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# CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA SPEAKS FOR GOD IN HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE HOLY BIBLE

## ABSTRACT

Cyril of Alexandria is known more for his defence of Alexandrian Christology than for his accomplishments as an interpreter of the Old and New Testaments. Although the fathers were aware that the Old Testament's idiom differed from that of the New Testament, they considered the Bible to be one book and that each part thereof complemented the other. Cyril emphasises that "[t]he entire Scripture is one book, and was spoken by the one Holy Spirit" (Isaiah PG 70, 656A).<sup>1</sup> The unity of the Bible is based on Christ; without him, it is difficult to view Leviticus, Proverbs, Ezekiel, Mark's gospel, the Acts of the Apostles or the first epistle of John as part of one Holy Book, the Bible.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cyril insists that the law of the Old Testament is a pedagogy which, using metaphors and types, led infants to maturity and hid the beauty of the presence of God within it (Glaphyra PG 68, 137B). In the New Testament, the presence of God becomes visible in the enfleshed (*sesarkomenos*) Divine Word. The New Testament enables people to understand the stories and the pictures in the Old Testament spiritually (Glaphyra PG 68, 148C). Cyril's most interesting interpretation is the Gospel of John. In every interpretation treatise, the patriarch of Alexandria develops his Christological teaching and explains how God, and especially the Son of God, reveals Himself to humanity. Cyril of Alexandria underlines the mystery of God through his interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. For him, both the Old and the New

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1 The abbreviation PG stands for J.P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus graeca*. Paris, 1857-1866.

Testaments are the ways in which God revealed Himself to Israel and to the world. Linked to the Christological controversy, which led to the Council of Ephesus in 431, the last important representative of the Alexandrian tradition in the Greek Orient, Cyril the Bishop of Alexandria, was later defined as the “guardian of exactitude” – guardian of the true faith – and even as the “seal of the Fathers”. His important commentaries on many of the New and Old Testament Books are based on the defence of the Trinitarian and Christological faith against the Sabellian, Arian, Apollinarian and Nestorian theses. His interpretation is based on a more literal and occasionally typological exegesis. In his interpretation of the Holy Bible, Cyril finds the opportunity to speak about the Triune God and mainly to explain his Christological teaching. The latter was very important for his theological disagreement with the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius.

## 2. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE BIBLE

Cyril's dealing with the interpretation of the Scriptures enables him to exercise a harsh polemic against contemporary and former heretical teachings. Any heresy is a danger to the unity and coherence of the body of the Church (Glaphyra PG 68, 696BC). Heresy deprives man of salvation and leads to the loss of his soul (Glaphyra PG 68, 556C; Epistles PG 77, 1088B). Therefore, Cyril refutes any heretical errors on reasonable arguments and hagiographical evidence. Cyril found it extremely difficult, at the time, to campaign for Orthodoxy due to the contrasting interpretations between the Antiochian and the Alexandrian schools of theology and interpretation. The rivalry between these two schools is documented differently in their interpretation of the Bible. In Alexandria, the prevailing biblical approach used allegory in its interpretation of Scripture, whereas the Antiochian school stressed the primacy of historical exegesis (Artemi 2012:22, 66, 210).

Cyril is convinced that the theology of the Church must be based on the interpretation – the explanation – of the Bible (I Ad Corinthians PG 74, 868B). The Greeks had invented a mythology for their gods and ignored the One and real God, who is revealed through the plain text of the Bible (I Ad Corinthians PG 74, 868B; Contra Julianum PG 76, 853CD). The biblical documentation is not simply an external reference to a text that was written in the past; the awareness and realisation of the “meaning” of Scripture is the very fact of the society of God (XII Prophetas PG 71, 33A, 36B). Cyril considers that the God-bearing men of both the Old and the New Testaments are hydrants of the redemptive Word. He believes that the theological teaching of the Testaments nurtures the world that has dried up from sin (Ad Nestorium PG 76, 169A). Therefore, he does not hesitate

to base his writings on the texts of the Holy Bible. Finally, he considers the New Testament to be superior to the Old Testament, because the former reveals more important truths and the way that should be followed in order to become perfect, and complete his restoration (Isaiah PG 70, 217D).

Through his works, Cyril shows the respect which the Holy Father nourishes for both the Old and the New Testaments. He considers both as equal sources of the Bible that strongly and unequivocally proclaim the existence of one triune God. Simultaneously, the Bible ridicules those heretics who distort the biblical truth. Only in the Bible “does the divine beauty light” (Contra Julianum PG 76, 856D-857A). Cyril also emphasises that the language of the Bible is inferior to that of Greek ancient philosophical texts, but he explains that the latter are used as a practice for the real “education” of the Bible (Contra Julianum PG 76, 857C-860A).

For Cyril, the Scriptures are the pillar of his thought, because he considers their texts to be inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to be the true documents for the “mystery” of Jesus Christ:

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 (Glaphyra PG 69, 308C).

Cyril emphasises the following:

But I think that those who are engaged on the Holy Scriptures ought to admit all writings that are honest and good and free from harm. For thus collecting together the varied thoughts of many and bringing them together into one scope and understanding, they will mount up to a good measure of knowledge, and imitating the bee, wise workwoman, will compact the sweet honeycomb of the Spirit (Ad Johannes I PG 73, 18A).

In general, for Cyril, the Bible is always related to 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” (Weinandy & Keating 2003:21).

The Bible is about Christ and nobody can speak for the incarnate Word without using the words of the Bible. Cyril’s point of view thus differs

from that of the previous fathers. For Irenaeus, as for all early Christian interpreters, the Scriptures did not stand alone, but were understood and interpreted within the context of the Church's faith and life, its creeds, its liturgy, its practices and its beliefs (Weinandy & Keating 2003:15). For Cyril, the books of the Bible protect the faithful from the heretics and "establish" the faith in them. In these divine books, God put the whole truth for Himself. Although the human being is not able to contain the whole universe, the human mind can only accept some parts of the ultimate revelation of God, in order to be protected from the tales of the heretics (Ad Johannes I PG 73, 21B).

The Bible exhibits the divine truth:

The Spirit does not reveal the truth to those who spend too much effort preparing for battle and who exult in tangled and deceptive arguments rather than rejoice in the truth. This is because the Spirit does not 'enter a deceitful soul' nor does he otherwise allow his precious pearls to be rolled under the feet of swine. Instead, he would rather spend his time with simple minds because they move without guile and avoid superfluous sophistry (Ad Johannes I PG 73, 9AB).

In concluding, Cyril emphasises the end, the highest goal of the entire Bible, namely the coming of Christ. To this end, there is a stable unity between the Old and the New Testament. To quote Henri De Lubac (1959:322):

Jesus Christ brings about the unity of the Scripture, because He is the endpoint and the 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.

Sometimes, Cyril uses verses from the New Testament as hermeneutical keys to reading the Old Testament, thus revealing his understanding that both Testaments are a unified whole. An example of what we have referred to above is that "Cyril looks to passages such as Matthew 5:17 and John 4:24 as providing the hermeneutical keys to interpret the Old Testament" (Beazley 2009:6). Within the unified whole of Scripture, Cyril recognises that each author has a particular σκοπός and τέλος for his individual works (Wilken 2004:842). Finally, Cyril explains the very origin of both the Old and the New Testaments. It requires that the doctrine in both be harmonious, because both refer to man's salvation according to God's project, which is the incarnation of the Second Person of the Triune God.

### 3. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA AS INTERPRETER OF THE BIBLE

According to Cyril, the Bible is meant to reveal the “mystery of Christ”, which is the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word (Glaphyra PG 69, 308C). The divinely inspired biblical texts were written by the prophets, the evangelists and the apostles and are the source of man’s salvation. Through these texts, the Triune God reveals Himself, His will and all the divine mysteries. Of course, Cyril never fails to stress that interpreting the holy texts is a difficult task (Ad Johannes PG 73, 16A). A great deal of patristic exegesis is replete with inter-textual connections based on theological and perceived connections of grammatical and thematic elements. Cyril is no exception to this (Beazley 2009:4).

Faithful to the memory of his uncle Theophilus, Cyril adopts the use of typological interpretation, avoiding allegory for the majority of his treatises (Artemi 2012:66, 210). He is concerned with the correlation between the historical data of the texts and their spiritual meaning. For this reason, he prefers typology. He contends that scholars should not overlook the grammatical and spiritual elements of the divinely inspired texts of Scripture, because they would not have the opportunity to learn the true meaning of the writings and to benefit spiritually. Although Cyril uses typological interpretation, he is often labelled as eclectic in his methodology in that he can appear to draw from both Alexandrian and Antiochian sources, because of variances in exegetical practices from the well-perceived boundaries between Alexandrian and Antiochian exegeses (Keating 2004:13-14). It is likely that such perceived eclecticism posits that there might be less of a dichotomy at work in Greek Patristic exegesis. Thus, it is important to evaluate Cyril on his own terms, as Keating suggests (Keating 2004:5). This requires a working knowledge of Cyril’s time and history, as his own terms appear intrinsically wrapped within the history and tradition of his time. However, in order to understand Cyril, one should not assume that the voices of his contemporaries speak for Cyril, as he may not always be a harmonious voice on this historical stage (Beazley 2009:9).

*Οἱ τὴν ἐν ταῖς θεοπνεύστοις Γραφαῖς ἱστορίαν ὡς ἔωλον παραιτούμενοι, φεύγουσι κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς τὸ νοεῖν δύνασθαι, καθ ὃν προσήκει τρόπον, τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς γεγραμμένα. Θεωρία μὲν γὰρ πνευματικὴ καλὴ τε καὶ ὀνησιφόρος, καὶ τῆς διανοίας τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν εὖ μάλα καταλαμπρύνουσα νουνεχεστάτους ἀποτελεῖ. Ὅταν δέ τι τῶν ἱστορικῶς πεπραγμένων διὰ τῶν ἱερῶν ἡμῶν Γραμμάτων εἰσφέρηται, τότε δὴ τὸ ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας χρῆσιμον θηρᾶσθαι πρέπει, ἵνα πανταχόθεν ἡμᾶς ἡ θεόπνευστος Γραφὴ σώζουσά τε καὶ ὠφελοῦσα φαίνεται (Isaiah I PG 70, 192AB).*

Typological interpretation was used in many of the Old and the New Testament texts. Many terms in the Old Testament, such as the paschal lamb, typify the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. Reference to this lamb is the pre-designation of Christ and his sacrifice, which was the means of mankind's salvation from the bondage of sin (Lucem PG 72, 820B). At another point, he mentions that Isaac was the "type of Christ", who is loaded with the wood for his own sacrifice, just as the Lord himself was burdened with the cross (Lucem, PG 72, 933D) on which he would suffer in his human nature and die on Calvary (Golgotha).

The use of the typological method was not limited to the examples cited earlier, but was applied to many other events of the Old Testament which prefigured the events of the New Testament. Cyril has the opportunity to show that the events and the law of the Old Testament are a type, *typos*, indication of the proper nature of devotion to God: the beauty of truth is hidden within it:

... διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν ἰοῦσαν πραγμάτων (=στοιχείων τῆς ΠΑ), τὴν νέαν ἡμῖν ἐπιδείξει Γραφή, καὶ τῆς νομικῆς πολιτείας οὐ σφόδρα διωκισμένην τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴν, εἰ πρὸς θεωρίαν ἀγοίτο τὴν πνευματικὴν τὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις διωρισμένα. Τύπος γὰρ ὁ νόμος καὶ σκιά, καὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἡ μόρφωσις ὡς ἐν ᾧδῖσιν ἔτι καὶ κεκρυμμένον ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ἔχουσα κάλλος (De adoratione in spiritu et veritate, X PG 68, 137AB).

Cyril often uses typological interpretation in an allegorical way, as referred to above regarding the interpretation of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham as an indication of Christ's sacrifice. In Cyril's work, *Glaphyra in Genesis* (Glaphyra III PG 69, 137B-140A), the interpretation of this passage of the Old Testament (Gen. 22:1-2, 5-19) is based on the "breadth of history" (Glaphyra III PG 69, 140A), the historical and grammatical method. In another treatise, Cyril incorporates the allegorical interpretation of this event of the Old Testament as it was first presented by Paul in his Letter to the Galatians. In this instance, Isaac and his sacrifice represent Christ and his sacrifice, as mentioned earlier. Allegorically, Isaac was the beginning of the realisation of God's promise to Abraham, namely that his descendants would increase like the grains of sand of the sea (Gen. 13:16-17) and the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5-7), meaning not the progeny of the flesh, but those who believe in Christ and are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Cyril mentions that the Greek poets and sages were the first to use the allegorical method, because they:

... admired elegance of speech, and good language was among their main aims, and they boasted in mere refinements of words and

revelled in bombastic language: and their poets had falsehood for their material, wrought by proportions and measures into what is graceful and tuneful; but for the truth they cared little, being sick through a lack of right and profitable doctrine, meaning that God Who Is by his nature. And truly, as holy Paul says, ‘They became vain in their imaginations, and their heart, being void of understanding, was darkened. Saying that they were wise they became foolish, and changed the glory of the Incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things (*Quod unus sit Christus* PG 75, 1253D-1256A; Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18).

Cyril’s allegorical method conceals what each interpreter conveys, but it reveals the “hidden treasure” in the god-like words: “περι αὐτῆς (= τῆς θείας φύσεως) ἀλλ ὡς αὐτῇ πρέπει καὶ βούλεται” (Ad Johannes PG 73, 61C). This treasure is revealed only through the Holy Spirit in the minds of scholars, “εἰδὸς δὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὰ ἐν Θεῷ κεκρυμμένα, ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων αὐτὰ διαπορθμεύει ψυχαῖς, καὶ ἀπλανῆ καὶ ἀμώμητον αὐταῖς ἐνήσι γνώσιν” (I Ad Corinthios PG 74, 884D).

The patriarch of Alexandria explains that the indwelling of the Spirit in the authors of the New Testament resembles the lamp in the tent of Testimony, in which the fire illuminated both the stage and the surrounding area (Ad Johannes PG 73, 193BC, 569C). By this example, he means that all scholars need to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit, in order to understand the same truth as did the authors of the books of the New Testament.

In general, the Holy Spirit’s role in deepening the study of the events is emphasised. The Holy Scripture cannot be interpreted only by means of allegorical and historical-grammatical methods, but Cyril teaches that the interpretation of the Holy Bible is the result of the scholars’ illumination from God. This does not mean that Cyril no longer uses these methods. In the case of Christ’s parables, Cyril leaves aside the established methods of interpretation in order to understand the scope and depth of the meaning of the parables. In any case, he argues, the best tool for the interpretation of the parables is the narrator’s ability to explain the meaning of them according to the teaching of Christ (Lucem PG 72, 625A).

Despite his interpretive efforts aimed at clear and sound theological teaching, Cyril knows that it is very difficult to talk about the divine mysteries. He refers to God as a Being, which differs from each created being, because He created everything while He Himself was uncreated and eternal. The Alexandrian father had to interpret the revealed divine truth through the finite limits of human language. This involved many obstacles and risks. For this reason, many theologians or scholars of holy texts

consciously avoided theological interpretations of the Bible and opted for silence. On the other hand, God sometimes commanded: "Speak and be not silent". The holy father abided by the divine command. Cyril constantly believes that the books of the Bible were written by authors enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. These authors lived in a particular era, were influenced by a certain philosophical environment and wrote in a specific linguistic form. Taking all these parameters into consideration, Cyril highlights theological integrity, while avoiding the extremes of the Antiochian schools in terms of Christological dogma.

Many scholars attribute the problem of the Christological formula concerning the nature of Christ "Mia-phasis and Dyo physes" to the controversy between the Alexandrian and the Antiochian schools of theology. While the Alexandrian school adopted the "hypostasis union" or the "nature union" of the Godhead and manhood to assert the oneness of Jesus Christ, the Antiochian school accepted the "indwelling theology", that is, the Godhead dwells in manhood, as if Jesus Christ were two persons in one, to avoid confusion between the Godhead and manhood, and to avoid attributing human weakness to His divinity. The starting point of the Alexandrian school was John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh", while that of the Antiochian school was Colossians 2:9 "For in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily". St. Cyril rejects the Antiochian theory of "indwelling", that is, the Godhead of Christ dwelt in His manhood, or the theory of "conjunction" or "close participation" as insufficient to reveal the real unification, but permits the division of natures of Christ as Nestorius taught (Malaty 1987:11).

#### 4. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

Cyril views the study of Scripture as the soul of theology. His aim as an exegete and theologian is to passionately defend the unity of the Incarnate Word. Cyril of Alexandria is above all a priest who tirelessly comments on the Scriptures in the light of the incarnate Logos (Weinandy & Keating 2003:209-236). His exegesis of the Psalms is characteristic. As he writes in the *Proemium* of his *Commentary*, the text of the Psalms is, in an extraordinary way, overflowing with narratives concerning Christ the Saviour of us all (Psalms PG 69, 717AB). Before the incarnation of the divine Word, people were unable to exceed the limits of their worldly desires, because of the difficult path to rid themselves of their sinful mentality. When the Son of God became *sarx* (a man with both soul



and body), without losing his divinity, the road to virtue became smooth (Psalms PG 69, 720A; Psalm 1:3).

The Alexandrian father argues that man is able to achieve knowledge of God partly through the creation,

[f]or the face of the Lord is spiritual contemplation of everything that has come to be on the earth, while the light of His face is partial knowledge of these things (Psalms PG 69, 740C; Psalm 4:6).

Basically, Cyril's theology is the praise of God. He views the glory of God in the wholeness of creation and, in particular, the creation of man, the incarnation of the Word of God, and the work of salvation. This praise is attributed, and has given proportion to all the Persons of the Holy Trinity: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse shows the work of his hands" (Habacuc PG 71, 881A; Psalm 18, 2 (19, 2); Psalms PG 69, 828C; Thesaurus PG 75, 248BC).

Cyril emphasises that God is one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: "One deity, in three hypostases". "Μία μὲν γὰρ θεότητος φύσις, ὑφέστηκε δὲ ἰδικῶς ὁ Πατήρ, καὶ μέντοι καὶ ὁ Υἱὸς ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα" (2 De recta Fide ad reginas PG 76, 1405C; Adversus Nestorii blasphemias PG 76, 60B, 172A). One God exists in three persons. The Father distributes goods to man by means of the Son, through the grace of the Holy Spirit (De adoratione in spiritu et veritate PG 68, 413A, 521B; Exod. 20:3; Isaiah IV, 1, PG 70, 873A; Adversus Nestorii blasphemias PG 76, 172A; Psalms: PG 69, 1124D).

Cyril stresses unequivocally that God is One "by nature and truly" (Isaiah PG 70, 772B). He remarks that the Christian doctrine of God the Father is not based on the dominant thought of secular Greek philosophers. The latter considered him to be an impersonal authority, who had created the world. Cyril emphasises the monarchy of the Trinity, in order to clarify that the Son and the Holy Spirit come "physically" (by nature) and in essence from the Father as the sole "principle with no beginning" (Thesaurus PG 75, 112AB). The Father is called Father, because he engendered the Son by his own essence (Psalms PG 69, 1236C; *De Ss. Trinitate* PG 75, 717A).

On the other hand, the Son is the face (*prosopon*) of God the Father, but not identical with the hypostasis of Father, because this would lead to the heresy of Sabellius. Even when Cyril calls the Son the face of the Father, he does not adopt Sabellius' teaching. He is referring to the revelation of the incarnate Son in the world. This is confirmed by the words of Christ: "He is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature"; "he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father", and "the Father and I are One" (Psalms PG 69, 1140CD; Hebr. 1:3; Jo. 14:9, 10:30).

Cyril characterises the Son of God as “Light of the Father’s Light”, because the Father and the light that has been engendered by him, the Son, are inseparable. This is used to demonstrate the *homoousion* that exists between the Father and the Son, so that the latter is called the “radiance (*apaugasma*) of the Father” (Psalms PG 69, 921A; Psalm 35:10). “Radiance” (*apaugasma*) is a term first used in the Wisdom of Solomon: “For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness” (Wisdom of Solomon 7:26), and later by the Apostle Paul: “His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself made purification for our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebr. 1:3) and Athanasius of Alexandria:

And the origination of mankind is brought home to us from things that are parallel; but, since ‘no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him’ (Matthew 11:27), therefore the sacred writers to whom the Son has revealed Him, have given us a certain image from things visible, saying, ‘Who is the brightness of His glory, and the Expression of His Person’ (Hebr. 1:3) (*De Decretis* 11:3).

Cyril states unequivocally that this derives from the radiance of the divine “sun”, God the Father. In the same way that the brightness of the sensible sun does not come after it, but rather the light occurs simultaneously with the sun, so also with the Son, who is the radiance (*apaugasma*) (Johannes 1:27) of the intelligible “Sun”, God the Father. The Son is, therefore, eternal, without beginning, just like God the Father, and consubstantial with the Father as *homoousion*. Only the Son knows the Father and the Father knows him (Psalms PG 69, 1221A; Hebr. 1:3). The Word, who is “God naturally and truly”: “ὁ κατὰ φύσιν ἰδίαν ἐλεύθερος, ὡς Θεός, ὁ ἐν μορφῇ καὶ ἰσότητι τοῦ γεγεννηχότος” (*Adversus Nestorii blasphemias* PG 76, 121A, 201C; *De Ss. Trinitate* 3 PG 75, 828A; Jo. 10: 35-36), through His incarnation, constructs the bridge by which the Creator approaches his creatures:

Ἄλλ’ ἐπεσχέψατο ἡμᾶς ἀνατολὴ ἐξ ὕψους·(Lk. 1:78) ἐπέφανεν ἡμῖν ὁ Μονογενὴς τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος, καὶ συναναστρέφει τοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, καθ’ ἡμᾶς γεγωνὸς ἄνθρωπος μετὰ τοῦ μείναι φύσει Θεός· αὐτὸς ἡμᾶς συνῆψε δι’ ἑαυτοῦ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ, περιελὼν τὸ μεσολαβοῦν, καὶ ἀμνησικάκως ἀπαλλάξας τῆς διστάσης ἡμᾶς ἁμαρτίας καὶ δικαιοῦσας τῇ πίστει (*Apologeticus contra Theodoretum pro XII Capitibus* PG 76, 461AB).

In other words, the incarnate Son is the means whereby the Father relates to Creation (Psalms PG 69, 877D). It is stressed that the word

“apaugasma” is mentioned only once in the New Testament, in the Epistle to the Hebrews 1:3, to which Cyril refers in this statement. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Son is the “apaugasma” of the glory, the reflection of the glory of God. Therefore, in the New Testament, the only time the word “apaugasma” is mentioned, it has the meaning of *reflection*, a meaning that is assigned in the passive sense. However, Cyril uses the same word in his commentary to mean radiance and effulgence of light, and links it with the Son Being “Light of light”. This meaning reflects the active sense of the word.

Cyril of Alexandria emphasises that the Only-begotten Word of God the Father, (*Adversus Nestorii blasphemias* PG 76, 129B; *De incarnatione unigeniti* PG 75, 1209A), “because He is God” (Psalms PG 69, 1225B) is the creator of the earth, the sky and all that is in them (*De incarnatione unigeniti* PG 75, 1197D, 1245BC; Isaiah PG 70, 853C; Thesaurus PG 75, 485D, 488A, 492C; Col. 1:16). His creative capacity has not been learnt; rather he has it “essentially and physically” through being consubstantial with the Father. St. John’s saying “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” testifies to God’s creative attributes. Being omnipotent, He can penetrate deep into the “being” of man, and knows even the innermost thoughts of His creatures and provides for them (Thesaurus PG 75, 261A).

The God-man (*Theanthropos*) is powerful and is able to save both the righteous and the sinners (Psalms PG 69, 901B). When the sinners repent, they try to put their repentance into practice. The Incarnate Word “did not approach man in order to punish him; the Father sent his Son into the world, not in order to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (Psalms PG 69, 1081AB; Jo. 3:17). He was full of love for his creation and unsparingly offered redemption and salvation of the human race. He taught the will of His Father and declared that the standard for the world’s judgement will be the Gospel and his proclamation of salvation (Isaiah PG 70, 592B).

The patriarch of Alexandria notes that the Incarnate Word (*Ad religiosissimum Imperatorem Theodosium* PG 76, 1168A) intersects with, and simultaneously unifies history. He claims the new (Kainos) man in his substance to be “one with his own flesh”. The immutability of the Incarnate Word’s divine nature declares that God is not subject to any alteration or change, because his nature is full, infinite and perfect. He is the life, who “was born of God Father’s life, having his own hypostasis” (*Ad religiosissimum Imperatorem Theodosium* PG 76, 1168A). His existence is not “at the same time (*omochronos*)” as the creation of his human nature, because he is “the creator of the ages” (*Ad religiosissimum Imperatorem*

*Theodosium* PG 76, 1168A; *Psalms* PG 69, 724A). For this reason, Paul states that “Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (*Ad Hebraeos* PG 74, 997CD, 1000A; *Hebr.* 13, 8). Therefore, Christ is immutable and unalterable in the centuries that have passed “yesterday”, in the present “today”, and in the age to come, “forever”. This explains the words of Jesus: “Before Abraham was, I am” (*Ad religiosissimum Imperatorem Theodosium* PG 76, 1196B; *Jo.* 8:58). Even though it seemed that he spoke to his contemporaries as a man, he did not do so according to his age as the Incarnate Word, but according to his existence as God. The latter is eternal and beyond time:

Ἦν μὲν γὰρ αἰεὶ καὶ ἔστιν ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ, καὶ τόπος αὐτοῦ κενὸς τὸ σύμπαν οὐδεὶς. Πληροὶ γὰρ τὰ πάντα τῆς θεότητος φύσει. Ἀφίκται δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐμφανῶς ὁ ἀόρατος, ὅτε τὴν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὑπέδου μορφὴν’ (*Contra Julianum* PG 76, 932CD).

The Son presents the enhypostatic picture of the Father to the world; he reveals divine truths in a way that the human mind is able to capture and interpret. As a man, he does not bear the eternal glory which he has as God. For this reason, prior to his passion and self-sacrifice on the cross, he asks the Father to glorify him as a man with the glory which he has had since the beginning of the world:

the Only-Begotten Word of God being Lord of glory would not (as though lacking glory) have sought it from the Father. Hear therefore from us too: If you say that the Only-Begotten Son who is from God by nature is not he who here asks glory from the Father, who was it who said, ‘Glorify me with the glory which I had with you before the world was?’ (*Adversus Nestorii blasphemias* PG 76, 216B; *Jo.* 17: 4-5; *Psalms* PG 69, 724B).

The divine truth, the divine presence reveals himself, and demonstrates that he is different from any human presence or truth (*De recta fide ad reginas* PG 76, 1205B). Therefore, the uncreated truth, God, acts and presents Himself to man. This is the process which Cyril calls “apocalypse”, “illumination”, “light”, and “teaching” (*dadouchia*). The Holy Spirit makes the Triune God known in man. At the same time, the Spirit is consubstantial and equal to the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, the Holy Spirit knows the authentic divine truth and reveals it completely to the people who live in Christ. Both “rational” and “non-rational” creation participates in the actions of the third person of the Holy Trinity, and is thus enlightened and sanctified continuously through its course in time (*Psalms* PG 69, 1209B; *Psalm* 83:5-7).

The Father is revealed as God in the Old Testament. He is the creator of a variety of wonderful things. He made his presence known to those who did not belong to the Jewish race, such as the Egyptians, and emphasised that “he is the only one God by nature and truth”. At the same time, with the help of the Holy Spirit, He shows to the Israelites and their neighbours that the true God is Spirit. Thus, they must as “true pilgrims” worship “the Father in spirit and truth” (Psalms PG 69, 1192C).

God rages against those who despise and ignore His will. He is often present in the history of Jewish people to punish the chosen people with hardships, calamities and wars, to make them reconsider their choice of the wrong path – to make them reasonable. This is why the blessed David says:

whose mouth must be held with bit and bridle, lest they come near you. Many sorrows shall befall the wicked: but mercy shall surround him who trusts in the Lord about (Isaiah PG 70, 281AB; Psalm 31 (32): 9-10). God grants rejoicing and gladness to those who seek justice and fight for peace (Psalms PG 69, 912A).

In the Old Testament, man follows in God's footsteps. God the Father pays to each man what he is entitled to (Glaphyra PG 69, 373B):

with a nod, He can humiliate the high and elevate the lowly, wither the fresh plant and make the dry plant green again.

In addition, through the prophets, God proclaims hidden and future things, which only He knows (Isaiah PG 70, 188A). The Father enables man to come to Him by means of the Word's Incarnation with spiritual sacrifice, deservedly earning a “place” in the divine mind (*De adoratione in spiritu et veritate* PG 68, 1032B, 1024AB; Act. 4:12). Thus, because of Christ, people will be able to be worthy of both the memory and the knowledge of the Triune God. With the Incarnation of the Word, God the Father revealed his glory and his will in the face of Christ. For this reason, Cyril observes,

we know the Father through him [Christ], who revealed to us his [the Father's] good will, which is that which is perfect and acceptable, according to the Scriptures (*De adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate* PG 68, 741CD).

Cyril invokes as irrefutable the evidence of Christ's words: “... everything that I heard from my Father, I proclaimed to you” (*De adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate* PG 68, 741CD; Jo. 16:15). Christ, therefore, is the port and route through which the Father reveals Himself to the people and, by means of Christ, rational beings can attain God (Thesaurus PG 75, 485BC, 560CD, 561A; *De SS. Trinitate* PG 75, 812BC, 1021B; Joannes PG 73, 556C-7A;

Psalmos PG 69, 840A). With his mission, Christ indicates to people the root from which He is springing, and he adds to the Father's revelation of himself (*De SS. Trinitate* PG 75, 812B).

It should be mentioned that, in the Psalms, one encounters knowledge of the divine Word and the Holy Spirit. These are not referred to as separate hypostases, but as God's attributes. The reason for this is that the world of the Old Testament perceived God not in the sense of Christian monotheism, but in the sense of *enotheismos*: God in one substance/hypostasis.

In general, the Scriptures show the presence of the Triune God and speak for the unity of Christ. The Scriptures uphold the ideas of union in every text, when they refer to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The *only begotten Son and Word of God* is presented in the New Testament. Cyril uses the phrases of Paul to speak for God through the Bible:

All things were made through Him, and without Him was nothing made, ... Since then the Divine Paul declares that all things were made through Jesus Christ, and the Divine Evangelist confirms the force of the sentence and preaches that He was God the Maker of all things, speaking truly, and the Angel's voice too points out that Jesus Christ was truly born of the Holy Virgin (*De Incarnatione Unigeniti* PG 75, 1309BC).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Cyril of Alexandria was greatly interested in the interpretation of the Bible. Saint Cyril wrote the various commentaries of the books of the Bible with the intention of defending the faith against the false opinions (*ψευδοδοξίαις*) of other teachers (*ἑτεροδιδασκαλούτων*) (Farag 2007:71). Cyril emphasises that the Scriptures reveal God. As interpreter of the Scriptures, Cyril does not deal with the text as text, but as the source that anyone can "see", the epiphany of the Triune God. Through the Bible, Christians are taught that the Father is the eternal source of the Godhead, from Whom the Son is begotten eternally and from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally. It is obvious that Cyril uses the interpretation of the Bible as the only way for speaking for the Triune God, enfleshed Word and Holy Spirit. Cyril's interpretation of both the Old and the New Testaments follows the method of the Apostle Paul. According to the Apostle of Nations, the interpretation of the Old Testament should become in the light of Christ; therefore, Cyril expands his exegetical imagination by showing how other passages of the Bible can be read in that way. In his interpretation, Cyril used a middle road for the way of exegesis of the Antiochian and Alexandrian schools. The Alexandrian father's interpretation taught that the Bible becomes a

general area of interrelated words, all speaking about the same theological subject, the one God revealed in Christ, whose work was proven by the Holy Spirit in the Church. Cyril believed that it was his task as interpreter to lead any faithful to penetrate the meaning of the text beyond the words, to highlight a word here, an image there, to find Christ unexpectedly, and to perceive the splendour of divinity.

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