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John J. O'Keefe

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## CHRISTIANIZING MALACHI: FIFTH-CENTURY INSIGHTS FROM CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

BY

JOHN J. O'KEEFE

Shortly after his elevation to the episcopacy in the year 412, Cyril of Alexandria began work on a series of commentaries which may have at one time covered every book of the Bible. Not all of these commentaries are now extant, but enough survive to illustrate that Cyril was, above all else, an exegete.<sup>1</sup> Of the ten volumes dedicated to him in Migne's *Patrologia*, seven contain biblical commentary. This fact alone marks Cyril as one of the most prolific biblical commentators of the entire early Christian period. For many students of patristic theology, however, the extent of Cyril's interest in the Bible is unknown.

Cyril's case is not unique. Until quite recently patristic exegesis in general has not received much scholarly attention. Several reasons account for this. First, the agenda of systematic theology has tended to determine which early Christian texts are translated, read, and studied. Studies motivated by systematic questions have made invaluable contributions to the scholarly understanding of patristic theology, yet they have tended to ignore an enormous amount of patristic exegetical literature. A second reason patristic commentary has been neglected relates to early Christian exegetical method. Much patristic exegesis, especially that associated with the Alexandrian tradition, makes free use of allegory, the antithesis of modern exegetical technique. Since historical criticism insists that only historical readings of the texts are legitimate, patristic commentary appears outdated and irrelevant.

Recently, a new interest in the Bible has emerged. Numerous scholars of distinction note that the major early Christian doctrinal debates (such as the debates about the Trinity in the fourth century or the debates about the nature of Christ in the fifth), revolved around the interpretation of key biblical texts.<sup>2</sup> In addition, many scholars, alarmed by the alienation of the Church from its own book, have begun to question the supremacy of the historical-critical method and to seek ways to expand the meaning of the Bible to include more than the original historical meaning.<sup>3</sup> Since no patristic commentator, including Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, utilized historical criticism in the modern

sense, and since most patristic commentators accepted without question unhistorical readings of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament, many scholars have begun to reexamine ancient exegesis for help in answering contemporary hermeneutical questions.

The question is, however, what exactly should scholars look for in early Christian exegetical texts? Since they are not always the best sources for information relating to doctrinal development, studies of patristic exegesis, when they have been done, have concentrated on methodological questions.<sup>4</sup> Answering these questions provides important information, but it can give one a false sense of having understood the goal of patristic exegesis. As R. Greer explains, ancient Christian interpreters were not “preoccupied with method,” rather their exegesis rested upon the “fundamental conviction that Scripture was intimately bound up with the life of a religious community.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, it is not enough to ask how early Christian exegetes interpreted a text; one must also attempt to discover what that exegete thought the text meant as Christian Scripture for his community. Since authors brought to biblical interpretation their own cultural perspectives—perspectives governed by such diverse elements as creeds, moral teaching, and current ecclesiastical politics—patristic commentary, especially on the Old Testament, contains an important historical record of how a text was made meaningful to a community other than the one for whom the text was first composed. Early Christian commentaries, then, should be read not so much for the light they shed on strictly theological questions and not just as a means to isolate a patristic exegetical method, but primarily for what they tell us about Christian life at the time of their composition.

For Cyril, as for other commentators, interpreting the Bible correctly went beyond employing the proper methodology: it included bringing the proper Christian perspective to the interpretation. Hence, in his *Commentary on Malachi*, the subject of this essay, I will argue that Cyril’s interpretation depends less on his method and more on his own fifth-century understanding of the nature of Christian faith, Christian ministry and Christian moral behavior. Moreover, from this interpretation the modern scholar can derive important information about Christian life in the fifth century. However, since Cyril’s exegesis has been largely ignored in part because of a general characterization of Alexandrian exegesis as allegorical, some clarification of the way his exegetical method functions to support his interpretative conclusions is in order before we turn to his commentary.

### *I. Cyril's Place in Contemporary Discussion of Patristic Exegetical Method*

Recent discussion of patristic exegesis has demonstrated that efforts to characterize Antiochene exegesis as historical and Alexandrian exegesis as not historical were incorrect: there was no historical-criticism in antiquity, and neither school was interested in history.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, there are sound reasons to question any sharp distinctions drawn between the exegetical methods of the two schools. Frequently the Antiochene rejection of Alexandrian allegorical interpretation (in particular the allegorical interpretations of Origen) is taken to be indicative of more basic methodological differences separating the two schools.<sup>7</sup> Beyond doubt, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia resist efforts to see direct predictions of Christ in the Old Testament and follow a fairly strict program of literal interpretation. Yet, upon closer scrutiny, it is clear that Antiochene and Alexandrian exegesis cannot always be characterized as antithetical. For example, Theodoret of Cyrus criticizes the methodological approaches of his predecessors as falling short of the requirements of Christian interpretation.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, students of Cyril's exegesis are struck by the attention he pays in his commentaries to the explication of historical detail, a characteristic generally associated with Antiochene exegetes.<sup>9</sup>

An influence on Cyril and the Antiochenes, but apparently not on Origen and Didymus the Blind, appears to have been the exegetical methods of the ancient grammatical schools.<sup>10</sup> The evidence suggests that Antiochene rejection of allegory was not motivated by a concern for history in the modern sense. Rather, significant exegesis seems to have been governed primarily by a desire to defend the integrity of a text against the seemingly anarchistic and arbitrary interpretations of those employing allegory. F. Young explains, "the author, it was assumed, had a subject to cover or thesis to propound ... so comment included discerning this."<sup>11</sup> The grammatical method involved several steps: first, the accuracy of the text itself was considered; second, the proper way to read the text was studied; third, difficult names, unknown places, obscure historical details, and salient literary features of the text were explained; finally, a discussion of the moral value of the text completed the process. This method seems to have been the dominant influence on Antiochene exegesis, and some scholars have concluded that this alone accounts for the difference between the two schools.<sup>12</sup> Yet,

a careful study of Cyril's work suggests that he too employed the methods of the grammatical schools in his own exegesis.<sup>13</sup>

In practical terms, this induces Cyril to modify the allegorical traditions of earlier Alexandrians. Cyril warns that not all passages of scripture lend themselves to spiritual interpretation.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in his view, prying into the hidden significance of a text can actually obscure the meaning. A. Kerrigan explains:

The literal sense does not always admit of spiritual meanings. "Let nobody be offended," [Cyril] writes, "if everything written about Jacob is not included in the *θεωρία*. One should realize that some historical episodes belong exclusively to the domain of history." He stipulates that the prolixity of the literal sense must be cut down; one should select only such elements susceptible of proving Christ's mystery which fit in with the *σκοπός* and are likely to profit hearers.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Cyril explains that paying attention to the literal meaning of the text is central to the process of interpretation:

The discourse of the holy prophets is always obscure. It is filled full of hidden ideas, and, with labor, it speaks to us in advance about the divine mysteries. For Christ is the end of the law and the prophets, just as it is written. However, I say that those who wish to make clear the subtle and hidden breath of spiritual insights must hasten to consider thoroughly, with the eye of the mind, especially, on the one hand, the exact historical meaning (*τῆς ἱστορίας τὸ ἀκριβές*) and, on the other hand, the interpretation resulting from spiritual contemplation (*τῆς πνευματικῆς θεωρίας*). They should do this so that, in every way, benefit might come to the readers, and the explanation of the underlying ideas be lacking in nothing.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, this approach differs little from that advocated by Diodore of Tarsus in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms.<sup>17</sup>

Cyril generally remained faithful to this method in the preparation of his Old Testament commentaries. With each new text, he begins with an explanation of the literal meaning and then moves on to the spiritual interpretation.<sup>18</sup> Throughout his commentaries he is careful to explain historical contexts, difficult names, and obscure vocabulary. Expressing interest in the accuracy of his text, he occasionally compares his standard Septuagint translation with "the version of the Hebrews."<sup>19</sup> This attention to detail, he believed, enhanced comprehension and helped prepare the way for Christian interpretation. All these concerns reflect the methods of the grammatical schools.

While each feature of the grammatical method could be explored in detail, one is of particular importance for the purposes of this study: Cyril's use of the term *σκοπός*. As a technical methodological term, the word *σκοπός* means the basic point of orientation of the text. This term occurs with some frequency in neoplatonic commentaries on Plato and Aristotle, but it appears with equal frequency in the work of Christian exegetes, from whom Cyril probably learned it.<sup>20</sup> The prologues of Antiochene exegetical works generally contain prefaces dedicated to discovering either the *ὑπόθεσις* or the *σκοπός* of the text under consideration. As Diodore of Tarsus explains in the prologue to his commentary on the Psalms:

Since this book of the Psalms is so necessary, then, I have thought it right to put together, as far as I understand them, a concise exposition of the subjects (*τῶν ὑποθέσεων*) specifically represented by each of the Psalms and their literal interpretation (*τῆς κατὰ λέξιν ἐρμηνείας*), so that while they are singing them the brethren may not be simply swept along by the sounds or find their mind occupied by other things because they do not understand the text...<sup>21</sup>

In their prologues, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus favor the term *σκοπός*, but they share Diodore's goals. Lexically, of course, *ὑπόθεσις* and *σκοπός* are not synonymous: *ὑπόθεσις* means "subject," while *σκοπός* means "end," "aim," or "object."<sup>22</sup> In the technical language of exegesis, however, both terms refer to the basic subject matter of the text. The difference between *σκοπός* and *ὑπόθεσις* may simply be that the latter outlines the former in more detail: in other words, a text has an overall "aim" that is realized through a consideration of certain "subjects."<sup>23</sup> In any case, the effort to identify the *σκοπός* or the *ὑπόθεσις* of a text stems from the conviction that texts actually had an identifiable point to make and that they possessed a basic unity and coherence, something allegorical interpretation seemed to ignore. In his own exegesis, Cyril uses the term *σκοπός* in exactly this way.<sup>24</sup>

Cyril, then, although an Alexandrian, used a methodology essentially identical to that of his Antiochene counterparts. Yet, when compared to Diodore, Theodore, or even Theodoret, Cyril was far more willing to read Christian meaning into a text. The work of B. de Margerie suggests that part of the reason for this can be traced to Cyril's conviction that Christ was the interpretive key to the entire Christian scripture. Obviously, this does not mean that Cyril was the first Christian exegete to read the Old Testament as prophetic of Christ. All early Christian

exegetes did that. However, as de Margerie points out, Cyril's very methodology may be fairly characterized as "christocentrique."<sup>25</sup> More than any other patristic author, Cyril focuses his exegesis on the reality of Christ as present in the Old Testament.<sup>26</sup> This conviction shapes Cyril's application of his method and allows the text a more direct Christian meaning without violating the basic integrity of the biblical narrative. From Cyril's point of view, it would appear that the exegesis of Diodore and Theodore was not methodologically flawed; it was simply not Christian enough.

These methodological considerations help clarify Cyril's place in early Christian exegesis, but they do not really help us answer the more basic question patristic exegetes brought to their interpretation: what does a particular passage or book mean for the contemporary community? As stated above, early Christian exegetes—including Cyril—were not pre-occupied with method: they were, rather, motivated by the "fundamental conviction that Scripture was intimately bound up with the life of a religious community."<sup>27</sup> Thus, instead of reading patristic commentary only as a means to clarify how early Christian exegetes approached a text, we should attempt to uncover how they thought the Bible actually promoted the Christian way of life. Moreover, we should ask ourselves what a given interpretation tells us about the overall structure and character of the Christian life at the time it was produced.

This task can be accomplished in two ways. On the one hand, individual biblical passages can be traced throughout their entire interpretive history. Such an exercise yields a great deal of information about important texts—such as Proverbs 8:22—and their reception, and it can also give one a sharper awareness of the different concerns and styles of ancient commentators.<sup>28</sup> However, this kind of study can miss extraordinary interpretations of seemingly ordinary biblical passages, or even entire biblical books. A second approach, which does not take a particular text, doctrine, or theme as the point of departure, would study entire biblical commentaries as consistent interpretive works in their own right, with their own particular vision of the Christian realities to which that text, in its own unique way, points. In the remainder of this essay, then, I will consider how Cyril dealt with one particular biblical text: the prophecy of Malachi.<sup>29</sup> In Cyril's view, Malachi had a great deal to say about Christ's arrival and purpose, about the role and function of Christian priests, and about the superiority of the Christian way of life.

## II. *Christianizing Malachi*

### Introduction: *Malachi as Scripture for the Church of Alexandria*

Cyril's Commentary on Malachi was probably composed between the years 412 and 420<sup>30</sup> as part of a series of exegetical lectures delivered to members of the clergy in Alexandria.<sup>31</sup> This commentary, like all of his commentaries on the Old Testament, was intended to explain how to uncover the Christian content of the ancient prophecies.<sup>32</sup> Following the grammatical methodology outlined above, Cyril begins the process of interpretation in the preface where he carefully orients his hearers to the basic details of the book of Malachi.

Cyril explains that the prophet lived about the same time as Haggai and Zechariah, that he prophesied after the return from exile, and that he should not be thought of as an ἄγγελος even though this is the meaning of the name "Malachi." Having clarified the basic details of the prophet's context, Cyril moves to comment on the book's σκοπός. The first point he makes is that Malachi intended primarily to bring charges against the priests and the people for transgressions of the law.<sup>33</sup> The prophet reprimanded the priests for allowing unacceptable sacrifices, and for neglecting the education of the people. In turn, the people were reprimanded because the men of Israel were divorcing their wives in order to marry foreign women. Towards the end of the preface, Cyril identifies a second feature of the book's σκοπός. In his view, the third chapter of Malachi contains a direct prediction both of Christ's incarnation and of his eventual return as judge.<sup>34</sup>

According to Cyril, then, the σκοπός of Malachi can be summed up in this way: Malachi details the way priests and people neglected their obligations to God, and it predicts the arrival of Christ. This is what the text is literally about. If we understand Cyril's interest in historical detail as similar to modern interest in history, then Cyril's introduction may seem odd to us: how can he think that Christian themes form part of the original intended meaning of the text and still be interested in the text's literal meaning?<sup>35</sup> To answer this question, we need only recall that Cyril's interest in the events of the narrative derives not from historical concerns but from the methodological practices of the grammatical schools. Cyril outlines the main points of Malachi's own situation not to explore it historically, but to define the arena within which Christian meaning must be sought. In other words, the Christian meaning of Malachi must be found within the limitations of the text's σκοπός;



since Malachi was about the failure of both priests and the people to worship God, the Christian meaning of the text cannot depart from these themes into, say, flights of allegory.

Knowledge of the details of the narrative, then, was vital to proper interpretation. Even so—and this point must be emphasized—the respect for the integrity of the narrative does not evince a corresponding concern for history. Cyril’s efforts result in the transformation of Malachi into a text meaningful to a Christian audience. In order to do this, he must first point out that the church is the rightful heir to the Old Testament, and that it alone can interpret the text correctly. Hence, on one level, Cyril’s interpretation contains significant anti-Jewish polemic. The implied contrast between Christians and Jews is highlighted by Cyril’s ability to find “obvious” references to Christ throughout the prophecy. Yet, because Cyril respects the text’s basic integrity, most of these references are associated with the “explicit” prediction of Christ that appears in chapter three of prophecy. On another level, Cyril works to explain how Malachi’s depiction of the failure of the old Jewish priesthood stands as a foil to the new priesthood of Christ, especially the priesthood of Cyril’s own fifth century. Finally, Cyril explains how the moral deficiency of the people in Malachi’s time actually predicts the moral superiority of the Christian people and the Christian way of life.

### 1. *Malachi as a basis for Christian polemic against the Jews*

An effort to demonstrate the failure of the Jewish way of life emerges as a strong feature of this commentary.<sup>36</sup> Cyril refers to Jews about fifteen times, and they are never mentioned favorably. In the past, Cyril explains, the Jews were struck by divine wrath because of their impious behavior.<sup>37</sup> The Jews, instead of following Jacob who was righteous, “followed in the footsteps” of Esau’s perversity.<sup>38</sup> They became exiles because of “great impiety.”<sup>39</sup> In the transition from the old laws of sacrifice to the new Christian worship, God “all but stops loving the Jews.”<sup>40</sup> The Jews are cursed and excluded from the “book of memorial” (Mal 3:16) because they killed Christ.<sup>41</sup>

The presence of a viable Jewish community in Alexandria may account for some of these remarks.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Cyril, in his comments on Mal 2:10-11, warns Christians, who appear to be attending synagogue, not to interact with the Jews:

We ... must avoid anyone who might be perverted in mind, impure in heart, and possessing an unorthodox faith.... Since it is possible to bear fruit spiritually in the church of Christ, what reason could there be for wanting to be joined, as it were, to others, and to be in communion with profane synagogues, and to provoke the God of the universe against us?<sup>43</sup>

Still, it would be a mistake to read this, or any of Cyril's commentaries, as primarily an anti-Jewish polemical tract. The polemical material helps Cyril emphasize that Malachi—indeed the entire Old Testament—belongs to the Christians, not to the Jews. According to Cyril the interpreter should seek the prophecy's true meaning not among the Jews who failed to heed God, but among those illuminated by the light of Christ.

## 2. *Malachi's "prediction" of Christ*

For Cyril, as one so illuminated, the Christian content of the prophecy seemed obvious. In the course of the commentary's forty pages, Cyril uncovers nearly eighty references to Christ. Most of these references surface in comments associated with chapter three.<sup>44</sup> Mal 3:1, he explains, signals the arrival of John the Baptist and predicts the incarnation. When the prophet wonders who will be able to endure the appearance of the God who "enters as the fire of a smelting furnace and as the lye of the washer" (Mal. 3:2-3), Cyril considers Christ's role in purifying the Christian church. Finally, the eschatological material in 3:19-23, which predicts Elijah's return on a "day" that is "coming, burning like an oven," provides Cyril with an opportunity to ponder the nature of life in Christ as it is now already, and as it will be when Christ returns.

A translation of Mal 3:1, as Cyril preserves it, reads thus: "Behold, I will send my angel and he will look upon the road before my face and suddenly the Lord whom you seek will have come into his temple and the angel of the covenant whom you desire. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord Almighty."<sup>45</sup> On this passage, Cyril declares that "the content of the prophecy set before us has passed over...to the mystery of Christ."<sup>46</sup> Echoing Matthew 11:10 and Isaiah 40:3, Cyril explains that this passage contains a "prediction...of the ministry of the holy Baptist," the forerunner of Christ.<sup>47</sup> He points out that John is called ἄγγελος, not because he possesses an angelic substance, but because he announces Christ.<sup>48</sup> The second part of Mal 3:1—"he will have come

into his temple”—has two possible interpretations: it either refers to the word becoming flesh in a virgin, or to his coming into Jerusalem, “which is the church in type.”<sup>49</sup> The last part of Mal 3:1—“and the angel of the covenant whom you desire”—also designates Christ, since “Christ was the angel of the new covenant.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, in Cyril’s view, all of Mal 3:1 refers in some way to the first coming of Christ and to the establishment of the Christian Church.

Mal 3:2-3 predicts the results of this coming: “who will endure the day of his entering? or who will withstand his appearance? For he enters as the fire of a smelting furnace and as the lye of the washer, and he will sit down, smelting and purifying, as silver and gold; he will purify the sons of Levi, and he will pour them out as gold and silver.” Cyril, in his interpretation of this passage, does not, as some interpreters had,<sup>51</sup> connect this passage with the second coming or with the last judgment. Instead he offers a more “realized” interpretation, believing that the purification, which the prophet predicts, refers not to the future, but to the present blessedness of the Christian life. The “fire” indicates the grace of the Holy Spirit that perfects us, when Christ sends it into our mind and heart. It is this spirit that “cleanses completely the filth that comes from sin” and “perfects those who have been purified.” The spirit of Christ produces human beings, especially priests, who are “radiant, sanctified, endowed with honor, and useful to the great house, that is, to the Church.”<sup>52</sup> This, Cyril adds, is what John meant by baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

Conversely, Cyril’s interpretation of Mal 3:19 clearly refers to the future judgment. Malachi writes: “For behold the day is coming, burning like an oven. It will burn them, and they will all be foreigners. All who do acts of lawlessness will be straw, and the coming day will kindle them, says the Lord Almighty, and there will be among them neither root nor branch.” In order to explain this passage, Cyril connects the prophet’s words to 2 Peter 3:10-13, which predicts that the heavens and the earth will pass away and be dissolved. Then, “foreigners,” that is “heretics,” “will be the food of voracious fire.” Also included in condemnation will be all sinners and those who are still prisoners to the passions of this world. There will be no hope, Cyril continues, for those who love sin, and, as Matthew 3:12 and 8:30 remind us, they will “be completely burned by unquenchable fire.”<sup>54</sup>

Mal 3:20-23 is the final passage that Cyril links directly to Christ: “and the Sun of Justice will rise for you who fear my name and [there

will be] a healing in his wings; and you will walk about and leap like a little calf released from bonds. And you will trample the lawless, for they will be ashes under your feet on the day that I make, says the Lord Almighty. And behold, I will send you Elijah the Thesbite before the great and manifest day of the Lord comes. He will restore the heart of father toward the son and the human heart toward its neighbor, lest I come and smite the land utterly.” These verses become, at Cyril’s hand, a powerful prediction of both the accomplishments of the incarnation and the future glory of life with Christ at the end of time.

Thus, Cyril describes the effect of the “Sun of Justice” (Mal 3:20-21) on humanity as an illumination of the intellect and an inauguration of the possibility of freedom from passion. In Cyril’s view, because of Christ, it is possible to begin living now the perfected life of heaven.<sup>55</sup> The following highlights taken from Cyril’s remarks on this passage are illustrative:

Like a kind of sun, [the Son] illuminates with his own rays those who are in mist and darkness, and, by implanting the radiant beam of knowledge of God in the hearts of believers, he renders [them] pure, wise, and acquainted with all good works.... However, those [of us] who have been promoted to this [state] of splendor and who have been enriched, as the blessed Paul says, “in all speech and in all knowledge and in all wisdom, we see now in a mirror and in riddles and we know in part.”<sup>56</sup> But the perfection will come at the appropriate time, and finally we will have most perfect knowledge. [This will happen] when Christ again shines upon us from heaven...

Therefore, Christ illuminates those saints who have greatly feared the name of God and who have become curators (*ἐπιμεληταί*) of every virtue in this world. Just like a kind of “sun of justice,” he inspires rays of most perfect knowledge and delivers them from every weakness of soul and places [them] as far as possible from [their] former oppression. This is the meaning of “there is a healing in his wings”... For in one way the mind is intoxicated, but in another way it is tested by passions: for arrogance falls upon [it], [as well as] love of worldly glory, anger, greed, and other evils. But when we have become rich in respect to the pledge of the spirit through Christ, we will be accustomed to being stronger than the passions....<sup>57</sup>

In this passage, Cyril’s description evinces an eschatology that, characteristically, does not dwell on the future judgment.<sup>58</sup> Already, now, here, we enjoy some measure of Christ’s light and some measure of the freedom characteristic of the future kingdom.<sup>59</sup>

Cyril’s explication of Malachi’s “Christian” eschatology continues in

his interpretation of Mal 3:22-23. These final verses of the prophecy predict Elijah's return on the day of the Lord. Cyril explains that Elijah will return because God cares for humanity: his return "is a manifestation of God's gentleness and patience."<sup>60</sup> Cyril declares his hope that Elijah will overcome divisions in the Church by restoring into one faith "those who have been divided."<sup>61</sup> Elijah, Cyril suggests, will provide a last opportunity for people to convert to the Gospel before "the judge descends."<sup>62</sup>

According to Cyril, then, Malachi's eschatological images referred to Christian truths both already present and yet to come. His interpretation lacks the apocalyptic overtones that hang over some early interpretations of this text,<sup>63</sup> but it would actually have been surprising to find them here. Eschatology in the fifth century—conceived, at least, as an imminent warning of the end—was not a major theological or pastoral concern.<sup>64</sup> The world and the Church were secure under the protection of the Christian empire;<sup>65</sup> there was no reason to speak prematurely of their demise. Malachi's eschatology, as explicated by Cyril, reflects this situation. From a modern perspective, this Christian reading of chapter three is eisegesis, but from Cyril's point of view, it is what the prophet, as a part of the *σχοπός* of his prophecy, intended to say all along.

### 3. *Malachi as a predictor of the Christian priesthood*

Continuing his explication of the basic themes of Malachi, Cyril gives Christian meaning to the prophet's many criticisms of the post-exilic priesthood. He accomplishes this in two ways: first, he argues that Malachi predicts the replacement of the old covenant by the Christian church and the old clergy by the new clergy; second, he uses the prophecy's statements about priests as an occasion to reflect at length upon the great dignity of the Christian priesthood.

Cyril develops the first point primarily through an explication of Malachi 1:10-11. As Cyril records him, the prophet declares:

For which reason the doors shall be shut before you and you will not kindle my altar in vain. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not receive a sacrifice from your hands. Because from the rising of the sun to its setting my name has been glorified among the nations, and in every place incense and a pure sacrifice is offered to my name. For this reason, my name is great among the nations, says the Lord Almighty.

According to Cyril, this text contains a clear reference to the superiority of the Christian dispensation.<sup>67</sup> The closing of the doors “displays in advance...the beauty of the Christian way of life,”<sup>66</sup> and, at the same time, predicts the arrival of Christian priesthood. The new priests will be “celebrants of worship in the spirit” who will seek “especially vigorously the glory of God.”<sup>68</sup> In setting up this new reality, Cyril continues, God “all but departs from his love for the Jews,” making the older priesthood “unacceptable and the shadow inadmissible.”<sup>69</sup> Cyril insists, as if to counter any dissenting voices, that the realities of the Christian church provide the best evidence for the truth of his interpretation. The Jews, the participants in the older way of life, he explains to his hearers, have been “shut out” of the Church “through unbelief.”<sup>70</sup> The old priesthood and the old sacrifice have been superseded by the new priesthood that offers the new spiritual and “bloodless” sacrifice of the Eucharist.<sup>71</sup>

Still, Malachi’s references to priests provide Cyril with more than just a prophetic legitimation of the Christian priesthood; they also provide him with an opportunity to reflect upon the nature and role of that priesthood as he understood it. Consequently, Malachi’s remarks, and Cyril’s interpretation, offer the contemporary scholar a glimpse into how Cyril, and presumably much of the clergy of Alexandria, understood the nature of the priesthood. In Cyril’s view, priests had to be men of profound moral character both because they were ἄγγελοι of God who made known divine commands to the faithful, and because they were privileged to offer the “bloodless” sacrifice of the Eucharist.<sup>72</sup>

In developing his ideas Cyril distinguishes, although not consistently, between the episcopal ministry as the source of all priestly authority and the ministry of the lower clergy. Following general convention, Cyril usually employs the word *ιερωσύνη* to designate the priestly ministry of the bishop.<sup>73</sup> He tends to refer to the rest of the clergy generically as the *ιερουργοί*, literally, “holy workers,” but basically meaning “ministers.” Hence, when Cyril explains that “the priesthood [is] the very thing that all but comprises ministry,” he is probably reminding the clergy attending his lecture of their relationship to him.<sup>74</sup> Still, Cyril is careful to recall the general dignity of all priestly work. Interpreting Mal 2:3, he explains that the prophet’s obscure reference to the “shoulder” of the sacrificial beast—“Behold, I will separate out for you the shoulder”—points out the importance of providing for the material needs of the

clergy. These “parts,” Cyril explains, are reserved for the priests because “the ministers of the altar” are “wreathed with the highest honors.” In fact, their mediatorial leadership in the community is so important that Cyril declaims, “they are...placed in the position of God.”<sup>75</sup>

With this theology in place, Cyril transforms Malachi’s warnings urging priests not to forget the dignity of their position into a moral message for the Alexandrian clergy. When Mal 1:6-7 charges the priests with cheapening God’s name and with leading a less than virtuous life, Cyril extracts a lesson on the power of the priest to corrupt the people. He notes that “the multitude at hand will follow, in general, the virtues of the leaders, but [this same multitude] does wrong without measure, when it observes those who neglect reverence for God.” A few pages later, in reference to the same prophecy, Cyril warns that “those who possess the divine priesthood, [must] take great care lest [the same abuses that happened in Malachi’s day] happen in the churches,”<sup>76</sup> for indifference on the part of priests, he adds, is contemptible to God.<sup>77</sup>

Later, commenting on Mal 2:8, Cyril explains that just as the actions of a ruler should serve as an example for his people, so also the “holy priest” should work to live well so that “the people under his care become imitators of his own upright actions.”<sup>78</sup> Similar comments appear in his remarks about Mal 2:17—“you [are the ones] who provoke him with your words.” In Cyril’s view, this text contains a warning to Christian bishops and to Christian clergy to live in a way worthy of their status:

It is necessary that those chosen for holy work (ἱεραργούς) or those called to the priesthood (ἱερωσύνην) live in a holy way and conduct themselves morally in the church. For they will thus be an example of harmony and of all virtue to the people in their care who honor the God of the universe when they contemplate the radiant and remarkable beauty of the priestly way of life.... For just as the people are led astray when priests choose to live intemperately, so also will they derive a very great and extremely abundant profit if...they regard those who fulfill what is good and who have chosen to live in a way that pleases God.<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, when Mal 3:2-3 speaks of God “smelting and purifying, as with silver and gold,” Cyril explains that the “ministers of the Church” are, in general, men so tested, and that Christ himself will be their “radiant sacerdotal, and holy garment.”<sup>80</sup>

Cyril’s emphasis on the moral character of his clergy seems, in part,

to be rooted in his conception of the priest's function. In his view, the priest is both an interpreter of divine oracles, and the one who offers the new "bloodless" sacrifice: both of these activities, Cyril implies, require men of high moral stature. With respect to the first, Mal 2:7 is the primary text: "because the lips of the priest will protect knowledge, and they will seek out the law from his mouth, because he is an ἄγγελος of the Lord Almighty."<sup>81</sup> Through his interpretation, Cyril attempts to illustrate how Malachi's words highlight the priest's role in mediating God's word to the people:

He does not change the meaning of the divine oracles to something else, nor indeed does he teach "human precepts as doctrines,"<sup>82</sup> but, like an ἄγγελος of God, he makes very clear, to the people in his care, what has sometimes been obscurely prophesied.... It would be a source of commendation for those who report what is from God to add nothing more to the things they report, nor indeed to dare to make any subtraction.... The "lips of the priests," then, will guard the "knowledge" of the law, and they will report it, adding nothing. For this reason, he is called "an angel of the Lord Almighty," although he is human by nature, because he reports clearly what God desires....<sup>83</sup>

The priest's role may be limited to reporting what he hears, but he is nonetheless reporting the word of God. The priest is, as an ἄγγελος, a mediator between God and the church.

The second aspect of priestly ministry that Malachi predicted concerns the priest's role in the celebration of the Eucharist. Mal 3:3-4 provides the primary imagery: "...and they will be offering sacrifices to the Lord in justice. And the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord, as in the days of eternity and as in ages of old." Cyril understands these verses as a direct prediction of the spiritual priesthood that offers the new spiritual sacrifice of Christian times. He believes that the future to which Malachi alludes had become a present reality with the advent of Christ's priests, who offer a sacrifice that is morally superior to the sacrifice of the Jews:

For we who have been called in Christ to perform sacred rites, approach [him] no longer through blood and smoke, nor do we offer to God lambs or kids, but rather we fulfill in the churches a holy and spiritual sacrifice, which is spiritually apprehended in Christ. When we bring forth [the offering] for the purpose of sanctity and even for participation in eternal life, like a certain choice incense, we offer him the sweet smells issuing from sacrificial rites, and by sacrificing "justice" to him we have confidence that we will also be acceptable.... Therefore, he said concerning those



called in Christ to perform sacred rites that they will be better than the first ones [so called]. They will not slay sheep like them, nor defile the altar through offering polluted bread, but they offer God “justice” and the spiritual perfume of the evangelical way of life in place of incense. For they celebrate the acceptable worship such that it in no way falls short of the sacrifices fit for the “days of eternity,” that is, for the life of the holy spirits in heaven, who pass away great and unbroken days and ages.<sup>84</sup>

For Cyril, in this commentary at least, the awe and the dread of priesthood was not located primarily in the power to consecrate, but in the moral responsibility incumbent upon one who both preaches the gospel as an ἄγγελος of God, and who offers the morally superior bloodless sacrifice of the Eucharist.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4. *Malachi as an Exhortation to Moral Perfection*

We turn now to the final feature of Cyril’s interpretation of Malachi. The prophetic narrative includes a scolding of the entire people, not just the priests. Although he does not state it explicitly, Cyril’s comments imply a contrast between the lack of virtue in Israel at the time of Malachi and the great virtue of the Christian people and their way of life, especially as manifest in ascetical practice.

On the one hand, then, in several passages in the commentary Malachi’s words become an exhortation to all Christian people to a life of virtue and piety. For example, Cyril writes that a mandate to live a life of virtue constitutes the true meaning of Malachi’s warnings about a swiftly approaching judgment (Mal 3:5):

Therefore, it is necessary to reject wicked actions with all our might, to be eager for what is better, and to strive to perform fully the actions through which one might become full of virtue and every praiseworthy quality. For such a person will be free of the charges coming from God’s wrath issued against those accustomed to sin....<sup>86</sup>

Likewise Mal 2:14-16, where the prophet criticizes the men of Israel for divorcing their wives, becomes an occasion for Cyril to reflect on the moral superiority of Christian marriage. Calling the people of Malachi’s day “witless” and implying that they could not keep the law, Cyril contrasts the Christian ideal as presented in Matthew 19:3-9, where Jesus forbids divorce except in the case of infidelity. Divorcing a woman without cause, Cyril warns, will result in “impious thoughts” and invite the curse of God<sup>87</sup> because of the nature of the union that takes place between husband and wife:

I myself will say to this: consider that "she is your companion and the woman of your covenant" (Mal 2:14). That is, she is one flesh with you, given in marriage according to the law.... I think the phrase "and the remnant of his spirit" (Mal 2:15) means that a man is, in some way, physically and spiritually blended with the one he has joined in lawful wedlock. And just as they have become one body, so in some way they are one soul, because love binds them together, and the divine law brings them together in concord. So then, he calls the woman "the remnant of the spirit" of a man, and, as it were, a part of his soul because of the union, the union, I mean, that is in the concord of love.<sup>88</sup>

On the other hand, however, Cyril does more than simply point out the virtue of Christian life; he also commends a particular understanding of Christian virtue. In several passages he implies that the ascetic ideals, with which he was personally familiar,<sup>89</sup> were also predicted by Malachi. Interpreting Mal 1:14, he explains that becoming "masculine and superior to the passions" is the "spiritual meaning" of the command that only male sheep may be sacrificed.<sup>90</sup> In his discussion of Malachi's insistence that sacrifices must be without blemish (Mal 1:13), Cyril exhorts his hearers to inspect their own souls for blemishes, to live in virtue, and, as Isaiah advises, "to be set free from" the passions.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, interpreting the "day" that "is coming, burning like an oven" (Mal 3:19), Cyril warns that faith in Christ is not in itself sufficient to guarantee salvation. "Faith in Christ," he writes, "justifies and delivers from the stain of past sins,"<sup>92</sup> but backsliders, people who incline "towards the things of the flesh and the passions of the world," destroy their own faith.<sup>93</sup> Finally, in his discussion of the benefits that reach the Christian people through the intercession of the "Sun of Justice," Cyril implies that the eschatological kingdom will bring a perfected state of *apatheia*.<sup>94</sup>

It should be clear that Cyril discerned, in the prophetic words of Malachi, not only divine commands ordering the people to lead lives of virtue, but also a prediction of actual virtues associated with the Christian way of life. At its heart, Cyril's understanding of Christian virtue seems to have been rooted in the classical Greek and Christian notion of freedom from the passions which afflict us in this world. Living such a life, while primarily the responsibility of the clergy, was nevertheless a call extended to all believers. Malachi's warnings to the people of ancient Israel are transformed into both an everlasting indictment of their transgression and into a legitimation of the Christian values of the fifth-century church.

Cyril's commentary on Malachi, then, is about Christianity. It describes Christ's once and future coming, the holiness and function of Christ's priests, and the virtue of Christ's people. Although an interpretive methodology is presupposed and implemented, the method is less important than the meaning. This essay could have focused on the features of Cyril's method, yet such an approach would not have revealed how he thought Malachi, with its own unique *σκοπός* and message, informed and advanced the Christian way of life. As it stands, the commentary tells us a great deal about how Cyril used the Bible to interpret and legitimate the Christian life as he understood it. Although not inattentive to the literal and historical meaning of the text, Cyril naturally sought to understand the ancient message in light of its fulfillment in Christ. His use of the grammatical methods of the schools was a means to this end.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive, though somewhat dated, description of Cyril's exegetical corpus can be found in A. Kerrigan, *Cyril of Alexandria: Interpreter of the Old Testament* (Rome, 1952).

<sup>2</sup> See especially R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988); R. Greer, *The Captain of our Salvation: A Study in Patristic Exegesis of the Hebrews* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1973); M. Simonetti, *Studi sull'Arianesimo* (Rome, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Of the growing number of books and articles on this topic, see most recently B. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou, for example, were extremely interested in studying early Christian exegetical method to assist them in their own efforts to preserve traditional exegesis while opening Catholic scholarship to historical-critical method. See, J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum futuri: études sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1950); H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959-1962). Other, more recent, studies display a similar interest in method: B. de Margerie, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse* (Paris: Cerf, 1982, 1983); C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese* (Köln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1974); M. Simonetti, *Lettera e/o Allegoria: un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica* (Roma: Institutum patristicum, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> J. Kugel and R. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 200-201.

<sup>6</sup> See F. Young, 'The Rhetorical Schools and their Influence on Patristic Exegesis', in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, edited by Rowan Williams (Cambridge, 1989), 189.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the remarks of J.W. Trigg, *Biblical Interpretation* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 31-38.

<sup>8</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Comm. in Ps.*, PG 80, 860 C-861; cf. J-N. Guinot 'L'importance de la dette de Théodoret de Cyr à l'égard de l'exégèse de Théodore de Mopsueste,' *Orpheus* 5 (1984): 77.

<sup>9</sup> Kerrigan, *Cyril of Alexandria Interpreter*, 110; M. Simonetti, 'Note sul commento di Cirillo d'Alessandria ai Profeti minori,' *Vetera Christianorum* 14 (1977), 314.

<sup>10</sup> See Young, 'The Rhetorical Schools,' 195-196.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>12</sup> This is the primary conclusion of Schäublin, *Untersuchungen*, especially 25-42.

<sup>13</sup> See D. Cassel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Science of the Grammarians: A Study in the Setting, Purpose, and Emphasis of Cyril's 'Commentary on Isaiah'* (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1992), and J. O'Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentators on the book of Malachi* (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1993), 13-33.

<sup>14</sup> Origen, in *Prin.* eds. H. Crouzel and M. Simonetti, SC 268 IV.III.5.143-144, specifically says that every text has a spiritual meaning, but not every text has a literal meaning. This does not mean, as some have charged, that Origen ignored the literal (see SC 269, 151-154 and notes 2 and 9 for IV.III), nevertheless, Origen's effort to discern spiritual meaning in every text went beyond what was considered appropriate by Antiochene exegetes such as Diodore and Theodore.

<sup>15</sup> Kerrigan, *Cyril of Alexandria Interpreter*, 367. The quotation is from Cyril, *glaph.* PG 69, 192 B.

<sup>16</sup> PG 70,9 A.

<sup>17</sup> *Comm. in Ps. Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca* 6, 3-8.

<sup>18</sup> For a systematic study of the relationship between literal and spiritual meaning in Cyril's Old Testament exegesis, see Kerrigan, *Cyril of Alexandria Interpreter*, 35-40, 111-122.

<sup>19</sup> By this Cyril meant one of the other Greek translations of the Old Testament, not the Hebrew original. See O'Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel*, 119-149.

<sup>20</sup> Kerrigan, *Cyril of Alexandria Interpreter*, 89-90 believes that Cyril's use of the term has philosophical roots. Frances Young, 'The Rhetorical Schools', 191, notes that there is indeed a similarity between the Antiochene uses of the term and fifth-century neoplatonic exegesis. However, she adds: "NeoPlatonist and Christian are more likely independently to have taken over what was a technical usage in the schools and each adapted it to their own dogmatic concerns." Given Cyril's limited philosophical training, it is unlikely that he learned the term from reading philosophical texts. For a discussion of Cyril's acquaintance with philosophy, see P. Burguière and P. Évieux, *Cyrille d'Alexandrie Contre Julien*, SC 322 (Paris, 1985), 62-64, and W. Malley, *Hellenism and Christianity. The Conflict between Hellenic and Christian Wisdom in the Contra Galilaeans of Julian the Apostate and the Contra Julianum of St. Cyril of Alexandria* (Rome, 1978), 258-261. The term *σχοπός* was also important in the work of Athanasius, arguably the author upon whom Cyril most relied; see J.D. Ernest, "Athanasius of Alexandria: The Scope of Scripture in Polemical and Pastoral Context," *Vigiliae Christianae* 47(1993), 341-362.

<sup>21</sup> *Comm. in Ps. Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*, 6.4.33-43. Translated by B. Daley, Weston School of Theology, Cambridge MA (unpublished).

<sup>22</sup> *Σχοπός* can also mean "purport, "significance," or "test," but these meanings are secondary in the exegetical material under consideration here.

<sup>23</sup> Young, 'The Rhetorical Schools,' 191; Cassel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Science of the Grammarians*, 140-145.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *glaph.* PG 69.192B; *comm. in Is.* PG 70, 797B; *comm. in Mal.* P.E. Pusey, ed. "Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini: In XII Prophetas," vol. 2, 546.24 (henceforth all references to the Commentary on Malachi will be referred to only by page and line number).

<sup>25</sup> B. de Margerie, 'Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie élabore une exégèse christocentrique jusque dans sa méthode,' in *Introduction à l'histoire de l'exégèse*, vol. 2, 270-303.

<sup>26</sup> A simple comparison of the commentaries of Cyril and Theodoret on the Minor Prophets reveals that while the two exegetes employ the same methodology and produce the same basic interpretation of the text, Cyril finds allusions to Christ in the text far more frequently than his Antiochene counterpart. However, following the principles of the grammatical schools, he does so without violating the integrity of the narrative.

<sup>27</sup> Greer, *Biblical Interpretation*, 200-201.

<sup>28</sup> For a recent example of this see R. Wilken, 'In novissimis diebus: Biblical Promises, Jewish Hopes and Early Christian Exegesis,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (Spring, 1993): 1-19.

<sup>29</sup> His commentary on Malachi has been chosen for several reasons. First, it is short enough to be covered adequately in a journal article; second, while this prophecy does not spring to mind as a central text, Cyril found in it much fuel for fruitful reflection on the nature of the Christian life.

<sup>30</sup> See the summary of the evidence in J. O'Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel*, 149-156.

<sup>31</sup> Cassel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Science of the Grammarians*, 58-84, and O'Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel*, 168-181, both suggest this as the likely origin of Cyril's Old Testament commentaries.

<sup>32</sup> In the preface Cyril states that his goal, "is to make [the prophecy] more intelligible to those who read it," and to help them "understand everything that the book contains," 545.5-7. Similar statements appear in the preface to his *Commentary on Hosea*, Pusey, vol. 1, 1.20-121; and his *Commentary on Zephaniah*, Pusey, vol. 2, 167.12.

<sup>33</sup> 546.23-25.

<sup>34</sup> 547.27-548.5.

<sup>35</sup> The remarks of D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1-21, are helpful here. Among other things, Dawson points out that frequently interpretations that began as allegorical readings eventually replaced older literal meanings. To the interpreter of a text where such a transformation had occurred, the allegorical reading would be the literal meaning.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed description of Cyril's relationship to fifth-century Judaism in Alexandria, see R. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale, 1971).

<sup>37</sup> 550.9-10.

<sup>38</sup> 552.14-19.

<sup>39</sup> 554.22-25.

<sup>40</sup> 564.16-18.

<sup>41</sup> 616.6-9. Cf. 582.3-5; 585.1-5; 613.15-19.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Wilken, *Judaism*, 39-68.

<sup>43</sup> 584.20-23. It is possible that Cyril may have faced a situation similar to that of John

Chrysostom, who once alluded to members of his congregation observing the Sabbath with the Jews and attending church with the Christians. Cf. Chrysostom's *Discourses Against the Judaizing Christians*, PG 48, 843-942.

<sup>44</sup> Cyril, in keeping with his belief that Christ was "the end of the Law and the prophets" (e.g. 567.22 and 626.8-15; *comm. in Is.* PG 70, 10A), did not limit Malachi's prediction of Christ to chapter three alone. For example, Mal 2:5 and 2:6, passages mentioning God's covenant as a covenant of "life and peace," provide Cyril with an occasion to reflect on Christ as "the truth who is life and peace," and who is the reality replacing the "image and the sketch" that was the Law (575.12-22).

<sup>45</sup> 594.21-24.

<sup>46</sup> 594.26-595.25.

<sup>47</sup> 595.12. For the history of early Christian interpretation of this text, see O'Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel*, 73-86.

<sup>48</sup> 595.28, cf. 546.3-10. It is possible that Cyril was thinking of Origen, who could have suggested that Malachi was an Angel. We know that Origen wrote a commentary on Malachi because Jerome claims to have read it. In his own *Commentary on Malachi*, Jerome suggests that Origen thought Malachi was an angel: "Scripsit in hunc librum Origenes tria uolumina, sed historiam omnino non tetigit, et more suo totus in allegoriae interpretatione uersatus est, nullam Ezrae faciens mentionem sed angelum putans fuisse qui scripsit, secundum illud quod de Ioanne legimus: 'Ecce ego mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam' " (CCL 76, 902.42-46).

<sup>49</sup> 596.13.

<sup>50</sup> 596.26.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Origen, *Cels.* SC 147, 6.25-26.

<sup>52</sup> 599.15-24.

<sup>53</sup> 599.24-600.3.

<sup>54</sup> 618.6-620.11.

<sup>55</sup> Cyril probably spent several years among the monks in the Egyptian desert, perhaps under the tutelage of Isidore of Pelusium. See the comments of P. Évieux et al., *Cyrille d'Alexandrie, Lettres Festales*, SC 372 (Paris, 1991), 14-20. Here, Cyril may be reflecting the notion, characteristic of contemporary asceticism, that holy men and women somehow lived, by anticipation, the angelic life of heaven. An interesting description of this concept can be found in P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University, 1988), 323-338.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Cor 1:5; 13:12.

<sup>57</sup> 620.12-623.27.

<sup>58</sup> This corresponds to his eschatological thought expressed in other places. B. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1991), 110, writes: "For Cyril, as for so many of his Greek forbears, the heart of eschatological beatitude is direct knowledge of God. Eternal life, he insists, is 'not simply to rise, but is, more properly, a life of rest and glory and delight—spiritual delight, of course, and no other. The key to spiritual delight is perfect knowledge of God, and an accurate revelation of the mysteries of Christ; this revelation will no longer be 'in a mirror' or 'through riddles,' as now, giving us merely vague hints of what we seek, but it will shine brilliantly and clearly in us, and implant in us perfect knowledge'."

<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere Cyril asserts belief in the resurrection of the body, Daley, *Hope*, 110, but he neither affirms nor denies it here. Still, he does mention that Christ's coming results

in freedom from corruption, and the richness of the physical imagery suggest a belief in a physical resurrection.

<sup>60</sup> 624.4-5.

<sup>61</sup> 624.11f. Here Cyril probably means heretical Christian groups. It is possible that he is even thinking of the Novationist churches that continued to exist in Alexandria. According to Socrates (*h.e.* VII, 7, PG 67, 752), Cyril, in the first years of his episcopacy, spearheaded an effort to remove them from the city. Exactly what Cyril means here is unclear, since earlier he declared that heretics would be food for the burning oven (see note 57 above).

<sup>62</sup> 624.14-16. It is interesting to note that Augustine (*De Civ Dei* 20.29), John Chrysostom (*Hom. in Mt.* PG 57-58, 559 AC) and Theodoret of Cyrus (*Comm. in Mal.* PG 81, 1985 C) suggest that God will send Elijah to offer the Jews one final chance to accept Christ.

<sup>63</sup> E.g. *Ad Diognetum*, 7.6; Commodian, *Carmen*, CCL 128, 103; 110.

<sup>64</sup> See here B. Daley's general characterization of eschatology in the fifth century as "Grace Present and Future," *Hope*, 105-123.

<sup>65</sup> Cyril seems, for the most part, to accept Eusebius's vision of history as described by G. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1986). Cf. *Juhn.* SC 322, preface, 1-5.

<sup>66</sup> Cyril's interpretation of this is actually quite traditional: cf. Justin, *dial.* ed. G. Archambault, 28.5; Eusebius, *d.e.* GCS 23, 1.10.35; Cyril of Jerusalem, *catech.* SC 126, 18.25.

<sup>67</sup> 562.15.

<sup>68</sup> 562.20-21. Cf. Wilken, *Judaism*, 69-92.

<sup>69</sup> 564.17-19.

<sup>70</sup> 562.26.

<sup>71</sup> 563.5-11.

<sup>72</sup> Cyril's understanding of the priesthood resembles, in significant ways, the theology of priesthood presented by Gregory of Nazianzus in the *Defense of His Flight* (SC 247) and by John Chrysostom in his treatise *On the Priesthood* (SC 272). Gregory's treatise, ostensibly a justification to his local community of his reasons for seeking to avoid ordination, delineates the awesome responsibilities incumbent upon priests. Citing passages from various books of the Bible, including Malachi, Gregory offers a litany of texts that point out the weight, dignity, and awesome responsibility of the priesthood. Chrysostom's work, though entitled *περί ἱερωσύνης*, is more properly a treatise that explores, with similar awe and dread, the role and position of the Christian bishop. Both emphasize the moral and evangelical responsibilities of the priest: he must both live and preach the gospel. The power and responsibility of the priesthood seem to lie primarily here, rather than in the power of intercession or consecration. See B. Daley, 'The Ministry of Disciples: Historical Reflections on the Role of Religious Priests,' *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 612-613, and Chrysostom, *Sac.* SC 272, II.4-6, 12-14.

<sup>73</sup> On the development of the term, see the remarks of A.M. Malingrey, SC 272,72, note 1, and B. Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacrament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 79. Henry Chadwick, in his article 'The Role of the Christian Bishop in Ancient Society,' *Center for Hermeneutical Studies* 35 (Berkeley, 1980): 1, reminds us that most bishops in antiquity presided over sees so small that they would have known the members of their flock by name and carried out the duties we would normally attribute to a priest.

<sup>74</sup> 574.24-25.

<sup>75</sup> 572.16-19. Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Magn.* VI, ed. K. Lake (Cambridge: Harvard, 1912).

<sup>76</sup> 559.8-10.

<sup>77</sup> 559.14-17.

<sup>78</sup> 580.13-15. Note Gregory of Nazianzus's use of similar language, SC 247, I.6.1f.

<sup>79</sup> 594.7-20.

<sup>80</sup> 600.17-25.

<sup>81</sup> It is interesting to note that this particular text was interpreted as a reference to the exalted position of the priesthood only in the East and only from the beginning of the fourth century. Cyril's interpretation echoes that of Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and even the Apostolic Constitutions. See, O'Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel*, 94-97; 240-258.

<sup>82</sup> Mt 15:9.

<sup>83</sup> 578.15-27; 579.3-6; 579.11-17.

<sup>84</sup> 601.24-602.4; 602.9-19.

<sup>85</sup> See contrast, Chrysostom, *Sac.* SC 272, III.4.

<sup>86</sup> 605.14-20.

<sup>87</sup> 590.21-591.8.

<sup>88</sup> 589.3-18. In this passage Cyril refers to the union of the partners in a marriage with the noun ἕνωσις and the verb ἐνώω. These terms became very significant for Cyril during the christological controversy (after 428), when he used them to describe the union of the divine and the human in Christ. In the *Commentary on Malachi* there is no hint that these terms have any christological meaning.

<sup>89</sup> See note 55 above.

<sup>90</sup> 570.13-24.

<sup>91</sup> 569.6-7.

<sup>92</sup> 619.9-10.

<sup>93</sup> 619.10-13.

<sup>94</sup> 622.19-623.8. The quest for impassibility was a major preoccupation of monks, in particular those who subscribed to the ideas of Evagrius of Pontus. It is possible that Cyril, during his years in the desert, met Evagrius who had arrived there in 385. Although assisting his uncle Theophilus in opposition to Origenist monks like Evagrius, Cyril was, nonetheless, influenced by them. This is the opinion of Évieux, SC 372, 15-17. Cf. P. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 374-376.

Creighton University, Omaha, NE 68178 Department of Theology