in Christ's ontological assumption of and re-creation of our nature in himself, a re-creation which is then appropriated to us in a twofold manner through baptism and the Eucharist. The christological basis of our kinship with God, and the christological pattern for our moral life of faith and obedience are inseparably linked, and together provide the christological center for our reception of, and progress in, the divine life.

Perhaps the most frequent criticism of Cyrilline Christology, and of the Alexandrian school in general, concerns the specifically human element in Christ, and correspondingly, the human reception of salvation and the divine life.[53] Does Cyril allow full play for the complete humanity he repeatedly insists the Word assumed? Is the *human* life of Christ genuinely a pattern for our own? Lurking behind these questions is the suspicion that Cyril's portrait of Christ tends towards the docetic, that is, towards only the appearance of a true humanity.[54] To the contrary, it is precisely in Christ as a pattern for our reception of, and progress in, the divine life that we witness most clearly the active *expression* of Christ's own humanity in Cyril's thought.

Cyril lays down the principle of Christ's active humanity in his commentary on John 16:33, 'But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'. He states, significantly, that Christ has overcome the world, not 'as God', but 'as man':

> For Christ overcame it for us as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος), being also in this a beginning and gate and way for human nature. For we who were fallen and vanquished of old have conquered and have overcome on account of the one who overcame as one of us and for our sake. For if he conquered as God (ὡς Θεός), it profits us nothing; but if as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος), we have overcome in him.[55]

[53] Bernard Meunier, for example, in *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), pp. 209, 211, judges that Cyril and the Alexandrians in general elevate 'nature' over the individual, and so underplay the individual's role in the human reception of salvation.

[54] See Frances Young, *Nicaea to Chalcedon* (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 260, for a description of this commonly-held estimation – which she rejects – that Cyril's Christology is thinly disguised Apollinarianism, and that Cyril was 'incapable of doing real justice to the humanity of Christ'. She also points to 'the apparent docetism so often detected in the Cyrilline position' (p. 261), but concludes that for Cyril the full human condition in Christ was very real.

[55] Pusey, vol. 2, p. 657.

We can see this principle applied in a number of instances. Speaking on John 19:4, Cyril points to the obedience of Christ as man: 'The one who is Lord of the law as God (ὡς Θεός), came among us a keeper of the law as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος)', as the Second Adam, thereby extending justification to us all.[56] When treating the high-priestly prayer of Christ in John 17, Cyril allows the human reality of Christ full play: 'For possessing all things as God (ὡς Θεός), he says that he [Christ] receives as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος), to whom kingly rule is not intrinsic, but given'.[57] And again, 'He, then, that of old reigns from the beginning as God (ὡς Θεός) together with his own Father, was appointed king as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος), to whom like all else kingly rule is given, according to the limitation of human nature'.[58] Moreover, Cyril presents Christ's obedience to the Father in John 17, and the completion of his appointed work, as the model for our own obedient service to God.[59] This follows Cyril's principle that Christ himself 'as man' serves as the model for us in everything:

> If then, he [Christ] should say these things as man (ὡς ἄνθρωπος), you will receive it in this way: Christ is for us a pattern (τύπος) and beginning (ἀρχή) and image (εἰκών) of the divine way of life, and he displayed clearly how and in what manner it is fitting for us to live.[60]

Thus, Cyril strenuously maintains that Christ accomplished the redemption and the transformation of our nature 'as man' (ὡς ἄνθρωπος), and not as the divine Word acting divinely in merely human garb. Further, Christ, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, is the pattern for *our* humanity, for how we receive the Spirit and how we live a life pleasing to God. Indeed it is only Christ, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, that we can imitate, for his properly divine attributes remain ever beyond human reach. Cyril does ascribe to Christ natural human weaknesses,[61] even if he limits their scope rather narrowly and at

[56] *In Jo.* 19:4 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 63).

[57] *In Jo.* 17:2 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 665).

[58] *In Jo.* 17:6–8 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 684). For the same principle applied to the Son receiving 'the name which is above every name' (Phil. 2:9) 'in a human way' (ἀνθρωπίνως), see *In Jo.* 17:11 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 697).

[59] *In Jo.* 17:4–5; 14–15 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 671–4; 709–10).

[60] *In Jo.* 17:4–5 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 672). Cyril's *Commentary on Luke* gives special prominence to Christ as moral exemplar for us. See, for example, *In Luc.* 2:21–24; 3:21–22; 4:1–2; 9:23–26; 9:51–56; 22:24–30.

[61] *In Jo.* 12:27–28 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 316).

points describes the human suffering and temptation of Christ in simply pedagogical terms, giving the impression that Christ's experience of suffering and temptation was feigned, an exercise carried out merely for our instruction and imitation.[62] Yet it is perhaps just this principle – that Christ, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, is a pattern for us in everything – which preserves a fully expressed humanity in Cyril's presentation of Christ.

It is important to recognize that our reception of the gift of divine life has a clear goal in Cyril's account: the gift of divine life, in cooperation with our own free response, yields a divine 'way of life' and ushers in a progressive sanctification aimed at the perfection of the divine image in us. The outworking of this divine life in us, and so the outworking of our sanctification and divinization, is a process of growth towards full conformity to Christ, dependent on the indwelling of divine life, but requiring as well our full response and cooperation. Cyril conceives of our growth into the image of God as rooted in the life-giving sap of the Spirit that flows from our union with Christ through faith and love.[63] This union is productive of a panoply of fruits: good works, manifold virtue, a life of godliness, and a share in the mission of Christ to the world. Cyril does not offer a technically drafted account of the spiritual life, or a theory of spiritual growth. But building upon biblical metaphors and examples in the life of Christ, he displays a high degree of confidence in the spiritual fruitfulness available to us in this life.

Cyril's notion of a progressive outworking of the divine life within us, in which we are fully participative, offsets the impression

[62] For example, see *In Luc.* 11:5–10 (Payne Smith, p. 323).

[63] See Cyril's extended commentary on John 15:1–17 (Pusey, vol. 2, 534–85) for his magisterial treatment of our growth into the divine image. The vine–branches imagery provides Cyril with a multivalent metaphor for expressing the reciprocal, though unequal, union between Christ and us. The primary agent in the union is Christ, who as the vine joins us to himself and comes to dwell *effectively* in us, nourishing us through the life-giving sap of the Holy Spirit, and through his own flesh in the Eucharist. This union establishes our life-giving communion with God, and provides the ground for our growth and maintenance of that communion. In response, we 'cling' to Christ through faith and love, with the emphasis here on the necessity of fruit-bearing love for maintaining our connection to Christ. Cyril's handling of the vine–branches metaphor impressively comprehends the major features of his teaching on the appropriation of divine life.

of a strictly physicalist theory of divinization, whether based on the Incarnation itself, or on our 'physical' contact with Christ through the Eucharist. The bodily aspect of our divinization is indeed essential for Cyril, but it is not sufficient in itself. His narrative of divine life, taken to its completion, reveals an outworking of the divine life which demands our free assent of faith and full cooperation in order to reach the goal of our *moral* conformity to Christ. Moreover, the notion of Christ as pattern for us 'as man' brings an important corrective to a common assessment of Cyril's Christology which holds that Cyril allows no active role for Christ's humanity. Perhaps Cyril's most complete account of the humanity of Christ appears, not in his polemical christological writings, but in the numerous occasions in his biblical commentaries in which Christ is put forward as our moral exemplar, his humanity being the pattern for our own.

Partakers of the divine nature

More frequently than any other Christian writer before him,[64] Cyril of Alexandria either cites or makes allusion to the phrase from 2 Peter 1:4, 'that you may become partakers of the divine nature' (ἵνα . . . γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως).[65] But despite its frequency, Cyril offers surprisingly little exegesis of the verse itself. It would appear at first glance to serve as a shorthand way of summing up what Christ has accomplished for us by taking and redeeming 'the whole of our nature' in himself.

Returning to the question raised in the introduction to this essay, I would like to suggest that Cyril employs 2 Peter 1:4, in large part, as a biblical replacement for the technical terminology of divinization. It is no coincidence that the scarcity of such terms as θεοποίησις and θεοποιέω in Cyril is accompanied by a marked

[64] Norman Russell, 'Partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Pet. 1:4) in the Byzantine Tradition', in *Kathegetria*, ed. J. Chysostomides (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1988), p. 57.

[65] Russell, 'The Concept of Deification', p. 434, identifies at least forty citations of or allusions to 2 Peter 1:4 in Cyril's entire corpus, nineteen of which are from his New Testament commentaries. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, pp. 163–4, cites forty-eight instances in all, twenty-four from the New Testament commentaries. I have located forty-one references in Cyril's New Testament commentaries alone (for a complete listing, see my thesis, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria', p. 155).

increase in the attestation of this text.[66] Furthermore, Cyril typically employs the expression, 'partakers of the divine nature', in just those contexts where we also find his infrequent use of the technical vocabulary of divinization, and where Athanasius had used this vocabulary so freely before him: to describe the culmination of that event whereby we are recreated to new life through baptism and the gift of the indwelling Spirit, and so attain to 'sonship' in Christ.

What might account for this preference for 2 Peter 1:4 over the inherited terminology of divinization? Norman Russell has convincingly shown that with the opening of the Nestorian controversy (429), Cyril ceased using the terminology of divinization altogether as a means for expressing our share in the divine life. In the face of Nestorius's charge that he (Cyril) was teaching an 'apotheosis' (ἀποθέωσις) of Christ's flesh (i.e., that Christ's flesh became divinity), Cyril defended a proper understanding of the Word's divinization (θεοποίησις) of his own flesh on the one hand, and on the other counter-charged Nestorius with teaching that the Incarnation was the divinizing of a mere man.[67] But given the entanglement of this terminology in the debate with Nestorius over the Incarnation, Cyril evidently refrained from this point onwards to employ the vocabulary of divinization to describe our share in the divine life. The terms had become too embattled for wider use. This does not account, however, for Cyril's very guarded use of this terminology, and his clear preference for the expression from 2 Peter 1:4, even before the Nestorian controversy. Though one can only speculate, it may be that the anthropomorphite controversy, which erupted in the early fourth century Origenist crisis and was still an ongoing problem in Egypt, inclined Cyril to shy away from a terminology which might have caused confusion concerning the nature of the image of God in humanity. Cyril

[66] Both Russell, 'The Concept of Deification', p. 298, and A. L. Kolp, 'Partakers of the Divine Nature: the Use of 2 Pet. 1:4 by Athanasius', *SP* 17 (1982), p. 1018, identify Origen as the first Christian author to cite 2 Peter 1:4 (*De princ.* IV.4.4; *Homilies in Leviticus* IV.4; *Commentary on Romans* IV.9). Russell, p. 336, also identifies six citations of 2 Peter 1:4 in Athanasius (*C. Ar.* I:16; III.40; *Ep. Serap.* 1.23, 24; *Vit. Ant.* 74; *Ep. Adelph.* 4), though he finds no citation of this text in the writings of the Cappadocians (p. 381). For the use of 2 Peter 1:4 in the Greek tradition following Cyril, see Russell, 'Partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Pet. 1:4) in the Byzantine Tradition'.

[67] *C. Nest.* 2, 8 (*ACO* 1, 1, 6, p. 46).

may have become cautious in using the language of divinization in order not to give credence to those who were teaching a corporeal resemblance between God and human beings.[68]

In any case, Cyril does follow his predecessor, Athanasius, closely in the latter's use of the concept of participation in order to express the substance of the term θεοποίησις. Cyril inherited an already developed and transposed concept of participation.[69] It is noteworthy that he never argues *for* these basic principles of participation, but always argues *from* them to demonstrate one or another conclusion. These basic principles are: (1) that which participates is necessarily distinct (and distinct in kind) from that which is participated in; (2) that which participates possesses the quality it receives only in part and from without; that which is participated in necessarily possesses that quality fully and by nature; (3) that which participates can lose what is has by participation; that which has a quality by nature cannot lose it.[70] Cyril applies this concept of participation to various analogous levels in order to state the conditions of the relationship between the Triune God and creation.

In his commentary on John 1:3–10,[71] for example, Cyril displays these analogous uses of the concept of participation, and shows the Word himself to be the link between the various levels to which the notion of participation is applied. The Word is 'Life' as the source of being of which all creation partakes. He is 'Light' in the sense that he grants to all rational creatures the very quality of rationality through participation in himself. These properties of being and rationality then define what a human being is 'by nature'. Finally, in the Incarnation the Word is the Light who has come into the world to enlighten all who are in the moral darkness of sin, and to restore incorruption to our mortal bodies. Cyril there-

[68] For Cyril's anti-anthropomorphite writings, see Wickham, pp. 132–221.

[69] For an overview of the philosophical concept of participation, the biblical use of the language of participation, and the transposition of the concept of participation in the Fathers, see my thesis, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria', pp. 156–68.

[70] This last principle is applied only to what may be termed 'dynamic' or 'supernatural' participation in God. While we could presumably lose our participation in being and rationality by simply ceasing to be, Cyril does not envisage this possibility.

[71] Pusey, vol. 1, pp. 74–130.

fore employs the concept of participation in three analogous senses in order to explain how we *are*, how we are *rational*, and how we are *enlightened by grace* through participation in the Word, advancing to that which is 'above our nature'. Importantly, participation for Cyril defines at one and the same time both the positive content of the relationship between God and creation at each respective level, and the ontological limits and distinctions which are necessarily entailed.

What then does Cyril mean by the phrase, 'partakers of the divine nature'? What ontological consequences are entailed? Does Cyril's account of our participation in the divine nature threaten to blur the distinction between the Creator and creation, between things divine and things human? And if not, what positive content does he, in the end, accord to human participation in the divine nature? To resolve these questions, we must look to Cyril's presentation of the Incarnate Word, the 'mediator and measure' of our participation in the divine life. In Cyril's understanding of the economy of salvation, the Incarnation reveals a complementary set of truths, and so performs a complex set of roles. It is the meeting point of the divine and human; it is the ground for human participation in the divine life; and it defines the nature and limit of that participation. This complex reality of the Incarnate Word may be summed up under the following four headings:

Christ as the 'common frontier' of the divine and the human

In his commentary on John 10:15, 'Even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father', Cyril writes: 'For Christ is, as it were, a kind of common frontier (μεθόριον) of the supreme divinity and humanity (being both in the same one, and as it were holding together in himself things so greatly separated), and as God by nature he is joined to God the Father, and again, as truly a man, is joined to men'.[72] For Cyril, Christ not only provides the link in himself between divinity and humanity; he also *remains*, as fully divine and fully human, the sole and irreplaceable locus of our dynamic participation in the divine life.

[72] *In Jo.* 10:14–15 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 232–3).

Two levels of sonship

In Cyril's sharply anti-Arian commentary on John 14:11, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me', our sonship 'by participation' and 'by grace' is set in pointed contrast to Christ who is Son 'by nature'.[73] Though the Word, by becoming a man, is in himself the means of our participation, a qualitative difference yet distinguishes us. He is in God, not 'by an external relationship' (σχετικῶς), nor as a 'partaker' (μέτοχος), but essentially and by nature. And by implication, we are 'in God' precisely by external relationship and as partakers. Moreover, our participation in the divine nature is given a strongly ethical coloring, comparable to the second sense of 'kinship' (συγγένεια) noted above.

Mounting up to a dignity beyond our nature

In Cyril's writings we frequently encounter some variation of the phrase that in Christ 'we mount up' to a 'dignity above our nature'. What is the significance of this phrase in light of Cyril's understanding of our participation in the divine nature? To participate in Christ through the Holy Spirit is to mount up to a dignity beyond our nature, revealing us to be 'sons of God'.[74] This yields, not an identity with God, but an imitation of him through grace. The saints, Cyril tells us, mount up by their likeness to Christ through faith, and acquire 'by adoption' what he is 'naturally'. Even if, for Cyril, our participation in Christ grants us a dignity 'above our nature' (ὑπὲρ φύσιν), the result is nonetheless one that is humanly fitting, and is not 'above man' (ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον).[75] What are we to make of this paradoxical assertion? As an attempt at synthesis, we may say that for Cyril our participation in the divine nature, which is always in and through Christ, results in the elevation of our nature, enabling us to attain to the ethical imitation of Christ's qualities befitting to our humanity, and granting to us a share in divine power and perfections appropriate to the limitations of our humanity. For Cyril, even when participating in the divine nature, we ever remain 'human beings' (ἄνθρωποι).[76]

[73] *In Jo.* 14:11 (Pusey, vol. 2, 431–56).

[74] For example, see *In Jo.* 1:12 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 133).

[75] *In Jo.* 12:26 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 314).

[76] *In 1 Cor.* 15:50–56 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 317); *In Jo.* 17:20–21 (Pusey, vol. 2, p. 737).

The relationship of the Word to his own flesh

Given the presentation of Christ as the mediator and measure of our participation thus far, we may pose a final set of questions to Cyril's account. How is the Word's own flesh related to himself, and through him, to the Father? Does it in any way serve as a pattern for *our* participation in the divine nature, or is it simply unique, possessing its own distinct manner of union with the Word, and its own set of exclusive qualities? The manner of the union of the Word and his flesh, Cyril tells us, is altogether beyond the powers of the mind to understand and incapable of explanation. But he is in no doubt that this ineffable union is different from the manner in which Christ dwells in us (and we in him).[77] The latter is by a relationship of participation which allows us to receive the divine life. But it does not so alter us that we take on the life-giving property of the Word. The Incarnation, therefore, is a unique, *sui generis* union, and it grants to Christ's own humanity certain qualities that excel our humanity. In this sense, the Word as man seems *not* to be a pattern for our own participation in the divine nature.

It is important that we recognize the complexity of Cyril's thought here. He is insistent that the Word has indeed assumed our very flesh, taken from the Virgin, and is like us in all things except sin. But in Cyril's view of Christ, this does not debar Christ from possessing in his humanity more than we do. In the event of the Incarnation, not only is the manner of union unique, but the humanity of the Word obtains certain characteristics different from and greater than those of our common humanity.[78]

At the same time, there are clear limits which apply to the assumed humanity of the Word. In his commentary on John 17:22–23, when discussing the consequences of the *kenosis* in Philippians 2:7, Cyril states unequivocally that the flesh assumed from the virgin is in no way consubstantial with God the Father, nor with the divine nature. Speaking more concisely, Cyril says that the flesh, sanctified by union with the Spirit according to an ineffable

[77] For example, see *In Luc.* 22:17–22 (Payne Smith, p. 570).

[78] In the same way, Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, p. 196, writes: 'On the one hand Christ is like Adam in that he is *like other men* in every respect save sin; but he is *unlike* other men because he showed himself superior to death and set mankind on a wholly new course.'

manner of union, rises up to an unconfused union with the Word of God, and through him with the Father, but by 'an external relationship' (σχετικῶς), not naturally (φυσικῶς).[79] On the one hand Cyril rejects what he understands the Nestorian position to be, namely, that a *man* is said to be joined to the Word by an external or participatory relationship (σχετικῶς). But he appears to be committed to the view that, once joined to the Word in an ineffable union, Christ's own flesh, his assumed humanity, remains ever in a σχετικῶς relationship with the Godhead as such. The Incarnation displays at one and the same time the most profound union of the human and the divine and their unbridgeable distinctiveness.

With all this in view, we are now in a position to revisit the question, whether in Cyril's account, Christ's own humanity is a pattern for our participation in the divine nature, and if so, in what manner. Towards a resolution to this question, I would observe that Cyril speaks of the Word in his own assumed humanity in two different senses. The manner in which the Word is united to the humanity he has assumed in the Incarnation can be distinguished from the manner in which the Word *in* his assumed humanity is the object of the divine economy of salvation. In the former sense, the Word's own humanity is at certain points distinct from ours, not only in the manner of union with divinity (which is evident), but also in the qualities that accrue to his human nature. In the latter sense, the Incarnate Word himself serves as the pattern and firstfruits of our own humanity, both in the reception of the divine life through the Holy Spirit, and in moral progress in the divine image of God in man.

In the first sense, in the unique union brought about by the Word's assumption of our humanity, Christ's flesh is sanctified specially from the point of conception,[80] and it becomes powerful

[79] *In Jo.* 17:22–23 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 2).

[80] *In Jo.* 17:18–19 (Pusey, vol. 2, pp. 726–7). Cyril makes this point strikingly in his exegesis of Hebrews 1:9 (Pusey, vol. 3, p. 380). He applies the text, 'Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your comrades', to the event of the Incarnation to show that the sanctification by the Word of his own flesh through his own Spirit is not partial nor in the order of a 'guarantee' like our sanctification, but is *beyond* ours, being full of his own power and glory.

and life-giving (in the miracles of healing and in the Eucharist).[81] In this sense, the *Incarnate* Christ is the one who breathes the Spirit and who raises the dead. Significantly, none of these prerogatives are fitting to us or pass over to us. They are incommunicable. But in the second sense, Christ as man (in the individual humanity he has assumed) is a pattern for us; the pre-rogatives which Christ receives and gains in his own humanity for the sake of our humanity are patterned upon our own and are communicable.

I am not suggesting that Cyril himself explicitly proposes this distinction as I have stated it, but I believe such a distinction is in play in Cyril's understanding of Christ, and that it is necessary to make such a distinction in order to make sense of the various and contrasting claims Cyril makes about Christ's humanity as distinct from ours on the one hand, and as a pattern for us on the other. These two notions are held together, I would suggest, by Cyril's claim that one and the same Incarnate Word is both agent and recipient of human redemption. It may be tempting to read this second sense of Christ's relationship to his own assumed humanity as nominal, as given just in the order of a sign (or perhaps as simply trumped by the Word acting as agent through his own flesh). This would be to underestimate, however, the seriousness with which Cyril proposes the Incarnate Christ as both agent and recipient of redemption, as genuinely occupying the common frontier of humanity and divinity. All this makes for a rather complex Christology in which the incarnate Christ in one sense is, and in another sense is not, the pattern for our participation in the divine life. At points Cyril emphasizes Christ as divine agent who imparts the Spirit and whose flesh is life-giving, due to his Arian concerns on the one hand, and to his earnestness to guard the unity of the Incarnate Christ against Nestorius on the other. But his presentation of Christ, who as man is a pattern for us, who receives both the Spirit and kingship, who is raised from the dead as the firstfruits of human nature, and who thus serves as the measure of our own participation in the divine nature, ought not to be lost from view.

[81] In his treatise, *C. Synous.* (Pusey, vol. 3, pp. 479–80), Cyril states that the body of the Word is 'the same nature' (ὁμοφυές) as our bodies, and yet 'far above our limitations'. It is divine (θεῖον), but not changed into the nature of the Godhead. If the body of the Word were not flesh like ours, Cyril explains, then the Eucharist would be of no use to us, and the whole point of mediation would be lost.

In any event, whether in comparing us with Christ in his relation to the Father, or with Christ in his relation to his own flesh, Cyril is unerringly consistent regarding the character of our 'participation in the divine nature'. Our union with God is 'by an external relationship', 'by participation', and 'by grace'. Though we genuinely attain to participation in the divine life, we never exceed the created measure of our humanity.

Conclusion

We have seen that in order to grasp Cyril's understanding of divinization we must look to his presentation of the Incarnate Christ. It is in Christ as representative of the human race and Christ as pattern for the human race that we discover Cyril's conception of the divinized life. Thus, the baptism of Jesus, his reception of the Spirit, and his death, resurrection and ascension are for Cyril more than just the means of our salvation and the pattern for us. These events display the actual sanctification and 'divinization' of Christ the Second Adam, the new root and firstfruits of redeemed humanity. In fact, the entirety of Christ's human existence displays the progressive sanctification – and therefore, divinization – of our nature, which he assumed and transformed in himself first of all.

As applied to us, divinization in Cyril may be understood in two senses, a strict and narrower sense, and a broad and more comprehensive one. With respect to both senses, human reception and cooperation are essential. In the strict sense, divinization is the impartation of divine life effected in us through the agency of the indwelling Spirit in baptism, and through Christ's life-giving flesh in the Eucharist. Properly speaking, *Christ in us* – through his Spirit and his life-giving flesh – is the source and ground of our divinization, accomplishing our justification, our sanctification, our divine filiation, and our participation in the divine nature. In the broad and more comprehensive sense, divinization includes our progressive growth into the divine image. In Cyril's view, our divinization cannot be dissociated from our free and faith-filled response to God and our growth in virtue through obedience to the divine commands, yielding a way of life pleasing to God. In this sense, the divinization of the human race, to be fully accomplished only with the redemption of our bodies, is already

significantly under way in this age. This human response is not merely instrumental; it is, I would suggest, a co-efficient element in Cyril's understanding of our divinization, broadly conceived. For without our free adherence of faith and progress in virtue through obedience, it is no longer *human* life in its entirety that is divinized.

If the account offered here is accurate, then summary descriptions of Cyril's soteriology as 'physicalist' or 'somatic' require significant modification. On the one hand, a largely 'somatic' reading of Cyril's conception of our union with Christ must be adjusted in the light of the richly developed role Cyril accords to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the means of our union. On the other hand, considerations of faith, free choice and obedience are not tangential to Cyril's narrative of the divine life; on the contrary, they are part of the fabric of that narrative and are anchored in Christ himself who 'as man' is a pattern for us in the reception of, and progress in, the divine life. Cyril indeed correlates the somatic and pneumatic means of our union with Christ, and impressively integrates the ontological and ethical aspects of our sanctification and divinization.

This account of our divinization is strengthened and deepened by the manner in which Cyril conceives of it within the entire biblical narrative of redemption, a narrative which in Cyril's presentation springs from the life of the Triune God. The doctrine of the Trinity surrounds, as it were, the narrative of divine life in Cyril, being its source and final goal, and determines the execution of that narrative in the missions of the Son and Spirit. Cyril's narrative of divine life is not only biblically grounded and christologically centered; it is also pneumatological in execution and Trinitarian in shape.

Cyril is plainly at his theological best when speaking in terms of the narrative of salvation, weaving an impressive tapestry of biblical texts in the production of an integrated account of the gospel narrative which magnifies both the saving initiative of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the possibility for the divinization of human life, even in this age. His 'narrative of divine life' remains a significant achievement, worthy of renewed attention and study.

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Chapter 7

Incorruption, Anti-Origenism, and Incarnation: Eschatology in the Thought of Cyril of Alexandria

JOHN J. O'KEEFE

When Cyril of Alexandria died in 444, after presiding over the see of St Mark for thirty-two years, he left behind a mixed legacy. A well-known passage from a letter penned by one of his adversaries testifies to the complexity of this man:

> At last with a final struggle the villain has passed away ... Observing that his malice increased daily and injured the body of the Church, the Governor of our souls has lopped him off like a canker ... His departure delights the survivors but possibly disheartens the dead; there is some fear that under the provocation of his company they may send him back again to us ... Care must therefore be taken to order the guild of undertakers to place a very big and heavy stone on his grave to stop him coming back here ... I am glad and rejoice to see the fellowship of the Church delivered from such a contagion; but I am saddened and sorry as I reflect that the wretched man never took rest from his misdeeds, but died designing greater and worse.[1]

Contemporary authors have often agreed with this assessment, blaming Cyril for a variety of political and theological misdeeds.

[1] Theodoret, *Ep.* 180 as quoted by G. L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics* (London: SPCK, 1940), p. 150. Y. Azéma, *SC* 40, 10 says, 'Les lettres à Jean d'Antioche (PG 83, 1489 et suiv.) sur la mort de saint Cyrille... sont certainement apocryphes'. Therefore, letter 180, surviving only in Latin, might not be authentic.

Often cited are the lavish gifts that Cyril sent to Constantinople in an effort to win both approval of his theological positions and the condemnation of Nestorius.[2]

Cyril is best known by modern scholars for his contribution to the christological controversies of the fifth century, although scholars disagree about the exact nature of this legacy.[3] He is less known as an exegete of the Bible, even though 70 per cent of his surviving work is commentary on the Bible. Clearly Cyril was a gifted theologian and possessed a profound sense of the theological structure of the Christian religion. Yet, considering his keen interest in exegesis, it would be a mistake to see his theological vision as somehow detached from the Bible. Cyril's Christology is and was profoundly biblical and flowed from a source buried deep in the heart of the narratives of Christian faith.

In this essay, however, the topic is neither Christology nor exegesis, at least not explicitly. Here we are charged with exploring the basic contours of Cyril's Christian hope, his 'eschatology'. Eschatology, like all the 'ologies' of contemporary systematic theology, is a modern construct. Just as no ancient author wrote about 'Christology' *per se*, neither did they compose works dedicated specifically to eschatology. Issues normally associated with traditional systematic disciplines came up, but they did so in the context of rhetoric and exegesis more than in the context of dedicated treatises following scholastic categories. Stated more simply, Cyril wrote no treatises on 'eschatology', but neither did any of his contemporaries.

Still, even if there were no scholastic distinctions governing the composition of early Christian theology, we can still say that, from author to author, different questions and issues dominated. If we define eschatology as a branch of theology dealing in particular with questions about the ultimate fate of both humanity and the world, then it is fair to say that these questions were not at the very center of Cyril's concern. Cyril was much more occupied with interpreting the Old Testament in the context of the Christian

[2] J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1958), p. 354, n. 2.

[3] J. McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) is the best modern study of the legacy of Cyril in the Christological Controversy.

way of life, about the lingering power and influence of Jews and pagans in Alexandria, and, later in life, about the christological errors of Nestorius and the Antiochenes. On the one hand, then, exploring 'eschatology' in Cyril is a construction project since we are seeking to highlight themes that, in the mind of the author at least, were less critical than other, more pressing, concerns of the day. On the other hand, this construction project warrants the effort; all Christians, ultimately, care about the fate of humanity and the world. If we look, we can see the basic contours of Cyril's Christian hopes embedded in the details of his larger corpus. Hence, we can set his eschatology in the context of a larger vision and see there, in that vision, a lively tension between a hope already realized in part and a hope for a future yet to come and in which we will have a share of the very life of God.[4]

In a way, I am asserting nothing more than that Cyril affirmed a basic tension that exists in the Christian imagination between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. This is certainly true, but I propose to argue that in the tension, as Cyril understood it, we can see reflected several things that shed light on the larger context of Cyril's thought. Cyril's eschatology seems to rotate around one critical core conviction: the ultimate destiny of the person is to share God's life by moving from our present corruptible state to a future incorruptible state. This conviction has both a practical and a theological consequence. Practically, it means that we can begin to live in this incorruptible state now. Theologically, it implies that only the full presence in the corruptible world of the incorruptible Son could make this transformation possible. I would like to further suggest, both that the particular form of Cyril's practical vision makes the most sense in the context of late fourth- and early fifth-century resistance to Evagrian Origenism, and that the vehemence with which he held to this vision can help us to understand why Cyril perceived the two nature Christology of the Antiochenes as so dangerous. Thus, eschatological insight redounds to Christology. An ever-present reality in the development of both themes was, of course, the Bible.

[4] For a careful study of Cyril's understanding of divinization see D. A. Keating, 'The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 2000).

The realized and future contours of Cyril's eschatological thought

As noted above, few scholars have bothered to spend much time studying and writing about Cyril's eschatology. Brian Daley, in his book *The Hope of the Early Church*, considers Cyril in the context of other Greek authors of the fourth and fifth centuries.[5] Daley explains that for these authors

> the Christian hope ... became more and more a preoccupation of homilists and spiritual writers eager to motivate their hearers, or else was subsumed into Christology and soteriology, as a corollary of the theologian's way of conceiving God's relationship to the world. Eschatological doctrine, as such, withdraws in this period from the center of the Greek theological stage.[6]

In other words, eschatological thought neither tends toward fascination with an apocalyptic future nor does it retreat into a kind of utopian vision of a perfected, this-worldly Christian community. It is a classic expression of that tension between the conviction that the promise has already been delivered and that the promise is yet to be fulfilled.

Daley explains further how, for Cyril, the resurrection of bodies free from corruption is explicitly linked to the resurrection of Christ himself, and is grounded upon the hope that in the future we will have direct, rather than derivative, knowledge of God. There is nothing surprising here. At first glance, then, the substance of Cyril's thought on this topic seems to follow predictable patterns that are not terribly interesting in themselves. Daley himself devotes only three pages to his reflection on Cyril, and he notes that only a few authors have broached the topic at all and these have not produced major studies.[7]

The only thorough examination of Cyril's eschatology ever attempted is an unpublished doctoral dissertation written by Frank J. Caggiano. Caggiano spends nearly 400 pages exploring eschatological themes in Cyril's extant writings. The work is comprehensive and impressive, especially in the organization of the

[5] B. E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 105–23.

[6] Daley, p. 105.

[7] See Daley, p. 245, n. 3.

enormous volume of material under consideration. Caggiano agrees that, on the surface, Cyril seems not to have been particularly interested in eschatology as such. However, he goes on to suggest that this in itself should not deter us from trying to understand the eschatological dimension of Cyril's thought. For Caggiano, and for Daley whom he has read, given Cyril's context in the fifth century, it is really not surprising that we do not find a preoccupation with eschatological themes. On the other hand, Caggiano argues convincingly that, while not on the surface, eschatological issues permeate all of Cyril's writing and form an important part of his theological synthesis. The key to recognizing this, in Caggiano's view, is coming to appreciate the powerful role that the notion of 'recreation in Christ' played in Cyril's Christian vision. He writes:

> For Cyril, re-created life, begun in this earthly life, will be fully realized only after the resurrection of the flesh and man's entrance into eternal life. In other words, Cyril sees the last things as part of the radical fulfillment of the re-creation which has already begun to unfold in history.[8]

The thesis of the work is simple: the conviction that the human person will be recreated in Christ determines the fundamental shape of Cyril's eschatology.

At root, Caggiano's dissertation is a massive survey of eschatological texts culled from Cyril's entire corpus. These texts are then arranged thematically in order to illustrate various aspects of this notion of recreation. Hence, chapters one and two treat, respectively, the First and Second Adams and explain how Christ restores to glory what had been lost in the fall. Chapters three, four, and five, which I will summarize briefly, deal more directly with eschatology.

In the third chapter, called 'Re-Created Man in Christ', Caggiano explores what exactly Cyril meant by recreation. He writes at the beginning of the chapter that, according to Cyril, Christ has

> restored the divine image in re-created man in various ways. Christ has healed man's reason, allowing him to recognize divine truth. He has strengthened man's freedom, permitting him to conquer the

[8] F. J. Caggiano, 'The Eschatological Implications of the Notion of Re-Creation in the Works of Saint Cyril of Alexandria' (Ph.D. thesis, Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1996), p. 11.

> carnal passion which Satan uses to tyrannize all men. Christ also re-established man's dominion by giving to him a share in the promise of His eternal dominion, that is, the Kingdom of Heaven.[9]

The process of restoration builds upon the foundational Pauline idea that because of Christ we are now able to become adopted children of God and share in God's incorruptible life.

Caggiano argues in the fourth chapter that Cyril believed this process of recreation could begin in this life and was not purely a reality to be realized in the future. Christ's death and resurrection have had a real effect that the Christian person is able to encounter already here and now. Hence,

> Christ brings salvation history to fulfillment by *revealing the fullness of truth and spiritual worship* which the Mosaic covenant prefigured. In addition, through His death and resurrection, Christ *has destroyed* the power of sin and death, had defeated the tyranny of Satan and the evil demons and allows believers to share in His victory.[10]

The chapter offers the reader a virtual cascade of citations illustrating the realized character of Cyril's hope.

Finally, Caggiano studies in chapter five the more traditional and future aspects of Cyril's eschatology. This chapter is especially important since some commentators have suggested that Cyril tended to ignore the future dimension of the Christian hope. Caggiano argues to the contrary that Cyril's works are full of future themes. On numerous occasions he reflects upon death as a gateway to complete fulfillment of the promise. Cyril also never neglected the theme of second coming and final judgment. Indeed, at times he even emphasized the more dreadful aspects of that day.[11] Caggiano shows that Cyril spent time reflecting on the state of the human soul in the time between the death of the body and the general resurrection, that he speculated about the features of heaven and of hell, and that he devoted significant energies to describing the bliss and freedom that await the re-created person.

Caggiano's dissertation is a mass of citation and example, and as such it is an essential resource for anyone interested in the

[9] Caggiano, p. 139.

[10] Caggiano, p. 213, emphasis added.

[11] Caggiano, pp. 280–300, offers an excellent and comprehensive discussion of the appearance of judgment themes in Cyril's corpus.

eschatological dimension of Cyril's thought. There is no doubt both that the themes that Caggiano explores were in fact of concern to Cyril and that he has successfully distilled the essence of certain critical aspects of Cyril's eschatological vision. He has also successfully shown how so many of Cyril's ideas in this area return to, and revolve around, the basic insight that human beings have been re-created in Christ; this is the most important claim that Caggiano makes. On the other hand, Caggiano's study is oddly detached from the actual context of Cyril's work. The dissertation is driven by the systematic category 'eschatology' and, as Caggiano himself admits, there was no such systematic category in the fifth century. Indeed, Cyril never wrote a treatise on eschatology. In the end, then, the assembly of all of these eschatological elements is interesting, and underscores, with its massive documentation what B. Daley has already observed, namely that Cyril, on this topic at least, was basically a man of his age.

Still, while it may be tempting to do so, we should not be too quick to minimize the significance of Cyril's thought in this area. If we look at this issue a bit more contextually, some surprises and intriguing possibilities emerge. On the one hand, as I have just suggested, Cyril's eschatological vision strikes the reader as a balanced and somewhat typical expression of a Christian culture growing comfortable with its dominance in late antique society. Fifth-century Alexandria was simply the wrong context for the flourishing of apocalyptic. Similarly, as Caggiano has shown, Cyril understood the tension between the promises of God already fulfilled and the promises of God yet to be delivered. However, in my view, there is at least one aspect of Cyril's thought on this question that has not been sufficiently highlighted and another that has been missed entirely. In the case of the former, I single out the dominance of the concept of 'incorruption' (ἀφθαρσία) in Cyril's hope, and, in the case of the latter, I cite the importance of the Origenist controversy in shaping key aspects of Cyril's eschatological vision. Both of these points need further elucidation.

Scholars focused on Greek patristic theology have long recognized the importance of the concept of incorruptibility (*aphtharsia*) and the integral place it plays in the Eastern understanding of the redemptive work of Christ. This and related theological concepts, however, are not usually noted as significant features Cyril's

thought.[12] Perhaps it is the very pervasiveness of the term, both in Greek patristic literature and orthodox soteriology that makes it easy to overlook. Yet, the idea that one would conceive salvation as a deliverance from corruption and decay, pervasive though it may be, is far from inconsequential no matter where encountered. As Nonna Verna Harrison explains, this doctrine reaches toward the cosmological. If we take the idea of salvation as deliverance from corruption and decay seriously, she comments,

> [then we must be prepared to recognize] how radically material things will have to be transformed in order to share fully in this cosmic redemption. To share in eternal life, matter itself will have to be differently structured so that the second law of thermodynamics no longer operates. The biosphere will have a new ecology based on universal cooperation among organisms and species instead of competition for survival . . .[13]

This radical transformation, or restoration, of creation is, in Orthodox thought, the central accomplishment of the Incarnate Word. The word *aphtharsia* is far from neutral and, one might say, even begs for some kind of cosmic speculation.

Therefore, when we note the frequent appearance of this term in association with Cyril's eschatology, it would be wise not to neglect it by assuming we understand it. With this caveat in mind, two observations are critical. First, Cyril's theological mind firmly lashed this hope for incorruptible life to a powerful defense of the Incarnation. In other words, soteriology, eschatology, and Christology are deeply interrelated. Second, the particular form into which Cyril shaped these interrelated ideas makes most sense if understood against the backdrop of the Origenist controversy. For Origenist thinkers, incorruption was one of the fruits of an

[12] L. R. Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria: Selected Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 201, n. 15: 'ἀφθαρσία/incorruptibility, φθορά/corruption, and their cognates are important in Cyril's thought, though less so than in Athanasius (see *De Incarnatione passim*). "Incorruptibility" for Cyril means "stable existence", and involves moral as well as physical qualities. It is a feature of the image of God in man . . . and being possessed by Adam through divine grace, not natural endowment . . .' Caggiano is aware of this but tends to subsume it beneath the larger issues of recreation.

[13] N. V. Harrison, 'Theosis as Salvation: An Orthodox Perspective', *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997), p. 435.

ascetical life. That fruit could be enjoyed now, in the body, but full realization of incorruption was something less bodily and more spiritual.[14] A close reading of Cyril reveals that while he spoke of incorruption as the fruit of an ascetical life, he was careful to avoid any spiritualizing language implying that the body, in the end, did not participate in incorruption. Significantly, Cyril shows virtually no interest in the possible cosmological and philosophical implications resident in his notion of incorruption. Such speculation was precisely the thing that caused Origenist thinkers so much difficulty and that worried men like Cyril.[15]

The incorruptible life

Let me turn first to incorruption and incarnation. Scholars usually present Cyril's Christology in one of two ways. Some, drawing on the contemporary distinction between 'high' and 'low' christologies, insist that Cyril was preoccupied with the divine Christ and had little interest in his humanity. Other, more philologically-minded students carefully detail the complexity of meanings associated with the terms 'ousia', 'hypostasis', 'physis', and 'prosopon', and risk reducing Cyril's ideas to word studies.[16] I have argued elsewhere that locating Cyril's christological thought on the spectrum of high and low christologies is both anachronistic and unhelpful.[17] Cyril's commitment to the real humanity of the Incarnate Word is, in my view, beyond dispute. That commitment, I suggested, derived ultimately from a particular reading of the Scriptures that led Cyril to insist upon the Son's proximity to the world, even when such an insistence threatened the doctrine of divine impassibility and forced him to rely on paradoxical language, such as 'impassible suffering'. I continue to be convinced

[14] For an excellent discussion of these themes in Evagrius, see A. Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétienne*, Spiritualité Orientale 30 (Bégrolles en Manges: Abbaye de Belle Fontaine, 1979), esp. pp. 189ff.

[15] See Elizabeth Clark, *Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chapter 2, and Guillaumont, pp. 202ff.

[16] McGuckin offers an excellent explanation of the terminology of the fifth-century debates without reductionism, pp. 126ff.

[17] See J. J. O'Keefe, 'Impassible Suffering? Divine Impassibility and Fifth-Century Christology', *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), pp. 39–52.

that this is the case. However, I did not recognize until fairly recently the significance of *aphtharsia* in the development of Cyril's ideas about Christ. Indeed, in the three articles I have written that concern Cyril, I did not mention *aphtharsia* even once.[18]

This is, in my view, a rather glaring omission. Indeed, it is fair to say that in virtually every significant discussion of the Incarnation and of Christ, Cyril finds a way to drop in a reminder that his vision of Christ is necessary if humans are to be delivered from corruption and attain divine glory. In other words, a particular eschatological vision was driving Christology. Three brief examples will suffice to illustrate the point. These examples are taken from different periods of Cyril's life. It is noteworthy that these ideas predate the controversy with Nestorius that began in 428.

I take the first example from Cyril's tenth festal letter, written in preparation for Easter of 422. In this letter Cyril reflects upon the incorruptible life in the context of a particular interpretation of Exodus 16, read in the light of Hebrews 9:4. This chapter of Exodus tells the story of 'manna from heaven'. Most of the manna that is not eaten, the text explains, rots on the ground, but some is collected and put in an urn before the ark of the covenant. This manna does not rot. Hence, the author of the letter to the Hebrews is able to note that in the Holy of Holies, inside the ark 'there was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant . . .'. Cyril interprets this story as a type of our future, incorruptible life. Christ, he writes,

> will clothe our bodies with the divine glory as if with something golden[19] and, having placed us in the sight of God the Father, he will change us and make us incorruptible. We will no longer be subject to decay, but we will live forever.

Cyril goes on to link this claim to Philippians 2, a key text in his christological vision:

> For let us understand that by nature he is God, since he was begotten of God and that he ineffably and mystically manifested the essence of God the Father. Because of this we know that he is 'in the form of

[18] In addition to 'Impassible Suffering', see O'Keefe, 'A Letter that Killeth: Toward a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000), pp. 83–104, and 'Christianizing Malachi: Fifth-Century Insights from Cyril of Alexandria', *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996), pp. 136–58.

[19] Cyril is here alluding to the urn of Hebrews 9:4.

> God' and has equality in everything. While being this truly, 'he humbled himself', according to the scriptures, 'taking the nature of a slave', that is, becoming like us so that we might become like him . . .

The integral connection between eschatological hope and christological vision is impossible to miss.

The second example is taken from his *Third Letter to Nestorius*, a very important text in the christological controversy, and generally dated to *c.*430. Cyril writes as follows:

> We confess that the very Son begotten of God the Father, the Only-begotten God, impassible though he is in his own nature, has (as the Bible says) suffered in flesh for our sake and that he was in the crucified body claiming the sufferings of his flesh as his own impassibly. By nature life and personally the Resurrection . . . 'by God's grace he tasted death for every man' in surrendering his body to it (cf. John 11:25). With unspeakable power he trampled on death to become in his own flesh first the 'first-born of the dead' (Col. 1:18) and 'first fruits of those asleep' (1 Cor. 15:20) in order that he might blaze the trail for human nature's return to incorruptibility . . .[20]

Here the promise of incorruption gives Cyril's critique of Nestorius a clear eschatological thrust.

Somewhat later we find similar themes expressed in Cyril's short treatise 'Doctrinal Questions and Answers'. Drawing upon the Pauline imagery of the first and second Adams, Cyril answers a question seeking clarification about how Christ reverses the penalties connected to Adam's sin. He explains that

> [Adam] became mortal . . . and transmitted the curse to his seed . . . whereas our Lord Jesus Christ who bears the title 'second Adam' and is a second beginning of our race after the first, re-formed us into incorruptibility by assaulting death, nullifying it in his own flesh and in him the force of the primal curse has been broken . . . For there is one who hallows all, justifies and restores them to incorruption, Jesus Christ our Lord, and through him and from him the gift comes to all alike.[21]

Here again there is a deep connection in Cyril's mind between the necessity of a fleshy incarnation – Christ nullifies death in his flesh – and our deliverance from corruptibility.

[20] *Ad Nest.* 3, 6 (Wickham, pp. 21–3).
[21] *De Dogm.* 6 (Wickham, p. 203).

More examples illustrating this connection are exceptionally easy to find throughout Cyril's corpus. I would even argue that ignoring this aspect of Cyril's understanding of redemption significantly distorts his intent. Cyril's Christology makes much more sense when it is located in a broader discussion of his hope for human transformation to incorruptible life. This is an under-emphasized aspect of Cyril's theology and a key to understanding the vehemence with which he both attacked his opponents and insisted on the reality of the Son's Incarnation.[22]

The specter of Origen

Less obvious to me, however, is the exact context in which to set Cyril's thought on this matter. In my view, it makes most sense to set it tentatively in the waning phases of the Origenist controversy, at a time when the issues are still alive but the danger had subsided. The evidence is suggestive. Firstly, Cyril, on at least a few occasions, takes time to vocally defend the good of marriage. Secondly, he often insists, against anthropomorphites, that the creation of humanity in God's image does not imply that God has human form, but this claim never results in any retreat from the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Finally he embraces a vision of the ascetical life that, on the one hand affirms the possibility of achieving *apatheia* in this life, but, on the other hand, remains cautious about the project itself.

Let us turn first to Cyril's defense of marriage. In the *Third Letter to Nestorius* there is a remarkable passage that is easy to miss if one is preoccupied with Christology.

> For the very reason that the holy virgin gave fleshly birth to God substantially united with flesh we declare her to be 'Mother of God', not because the Word's nature somehow derived its origin from flesh ... He had no need of temporal birth ... for his own nature. No, he meant to bless the very origin of our existence, through a woman's giving birth to him united with flesh. He meant too that the curse on the whole race, which dispatches our earthly bodies to death, should

[22] For a thoughtful discussion of Cyril's soteriology see, Lars Koen, *The Saving Passion: Incarnational and Soteriological Thought in Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on the Gospel According to St John* (Uppsala: Graphic Systems, 1991).

> cease as well as the words (from now on rendered null and void by him) 'in sorrow you shall bear children' (Gen. 3:16) and he intended to prove true the prophet's utterance 'Death waxed strong and swallowed and again God took away ever tear from every countenance' (Isa. 25.8). This is our reason for affirming of him that he personally blessed marriage by his incarnation as well as by responding to the invitation to leave for Cana in Galilee along with the holy apostles.[23]

A similar passage affirming the good of marriage and of human generation is found in his commentary on John 2:1, the story of the wedding feast at Cana. Here are Cyril's words in Pusey's elegant translation:

> Seasonably comes He at length to the beginning of miracles, even if He seems to have been called to it without set purpose. For a marriage feast being held (it is clear that it was altogether holy), the mother of the Saviour is present, and Himself also being bidden comes together with His own disciples, to work miracles rather than to feast with them, and yet more, to sanctify the very beginning of the birth of man: I mean so far as appertains to the flesh. For it was fitting that He, Who was renewing the very nature of man, and refashioning it all for the better, should not only impart His blessing to those already called into being, but also prepare before grace for those soon to be born, and make holy their entrance into being.[24]

Based upon what we know about this period of Christian history, it seems clear that these remarks do indeed fit in the context of resistance to Origenism. Elizabeth Clark, in her masterful study of the topic, points out that Cyril's uncle Theophilus, reflecting the worries of many others, was particularly concerned about Origenist tendencies to denigrate reproduction.[25] Given Cyril's close association with his uncle, it seems likely that the nephew would be aware of the issues of concern in the diocese.

A second indicator that Origenist issues may be lurking behind Cyril's understanding of *aphtharsia* emerges from his understanding of exactly how humans were created in the image of God. We know that the controversy surrounding Evagrius and other

[23] *Ad Nest.* 3, 11 (Wickham, pp. 27–9).

[24] *In Jo.* 2, 1. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, trans. P. E. Pusey, A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, vol. 1 (Oxford: James Parker, 1874), pp. 200f.

[25] Clark, pp. 116–17.

Origenists was provoked, in part, by the objections of literal-minded monks who ascribed human qualities to the Godhead because of the scriptural teaching that humans were made in God's image. Theophilus, despite a brief and politically motivated alliance with anthropomorphites, rejects their understanding of God without embracing the Origenist denigration of the body.[26] Cyril, following his uncle, avoids all anthropomorphite interpretations of Genesis 1, but he is generally eager to remind readers that the body must participate in salvation and incorruptible life.[27] These remarks from the *Commentary on John* are representative:

> Even though death, which by transgression sprang on us, compels the human body to the debt of decay . . . yet since Christ is in us through his own flesh, we shall surely rise . . . For as if one took a spark and buried it amid much stubble, in order that the seed of fire preserved might lay hold of it, so in us too our Lord Jesus Christ hid life through his own flesh and inserts it as a seed of immortality, abolishing the whole corruption that is in us.[28]

While Cyril's defense of bodily resurrection without recourse to an anthropomorphite theology lacks the polemical urgency that characterized much of the discussion during the heat of the controversy, it does suggest a particular perspective that looks to that debate for its source.

Finally, it is also likely that Cyril's understanding of the ascetical life points in some critical ways backward to the controversies of his uncle's day. The claim that Christians ought to be in pursuit of impassibility though ascetical acts is a recurrent theme in Cyril's writing. In his festal letters, especially, he advocates aspects of this life to his entire flock, implying that asceticism in some form is good for all Christians. All the letters exhort the hearers to embrace fasting and self-discipline as a means to attaining life with God. Of course, the pre-Lenten context of the letters easily explains the prominence of this theme. However, it is interesting to observe how deeply the language of asceticism had penetrated into Cyril's reading of the Bible and into his pastoral agenda. I offer

[26] Clark, p. 120.

[27] See Cyril's *Ad Cal.* (Wickham, pp. 214–21).

[28] *In Jo.* 6:54 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 533). See Hubert Du Manoir, *Dogme et spiritualité chez saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Cerf, 1944), p. 189.

one example taken from Letter 15, but it would be easy to add more.

In the early part of Letter 15, just after the opening greeting, Cyril launches into an unusual reading of Numbers 10:9–10:

> When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, so that you may be remembered before the Lord your God and be saved from your enemies. Also on your days of rejoicing, at your appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over your sacrifices of well-being; they shall serve as a reminder before the Lord your God: I am the Lord your God.

On the one hand the text is chosen because the references to festivals and trumpets connect it to the festive topic of the letters.[29] On the other, Cyril selects it to advance a point about the ascetical life.

After citing the text, he explains to his hearers that the words present a type of future things. He then gives a history lesson and explains that the Jews were constantly threatened by external enemies such as the Moabites and the Midianites. In contrast, he then cites 2 Corinthians 10:4, 'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal' and claims that this text must, in a Christian context, point to our battle with the passions of the flesh. The 'trumpet' calls us to the spiritual battle of the season. This image then brings to his mind a passage from Joel: 'Prepare war, stir up the warriors. Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weakling say, "I am a warrior".'

Cyril then attempts an interpretation. He says we could read this as a command to literally turn our farm equipment into weapons and head to battle, but this is not the best reading. Still, since the law must be honored, we need to find a better reading.

Since, according to Paul, our relationship to the law is one of having been 'justified in Christ' and 'sanctified in the Spirit', we must set this text from Joel and the other from Numbers in the

[29] The liturgical use of the image of the 'trumpet blast' to mark the beginning of Lent seems to have been widespread in the ancient Church. See the discussion of William Harmless, *St Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 94–5 and 251–60.

context of both the Christian battle against the passions and the pursuit of virtue. We, like the warriors in Joel, are perfectly equipped for our battle. As proof he quotes Ephesians 6:14–17, with its references to 'loins girt with truth' (v. 14), 'the breastplate of righteousness' (v. 14), 'the shield of faith' (v. 16), and 'the sword of the Spirit' (v. 17). So equipped the Christian can enter the battle of Lent.

Many of the letters offer similar ascetical interpretations of Old Testament texts. These interpretations are always created by making intertextual connections between the New and the Old. They assume the enduring value of the old, when read in the light of Christ. They are also deeply ensconced in the rhetoric of early Christian asceticism. Cyril clearly believed that aspects of the ascetical project were applicable to all, but in general his recommendations are quite tame, non-elitist, and devoid of any cosmological or philosophical speculation.

Toward the end of his career, Cyril was still advocating the battle against the passions and the pursuit of *apatheia*. In his *Answers to Tiberius*, he reflects upon the possibilities of the ascetical project. We are not, he explains,

> Victorious over our innate impulses absolutely all at once; that is reserved for the life to come. But we can, with God's co-operation providing us with power from on high, curb the excitements of the flesh.[30]

While it is difficult to know with certainty who Cyril has in mind in this passage, Wickham, the editor of this text, speculates that Cyril might be responding directly to the individuals preaching Evagrian ideas in his diocese.[31] After all, Evagrius seems to have believed that *apatheia* could be acquired here and now if one embraced the necessary disciplines. The evidence is, therefore, suggestive, especially if we consider that Evieux, in his introduction to the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition of Cyril's *Festal Letters*, argues that Cyril spent significant time in the Egyptian desert and probably met Evagrius himself.[32] Given his uncle's struggles with Origenism, it is extremely unlikely that Cyril would be unfamiliar with the

[30] *Resp. ad Tib.* 12 (Wickham, p. 171).

[31] See Wickham, p. 169, n. 50.

[32] Pierre Évieux, *Cyrille d'Alexandrie: Lettres Festales*, vol. 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1991), pp. 14–17.

basic issues of the controversy. The lack of cosmological or philosophical speculation is also significant. With these facts in mind, it is difficult not to conclude that Cyril's toned-down preaching about *apatheia* has some connection to the Origenist struggle.

Implications

In the final analysis we can fairly conclude that scholars have not been wrong in their general judgment that the thought of Cyril of Alexandria did not revolve around eschatological themes. On the one hand, Cyril represents the growing trend in the Eastern Church to ground eschatological reflection in the Pauline theme of deliverance from incorruption. For Cyril, eschatology is essentially understood as that process by which we are delivered from sin and death, divinized, and made residents of an incorrupt and restored creation. This process of divinization can begin now, in this life, if we embrace aspects of the ascetical life. We can, in effect, begin to experience our recreation already, even though the transformation will not be complete until the next life. This eschatology, fixed in a tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet', places Cyril firmly and typically in the theological world of the fifth century. In this aspect of his thought at least, Cyril was not an original thinker. Still, even though he was not original here, we should not conclude that Cyril did not care deeply about this vision of human redemption and that he was not willing to defend it.

I have tried to show that if we set Cyril's appropriation of these fifth-century theological baselines in the context of that aftermath of the Origenist controversy, and if resistance to Origenism is a subtext that somehow nuances and directs that appropriation, then this common eschatology suddenly becomes a bit more interesting. Indeed, several things about the more significant aspects of Cyril's thought make a good deal more sense. Firstly, setting Cyril in an anti-Origenist context helps to illuminate the vehemence with which he insisted upon the reality of our physical redemption: salvation had to include the body and liberation from corruption if it were to mean anything at all; it could not be spiritualized. Cyril, like more well known anti-Origenists, steadfastly defended the resurrection of the body. Secondly, recognizing the context of

Cyril's eschatology may help explain why Cyril became so upset with Nestorius. Cyril insisted through his whole long career that human beings are delivered from death and decay only by the saving incarnation of the Word. Only a truly incarnate Son – one who touched us physically in our bodiliness – was capable of fulfilling the hope for a physically redeemed and incorrupt new humanity. Resistance to Origenism, and the concomitant eschatological themes, may well be a significant and under-explored subtext of the christological controversy. While Cyril may not be personally responsible for the Christian emphasis on redemption as *aphtharsia* and freedom from decay, defending this doctrine against dilution by an inadequate Christology may perhaps be his greatest legacy. Such a message, to borrow from the famous letter cited at the beginning of this essay, is unlikely to dishearten the dead, but it is certainly a delight to the survivors.

Chapter 8

Cyril of Alexandria: Bishop and Pastor

JOHN A. McGUCKIN

Some preliminaries

Cyril of Alexandria has been the victim of a good deal of European scholarly myopia in recent centuries; most of it with unacknowledged imperialist attitudes, and some of it not free of its own kinds of racist agenda. He has been caricatured, lampooned, and even accused of misogynistic murder (without sufficient scholarly basis in my opinion – though that has not seemed to rein in academics' relish for lurid details whether real or imaginary).[1] This latter charge, emanates, of course, from the infamous case of the assassination of Hypatia the Philosopher, torn to pieces by a Christian mob in Alexandria; that most violent of the many extremely violent cities of the Late Roman Empire,

[1] An idea of the extraordinary amount of 'raised temperatures' over the last three hundred years in regard to this, and how it has grown into a complex 'cause célèbre' far removed from sober historical reflections can be gauged from Lewis Thomas' curious book (ostensibly defending Cyril!) entitled: *The History of Hypatia – A Most Impudent Schoolmistress of Alexandria, Murder'd and Torn to pieces by the Populace – In defence of St Cyril and the Alexandrian Clergy, From the Aspersions of Mr. Toland* (London, 1721). The text can be viewed on: www.polyamory.org/~howard/Hypatia/Lewis_1721.html. The issue of whether or not Cyril was a 'bad man' was given high prominence by Gibbon and soon became identified as a marker of pro- or anti-Christian readings of late antique history from the eighteenth century on. That it is still operative in several textbooks is evidence, for me, of a certain sclerosis of imagination.

where mob rule usually stood in for popular suffrage.[2] Cyril has been taken to task for his 'over zealous' prosecution of his causes in the face of much opposition.[3] He has equally been berated for his many anti-Semitic remarks. There is much more evidence within his writings with regard to this charge, although even here we need to contextualize his pugnacious apologetic from within the realities of his own period, not ours (resisting the temptation to superiority by invoking post-Holocaust hindsight).[4] This was an era, it must be remembered, where the Christian and Jewish factions were engaged in a bitter (and more or less equally weighted) struggle for the political control of Alexandrian civic, intellectual and religious life.[5] Such a conceptualization of Cyril's political administration within an accurate historical context (a basic duty of scholarly writing it would seem to me) should certainly note the anti-Jewish propaganda and set it in some kind of measured historical canon of judgement. While his opinions are far from being paradigmatic of eirenic inclusivity, neither do they merit the elevation of Cyril as progenitor of the kind of pogroms that arose under Christian leaders of an ascendant church in the later medieval period. Attempts to make him out as a racist demagogue heading popular riots against the Jewish quarter of Alexandria can only be sustained by a seriously prejudicial twisting of the evidence.[6]

[2] See T. E. Gregory, *Vox Populi: Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979).

[3] What most contemporaries would have regarded as the basic duty of any ethnarch – that *parrhesia* or bold prosecution a bishop was expected to exercise in defence of the causes of his church. In Cyril's case that meant his vigorous work as representative of the Christians of Egypt – often to the chagrin of Christians of other cities of the empire whose episcopal leaders were not as well placed to exercise effective leverage on the seats of imperial power.

[4] See H. I. Bell, 'Anti-Semitism in Alexandria', *Journal of Roman Studies* 31 (1941), pp. 1–18.

[5] Cyril's strong advocacy of supersessionist attitudes to Judaism has to be contextualized in the robust mutual apologetic that then existed between the Jewish and Christian intellectual communities in Byzantine Egypt. See J. McGuckin, 'Moses and the Mystery of Christ in Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis', *Coptic Church Review* 21 (2000), pp. 24–32 and 98–114.

[6] For the case of the 'Alexander church' riots, when punitive measures were taken at Cyril's insistence against the largely Jewish locality that burned down a Christian church, which degenerated into rioting and looting on a wide scale, see McGuckin (1994), pp. 10–12.

Even when scholars have set out to be 'kind' to Cyril, they have tended to reduce him to the abstract symbolic intellectual cipher of a great dogmatician. European patristic scholarship of the late nineteenth century on, so overawed by the 'scientific' development of *religionsgeschichtliche* methodologies in the contemporary non-ecclesial departments of religion that were springing up within universities, desperately tried to adopt a correspondingly 'hard scientific' method. Thus, the scholarship of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended drastically to recast the study of the Christian writers of antiquity to the mould of 'History of Doctrines'. Texts were bracketed off, and given a life of their own, overly de-contextualized perhaps, but now at least capable of neat collation and refined taxonomic modelling. Such a Cyril, processed for the doctrine books, had only one thing to say – his contribution to the Christology controversy at the Council of Ephesus. All else was sacrificed to the altar of this cause. It is an approach that has continued on, in a sometimes naïve manner, throughout much of mid to late twentieth-century scholarship. Of course Cyril, as a dogmatician, also became an increasingly 'unpleasing' icon in the religious relativization that equally marked the twentieth century. So the history of religions approach that had first abstracted him as a dogmatist, then also tended to emphasize his 'intemperance' and his theological opinionatedness generally (not honestly taking on board that every ancient episcopal rhetor could be tarred with that same brush).[7] Recent historical judgements of Cyril offered by Wickham and myself that attempted some measure of balanced assessment in the picture, have called down censure in some reviews as examples of theologians having a penchant for being too kind to a villain.[8] In sections of my historical study on Cyril, which for

[7] Had scholars never read Nestorius, one wonders? Or the manner in which he harangued and assaulted his opponents in Byzantium? No model of eirenicism here either, though Nestorius won the popular sympathy vote by his courageous endurance of exile. See J. McGuckin, 'Nestorius and the Political Factions of 5th Century Byzantium: Factors in his Downfall', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 78/3 (1996), pp. 7–21 (Special Issue), *The Church of the East: Life and Thought*, eds J. F. Coakley and K. Parry,

[8] See Wickham, pp. xvi–xvii and McGuckin (1994), pp. 1–125. See, for example, Russell, p. 208, n. 45. The opinion given here as to Cyril's complicity in murder, albeit only a passing reference, seems to me a tired revival of old charges, sustained by nothing new, merely adding 'imputed' motives which an apparently omniscient modern editor reads back into the psychology of the

me were significant (though peripheral to the fundamental narrative), I tried to point out how Gibbon's Enlightenment agenda of villainizing Cyril (as a demonstration of how Christianity corrupted the Roman Empire), or the Victorian agenda which flayed him morally (as part of the attempt to dislocate Anglo-Catholic Alexandrian Christologies in the cause of a newly ascendant Kenotic–Humanist Christology) were profoundly anachronistic approaches mounted by scholars with vested interests lying not too far below the page.[9] But calls to turn the historical spotlight around in a wider arc may well have had less appeal than the old clichés. Be that as it may, it is not our concern as historians, ultimately, to empathize with the ancients, merely to attempt to explain them in some form of meaningful context, and preserve a measured balance in our assessment of the contributing evidence. The 'coverage' of all the evidence is certainly *de rigueur* in that regard. In relation to our present topic, Cyril's role as an episcopal administrator, positively considered, can be seen to be a very neglected area of studies. While Cyril may have been studied as political *eminence grise*, or as a theologian, or as an exegete, 'pastor' has not been a concept that has hitherto commanded much interest at all.

In antiquity Cyril was called the 'Seal (*Sphragis*) of all the Fathers' and he certainly summated the East Christian tradition of Christology, Trinitarianism, and mystical allegorical interpretation. From the early medieval period onwards, his exegetical work was progressively neglected in the West, though his general impact on Latin theology in key areas remained strong, if perhaps not as

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ancients. There is a rare balanced Victorian treatment by W. Bright, the Regius Professor of Church History at Oxford, in the article on Cyril in W. Smith and H. Wace (eds), *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, vol. 1 (London: 1877), pp. 763–73.

[9] See McGuckin (1994). The irresponsible condemnation of Cyril's moral character is found especially in the romantic nonsense pedalled as history in Charles Kingsely's novel *Hypatia*. This latter cost Cyril his volume in the Victorian series of patristic translations into English, such as *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. C. Gore and H. M. Relton exemplify those who, while versed in early Christian doctrine, advocated a Kenotic–Humanist Christology. Cyril then was one of the victims of a sea-change transpiring in the face of Anglican Christology in the generation after the Oxford Movement and in the time of that church's increasing self-alignment with the continental Liberal Protestant agenda.

dominant as it was in the Byzantine world where, despite the fraught post-Chalcedonian controversies, his star remained in the ascendant.[10] In his own lifetime he probably thought it would be for his great commentaries that he would be remembered.[11] Here he represents a tempering of the Origenian allegorical tradition, and works (both by personal preference, and by deliberate strategic choice) to moderate an exegetical style that reconciled tendencies of the Alexandrian and Syrian schools of interpretation as they had hitherto been developing.[12] Let it be stated at the outset that he is surely one of the Church's greatest intellectual thinkers in terms of Christology and Trinitarianism, and one of the most powerful of the early Greek exegetes; though it is only in very recent times that a fuller range of his writings in English have become available, and it is still the case that much of his exegesis remains untranslated and unedited.[13]

Why is it that European scholarship has not generally afforded him the place those glowing epithets would normally gain for an ancient theologian in terms of commanding modern research? Is it that scholars have been embarrassed by his personality? It has often struck me how many professional commentators on Late Antiquity feel the need to express some personal reserve in regard to his character when they have been working on his texts. It usually provokes me to wonder which of the fathers from this era

[10] See N. M. Haring, 'The Character and Range of the Influence of St Cyril of Alexandria on Latin Theology (430–1260)', *Medieval Studies* 12 (1950), pp. 1–19.

[11] See A. S. Kerrigan, *Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament*, Analecta Biblica 2 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1952). R. L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); and 'Exegesis and Theology: Some Reflections on the Adam-Christ typology in Cyril of Alexandria', *Church History* 35 (1966), pp. 139–156; J. A. McGuckin, 'Moses and the Mystery of Christ in Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis'.

[12] Part of this agenda, in his later years, was to dislocate the reputation of the great Syrian teachers Diodore and Theodore, whose tradition of theology, after Ephesus 431, he wanted to be censured. He increasingly came to realize that this was not a realizable political goal. His collation and publication of large volumes of exegesis is meant to undercut and offset some of the appeal of the Syrians, by 'toning down' much of the allegorical excess of the Alexandrian tradition, while retaining its mystical and poetical attractiveness.

[13] Russell is a welcome addition for the exegetical texts it offers in translation.

would a modern really want to assess him against? Would there be any of the ancient episcopal teachers we could hope to approach empathetically, or presume we could ever understand as we claim to understand moderns? Simply put, are there any of the ancients we moderns would care to identify with?

I offer these introductory remarks not to exonerate Cyril from any charge of demagoguery, but merely to state that it is necessary to contextualize him sensibly in the endemically violent world of Late Antiquity, where bishops (under the remit of imperial governors and military dukes) governed popular factions as best they could. We also need to be clear about the large extent of post-Reformation propaganda that has attached itself to his name and reputation, and still needs to be cleared away from the field so that more balanced research can be done.

Such a short pre-history, however, might explain why 'Cyril the Pastor' is not a title that has often been afforded to him in scholarly imagination. He seems to be a nightmare vision of a pastor; one whose threatened visit to the family home would induce a nervous slamming of the shutters. But this is an odd reaction for historians to sustain, when one considers how anachronistic so many of these responses are. In his own time and condition, it is clear that Cyril of Alexandria, considered as Ethnarch of the Egyptian Christians, was an abundantly successful pastor, with clearly applied strategies for his political and religious community, and exceptionally fruitful skills in organization and asset management for the church of Alexandria. Some of these he had learned from his uncle Theophilus, but others were more particularly his own. It is also clear enough that he departs from the violent strategies set in place by his uncle, and adopts a more moderated, more subtle policy of evangelization. This is not the same everywhere; for example, the Shenoudi in the Upper Nile regions were still actively and aggressively deconstructing paganism throughout Cyril's administration; but in Alexandria and its environs, Cyril's constantly repeated theme in his writings is the need to wean away Christians from pagan and Jewish cultic celebrations by reasoned argument, and the setting in place of alternative attractions. Cyril, of course, built on foundations his family had set in place, and from that basis developed his church to become one of the most powerful Christian centres of the fifth-century Byzantine world. This was no mean achievement given

the peculiar geographical conditions of Christian Egypt, and, in addition, the generic racial hostility shown to 'Egyptians' by the Byzantine centre of power (something abundantly evidenced in the tense relations between Orestes, the Constantinopolitan Christian governor of Alexandria, and bishop Cyril in his early administration).[14]

As its own proper focus, this essay wishes to consider Cyril's episcopal pastorate under the three symbolic headings: (1) his relation to the monastic and clerical communities of Upper Egypt, as demonstrated in his *Letter to Calosirius*; (2) his liturgical oversight as demonstrated mainly in his *Festal Letters* announcing the date of Pascha; and (3) his activities in regulating Christian popular 'leakage' to the abundantly present Jewish and Hellenistic centres of worship in Late Antique Egypt, particularly exemplified in the incident of the transferral of the relics of Saints Cyrus and John to Menouthis, the great Isis pilgrimage centre on the eastern littoral of Alexandria.

The so-called 'Anthropomorphite controversy'

The *Letter to Calosirius* shows Cyril exercising his pastoral oversight through the means of the local bishop of Arsenoite.[15] Calosirius was later one of the synodical party of Dioscorus of Alexandria, and a strong advocate of Eutyches at the Council of Ephesus in 449.[16] Under Cyril's administration he was the bishop of the Fayyum region, and was thus the nearest local ordinary presiding over the disembarkation point of the Nile passage from Alexandria to the monastic communities on the Red Sea at Mount Calamon.[17] The Fayyum was an area where the Alexandrian church owned extensive property.[18] The letter is a robust instruction to the bishop to intervene in the monastery affairs, justified on the

[14] See McGuckin (1994), pp. 10–15.

[15] *Ad Cal.* (Wickham, pp. 214–21).

[16] E. Schwarz, *ACO*, 2, 1, p. 81; 2, 3, p. 188.

[17] Otherwise known as Mount Porphyrites. From the Nile it is about 175 kilometres SE of Antinoopolis. But to reach it from the main desert communities one would probably choose to leave the Nile at Pispir or Oxyrhynchos, and this is why Bishop Calosirius is a key intervening figure.

[18] See R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 289–93.

grounds that some of the monastics of that community are engaging in the teaching of theology, a clerical office that falls under the ordinary episcopal duties of scrutiny of preaching. The letter concerns a conservative party of monastic teachers, who should be contextualized in the wider anti-Origenist movement still troubling the Egyptian desert communities. It is difficult to tell whether Mount Calamon was a centre of anti-Origenist feeling or the exact opposite. Cyril presents the theological positions being taught there in the most severe terms. 'Some are going about prompted by ignorance', maintaining that, 'since scripture says man was created in God's image, we ought to believe that the Godhead has a human shape or form'. This position, he says, 'is utterly witless'. More than that, it is capable of making those who choose to think it, 'incur the charge of most extreme blasphemy'.[19] The sacred Image, Cyril goes on, is not to be located in bodily terms. Man is indeed 'in the image', but this has to be understood as the divine image, which is bodiless, and humans are consequently images of the divine in spiritual terms only. Needless to say, we must not take Cyril's synopsis of his opponent's doctrine to be synonymous with that doctrine as really taught.

Moreover, the chief goal in his account is not so much to teach a theology of the image, a theme which had been so well established as to become almost clichéd by this period, but rather to signal to the unnamed 'teacher' of Mount Calamon that he is courting an archiepiscopal censure, and had better be silent.[20] He repeats the severe denunciation of the monastic teacher so often that it is clear that a very personal deconstruction is taking place. Calosirius the bishop is instructed to 'put a stop to these people', and 'rebuke those who make a habit of spouting this rubbish'. Cyril himself is 'ashamed to be writing' answers to such nonsense, and by being dragged into the dispute he has been 'made . . . an unwilling fool, under compulsion from them'. They, in their turn, have exposed themselves as fools because they have 'handled things beyond their powers'.[21]

[19] *Ad Cal.* (Wickham, p. 215).

[20] For a good exposition of Cyril's doctrine of the Image see: W. J. Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man According to Cyril of Alexandria* (Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 1957).

[21] *Ad Cal.* (Wickham, p. 217).

The rhetorical deconstruction is overwhelming. It has largely served its purpose in subsequently being elevated as a larger descriptor of a whole controversy allegedly covering Christian Egypt at this time: the so-called 'Anthropomorphite' dispute. In common readings of this text Cyril has perhaps been taken too much at face value, and his opponents marked down as Coptic peasantry, illiterate monks who were stupidly fundamentalist in their Bible-reading. Well, that intellectual denigration of his opponents is exactly what Cyril wanted to achieve, and what, generally understood, ancient apologetic rhetoric set out to accomplish in its genres of diatribe and rebuke. Whether or not it does justice to the opponents, historically understood, is quite another matter, and one where interpreters have not been sufficiently attuned to the kinds of xenophobia and 'nationalistic' loyalties that could be played upon when writing from Alexandria to the clerical élite of Upper Egypt, all of whom owed strong personal debts of loyalty to Cyril (a leader who was not shy of calling in those debts whenever he felt the need), and all of whom, to a corresponding extent, were set in an uneasy relationship to the alternative power-centres of Christianity in Upper Egypt – the charismatic monk-ascetics who gathered *scholae* around themselves in the small communities of the region, and who were frequently a mobile, transient, force that did not sit still long enough to come under the thumb of the sedentary episcopal governance structure.

One of the interesting things about this letter is that it sides Cyril with those who defend the point of Origen (and many of the 'Origenists', who cannot all be lumped in with the kind of speculative metaphysical Origenism that was to be later associated with Evagrianism) that God is a bodiless spirit.[22] The

[22] As Cyril synopsizes it: 'God cannot be embodied or exist in a bodily form if he is a spirit; because what is outside the category of body is outside configuration: deity is without dimensions or configuration' (Wickham, p. 215, slightly altered). At first reading this seems to be a question of Cyril setting out theological premises so basic that anyone denying them had to be an illiterate. A more nuanced exegesis of his text, however, can see it as part of the Origenistic tradition that rejected the notion of *ousia* as applicable to Godhead. When that position had been pressed, in the fourth century, to include the rejection of the Homoousion as a useful descriptor of the Logos, it had raised a storm of controversy; but the two premises, though logically related, need not necessarily be held together. One could thus be Origenian *and* Nicene. As far as the episcopal chancery of

anti-Origenian pogrom that began after Evagrius' death, and swept away with it the Tall Brothers, is here being reined in by Cyril, who is now more than ready to denounce the kind of pious anthropomorphisms that may have tried to claim the ascendancy in the monasteries after damage was inflicted on the Origenists. The unnamed teacher of the *Letter to Calosirius* has had his reputation as an intellectual damaged by Cyril's diatribe. Did this teacher of Mount Calamon actually represent all these theories which Cyril ascribes to him? Or even any of them? There were, doubtless, ignorant anthropomorphites in the desert, as anywhere else in the fifth-century Church, but this particular figure is clearly setting up as a serious religious authority. To censure him as an anthropomorphite is essentially the same kind of tactic that we find in the fourth century onwards when the designation 'Manichean' was being bandied around with little or no reference to the original meaning of the position historically or ideologically understood. Once Manicheism had been designated as a category of thinker who fell under proscription by Roman law, it was useful to lump in one's intellectual enemies under such an umbrella, and bolster one's intellectual opposition to them with the real threat of civil legal proscription to follow. This is what Cyril is doing here, continuing the tradition of the clash between Origenists and Anthropomorphites of the later fourth century when the Origenist camp more or less invented that term as a catch-all ridiculing what Florovsky more carefully presents as a school resistant to Evagrian ideas that the historical gospel of the incarnate Christ would be transcended in the ascent to imageless prayer.[23] This insistence that Origen's tradition had to be constantly grounded in a spirituality of material sacramentality (positivist eucharistic theory allied with the doctrine of the 'prayer of the heart') was exactly the way the monastic spiritual tradition did develop after Evagrius' generation, to become the mainstream 'orthodox' monastic

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Alexandria was concerned (and it is something true from the third century onwards) the lights kept blinking red and green erratically in relation to Origen's usefulness and value as a Christian teacher.

[23] See G. Florovsky, 'The Anthropomorphites in the Egyptian Desert', in *Collected Works*, vol. 4, *Aspects of Church History* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1975), pp. 89–96.

doctrine of prayer and asceticism.[24] In this sense, the so-called 'Anthropomorphites' may well have had the last word after all.

Cyril's claiming of control over the affairs of the monasteries was perhaps legally defensible, but it was a long way from being a canonical 'given' either in his uncle's time or in his own administration.[25] The diatribe against the unnamed teacher by means of a publicly read letter from the Archbishop, and this as staged by the local bishop in a variety of adjoining churches and monasteries, is meant first and foremost as a destruction of his moral right to teach, and the primary intellectual reason given (the crass anthropomorphism) is not necessarily as important as Cyril's playing to the jury of the more Origenistically inclined monks to support him. What he wishes to dislocate in the form of this teacher is further clarified as the letter proceeds: the *schola* he is attacking also implies that the eucharistic elements do not retain their consecrated value if they are held over to the day following the eucharistic *synaxis*, and the teacher does not advocate having to earn his living by physical labour.[26] The appeal to the cliché of the teacher as being too lazy to work, and this itself being an excuse for gluttony, is as much a part of diatribe's lurid *ad hominem* style as is Cyril's synopsis of the doctrine as brainless anthropomorphism, but it equally plays to the gallery of the common monk who could easily be induced to nurture resentment at a class of monastic theologians who spent their time chiefly in the praxis of

[24] See J. McGuckin, *Sages Standing in God's Holy Fire: The Spiritual Tradition of Byzantium* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001); and 'The Prayer of the Heart in Patristic and Early Byzantine Tradition', in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 2, ed. by P. Allen, W. Mayer and L. Cross (Queensland: Australian Catholic University, 1999), pp. 69–108.

[25] The same concern can be witnessed in his *Answers to Tiberius* (Wickham, pp. 132–79). Though this was addressed to Palestinian monastic enquirers, it was probably published for Egyptian monastic instruction too (see Wickham, pp. xviii–xix). The issue of the image of God in human form is raised in *Answers* 1, 2, 3 and 10. The *Doctrinal Questions and Answers* also fall into the same category (Wickham, pp. 180–213). Wickham is less inclined to see commonalities of controversy between the three pieces but certain points seem to me contiguous between all three, especially the *Doctrinal Questions* and the *Letter to Calosirius*, both of which have the Egyptian monastic context in mind, and the problem of 'anthropomorphism' which, if re-classified as an aspect of Origenism, was a factor that troubled Palestine and Egypt until well into the next century.

[26] See *Ad Cal.* (Wickham, p. 219).

prayer, reflection, and teaching – which latter includes textual production and dissemination.

Cyril's assault on their eucharistic doctrine on the grounds of common piety (the holy mysteries were under attack if these teachers did not believe they were objectively the abiding presence of the Saviour) is a coded way of attacking the pro-Origenist party too.[27] Cyril is clearly, and very cleverly, covering several bases at once, putting himself in the role as mediator between the various parties of conflict within the monastic tradition (Origenist and anti-Origenist), just as he is occupying the mediating role between the local hierarchs and the monastic *higumenoi*, because the critique he offers of a symbolistic reading of the Eucharist, which they seem to advocate, is really another way of reducing the Origenian *topos* of the superiority of the Word as icon of the Logos over the Eucharist, to a canonical 'blasphemy charge'. It is indicative of the manner in which Cyril himself treats Origen in his own exegeses. Large amounts of material are taken over substantively unchanged (and unacknowledged), while the christological, metaphysical, and (therefore) eucharistic ideas of the ancient teacher are purged.[28] Cyril is drawing a line in the sand between encouragement of Origenian monks who will follow the lead of the *Schola* of Alexandria, on the one hand, and those independents who want to maintain their freedom from that *Schola* and its master – Cyril.[29]

[27] The importance of the eucharistic aspect of Cyril's theology has been well brought out in modern times. See H. Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 2 (1951), pp. 145–64; E. Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing: An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of St Cyril of Alexandria* (Uppsala: Borgströms, 1977). See also *Answers to Tiberius*, no. 11, which gives an intriguing sidelight on Cyril's objections to 'schismatic' eucharists, that should probably be connected with his concern over communication with Meletians in the *Letter to Calosirius*.

[28] For a fuller discussion (and it was a controversy that ran on and on after Cyril's day) see L. Lies, *Origenes' Eucharistielehre im Streit der Konfessionen*, Innsbrucker theologische Studien, Bd. 15 (Innsbruck: Inn-Verlag, 1985).

[29] It has often been said that after Didymus this no longer existed, but it would be better to envisage it as continuing to exist dominantly in Cyril's time, with himself as the regnant teacher, constantly using his archiepiscopal status to ensure the *schola* was not overshadowed by what was happening in the desert communities – where there was a great deal of textual exegesis in progress in

Such independent monastics did indeed form a *schola* of their own, and did not need to work the arid land for their upkeep. This had two precise implications. Firstly, they did not need to inhabit any specific local monastery, since they were independent of the cycle of local economic production, but could rotate their dwellings in a wide arc of desert monastic travelling. Secondly, their sources of upkeep came from their literary patrons. It did not take vast sums of gold to sustain the ascetical life of an itinerant desert theologian. The market for literature from the desert was buoyant, and an abundant supply of willing financiers of the desert teachers on prayer could be found in Alexandria, Antioch, or Constantinople. The financial backers of desert literature in Constantinople and Antioch could also be relied on to give independent support to any local dissident party that made the life of the incumbent archbishop of Alexandria that little bit more difficult.[30] This made the *scholae* of monastic teachers potentially independent of the patronage of the archbishop of Alexandria.

The last point raised in the *Letter to Calosirius*, perhaps one of the most pertinent, emerges right at the end – almost appearing as an afterthought, but surely not placed at the end without significance. Here Cyril declares that he forbids the monasteries to receive Meletians indiscriminately with the orthodox members of his own clergy. He describes the Meletians as 'apostates' and heretics, though there is little in the schism to support a doctrinal root disagreement, and clearly there were numerous Meletian ascetics who had gained the admiration and support of the monasteries. As Wickham points out, the Meletian movement was centred around the Fayyum, and survived there well into the sixth century.[31] It would not, perhaps, be too far off the mark to suspect that the monks of Mount Calamon had been much impressed by

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dynamic ways that owed little to the city of Alexandria. See D. Burton Christie, *The Word in The Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[30] Count Lausos, the recipient and funder of Palladius' *Lausiac History*, is an example of such.

[31] An instance is mentioned in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (*PG* 65, 405). See Wickham, p. 221.

one such ascetic 'desert father', possibly a teacher who had drawn to him a wide array of ascetics, including Meletians.

The monks thus comprise a veritable *schola* of a widely appealing kind of Origenian spiritual synthesis without much regard for formal canonical ties of allegiance with the city. It is probably this which has alarmed the archbishop. It is also a factor which is all the more significant as a potential threat to the dominance of Alexandria over all affairs of Christian Egypt in the time of Cyril himself. Although he was undoubtedly one of the leading intellectuals of his generation and a vigorous publisher of texts, the fact remains that Alexandria had lost its place as the supreme locus of a great *schola* of Christian theology. There is no evidence of any real kind to indicate that the so-called 'Catechetical School' sustained any kind of physical existence (let alone international reputation) after the death of Didymus the Blind in 398. The city seems to have definitely lost out in relation to the Nile monasteries as the dominant centres of exegetical and theological reflection. It was the monasteries, and some of their internationally transient inhabitants (for so we must conclude in regard to those monks who functioned as ascetical teachers – both travelling to Constantinople and drawing followers from the capital) that were the alternative voices speaking for 'Christian Egypt' in this period.

Cyril's sympathetic friends would have alerted him to what was going on at an early stage. He opens his letter with the innocent remark: 'Some men arrived here from Mount Calamon and were questioned by me about the monks there.' But it is clear that he is far from passive in this investigation, and that many clerics would readily report to him, for he controlled all the paths to non-monastic ecclesiastical preferment in a large geographical area. He is writing to Calosirius the bishop, partly to let him know that his information has come separately from him. This is why Calosirius too seems to be the recipient of some degree of censure. The Alexandrian episcopate had already established itself as a patriarchate in practice by Cyril's day; and every bishop in Egypt owed him a debt of allegiance and relied on his personal patronage.[32]

[32] The term 'archbishop' is only found after the middle of the fifth century; 'patriarch' does not appear until the sixth century (see Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, p. 285, citing Frend and Feissel). The lack of metropolitan bishops in

In the time of Theophilus, the *Festal Letter* for the year 399 from the Alexandrian chancery had caused great offence in some parts of the monasteries of Egypt.[33] This *Festal Letter* was the beginning of the so-called 'Anthropomorphite heresy'. The monasteries widely condemned the *Festal Letter* as contradicting Scripture. Theophilus was read as having taught that Adam possessed the image of God, but that it was lost in the Fall, and his progeny did not continue it. This controversy ultimately resulted in a stand down by the Archbishop. It forced him, so as to retain an authoritative voice in the desert monasteries, to turn *volte face* and take his stand against the 'Origenist' party of intellectuals, issuing a synodical renunciation of Origenism in 401, and following it up with the selective persecution of some of the leading intellectuals who had formerly enjoyed his favour. Gennadius specifically describes another *Festal Letter* of his which, perhaps a few years before his death in 412, refuted the 'anthropomorphites', and thus went some way to the restoration of his own honour, as intellectual teacher, in the context of the Origenistic crisis.[34] The later Coptic *Life of Apa Aphou of Pemjde*, demonstrates the background to the controversy, with a saintly desert master, a holy man who has withdrawn into *xeniteia*, resisting the archbishop face to face and carrying the day (at least in the text of the hagiography) by himself instructing the clergy at Alexandria.[35] Theophilus had allied himself (to offset this dangerous possibility of a fracture opening up between the charismatic authorities and

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Egypt structurally intervening between the local hierarchs and the bishop of the city, however, meant that the bishop of Alexandria had assembled all the canonical rights of a patriarch by Theophilus' time. Cyril personally ordained (and thus was the major patron of) every bishop in the vast geographical territory that fell under his remit. It was the reason why he was able to swell the voting ranks at Ephesus 431 with his obedient local ordinaries, when the Imperial Sacra had first envisaged only a meeting of metropolitan-ranked hierarchs.

[33] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* (henceforth *HE*), 8, 11; See Socrates, *HE*, 6, 75.

[34] *De Vir. Ill.*, 33. See also Cassian, *Coll.*, 10.2. More can be found in E. Drioton, 'La discussion d'un moine anthropomorphite audien avec le patriarche Théophile d'Alexandrie en année 399', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 20 (1915–17), pp. 92–100, 113–32.

[35] See G. Florovsky, 'Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemjde', in *Collected Works*, vol. 4, pp. 97–129.

the official clergy of the city) with the important ascetics Horsiesi and Ammon. Cyril was to be careful in copying this example in his own relations with Shenoudi the Thaumaturg, and the other archimandrites he took with him to Ephesus. Cyril could not afford to have a repeat performance where the archbishop lost face in the monasteries, and so he heavily undermines the honour of the ascetic teacher of Mount Calamon. In the controversies that arose between his see and Constantinople, during the conflict with Nestorius preceding Ephesus 431, it was Cyril's infinitely better intelligence service (he sustained a permanent mission to the royal city), and the greater resources of his scribes in the Alexandrian chancery (which translated pertinent documents into Latin for the benefit of the papal court in Rome), that went a long way to ensuring Cyril's international apologetic victory. So it is here. His large network of patronage in the local sees is being extended to include the monasteries, and even the travelling teachers to whom they choose to give shelter, and all hinged on the personsal network of friendly allies over which he presided.

This reining in of affairs in significant Egyptian monasteries offers another light on Cyril's vigorous prosecution of the rights of his see, and the defence of his rights as Archbishop turns in this instance on his capacity to present himself over and against a pious ascetic, as a spiritual theologian of much greater acumen. This is why he largely takes the side of the Origenian party, not necessarily from any personal inclination, but because he can use the agenda of the tensions existing between Origenistic–Evagrian and local traditions of popular piety (a tension in which Meletian holy men might have gained the ascendancy) to ensure the regular flow of information between the monasteries and his residence in the city, allowing him to intervene decisively at an early stage. In the end, such vigorous prosecution of his episcopal rights may seem simply to echo the view of Cyril as a power-hungry cleric. The reality, of course, could be written differently. In a territory as large and geographically tormented as Egypt, a close relation between the capital at Alexandria and the outlying communities was of the utmost importance for the continuing 'Christianization' of the land. Cyril's ceaseless activity to foster and maintain these lines of connection continues a policy witnessed in Athanasius, and Theophilus before him. At all costs the monastic teachers of the communities and the local ordinaries had to be kept in harmony

with the central episcopal administrator in the city. Cyril knew, more than Theophilus, that he could not simply sustain this authority on the basis of his rank and the prestige of his city, factors that had less cachet in the desert, and so he presents himself as charismatic master of a theological *schola* giving authoritative 'words' like the best of the desert Abbas, and in the process underlining the pre-eminent claims of the *schola* of Alexandria which by now he has rendered synonymous with his own archiepiscopal chancery. This (which at one and the same time also explains his strenuous publishing activity), is not merely Cyril acting as an intellectual controversialist; it is more accurately to be read as a serious pastoral strategy for the cohesion of a vast diocese that was immensely vulnerable to dissolution – as later events in the seventh-century Arab invasion would all too soon demonstrate.

The pastoral strategy visible in the *Letter to Calosirius* is one that is substantively repeated in his other chief writings to the ascetics of Upper Egypt. We could take the *Letter to the Monks* as another example[36] where he again receives reports from his loyal followers of the region about 'Syrian' tendencies in the communities, which he characterizes as the 'weaker minds' who have been wounded in faith by the 'stupid vomitings' of Nestorian thinking. The same policy of pastoral supervision is again apparent in his *Letter to the Bishops of Libya and Pentapolis*.[37] In this latter text once again some monks have come to report to him about the state of local affairs. He writes back in part to criticize the local bishops (thus playing off monastic and ascetical power bases by making both necessarily refer to himself as central arbitrator, and central processor of intelligence about the affairs of each). The bishops appear to have ordained some characters who had formerly been monks themselves. One, at least, of the former monks had returned, now married, to serve the liturgy at the very monastery where he had been a rasophore, thus causing scandal to the older monks. Cyril claims that the scriptural injunction to him as High Priest, 'Make holy the sons of Israel' (Jos. 7:13), validates his right to intervene in these matters, and he warns his local ordinaries to

[36] *Ad Mon.* (*PG* 77, 9–40) and esp. 12–13, McGuckin (1994), pp. 245–61, specifically para. 3 (McGuckin, p. 246).

[37] *Ep.* 79 (*PG* 77, 364–5).

be more circumspect in the ordination of candidates in future. The *Letter to the Monks of Phua* also demonstrates him writing to a monastic community to denounce those who by subterfuge concealed their attachment to the Origenistic idea of a non-corporeal resurrection.[38] This he characterizes as contrary to the creed of Nicaea, and to general patristic tradition. He offers a succinct and clear argument that it is a Hellenistic (meaning Platonic) notion that logically followed from Origen's erroneous position on the pre-existence of souls, and one that contradicts the clear sense of St Paul's doctrine of the account we have to give at our individual resurrection from the dead (see 2 Cor. 5:10). In each of these cases the superior information concerning the local communities at the command of Cyril is at the heart of the success of his ministry of pastoral oversight, and the manner in which he can hold together from the centre such large and disparate church constituencies.

Alexandria as liturgical axis

This pivotal role of Alexandria, and the bishop's pastoral strategy rising from it, is seen again in the way the bishop's chancery served as a cultic, liturgical focus of attention. The problems over fixing a common date for Easter in Christian observance had been long running and bitter – one of the earliest international conflicts of ecclesiastical practice and doctrine. The most ancient cultic observance was probably that demonstrated in antiquity among the churches of Asia Minor, which celebrated Pascha as coinciding with Passover, on the evening of the fourteenth day after the full moon that occurred on or after the Spring Equinox. This pattern (later known by its opponents in the Roman tradition as the 'Fourteenth' or Quartodeciman Controversy) had already given way among the majority of Gentile churches by the second century in favour of celebrating Pascha on the Sunday following the Jewish Passover. Pope Victor of Rome heavily censured the Asian tradition in the cause of trying to establish a common practice.[39] It was widely held that the second Advent of Jesus would occur at the

[38] *Ep.* 81 (*PG* 77, 372–3).

[39] See Eusebius, *HE* 5.23–25 and R. Cantalamessa, *La Pasqua nella Chiesa antiqua* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1981).

Paschal Vigil, and the fear of being found asleep or unprepared like the foolish virgins of the Gospel parable, made the niceties of the liturgical calendar a very sensitive point among the early Christian communities. By the time of Nicaea, the custom of observing Pascha on a Sunday was common, but the difficulties were compounded by the problems of correlating the Jewish festal calendar, which is based on cycles of the moon, with the civic Julian calendar as observed in the Roman empire of the time, which was a solar calendar. To make matters worse the Julian calendar itself had variants which reckoned the date of the Spring Equinox differently. At Rome it was listed for 25 March while at Alexandria it was 21 March. The Council of Nicaea in 325 definitively settled on the Roman–Alexandrian tradition for celebrating Pascha and tacitly recognized the excellence of the Alexandrian Church's compilation of the Easter calendar. The decisions of Nicaea thus gave imperial sanction for the dating of Pascha to the Sunday following the Spring Equinox, and Alexandria was given the duty of announcing the date of Easter in good time to all the main churches by means of encyclical letters.[40] By the sixth century Rome itself, which had already had systems of its own in place by the time of Hippolytus, had come to rely on the Alexandrian computation.[41]

From this, the custom grew up of the Bishop of Alexandria, within his own very large province, notifying all his ordinaries at the same time, by means of annual Paschal encyclicals. These announced the start of the Lenten fast (itself first mentioned as a liturgical custom by Athanasius). In Cyril's writings thirty *Festal Letters* (*Heortastikoi Logoi*) have survived.[42] These letters were an important way that the bishop of the city kept in regular touch with the Christian communities of Upper Egypt which otherwise might well have regarded the great city as merely a distant landlord. It is clear from recurring references to 'visitors' that Cyril insisted on regular reports being brought to him by his subordinate clergy

[40] Controversy endured with the Syrian churches (the so-called 'Proto-Paschite' controversy), and later would again be a controversial matter for the Irish encountering Roman missionaries in Saxon England.

[41] His canon for computing Easter is inscribed on the base of the Hippolytus statue discovered in 1551 and now in the Lateran Museum.

[42] They are listed in Migne *PG* 77, 391ff. as 'Paschal Homilies'. The dating table supplied in Migne *PG* 77, 395 is very misleading.

who must have been summoned to the city to collect and publish these encyclicals. Monks also, especially the greater *Higumenoi* of the large houses and the clergy instructed to celebrate the liturgy in the monasteries, were summoned within the ambit of this episcopal relation by virtue of their involvement in the liturgical cycle. The laity were a different matter. In his letters Cyril is able to make them listen to him by virtue of the important fact that only he can announce to them the commencement of their major fasts and feasts. The letters typically announce the date at the end of the text, after they have expounded a large set of other issues. Some of the *Festal Letters* reflect, obviously enough, the major christological controversies that he felt to be demanding an answer, but in the main the christological issue is not really predominant in them.

In *Festal Letters* 5, 8, 17 and 27 Cyril engages enemies whom he seems to envisage in classic Arian terms, that is, those who denied the eternity of the Son because he was involved with an Incarnation in time and space. It was, of course, an apologetic thrust that he also used against Nestorius, attempting to caricature the latter's position in terms of the rhetorical '*reductio*' that Nestorius was logically an Arian. It seems, however, that Cyril's intended audience in his encyclicals is far more locally conceived. Despite his early *Letter to the Monks of Egypt* in which he warned against 'weak minded' ascetics being led astray by Nestorian teachings opposing the Virgin's title of Theotokos, it is clear enough that he hardly felt he needed to be worried about Nestorian infiltrations on the home front.[43] The Christology of the Egyptian church in general, even without his efforts, traditionally tended to the monist and mystical. Nestorian intellectual theorization was certainly not a theme against which he needed to inveigh, nor one in which he felt any need to bolster support from his ordinary bishops, all of whom seem to have been behind him with remarkable unanimity. What he attacks in the *Festal Letters* is the *scholae* of those who reduce Christ to mere manhood, being incapable of perceiving his divine status, or those who limit his divine status to a minor type or symbol, that is, the divinity instanced here, as operative in time and space, clearly being inferior to any notion of supreme godhead.

[43] *Ad Mon.* (*PG* 77, 9–40), McGuckin (1994), pp. 245–61.

What this apologetic addresses, in short, is the two communities in Egypt who were the constant thorns in his side – the Jewish sages who resisted his evangelistic efforts on scriptural bases, and the pagan intelligentsia who sustained a long-running apologetic against Christianity based largely on christological grounds. The form of the latter apologetic, despite Cyril's efforts to caricature 'pagans' as decadently sensual and materially myopic, can be gauged from the scale of the works he knew he had to produce, not least the great effort expended in his *Contra Julianum*. Julian's attack, and the even older apologetic that lay behind his offensive against the Christians, those large scale assaults on christological dogma that Celsus and Porphyry had raised in the second and third centuries, had all been mounted precisely on the grounds that the new religion was not sufficiently universalist or transcendent to represent the Empire at large. Origen had felt it necessary to answer the charges in his *Contra Celsum* more than a generation after the death of the philosopher, and it is interesting to see that Cyril likewise is producing his answer to Julian as a new knocking over of an enemy long dead and long disgraced within Christian circles.

Loud complaints against 'the Jews' also abound in almost all the *Festal Letters*. This may partly be due to the paschal nature of the texts on which Cyril comments. Christian paschal exegesis had, from the time of the Gospels themselves, turned on the apologetic theme of the rejection of God's Chosen One by his chosen ones. This was classically exemplified in Christian sources by the narrative of the chief priests' declamation in John 19:5–7,15, where they are made to state: 'We have no King but Caesar'. Subsequent development of that theme of the 'supersession' of Israel, dislocated by the Passion, and substituted by the new elect ethnos of the Christians, was a theme of much traditional exegesis, developing out of Origen's extended doctrine of the 'Old Testament' as a mere shadow or type of the truth to come. Cyril is certainly one of those who advanced this theme most vigorously.[44]

The first *Festal Letter*, dated to 414, begins with an interpretation of the types of Pascha set out in Numbers 10, and then

[44] J. A. McGuckin, 'Moses and the Mystery of Christ in Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis'.

soon turns into a denunciation of the 'infidelity' of the Jewish people. *Festal Letters* 4, 6, 8, 10, 20–2, 25 and 29 repeat that pattern to make the anti-Jewish propaganda almost an integral part of Cyril's paschal agenda. Traditional exegetical forms, though they may have shaped his exegetical style, are not themselves enough to account for the prevalence of this theme. To explain this, one needs to suppose that the strength of the celebration of Jewish Passover in Alexandria, and the outlying regions where the Christians had established town churches, was even in his day a powerful attraction for his faithful. What thus appears to be a textual record of severe alienation and hostility between Christians and Jews, the 'anti-Semitic' resonance of the texts themselves, actually turns out to be implicit evidence for the very kind of ecumenical 'leakage' we would least expect. The strength of the pastoral denunciation is a testimony to the prevalence and long-standing nature of the practice. The issue of Christians observing the cycle of Jewish feasts in the culturally mixed city of Alexandria had been an aspect of Origen's own preaching in Caesarea in the third century. Even in the fifth, it would seem, the inter-communal leakage is strong. The announcing of the times for observing the Christian fast also fits in with this context, for fasting was a distinct and much-admired mark of Jewish popular religious practice in antiquity, and the establishment of the liturgical custom of Christian fasting was an important development for the Church in setting out its own 'markers' of religiosity. The Christian fast, as a superior fulfilment of the Jewish practices, is a dominant theme of many of the *Festal Letters*.[45]

The cultic leakage of Christians to the Jewish community was one problem that worried Cyril, but so too was cultural conformity of his people to the Hellenistic background that formed another major sub-text of Christian life in Alexandria and the outlying towns of Egypt. *Festal Letters* 5, 6, 7 and 9 all inveigh against the custom of Christians observing pagan festivals too, or at least using elements of pagan cultic practice for the observance of their Pascha celebrations. The Church, Cyril demands, has to cast out the old leaven to observe its own Pascha purely. *Festal Letters* 9, 11, 12, 14 and 26 all make this theme of religious-cultural leakage a central issue, demonstrating beyond doubt that it was a major pastoral

[45] See *Hom. Pasch.* 4, 6, 7, 14, 21, 24 and 29.

problem in the eyes of the episcopal chancery of Alexandria. Cyril defines it as 'di-psychia', that is, the state of being 'two-souled', a waverer rather than a committed Christian. This issue of calling back his own faithful from the twin attractions of Hellenistic and Jewish piety, of course, is never met squarely on. Both alternative religious systems, those of the Hellenes and the Jews, are systematically defined as inferior, and as such cannot be allowed to emerge in the texts as the real 'attractions' they must have been to common Christian piety. Those propaganda texts must not be elevated outside the historical context to suggest that cultural hostility served to mark clean lines between Church, Synagogue and Temple, at this era – far from it. The defining of cultic boundaries is something that Cyril wishes to establish for his church, not something he can take for granted even in the period of Byzantine Christian ascendancy. As such the delineation of clear limits of Christian adhesion is a major pastoral strategy of his episcopal administration. This can be seen to be clearly operating in Cyril's political machinations to ensure his community's civil 'rights', as well as in one of the most intriguing (and almost accidentally surviving) records of Cyril's pastoral strategy – how he dealt with the immensely powerful attractions of the cult of Isis.

Cyril as missionary evangelist

Although Christianity had been in the ascendancy through the empire since the Constantinian era, it was an ascent that was not uniform or assured in every place. Alexandria, as an internationally diverse city, was often a law unto itself, and it is only in Cyril's lifetime (beginning in the episcopacy of his uncle Theophilus) that we see the Christians beginning to wrest control from the large factions of Hellenistic intelligentsia and the vigorous Jewish community. Theophilus had presided over the sequestration of many important places of worship of the 'old religion', and had given Cyril an evangelistic model that had no qualms about applying Roman law in favour of Christians dispossessing their neighbours. That take-over, enshrined legally in the prescripts of the edict of Honorius and Theodosius II dated to 407, had been highly controversial to the point of bloodshed and rioting, but was nevertheless sustained by the Byzantine imperial

authorities.[46] The destruction of the Canopic Serapeum by Theophilus caused international shock waves and was commented on by all the major church historians.[47] The pattern of despoiling pagan places of worship was dramatically symbolized in the fall of the Serapeum and the seizing of the Caesareum as the episcopal palace, but it was carried on elsewhere throughout Egypt, and with varying degrees of pugnacity.[48] The monastics had played a large role in this. In Cyril's day this same policy continued in the ever necessary efforts to Christianize the rural regions. One of Cyril's ardent supporters, and one of the most violent forces against the continuing pagan establishment was, of course, Shenoudi of Atripe. Shenoudi (who soon attracted hagiographies depicting him as a powerful thaumaturg and exorcist) once again demonstrates the need for the archbishop of Alexandria constantly to sustain close and loyal ties not only with the rural bishops, but also with the dominant monastic *Higumenoi.*

In the course of the establishment of the Church as a major corporation in ancient Alexandria Theophilus had accumulated great wealth, and immeasurably advanced his personal power and that of his office, even though that power among his predecessors was already significant since the time of Athanasius. Theophilus left behind a reputation as a builder.[49] The Church, with land holdings, tax revenues from the seventy-five local dioceses, and interests in Nile shipping (that also included regular trade links

[46] *Codex Theodosianum*, 16, 10, 19: 'Pagan altars in all places should be destroyed, and all temples on our (imperial) estates should be transferred to suitable uses . . . to bishops of the local regions we grant the faculty of ecclesiastical power to prohibit the said practices.'

[47] Rufinus, *HE* 2, 22–27; Theodoret, *HE* 5, 22; Socrates, *HE* 5, 16; Sozomen, *HE* 7, 15; John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 78, 45. See also Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists*, p. 472, for the non-Christian rancour at what had happened. Theophilus is not given a generally good personal press in ancient treatments outside of Egypt. Even one of his own local bishops, Isidore of Pelusium, comments acidly on his 'passion for accumulating gold and jewels' (*Ad Mon. PG* 78, 284–5).

[48] Since 360 the large complex of the Caesareum, on the hill overlooking the harbour, a prime and highly symbolic piece of real estate in the city, had been sequestrated as the residence of the Christian bishops. The twin obelisks (that thus formed the gateway to Cyril's residence) can now be seen on the Thames embankment in London (Cleopatra's Needle) and New York's Central Park, where they were relocated in modern times.

[49] Rufinus, *HE* 2, 27.

from Alexandria to Rome and Constantinople) was a very wealthy institution in ancient Alexandria, and the focusing of so much power and monies in the hands of the archbishop made that office a formidable one indeed.[50]

In Cyril's administration some of that militantly pugnacious strategy of ascendancy was continued. The squalid murder of Hypatia by a Christian mob was symbolically censured by the administration at Constantinople by the (temporary) curtailing of Cyril's right to command a personal retinue of followers (the so-called *parabalani* of Alexandria).[51] But it was a deed that effectively remained unpunished, and this is all the more significant given Hypatia's high standing in the counsels of the Christian city governor Orestes, and her reputation as a thinker among many Christian as well as Hellenistic admirers. John of Nikiu, however, in his later *Chronicle of the History of the Egyptian Church*, still represents the murder as a propaganda coup for the Alexandrian Church. He (from three centuries of hindsight) likens Cyril presiding over the Church at the time of her death to his uncle who presided over the destruction of the pagan places of worship. The assassination of Hypatia, in John's hands, is more or less paralleled to the fall of the Serapeum and her removal (glossing over any moral issues in regard to her murder) is attributed to Cyril retrospectively as a major coup in his advancement of the faith over the tenacious and hostile paganism that formed its previously oppressive context.

If we have no right, on the basis of the evidence, in accusing Cyril of personal involvement in murder, however, we do see his close and personal involvement in the sequestration of some of the synagogues in Alexandria. On the occasion of a Jewish mob's incendiary attack on the Alexander church and some adjoining Christian houses, in the early years of his administration, Cyril appeared, in a policy of forced restitution, personally at the head of a large force to claim the synagogue and property of the Jewish residents of the area where the attack had occurred. The best that can be said in regard to all this, is that Cyril, within a turbulent

[50] See Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, pp. 289–93.

[51] See W. Schubart, 'Parabalani', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 40 (1954), pp. 97–101; A. Philipsborn, 'La compagnie d'ambulanciers 'parabalani' d'Alexandrie', *Byzantion* 20 (1950), pp. 185–90. For a discussion of the political implications of the incident see J. McGuckin (1994), pp. 7–15.

city, was attempting to exercise pastoral leadership and control over a highly volatile Christian population, one that was on the rise and determined to reverse longstanding oppressions of its culture and society, both of which had had themselves been bloody and destructive in the recent past. Cyril here exercised his role as Ethnarch. In sequestrating the buildings to compensate the loss to the Christians by a Jewish terrorist attack, Cyril was within his rights according to current imperial legislation favouring the Christians, and he knew it. The subsequent degeneration of that punitive action into popular looting marks a fine line between serving as ethnarch-leader, and being pulled along by the forces of the mob and having to function as a demagogue. Much of Cyril's subsequent 'control fixation' (for which he has been equally criticized) can be explained on the basis of his early lessons as a popular leader. This was a populace, and even a Christian population, that could not be trusted an inch. If one did not retain a strong grip, the seat of the leader was a dangerous place indeed. One of the chief expectations the Christian 'ethnos' had, in common with the other major factions of Alexandria, was that their ethnarch would advance their cause politically as much as religiously. If he did not, or did not do so publicly enough, like most other leaders in Late Antiquity, his position was very precarious. The history of the throne of St Mark afforded Cyril numerous examples of murdered archbishops, as well as ineffective ones, exiled heroes, and powerful aristocrats. He had more than enough evidence to ponder on in regard to his own pastoral and political strategy. Apart from his exercise of leadership as Ethnarch in relation to the prosecution of the rights of Christians over and against the factional interests of the Jews and Hellenists in ancient Alexandria, we can consider one last iconic example of pastoral missionary strategy – the moves he made against that 'central spring' of the old religion, the Isis cult at the Menouthis Temple on the Mediterranean littoral east of Alexandria. The episode is preserved for us in a few fragments of Cyril's homilies that have been rescued and commented on by Sophronius of Jerusalem, from the time when the latter was exiled from his patriarchate and took refuge in Alexandria.[52]

[52] A fuller account can be found in J. A. McGuckin, 'The Influence of the Isis Cult on St Cyril of Alexandria's Christology', *SP* 24 (1992), pp. 191–9.

These fragments dealing with Cyril's 'discovery' of the relics of saints Cyrus and John give us another glimpse at the strategies employed by Cyril in his role as Bishop evangelist, actively seeking to keep the cohesion of his community by practical cultic methods. Sophronius is not giving a clear and straightforward account by any means, but it is evident from his text that he knows that the incident of the transferral of the relics marks the beginning of the end of the great temple of Isis at Menouthis, by virtue of the very fact that although Theophilus had established a small Christian church there, it was Cyril who amplified it as a centre for Christian pilgrimage and healing cults, and who vigorously prosecuted its rights by staffing it with monks. By Sophronius' day the shrine of Saint Cyrus (the place to this day is still called Aboukir – Abba Kyr) had apparently started to break the force of the Isis temple.[53] When Sophronius recounts incidents of the healing miracles performed by Saint Cyrus, he even borrows some of the records of the inscribed healing epiphanies from the old temple walls, thinking they belong to the Christian cult centre he wishes to panegyricize in his account.[54] His narrative witnesses to the kind of attractions that caused Menouthis to be an international pilgrimage centre – numerous healings and divinations presided over by a medicinal priesthood. The Temple of Isis at Menouthis was at the end of the great Canopic Way, adjacent to the site of the temple of Serapis at Canopus which Theophilus had destroyed in 395.

In the Christian world-view of Sophronius the religious dynamic of the place is not denied, merely ascribed to a demonic source, and as such reduced to the kind of 'false appearances' such as demons were often able to cause so as to lead the faithful astray – a dominant motif that can also be found throughout the pages of the monastic desert literature from Egypt. He describes it as follows:

> A foul demon appeared in the desert, in the form of a woman, which caused many phantasms and seemed to give forth numerous oracles,

[53] Cyrus and John developed a great cult, and became for the eastern Christian world one of the foundational exemplars of the 'Holy Unmercenary Saints'. They occupied, from an early time, a mention in the Eucharistic liturgical rite of the Prothesis. Their feast day is celebrated on 31 January.

[54] See Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Laudes in Ss. Cyrum et Joannem* (*PG* 87, 3380–424).

> though they were, of course, utterly false. They purported to concern the specifics of healing remedies, though they were of no use at all, except to bring to destruction all those who trusted in them. Many people were caught in the hidden snare of this evil spirit, and thought they should honour the demon with sacrifice and fat-offerings. In its name they made many offerings to the shrine. . . . When Cyril heard of the phenomena being celebrated at Menouthis, he prayed for a way from God to overthrow the demon.[55]

Following the symbolic example of his uncle, Cyril would preside over the dismantling of the last continuing cultic centre of Canopus. His strategy, however, was not a repetition of the force attendant on the events of 395, but rather designed to meet one attraction with another. The Isis cult continued far longer than that of Serapis precisely because it had a deep popular ground of support. It was a healing centre in the manner of the Aesculapean shrines where incubation often led to curative dreams and divine epiphanies. Priest-healers would also dispense medicine. The most famous cure associated with this site was infertility (generally regarded as a female condition), and so the large numbers of devotees also celebrated erotic rites. Stories concerning these erotic rites do not merely emanate from the exaggerations of Christian writers such as Sophronius, who found the orgies too scandalous for detailed comment:

> How can I describe the orgies that take place at Menouthis? These festivals where women abandon all modesty – and what inexpressibly large numbers of young girls rushing to take part? [56]

Sophronius clearly has fuller access to certain homilies which Cyril himself gave on the occasion of the transfer of the relics. Cyril's sermons, three of which survive for the occasion, were given over the course of a festal octave lasting from 26 July to 1 August,

[55] Sophronius, *Laudes in Ss. Cyrum et Joannem*, 24 (*PG* 87, 3409). (See also Cyril's own account in *Hom.* 18, 3, *PG* 77, 1100–5.) The cultic statue of Isis venerated at Menouthis was dramatically reclaimed from the sea in the summer of 2000, beautifully carved from black basalt. This was the 'female demon' of which Sophronius was speaking. Pictures of its lifting from the sea-bed, and a good artist's reconstruction of the environs of the Canopus temples can be seen in the initial report of the Alexandria excavations conducted by Jean-Yves Empereur, as given in the *Sunday Times Magazine* (London, 20 August 2000).

[56] Sophronius, *Laudes in Ss. Cyrum et Joannem* (*PG* 87, 3409).

possibly dated to 427 or 428. In his homilies Cyril himself explains the phenomena attendant on the establishment of the Christian shrine. He was instructed, so he tells his congregation, by a vision from God's angel given to him in the night.[57] He was shown the place in the great church where the relics of the martyr Cyrus could be found. The martyr was ready and willing to wake and do battle once more for the sake of the Church against the demonic forces raised against it at Menouthis.[58] Cyril had to find and transfer the relics with all solemnity. The account which follows shows that he did indeed open up the floor of the great church but found there not one, but two graves of saints. Unsure which of them was the martyr whom the angel had revealed to him, he instructed an ecclesiastical commission to investigate the provenance. This duly reported that while Abba Cyrus was a virgin monk, the other saint was a soldier named John and both had been martyred in the time of persecutions.[59] Accordingly, Cyril decided that he should, for safety's sake, transfer both saints to the site since he was not sure which set of bones belonged to which martyr. He instructed the Pachomian community of monks at Tabennisi to take charge of staffing the new shrine. At the head of a massive crowd of Christians, Cyril processed along the Canopic way in a chariot with the relics now lodged in a splendid gold and jewelled casket.[60] The account he gives of the manner in which the new saints would overthrow the old demon (Isis) demonstrates that a fair number of the devotees seeking healing at the Menouthis temple might well have been Christian. Their own saints will henceforward offer the healings which pilgrims formerly came seeking from the demons:

> Now that those who once were going astray have now turned back to the true and unmercenary healer none of us need any longer make up dreams. None of us need cry out to pilgrims: The Mistress has spoken, and commands you to do this . . . or that.[61]

[57] *PG* 87, 3688–9, 3693.

[58] 'The holy martyrs saints Cyrus and John came out ready to do battle for the Christian religion . . . as their reward for their love of Christ, they received the power to trample on Satan and expel the force of evil spirits.' *Hom.* 18, 3 (*PG* 77, 1105).

[59] *PG* 77, 1101.

[60] *PG* 87, 3696.

[61] *PG* 77, 1105.

Oracular divination was a very attractive way of approaching the divine mystery in Hellenistic cult. The Isis religion was renowned for the visions of the goddess devotees could expect. Christianity, by comparison, was so chaste in its ideas of apprehending the deity, or hearing the divine voice, that it had some room to make up in the popular imagination. Cyril here ostensibly abolishes the oracle by democratizing it. The power of the healer saint is able to operate without the customary intermediaries – the healer-priests of the temple who interpreted the dreams for the pilgrims and thereby prescribed healing remedies. The rub here, of course, was that their prescriptions were accompanied by a fee. The healing services at the Christian shrine were to be offered free of charge.[62] By deleting the one unpleasant element of the Isiac healing centre, that is the consultation fee, Cyril has sweetened the pill, and also reaffirmed the mystical wonder of oracular divination, though this time controlling it. He, as Christian hierarch, receives the intimations of God's angels and the news that martyrs from past generations have come from their sleep to assist his people in times of need. Cyril, the Christian ethnarch who will now deconstruct the last great centre of oracular divination in Egypt, is himself revealed as a sure guide in oracular divination – a visionary high priest and seer – who serves as a channel of healing graces for his people. The detail of staffing the newly refurbished church with robust Pachomian monks who could defend the rights of the shrine physically, if necessary, is also a telling point. The Christian centre cut off, that is intercepted, Menouthis from the flow of Alexandrian pilgrim traffic. Crowds travelling there along the Canopic way would surely have stopped off first to see what was going on in the new Christian healing centre. This is a telling and subtle detail of Cyril's pastoral strategy, designed to combat just that kind of community leakage he was most worried about, the backward slipping of Christians into the healing rituals of Isis, for he was aware of a more reliable way than physical force of keeping out Christians from the temple precincts. The Isis cult was widely tolerant and inclusive. As a female centre of divinatory practice and healing it was also immensely popular. It attracted devotees from all ranges of religion and none. It had no creed or exclusive liturgy that would debar

[62] He cites Matthew 10:8 as his proof text advertising this.

anyone, making it ideally suited as a centre of international as well as Egyptian religious traffic. Cyril seizes on its one point of vulnerability, that is, contact with the dead ritually defiled the devotee and those who had been in contact with the dead (even to the extent that the wearing of leather sandals was prohibited in the temple precincts) were forbidden access to the goddess' shrine. By arranging that his Christian faithful who were even thinking of paying a visit to 'The Mistress' stopped first to venerate the tomb of saints Cyrus and John, Cyril *de facto* ensured that the Isis priests themselves debarred his Christians – thus effecting the clever paradox of forcing an inclusivist cult to excommunicate Christian visitors whom their own clergy might not have been so able to control. In the process this made the Isis priesthood itself incur the attendant hostility of the pilgrims. All who came under the influence of the martyr saints, and greeted them with the liturgical kiss of veneration, whether Christians or pagans, were thereby both spiritually and socially liberated from the future influence of the goddess.

Cyril as pastoral strategist

Cyril in all his efforts to control and guide his turbulent church shows himself an able, inventive and strategic thinker. His intellectual gifts as demonstrated in his exegetical writings, and his christological works, are unarguable and deservedly known. His reputation as a pastoral strategist deserves to be more widely appreciated. Faced with a volatile population of Christians in a culturally and religiously diverse capital city, he managed to shepherd his people away from the twin attractions of Jewish and Hellenistic practices by a variety of devices. In the course of maintaining the coherence of a large and geographically difficult province he ensured that reliable and effective communication was maintained between his chancery and the outlying regions. In Upper Egypt this worked chiefly because of his ability to act as mediator among the tensions that potentially existed between the local ordinaries (all of whom owed him a close personal debt of loyalty) and the monastic houses which were less surely under his command. The ascetic communities were less biddable than the town bishops and village priests, and often looked to other authoritative voices travelling the desert, but even they counted in

their ranks sufficient numbers of loyal clergy so as to keep him informed of every development. To any signs of dissonance Cyril reacted promptly by means of encyclicals and canonical decrees to ensure his archiepiscopal chancery was at the pastoral centre of a lively nexus of interconnections. By placing himself in the mediating role between hierarchy, monastics and ordinary Christian people, Cyril claimed for himself the complex roles of chief priest, ascetical visionary, master of the *schola* of Alexandria and Upper Egypt,[63] exerciser of *parrhesia* and internationally successful ethnarch of the Christians of Egypt. It is a mistake to attribute all of this achievement to 'megalomaniacal' tendencies on his part. It ought to be acknowledged that he was a signally successful pastoral strategist in ways that were both considerably more subtle and more effective than those of his uncle Theophilus, who had groomed and trained him. Cyril had learned his lessons well, and taken the office and position of bishop to the highest level of a national Christian ethnarch, who could clearly overshadow even the officially appointed imperial provincial governor. He sustained such a large international presence not least by his most careful cultivation of the local churches whose very disparity and scattering made for constant problems of coherence in the Egyptian church establishment. In the hands of less able successors most of the gains Cyril made for the Church in Alexandria were eroded in a progressive alienation of Christian Egypt from Byzantium: one that ultimately proved disastrous for the fortunes of Christianity throughout the Orient.

[63] Even, ultimately, claiming the right of the Alexandrian *schola* to speak for the international christological orthodoxy of the Church.

Chapter 9

'Apostolic Man' and 'Luminary of the Church': The Enduring Influence of Cyril of Alexandria

NORMAN RUSSELL

Cyril's christological teaching, even if not always well understood, has never ceased to be regarded as normative for most Christians, and in today's ecumenical dialogue between the Eastern and Western Churches has assumed a position of vital importance.[1] Cyril was a man of powerful convictions, who took it for granted that a true Christology had to be related to a soteriology that could transform human beings and raise them up to the life of God. But he was also an astute ecclesiastical politician, resolute in his theological opinions but flexible in the way he presented them, narrow and uncompromising in his determination to pin down Nestorius but adaptable in his search after Ephesus (431) for an accommodation with the broader Antiochene tradition. These different facets of Cyril, reflecting his different responses to changing theological and political situations, were to enable both 'monophysites' and 'dyophysites' to claim him as their chief

[1] 'Apostolic man' and 'luminary of the Church' are expressions used by Pope Celestine I [*Ep.* 25, 7 (*PL* 50, 552)] and Maximus the Confessor [*Ep.* 12 (*PG* 91, 472a)] respectively. In the West, Cyril was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1882 and was the subject of papal encyclicals in 1931 (*Lux Veritatis*) and 1944 (*Orientalis Ecclesiae*). In the East (at least, west of the Euphrates) he has always been held to be one of the greatest of the doctors – 'the seal of the Fathers', as Anastasius of Sinai (d. 700) called him. The Oriental Orthodox, however (the Copts, Syrians, Armenians and Ethiopians) regard the Fourth (451), Fifth (553), and Sixth (681) Ecumenical Councils as betrayals of his teaching.

authority in the bitter conflicts that followed the Council of Chalcedon (451).

Cyril's ambiguity

The difficulty of ascertaining precisely where Cyril stood on the christological issue of one nature or two was felt even in his own lifetime. To many, amongst his followers as well as his opponents, his subscription to the Formulary of Reunion of 433 seemed to signal a complete *volte-face*, a disavowal of his Twelve Chapters with their insistence that Jesus Christ and the Word made flesh are a single entity. Cyril himself was perfectly aware of this, as he explained to his agent in Constantinople, the priest Eulogius:

> The doctrinal statement which the Easterns have produced is under attack in certain quarters and it is being asked why the bishop of Alexandria tolerated, even applauded it, seeing that they use the words 'two natures'. The Nestorians are saying that he shares their view and are winning those who do not know the precise facts (τὸ ἀκριβές) over to their side.[2]

The 'precise facts', although Cyril does not say so, are that the Formulary of Reunion was the best compromise that he could have secured in the circumstances. The repudiation of Ephesus by the Eastern bishops under the leadership of John of Antioch meant that the council would have failed unless the Easterners could have been persuaded to accede to it retrospectively. And the power diplomacy exercised by the imperial commissioner Aristolaus, backed up by the menacing presence of the *magistrianos* Maximus, made it clear to Cyril what the alternatives were: doctrinal agreement between Alexandria and Antioch or the setting aside of the Council with the possible restoration of Nestorius and the certain banishment of Cyril. It is no wonder that Cyril suffered bouts of nervous depression before an accord was finally signed.[3] The gloss that he put on the phraseology of the Formulary in his letter to Eulogius was that the 'two natures' refers to the Word and the

[2] *Ad Eul.* (Wickham, p. 63).

[3] The document which gives us an insight into the behind-the-scenes activities is the Letter of Epiphanius, archdeacon of Alexandria, to Maximian of Constantinople, *ACO* I, 4, pp. 222–5; trans. J. I. McEnerney, *St Cyril of Alexandria. Letters 51–110* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), pp. 188–92. I take the *aegritudo* of para. 3 to refer to psychological illness.

flesh, for neither becomes the other as a result of the Incarnation. But the 'two natures' in itself says nothing about the *union*. For this we need to refer to 'one incarnate nature of the Son'. The 'one nature' from 'two natures' is analogous to the formation of a single human being from the two constituent natures of body and soul. The words 'one' and 'two' in Cyril's usage refer to two different levels of reality.[4]

Cyril returned to this argument in greater detail in his First Letter to Succensus.[5] Succensus, one of Cyril's allies, although bishop of Diocaesarea in the territory of John of Antioch, had asked Cyril 'whether one should ever speak of two natures in respect of Christ'.[6] In reply Cyril rehearses the teaching of Nestorius, which he claims was derived from Diodore of Tarsus. The 'twoness' for Nestorius, as Cyril understood it, consisted in a man being joined to the Word in a nominal sense, so that the man and the Word enjoyed a deemed equality by honour or rank. The assigning of different sayings in the Gospels either to the humanity or to the divinity is symptomatic of such an approach. The correct doctrine, by contrast, is that Christ is the pre-eternal Word born of the Virgin. Cyril knows that he is accused of Apollinarianism for teaching this. A strict union is in danger of being seen as a merger [σύνχσις], mixture [σύνκρασις] or mingling [φυρμός].[7] Cyril rebuts the slander. What we affirm, he says, is that the Word from God the Father united to himself a body endowed with a soul without merger [ἀσυνχύτως], altera-tion [ἀτρέπτως] or change [ἀμεταβλήτως].[8] It is necessary to maintain the *two natures* (i.e., the composite elements, the divine and the human, that make up Christ) as well as the *one nature* (i.e., the single subject who is the Son – 'the one incarnate nature of the Word'). If either is missing our Christology cannot be orthodox.[9]

[4] Normally the oneness is the hypostatic reality of the Incarnate Word; the twoness is a distinction only in *theoria*. On Cyril's 'one-nature' Christology see the important article by M. Simonetti, 'Alcune osservazioni sul monofisismo di Cirillo di Alessandria', *Augustinianum* 22 (1982), pp. 493–511.

[5] See *Ad Succ.* 1 (Wickham, pp. 70–83).

[6] *Ad Succ.* 1, 2 (Wickham, p. 71).

[7] See *Ad Succ.* 1, 5 (Wickham, p. 74).

[8] See *Ad Succ.* 1, 6 (Wickham, p. 74).

[9] Simonetti ('Alcune osservazioni', p. 494) points out that Cyril's dyophysite affirmations cannot be explained simply by concessions to the Antiochenes. His normal preference is to reserve the term *physis* to indicate the divine nature of

It would perhaps have prevented a great deal of subsequent misunderstanding if Cyril could have gone one step further and made his second meaning of *physis* explicitly equivalent to *hypostasis*. Cyril accepted the Cappadocian identity of *ousia* in three separate *hypostaseis* on the trinitarian level.[10] But it was not until Chalcedon that an analogous distinction was applied to Christology: two natures but one *hypostasis* or *prosopon*. The reason why Cyril could not take that step was his conviction that the *mia physis* formula had been sanctioned by Athanasius, *the* Church Father so far as Cyril was concerned. In fact the phrase 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' had been devised by Apollinarius, who had put it forward in the statement of faith he sent to the Emperor Jovian in 363.[11] This statement had been reassigned to Athanasius by Apollinarius' disciples after his condemnation. Cyril was completely taken in by the forgery. He first used the *mia physis* formula in his five-volume polemic against Nestorius, and again in his important dogmatic letters to Eulogius and Succensus.[12] To him it was a useful phrase of irreproachable provenance which emphatically ruled out Nestorius' loose 'prosopic union' once and for all.

Chalcedon and the search for unity

Cyril's carefully balanced interpretation of the *mia physis* formula did not long survive his death.[13] Within a year or two the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Eutyches, claiming Cyril as his authority,

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the Logos. Other terms – *sarx*, *anthropos*, etc. – are applied to the humanity. But see the *De Recta Fide ad Theod.* (*ACO* I, 1, 1, pp. 42–72) sent to Theodosius in 430 (which Simonetti proves against de Durand [*SC* 97, pp. 42–51] to be earlier than the dialogue *De Incarn.*, the latter being a redaction of the *De Recta Fide ad Theod.*, perhaps even by someone other than Cyril) in which Cyril uses *physis* to indicate the humanity that becomes the *idion* of the Logos ('Alcune osservazioni', pp. 500–1; see *ACO* I, 1, 1, p. 58).

[10] See *Dial Trin.* 408cd.

[11] See *Ad Jov.* 1; H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* (Tübingen: Verlag, 1904), p. 251.

[12] See *C. Nest.* 2 prooem; *ACO* I, 1, 6, p. 33.7; *Ad Eul.*; *Ad Succ.* 1, 7; *Ad Succ.* 2, 2–4, etc. (Wickham, pp. 62, 76, 86–8, etc.).

[13] See Simonetti, 'Alcune osservazioni', p. 511: 'the succeeding monophysites would abandon the complex and also not wholly coherent position of the master'.

was preaching a Christ whose humanity had been deified and absorbed into his divinity as a result of the Incarnation. Eutyches was condemned by a Home Synod in 448 but he had powerful connections and made full use of them in attempting to vindicate his teaching. At the General Council called by Theodosius II to hear Eutyches' appeal, which met at Ephesus in 449, the new Alexandrian archbishop, Dioscorus, carried the day in Eutyches' favour by a combination of strong-arm tactics and a simple appeal to the assembled bishops: 'Two natures before the union, one afterwards. Is this not what we all believe?'[14] But Dioscorus alienated the traditional support which Rome had always shown for Alexandria, an error which was to cost him dearly two years later.

When the bishops reassembled at Chalcedon in 451 under a new Latin-speaking emperor, Marcian, officially to counter the twin threats of Eutychianism and Nestorianism, it was Pope Leo's *Tome to Flavian* that occupied the centre of the stage. Cyril's first two letters to Nestorius and his letter to John of Antioch containing the Formulary of Reunion were also put forward as authoritative, but the controversial Third Letter to Nestorius with its twelve anathemas (the Twelve Chapters) was excluded. The papal statement was examined rigorously against the standard set by Cyril and most of the Fathers of the Council were satisfied at the time that in acclaiming it they were not undermining the faith of Cyril.[15] But the Egyptian bishops had no illusions about how the conciliar decisions, especially the Definition, with its 'acknowledged in two natures' based on Leo's *Tome*, would be viewed in their homeland: 'We shall be killed if we subscribe to Leo's epistle. Every district in Egypt will rise up against us. We would rather die at the hands of the emperor and at your [the council's] hand than at home.'[16] The deposition and exile of

[14] *ACO* II, 1, 1, p. 140, para. 491, cited by W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 768.

[15] As Frend remarks, 'Cyril indeed presided in absentia' (*Rise of Christianity*, p. 770). The Cyrillian character of the Council is brought out well by P. T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 7–16 and by J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), pp. 167–78.

[16] *ACO* II, 1, 2, p. 113, paras 54–8, cited by Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, p. 773.

Dioscorus (although he was not accused of doctrinal error) and the promulgation of the Definition were widely interpreted after the council as a tacit rehabilitation of Nestorius.[17]

When Juvenal of Jerusalem returned to Palestine, he found himself branded by a large section of the monastic community as a betrayer of Cyril and barely escaped with his life. It was only with military support that he was restored to his see. There were even greater problems in Egypt, as the Egyptian bishops had foreseen. The administrator that Dioscorus himself had appointed to look after the Alexandrian Church during his absence at the Council, the archpriest Proterius, was appointed to succeed the deposed archbishop. He was the least controversial candidate who could be found, but the majority of the people would not accept him. They remained loyal to Dioscorus, and when he died in exile in 454, procured the consecration of Timothy Aelurus to succeed him. In 457 the Emperor Marcian died, and in the riots that ensued in Alexandria Proterius was murdered.[18]

Confronted with this volatile situation, the new emperor, Leo I, proceeded with great caution. He first sent a questionnaire to all the metropolitans of the empire asking them to consult with their suffragans and respond to two questions: What was their opinion of the Council of Chalcedon? What did they think of the consecration of Timothy Aelurus? The replies, collected in the *Codex encyclius*, are revealing.[19] Most of the bishops were against the consecration of Timothy; not many were hostile to Chalcedon.

[17] L. Duchesne accurately sums up popular feeling in Syria and Egypt: 'Cyril, the true Cyril, had been sacrificed to Leo' (*Early History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, London: J. Murray, 1924, p. 317). On the formula 'in two natures' and its relationship to Cyril's thought, see P. Galtier, 'Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie et Saint Léon le Grand à Chalcédoine', in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, vol. 1 (Würzburg: Echter, 1951), pp. 345–87, esp. pp. 363–72.

[18] The chief source for the ecclesiastical history of the period from Chalcedon to the end of the sixth century is Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Books II to VI. For modern accounts see Duchesne, *Early History*, vol. 3, pp. 271ff.; W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*; and Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, pp. 165ff. For a detailed theological analysis see the successive parts of A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2 (London: Mowbray, 1987), in progress. See also the fundamental study of J. Lebon, 'La christologie du monophysisme syrien', in Grillmeier and Bacht, vol. 1, pp. 425–580.

[19] These are analysed by Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 195–235.

None of them, however, addressed the problem of the Definition. Those who supported Timothy, loyal to Cyril's principle that nothing should be added to or subtracted from the faith of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea,[20] simply declared that any doctrinal elaboration was undesirable: 'Nor does the symbol of faith of the said holy Fathers need any explanation, since it is interpreted through itself and preaches clearly the mysteries of devotion.'[21]

One respondent who did go further than most in commenting on the central issues was Basil of Seleucia.[22] It was his conviction that Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius (which was read at both Ephesus and Chalcedon), together with Leo's *Tome* and Cyril's *Laetentur* letter, which established the reunion of 433, simply excluded erroneous interpretations of Nicaea. Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius was particularly important because it suggested how Chalcedon could be seen as the completion of Ephesus:

> For the text of the same letter written by Cyril to the ungodly Nestorius was honoured at both Councils; at Ephesus it censured the blasphemous Nestorius and at Chalcedon it destroyed the madness of Eutyches; and on account of the same words in the former Council [Ephesus] Cyril was crowned with the praise of all as the wise father of the Alexandrians; and at the *latter* Council [Chalcedon] after his death he was proclaimed, so to say, as *praeceptor pietatis*. [The bishops who] gathered at Chalcedon brought forward publicly, apart from the letters of the blessed Cyril, nothing else except those words of Leo, beloved of God and father of the Church of Rome, addressed to Flavian of holy memory against the madness of Eutyches, in which he is discerned to agree with the statements of the most blessed Cyril.[23]

This reply expresses the perception of most of the bishops at Chalcedon, who thought that they were reaffirming the faith of Cyril. Many of the laity, however, led by the monks and the lower clergy, saw the exclusion of the *mia physis* formula from the Definition and the inclusion of the phrase 'acknowledged in two natures' as proof that Cyril had been betrayed.

Encouraged by the response to his encyclical, Leo took military action against the followers of Timothy Aelurus in Alexandria

[20] Later known as 'Canon 7' of Ephesus. See Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, p. 171, n. 7.

[21] Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, p. 226, n. 106.

[22] On Basil of Seleucia see Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 215–16.

[23] *ACO* II, 5, p. 48.34–49; trans. Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, p. 215, n. 68.

and exiled their leader first to Gangra (where Dioscorus had been interned) and then to the Chersonese. But the government could not ignore the fact that there was widespread resentment on the popular level against Chalcedon. The imperial initiatives in search of a broadly-based unity continued over the next fifty years with the *Encyclical* of Basiliscus (475), Zeno's *Henoticon* (482), and the *Typus* of Anastasius (*c.*510). These were all attempts to arrive at a negotiated settlement either by bringing Chalcedon more into line with the side of Cyril represented by the Twelve Chapters and the *mia physis* formula, or else by setting aside Chalcedon altogether. The *Encyclical* (whose author was Timothy Aelurus) returns to the Ephesine position without insisting on the *mia physis* formula but anathematizing Leo's *Tome* and the 'innovations' (i.e., the Definition) of Chalcedon.[24] The *Henoticon* (whose author was Acacius of Constantinople) also anathematizes the 'innovations' of Chalcedon, along with Nestorius and Eutyches, but although making favourable mention of the Twelve Chapters refrains from criticizing Leo's *Tome*.[25] The *Typus* (whose author was Severus of Antioch) accepts the Symbol of Nicaea, the Definition of Constantinople, the Council of Ephesus and the *Henoticon*.[26] It is the first document to insist on *mia physis* but goes beyond Cyril's teaching in declaring: 'We do not say two natures. We confess the Word of God as one nature become flesh.' The *Henoticon* received the assent of most of the Eastern bishops, but failed to satisfy the supporters of Chalcedon. The *Encyclical* and the *Typus* had no chance of being accepted as a basis for peace, largely because Constantinople needed Canon 28, which put its patriarchate on a formal basis, and therefore could not entertain the anathematization of Chalcedon.[27]

[24] Text in Evagrius, *HE* 3, 4; trans. Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 238–40.

[25] Text in E. Schwartz, 'Codex Vaticanus gr. 1431 eine antichalkedonische Sammlung aus der Zeit Kaiser Zenos', *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München*, Philos.-philolog. u. hist. Kl.XXXII, Bd. 6. A, Munich 1927, nr. 75, pp. 52–4; Evagrius *HE* 3, 14 (abbreviated); trans. Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 252–3.

[26] The text survives only in Armenian; trans. Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, p. 275, with references.

[27] Meyendorff (*Imperial Unity*, pp. 193–4) observes that these were attempts to impose unity by force. There was nothing, however, exceptionable about that in itself. Even the union of 433 was achieved with the help of the threat of coercion.

Parallel to these official initiatives were attempts by individual scholars to demonstrate the compatibility of the conciliar definition with the broader teaching of Cyril. These were pursued with the support of extensive florilegia.[28] The first and most important was the *Florilegium Cyrillianum* compiled in Alexandria in about 480.[29] It demonstrates a wide reading of Cyril – 244 extracts from thirty different works. Cyril's *mia physis* formula is not included. But there are ample extracts from the First Letter to Succensus to demonstrate Cyril's compatibility with 'one hypostasis in two natures'. The First Letter to Succensus was also used by Nephalius of Alexandria, a rare instance of an anti-Chalcedonian who was converted to the opposing view.[30] Nephalius' *Apologia* (*c.*500) gives a large selection of texts from earlier Fathers, including Cyril, in support of the dyophysite position. Other pro-Chalcedonian florilegia which make prominent use of Cyril are those of Ephrem of Amida (patriarch of Antioch 526–44), Leontius of Byzantium (mid-sixth century), and Eulogius (Melkite patriarch of Antioch 580–608).[31] There were also anti-Chalcedonian florilegia, notably those of Philoxenus of Mabbug (*c.*440–523) and Severus of Antioch (*c.*465–538), which were based on Cyril.[32] Severus of Antioch's *Philalethes*, which is a detailed response to the *Florilegium Cyrillianum*, is particularly important.[33] It sets out to prove, by commenting on each text in turn, that Cyril (the 'Lover of Truth' of the title) when read in context supports the monophysite rather than the dyophysite position. Severus, who after an excellent education in Alexandria and Berytus, became a monk in Palestine, and then an ecclesiastical adviser to the Emperor Anastasius in Constantinople, before being raised to the throne of Antioch in 512, had one of the finest minds of the sixth century. Grillmeier laments that in his polemical exposition of Cyril's teaching 'a great "ecumenical" chance was wasted'.[34]

In his enthronement address Severus welcomed the first three Ecumenical Councils and the *Henoticon* but repudiated Chalcedon

[28] For a full list see Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 51–78, with copious references.
[29] See Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, p. 54.
[30] See Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 55–6.
[31] See Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 57–8.
[32] See Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, pp. 65–6.
[33] See Grillmeier, vol. 2/2, pp. 22–3, 28–46.
[34] Grillmeier, vol. 2/1, p. 66.

and the *Tome of Leo*. His tenure of Antioch was short-lived. Anastasius' death in 518 and the succession of Justin I led to a change of official ecclesiastical policy. Deposed as a monophysite, Severus found refuge with Timothy IV of Alexandria, under whose roof he wrote most of his works.

Severus used Cyril, 'the king of dogmas', as his model. But Cyril's expressions were not precise enough for him. Severus sought to 'purify' Cyril's language. Like Cyril, he taught a Christology 'from above', without the qualifications and the nuances of Cyril, but nevertheless not as one-sidedly as Apollinarius or Eutyches. Cyril's language needed to be 'purified' in order to deal with a situation not foreseen by him. Chalcedon and Leo had to be excluded and only the *mia physis* formula, without the 'dyophysite' qualifications that Cyril had introduced, could do this.[35]

Accordingly, in Severus' view only the divinity is a *physis*, not the humanity. The *mia physis* referred simply to the eternal Word (not a mixture of divinity and humanity as in Apollinarius), otherwise the unity of Christ could not be preserved. At Chalcedon by contrast, the *physis* expressed the distinction; the unity was expressed by the *hypostasis*. Severus repudiated the monophysite extremes both of Julian of Halicarnassus, who taught that the body of Christ was deified from the moment of conception and therefore not subject to corruption, and of Sergius the Grammarian, who analysed the philosophical problem of the nature of the union in static Apollinarianizing terms without taking into account the dynamic soteriology centred on the activity of the Word.[36] But in the battle with his Chalcedonian opponents to show who was more faithful to Cyril, he was not able to endow the humanity of Christ with the same degree of reality as they could. For him, as for Dioscorus, the distinction between the humanity and the divinity after the union existed only on the conceptual level – in *theoria*.[37]

[35] Grillmeier observes: 'to be noted is the fact that Cyril did not correct the wording of the formula itself. Only additional explanations protect it from the real heretical interpretations' (vol. 2/2, p. 154). On the Monophysite use of the formula see Lebon, 'christologie', pp. 478–91.

[36] On Julian see Grillmeier, vol. 2/2, pp. 25–6, 79–111; on Sergius, Grillmeier, vol. 2/2, pp. 26–7, 111–28; and I. R. Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1988).

[37] See the summary of Severus' Christology in Grillmeier, vol. 2/2, pp. 148–73.

Severus has remained a definitive theologian for the Syrian and Coptic Orthodox Churches, the 'new Cyril' who brought the great 'luminary of the Church of Alexandria' up to date in order to counter the 'neo-Nestorianism' of Chalcedon. But a fellow-Syrian contemporary, the author of the *Dionysian Corpus*, who assumed the name of St Paul's first Athenian convert, has had a much broader influence thanks to the success of his pseudonymity. Ps.-Dionysius' Cyrillian-Severan Christology is summed up in his Letter 4. The 'letter' is a response to the question: 'How can Jesus, who transcends all things, be placed on the same level of reality as all other human beings?' The reply is that he *cannot* be considered essentially the same as other men. The proof of his transcendent status is his miraculous birth and his ability to walk on water. In summary, 'he was neither a man nor not a man, but although "from men" was beyond men and transcended men, although he had truly become a man, and, moreover, did not perform divine acts in virtue of being God and human acts in virtue of being a man, but being God made man (ἀλλ' ἀνδρωθέντος θεοῦ) he lived amongst us by a new theandric activity (καινήν τινα θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν).[38] This statement, which clearly rejects the assigning of distinguishable divine and human acts to Christ, could have been taken to present an aphthartodocetic Christ in the manner of Eutyches or Julian of Halicarnassus if it had not been interpreted by Maximus the Confessor in line with a Chalcedonian Christology.

Maximus is an outstanding representative of neo-Chalcedonianism, the name given to the attempt in the sixth and seventh centuries to interpret Chalcedon from the orthodox side in a more Cyrillian manner in order to make it acceptable to the Syrians and the Egyptians.[39] An important phase of the work was accomplished during the reign of Justinian I (527–65) under the emperor's personal supervision. The work was advanced on three fronts: (i) the production of writings incorporating Cyrillian florilegia in order to demonstrate that Chalcedon did not contradict Cyril; (ii) the

[38] *Ep.* 4, 1072bc, G. Heil and A. M. Ritter (eds), *Corpus Dionysiacum* II (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), p. 161.5–10. The Monophysites read this as '*one* theandric activity'; on the textual point see A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 54.

[39] The term neo-Chalcedonianism was coined by C. Moeller. See his 'Le chalcédonisme et le néo-chalcedonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VIe siècle', in Grillmeier and Bacht, vol. 1, pp. 637–720, esp. pp. 666–96.

development of a 'theopaschite' doctrine in order to emphasize that it was the Word of God – the second Person of the Trinity – who died on the cross according to the flesh, not a human being distinct from the Word; and (iii) the condemnation of the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrrhus at the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical) of 553 in order to drive as strong a wedge as possible between Chalcedon and the old Antiochene tradition, now branded as 'Nestorian'.

In the following century a further refinement was proposed, the Monothelite formula, which marked the last supreme effort to reconcile the Monophysites (as they now were) to the Imperial Church. The situation created by the Persian occupation of Syria and Egypt and the counter-offensive of the Emperor Heraclius made the problem of ecclesiastical unity a matter of great urgency. Heraclius, like other emperors before him, took an active personal interest in finding a solution. A suggestion which came up in discussion with representatives of the Monophysites was that all could agree that a single divine-human activity (or theandric energy) was characteristic of the life of Christ. This 'monenergist' solution was referred to Sergius, the patriarch of Constantinople, who consulted his Roman colleague, Pope Honorius. Honorius was in favour of the phrase because it indicated that Christ operated through a single will.[40] The latter expression appealed to Sergius, who incorporated it into the *Ecthesis* which was published by Heraclius in 638.

The *Ecthesis*, with its prohibition of any reference in theological discussions to two energies and its promotion of 'one will' went further than any previous official document to accommodate the Monophysite position. Sergius was in favour of it because it seemed to him to express Cyril's *mia physis* Christology in language that was acceptable to both sides. Moreover, a quotation from Cyril was found which seemed to give it unequivocal support: in his exegesis of the healing of the daughter of Jairus through the uttered word combined with a manual gesture, Cyril says that Christ 'manifests through both a single cognate activity (or energy).'[41]

[40] On this see J. Meyendorff's excellent chapter, 'Emperor Heraclius and Monothelitism', in *Imperial Unity*, pp. 333–80.

[41] μίαν τε καὶ συγγενῆ δι' ἀμφοῖν ἐπιδείκνυσι τὴν ἐνέργειαν: *In Jo.* 6:53, 361d, Pusey, vol. 1, p. 530, 18–19.

The expression 'new theandric energy' from Ps.-Dionysius' Fourth Letter, which the Monophysites read as 'one theandric energy', provided further support from an apparently early date.

The practical benefits conferred by the *Ecthesis* seemed at first enormous. Cyrus, the Melkite patriarch and imperial governor of Alexandria, proclaimed a union with the Copts in 633 on the basis of it. Several Armenian groups were also reconciled to the Imperial Church. But protests gradually gained ground. The first was that of Sophronius of Jerusalem, who begged Cyrus not to proclaim the union because the phraseology of the *Ecthesis* seemed to him Apollinarian.[42] In the West Honorius' successors condemned monothelitism. With so many Easterners in favour of it, however, the intellectual leadership of the opposition to monothelitism after the death of Sophronius in 639 devolved upon a simple monk, Maximus the Confessor.

Maximus (580–662) was a convinced Chalcedonian but he also had a deep veneration for Cyril.[43] In his first major statement on Severan monophysitism, Letter 12, addressed to his old friend John the Cubicularius in 641, the year of Heraclius' death, Maximus sets out a succinct Chalcedonian Christology. Mary is truly and in reality the Theotokos. From her the Word took flesh, consubstantial with us and endowed with a rational soul, which he united hypostatically with himself, with the result that he was perfect God and perfect man, dual in nature or substance but not dual in hypostasis or person.[44] This statement is supported with passages drawn from Cyril's *Contra Nestorium*, *Adversus Orientales Episcopos*, Letter to Eulogius, and Second Letter to Succensus.[45] The passages, selected from a florilegium, argue

[42] Moeller's thesis that monenergism and monothelitism arose out of neo-Chalcedonianism has been questioned, for example by J. C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996), p. 302, n. 110, who thinks that 'these heresies more often have their origin in monophysitism pure and simple'.

[43] On Maximus' debt to Cyril see L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 2nd edn (La Salle: Open Court, 1995), pp. 40–8.

[44] *PG* 91, 465d–468d.

[45] See C. *Nest.* 2, 6 (*PG* 91, 472a), *ACO* I, 1, 6, p. 42.34–37; *Adv. Orient. Epis.* anathema 3 (*PG* 91, 472b), *ACO* I, 1, 7, p. 40.7–10 (I have not identified the untitled passage that follows at 472c.); *Ad Eul.* (*PG* 91, 477b), Wickham, p. 62.12–17; *Ad Succ.* 2, 5 (*PG* 91, 481c, 496a and 501c), Wickham, p. 92.29–36, 17–18 and 24–25, respectively.

that both the twoness and the oneness must be maintained simultaneously, the former indicating the separate natures of the divinity and the humanity, the latter their union. Cyril expresses it eloquently, in the first of Maximus's quotations, with his characteristic emphasis on the Word as the single subject of Christ's incarnate life:

> But when the mystery of Christ is set before us, our discussion of the union does not ignore the difference but nevertheless puts the division aside, not because we are confusing the natures or mixing them together, but because the Word of God, having partaken of flesh and blood, is still thought of as a single Son and is called such.[46]

Cyril is here defending the unity against what seems to him Nestorius' unbalanced emphasis on the duality. Maximus' task in his criticism of Severan Christology, however, is to correct the balance in the opposite direction. He therefore needs to address the Monophysites' shibboleth, the *mia physis* formula.

Maximus's analysis of the *mia physis* formula is preceded by an examination of Severus's 'one synthetic nature' (μία σύνθετος φύσις).[47] This expression is unacceptable to Maximus because when applied to Christ it excludes his double consubstantiality. A 'synthetic' nature cannot be *homoousion* with a simple nature, such as that of God. Rather, we should speak of 'one synthetic hypostasis', because this entails the presence of the two natures, thus maintaining the consubstantiality of Christ both with God and with humanity without sacrificing the unity. Severus was right to object that to say a union of two natures results in two natures is an illogicality. That is why we say that the union of the two natures results in one hypostasis.[48] Μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη on the other hand, is perfectly acceptable precisely because the word σεσαρκωμένη – 'made flesh' – implies a duality.[49] The 'one nature of the Word' expresses the divinity; the 'made flesh' expresses the humanity, for as 'the teacher' [Cyril] says, 'What, indeed, is manhood's nature except flesh endowed with life and mind?'[50] Such

[46] *C. Nest.* II.6; *ACO* I, 1, 6, p. 42.34–7, quoted by Maximus at 472a.

[47] *Ep.* 12 (*PG* 91, 488d–489c).

[48] *Ep.* 12 (*PG* 91, 492d–493a).

[49] The same point had been made by Justinian in his *Letter to the Alexandrian Monks*, *PG* 86, 1113a.

[50] *Ep.* 12 (*PG* 91, 501c), quoting Cyril, *Ad Succ.* 2, 5, Wickham, p. 92.24–5.

flesh has become the *idion*, the peculiar property, of the hypostasis. 'Therefore anyone who in saying "one incarnate nature of God the Word" shows God the Word to exist with ensouled flesh, conceiving of the flesh as something in substance completely different from God the Word, is a true and genuine disciple of piety.'[51]

If Cyril's 'one nature' does not contradict the 'two natures', neither does his 'one energy' contradict the 'two energies'. In a short treatise written in the following year (*Opusculum* 7), addressed to the deacon Marinus in Cyprus, Maximus applies the same logic to the monothelite argument as he had previously done to the monophysite.[52] First he establishes the duality of Christ's will not only by reference to biblical texts which speak of Christ's submission to the will of the Father but also by simple logic: if the humanity of the Word has a rational soul, then it also possesses a natural will.[53] Then he declares that 'two wills' implies 'two energies', 'as the wise Cyril taught us'.[54] Maximus is referring here to the passage from Cyril's *Commentary on John* which had been claimed as a testimony supporting the monenergist position: 'Christ manifests a single cognate energy through both.'[55] Maximus is aware of the original context of the phrase in Cyril's discussion of the miracles of Jesus, and particularly the raising of Jairus' daughter by a combination of word and gesture (Luke 8:54). The divine and the human energies come together and interpenetrate but remain distinct. Where, then, is the 'oneness' to be located? Not in the single hypostasis, for the energies belong to the natures. The oneness must be located in the union itself: 'the energy is one through the union of the Word himself to his holy flesh, and not naturally or hypostatically'.[56]

The same question arose in the disputation which Maximus held with Pyrrhus, the deposed patriarch of Constantinople, in North Africa in 645. When Pyrrhus, arguing from a monothelite position, brought up the proof text from Cyril, Maximus was ready with his response.[57] The miracles which Christ performed are

[51] *Ep.* 12 (*PG* 91, 501c).
[52] *PG* 91, 62b–89b; trans. Louth, *Maximus*, pp. 180–91.
[53] See *Opusc.* 7 (*PG* 91, 77b).
[54] *Opusc.* 7 (*PG* 91, 84c).
[55] *In Jo.* 6:53 (Pusey, vol. 1, p. 530.18–19).
[56] *Opusc.* 7 (*PG* 91, 88a); trans. Louth, *Maximus*, p. 189.
[57] See *Disputatio cum Pyrrho*, *PG* 91, 344b–345c.

evidence of an energy which is simultaneously both one and two, a divine energy operating through the instrumentality of the flesh. But the flesh of Christ is not a neutral channel. As the Word's own (*idion*), it is in itself life-giving. That is what Cyril means by the word 'both' – the divine energy working with and through the flesh. There is no single energy that is simultaneously akin to both the Word and the flesh. The 'oneness' lies in the Word's remaining the single subject that performs the miracles by a combination of speech and gesture.

The hardening of divisions

Maximus met a martyr's death as a result of the emperor's determination to promote ecclesiastical unity on the basis of the monothelite formula. But the imperial initiative in spite of its promising beginnings failed to achieve its goal. Within fifteen years the Sixth Ecumenical Council, meeting in Constantinople in 680–81, definitively rejected monothelitism, which by then was serving no useful purpose. Why did the enormous effort that was expended to heal the Christian divisions of the East, either through a Cyrillian interpretation of Chalcedonism or through an 'orthodox' interpretation of Monophysitism, fail so completely? The reasons may be summarized as: (i) the strength of what Meyendorff has called 'Cyrillian fundamentalism';[58] (ii) the creation of a parallel Monophysite ecclesiastical structure; (iii) the rise of Islam; and (iv) the lack of an adequate understanding of Cyril in the West. Let us look briefly at each of these in turn.

'Cyrillian fundamentalism' owed its strength to the soteriological orientation of Cyril's Christology and to the ease with which his ideas could be grasped on the popular level. While the intellectuals debated the ontological status of the divine and human natures, the ordinary believer knew that Christ was the Word made flesh who had suffered, died and risen again, who 'deified' believers through the sacraments and the moral life, and who would raise them up after death to participation in the life of God. Christ was not simply a model for right living but the active agent of a divine

[58] *Imperial Unity*, pp. 192–3.

destiny for all humanity. This was the Cyril revered on both sides of the divide, the quality that gave him his strong spiritual appeal to Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians alike.[59] Those who rejected Chalcedon, however, were 'Cyrillian fundamentalists' in the sense that they placed maximum emphasis on the sharper side of Cyril, on the combative champion of the Alexandrian christological tradition who had served the Twelve Chapters on Nestorius and had elevated the *mia physis* formula to a party slogan. They neglected the example of the accommodating Cyril, the ecclesiastical statesman who had maintained good relations with Rome and had worked hard after Ephesus to repair the breach with Antioch. They also neglected on the theological level the nuances and qualifications by which Cyril strove to prevent misinterpretation of his doctrinal position.

The creation of an independent 'Monophysite' ecclesiastical structure belongs to the sixth century, but the foundations were laid in the years immediately following the Council of Chalcedon. The deposition and exile of Dioscorus was a shock from which the Egyptians never really recovered. It seemed to them a condemnation of their entire theological tradition. Consequently, the authority of the Chalcedonian patriarch never extended very far into Coptic-speaking Upper Egypt. In Syria, as in Egypt, Monophysite and Chalcedonian patriarchs succeeded each other according to the ecclesiastical preference of the reigning emperor without affecting the countryside very much until in the mid-sixth century Jacob Baradaeus (*c.*500–78) was secretly consecrated bishop of Edessa. Jacob worked assiduously to create a separate Monophysite hierarchy, not only in Syria but also in Asia Minor and even the Aegean islands. To accomplish this he travelled about for months at a time disguised as a beggar in order to elude imperial agents, performing numerous clandestine ordinations. His aim seems to have been to convert the entire empire. In the event he founded the Syrian Orthodox Church, which the Melkites sometimes called the Jacobite Church after him. As separate hierarchies became established in Syria and Egypt, so the possibilities of union receded. Whatever theological agreements might be reached at

[59] B. Meunier correctly observes that Cyril's Christ is the Christ of popular devotion (*Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), pp. 288–9).

government level, the local ecclesiastical communities now had a momentum of their own.[60]

The phenomenal rise of Islam in the seventh century took everybody by surprise. The Roman and Persian empires, exhausted by twenty years of warfare, were incapable of mounting an effective defence. Damascus fell to the Arabs in 635, Jerusalem in 638 and Alexandria in 642. The effect on relations between Monophysites and Chalcedonians was to consolidate the divisions. On the one hand the imperial government no longer had access to the Christian communities in Syria and Egypt; on the other, it was not in the interests of the new Muslim rulers to foster Christian unity. From the Byzantine point of view, the formation of any policy for ecclesiastical union, whether on a neo-Chalcedonian or Monophysite basis, was now pointless.

The Latin West stood apart from these developments. In the seventh century, and indeed for many centuries to come, knowledge of Cyril in the West was very limited.[61] The process of the translation of Cyril's writings into Latin began in his own lifetime. He himself saw to the translation and despatch to Rome of his First and Second Letters to Nestorius. But his more forceful side was not known in the West at the time of Chalcedon. The opponents of the Council were therefore all branded by Pope Leo as Eutychians or Apollinarians. The 'conservative' or 'fundamentalist' Cyrillism of most of them was not recognized. Later in the fifth century, however, a cross-section of Cyril's writings became available when John Talaia, the Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, fled to Rome in 482 as a result of political unrest, taking with him a Latin translation of the *Florilegium Cyrillianum*. But it was only in the sixth century that Cyril's Third Letter to Nestorius with its appended Twelve Chapters was

[60] The other two Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Armenian and the Ethiopian, have a different history. The Armenians, who were involved in a war with Persia in 451, were not represented at the Council of Chalcedon. They accepted the *Henoticon* and in 555 formally repudiated the Council. The Ethiopians seem to have received their Christianity from Egypt already in the Monophysite form. Their main christological authority is a compilation of texts known by Cyril's name, the *Qerellos*.

[61] For the period up to Thomas Aquinas see N. M. Haring, 'The Character and Range of the Influence of St Cyril of Alexandria on Latin Theology (430–1260)', *Medieval Studies* 12 (1950), pp. 1–19.

translated into Latin. The occasion was the visit to Rome in 518 of a group of Scythian monks in connection with the promotion of theopaschism, the attempt to interpret Chalcedon in the light of the Twelve Chapters.[62] The translation was made by a fellow Scythian monk resident in Rome, Dionysius Exiguus, who also translated the First and Second Letters to Succensus. Apart from Thomas Aquinas there were no further major advances in the West's knowledge of Cyril until the eve of the Renaissance.[63] At the Council of Florence (1438–39) Cyril was appealed to by the Latins as the chief Greek patristic witness to the *Filioque*, thanks largely to a florilegium that had been prepared in the thirteenth century by the unionist patriarch of Constantinople, John Veccos.[64] Subsequently Cardinal Bessarion, who had been one of the chief spokesmen on the Greek side at the Council, promoted the translation of Cyril by one of his protégés, George Trapezuntius, and in this way some of Cyril's longer works began to circulate in Latin. The invention of printing led gradually to a wider dissemination of Cyril's writings, a process which culminated in the publication in Paris in 1636–8 of the collected works in Greek and Latin, edited by Jean Aubert.[65]

The resumption of dialogue

In modern times there have been renewed efforts to find a solution to the doctrinal problems dividing the Chalcedonian from the non-

[62] On this episode see J. A. McGuckin, 'The "Theopaschite Confession" (Text and Historical Context): a Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), pp. 239–55.

[63] Haring, 'Character and Range', pp. 18–19. Haring notes that it is Thomas 'to whom we owe the return of Cyril into Western theology' (p. 18). In the Byzantine world there was a parallel resurgence of interest in Cyril in the fourteenth century, when a text from the *Thesaurus* denying that God himself and the life within him are distinct realities (*Thes.* 14, *PG* 75, 240bc) became the occasion of a pamphlet war between Palamas and the Akindynists. See Robert E. Sinkiewicz, *Saint Gregory Palamas: The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), pp. 259–69.

[64] B. Meunier, 'Cyrille d'Alexandrie au Concile de Florence', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 21 (1989), pp. 147–74. For recent studies on Cyril's role in the *Filioque* controversy up to modern times, see the contributions of Marie-Odile Boulnois and Brian E. Daley to the present volume, esp. pp. 106–8 and p. 117, no. 8.

[65] For a brief account of the early printings see Russell, p. 68.

Chalcedonian Churches. The key to the solution is Cyril of Alexandria, as was recognized many years ago by Pope Pius XII. In his encyclical *Orientalis Ecclesiae*, promulgated on Easter Sunday (9 April) 1944 to mark the fifteenth centenary of Cyril's death, the pope appealed to the Oriental Orthodox 'to bear in mind that the decrees which were later to be issued by the Council of Chalcedon as new errors arose are in no way contrary to the teaching of the Patriarch of Alexandria'. The earliest initiatives on a practical level, however, were taken by the Eastern Orthodox, who began holding discussions with the Oriental Orthodox in the 1960s through their Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. This commission has done important work in the field of historical reassessment, notably in its study of the *mia physis* formula and the Cyrillian basis of the theology of Severus of Antioch.[66] Catholic approaches to the Oriental Orthodox got under way a decade later. Since the early 1970s there has been dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches under the aegis of Cardinal Koenig's foundation, Pro Oriente. At a meeting in Rome in May 1973 the Coptic Pope Shenouda III signed a joint statement with Pope Paul VI on Cyril's *mia physis* formula. Since then there have been a number of meetings of the Dialogue Commission.[67]

One important group which has been left out of these conversations until very recently is the ancient Church of the East, the descendants of those Christians of the Antiochene tradition who were not affected by the Council of Ephesus and whose most revered teacher is Theodore of Mopsuestia.[68] The consultations sponsored by Pro Oriente did not at first include the Church of the East on the official level. This situation was remedied in 1994

[66] See Torrance, *Christology*, pp. 18–19; O. F. A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1999), pp. 123–9.

[67] See 'The Modern Roman Catholic – Oriental Orthodox Dialogue', *One in Christ* 2 (1985), pp. 238–54.

[68] The so-called 'Nestorian' Church. On its correct name and theological position see S. Brock, 'The "Nestorian" Church: a lamentable misnomer', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996), pp. 23–35. The Church of the East was not affected by the Council of Ephesus because most of its members lived outside the Roman Empire in Persian territory.

when Pro Oriente's negotiations with the 'pre-Ephesine Church' resulted in a 'declaration of common christological agreement' signed in Rome by Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV and Pope John Paul II.[69] On the non-Chalcedonian side, the Syrian Orthodox began independent conversations with the Church of the East, but these have been suspended following a meeting of the Oriental patriarchs called by Pope Shenouda III, in which it was decided that none would engage in dialogue without the participation of the others. The biggest challenge now in these ecumenical negotiations is the christological dialogue between the Church of the East and all the rest – the Oriental Orthodox, the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholics – calling as it does for a reconciliation between Cyril of Alexandria and one of the greatest of his *bêtes noires*, Theodore of Mopsuestia.

[69] J. F. Coakley, 'The Church of the East since 1914', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996), pp. 178–97, esp. 196–7.

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