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CYRIL AS PASTOR: THE PROCLAMATION OF
HIS CHRISTOLOGY TO HIS PEOPLE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
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May 1987

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PREFACE

Many modern scholars have written on Cyril, Nestorius and their Christologies, including such men as R. V. Sellers, Aloys Grillmeier, Adolf Harnack, Friedrich Loofs, Paul Tillich, Lionel Wickham and others.¹ While we may acknowledge their depth of research, it must be pointed out that these men have concentrated almost exclusively on Cyril's great polemic and dogmatic documents. It seems that no one has looked very closely, if at all, at the things that Cyril had to say to the people in his pastoral care.

There is some importance in considering what Cyril had to say to the people in his diocese. While the supporters of the Council of Chalcedon saw the Council as a triumph of Cyril's view, there were then, and are now, different viewpoints. Nestorius believed that Chalcedon had vindicated him and condemned Cyril,² and the Monophysites agreed with

¹Cyril of Alexandria, Select Letters, ed. Lionel R. Wickham, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). Wickham includes a good beginning bibliography in his translation of some of Cyril's letters.

²Nestorius, Bazaar of Heracleides, ed. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925). The Bazaar is considered to have been written at some time after the Council of Chalcedon because in the latter part of the book, Nestorius mentions Eutyches and his teaching of only one nature (p. 339) and the fines (2000 pounds of gold) that the emperor "exacted" from Flavian (p. 432). Nestorius also explicitly claims that he and Flavian taught the same thing (p. 362), that by honoring Flavian and Leo Chalcedon was commending him (p. 374-5), and that Chalcedon had vindicated him and condemned Cyril as a heretic (p. 377). The date of the Bazaar could even be placed as late as A.D. 455, since Nestorius 'prophecies' that Rome is 'going to be sacked,' which was done by the Vandals in that year (p. 379).

him at least to that extent. In the modern world scholars such as Loofs, Abramowski, Driver, Bethune-Baker, Sellers, and Seeberg have shared, in some degree, Nestorius' viewpoint on Chalcedon and Cyril.³

A significant part of the Egyptian diocese became Monophysite after the death of Cyril (and may have been Monophysite before, considering the reaction to Cyril's signing of the Formula of Reunion in A.D. 433). If Cyril had preached and taught Monophysitism to his own people (regardless of 'formal' doctrinal agreements) it would be easier to understand the anti-Chalcedonian reaction in Egypt. However, if Cyril, in his writings to his own people, upheld the doctrine that was acknowledged at Chalcedon, the strength of the Monophysite party in Egypt becomes much harder to explain.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate Cyril's Christology as he wrote or preached it to the people in his own diocese, for the particular purpose of discovering whether Cyril, in speaking to his own people, was "Chalcedonian" or "Monophysite." Cyril's anthropology (even though it would be helpful in a definitive study of Cyril's Christology) is not covered, nor are Cyril's major dogmatic and polemic works used.

Chapter One is a brief introduction to the Nestorian controversy, the historical problems involved with it, and brief summaries of the Christologies of Nestorius and Cyril.

Chapter Two deals with the letters which Cyril wrote to his people. These are mainly his Paschal letters, written to his diocese to announce

³Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975, 2nd. ed.), pp. 559-568. Grillmeier includes an appendix entitled "The Nestorius Question in Modern Study" which is indispensable for understanding this "modern" viewpoint of Nestorius and Cyril.

the time of Easter, as well as his famous first letter, ad monachos Aegypti. (Chapters Two and Three include somewhat extensive quotations in order to set out clearly what Cyril said to his flock.)

Chapter Three discusses Cyril's sermons to his people, including the few fragments of Greek homilies still extant, and especially the 156 sermons of Cyril's Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke.

Chapter Four analyzes Cyril's use of the key terms οὐσία, φύσις, ὑπόστασις, and πρόσωπον, and discusses whether Cyril's Christology, as expressed to his people, was Monophysite Christology. Chapter Five, then, is the summary and conclusion of the paper.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE NESTORIAN CONTROVERSY

When, in the fall of A. D. 412, Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria died, he was succeeded as bishop of Alexandria by his nephew Cyril, on October 18. The first sixteen years of Cyril's episcopate were relatively quiet, although broken by riots and strife between the Christians, Jews and pagans of Alexandria.

The Nestorian controversy began shortly after the election of Nestorius to the episcopate of Constantinople in April of A. D. 428. In November of that year, Nestorius' chaplain, by the name of Anastasius, preached a sermon (against what he thought was Apollinarianism) in which he condemned the use of *θεοτόκος* as it applied to Christ's being born of Mary. On Christmas Day, A. D. 428, Nestorius himself took the opportunity to condemn the term in a series of sermons (a series of sermons that soon found their way to the monasteries of Egypt).¹

The reaction in Constantinople itself was quick, with the people in the church expressing their disapproval of Nestorius' sermons. On Lady Day, A. D. 429, Proclus of Cyzicus preached a sermon in Constantinople in favor of the *θεοτόκος* and against the ideas of the bishop.

¹B. J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A. D. 461 (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), vol. 3, chs. 21-26, quoted in Nestorius, Bazaar of Heracleides, ed. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. xvii. The dates that follow are taken from the same source, Bazaar, pages xvii-xxix, unless it is otherwise noted.

Eusebius of Dorylaeum published a pamphlet in that spring which accused Bishop Nestorius of being a follower of Paul of Samosata.

Soon after Easter, Cyril wrote his famous letter to the monks of Egypt (ad monachos Aegypti), and Nestorius wrote a letter to Celestine of Rome, warning him about an outbreak of Apollinarianism in the East. Monks in Constantinople submitted a petition to Emperor Theodosius II against Nestorius, and asked for a general council of the whole church.

In August of A.D. 430, a synod in Rome condemned Nestorius and Celestine ordered Cyril to carry out the sentence of the synod. John of Antioch also wrote to Nestorius asking him to accept the term *θεοτόκος*. In November, Emperor Theodosius called a general council to meet in Ephesus on Pentecost, A.D. 431. A month later, in December, Nestorius received news of his condemnation in Rome, as well as Cyril's Third Letter to Nestorius (which contained the Twelve Chapters).

The council was supposed to begin meeting on June 7, A.D. 431, but the bishops were still waiting for John of Antioch on June 21. When the council received a message from John telling them not to wait,² the council did not wait and went on to condemn Nestorius in a session which

²Lionel R. Wickham, Introduction to Select Letters, by Cyril of Alexandria (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. xxiv. Wickham believes that the letter or note that John sent about "not waiting for him" was written "months beforehand." Driver and Hodgson, in the chronology they give in the Bazaar (which they quote from Kidd, A History of the Church to A.D. 461, see above) maintain that the letter said John would arrive in five or six days (which is hardly appropriate for a letter written months beforehand). It is also significant that John's two emissaries, Alexander of Apamea and Alexander of Hierapolis brought the message orally "that the Council should not wait for him if he is delayed on his journey." (p. xix). Charles Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, From the Original Documents (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), p. 45, mentions that the letter was written from Ephesus, and that the Council waited 16 days after receiving the letter, not 5 or 6.

he refused to attend. However, when John arrived, he and Nestorius convened a council of their own, which promptly condemned Cyril and Memnon of Ephesus, and reported to the emperor what had been done.

It was mid-July before the emperor heard both sides of the story, and when he did, all three men (Cyril, Memnon, and Nestorius) were ordered deposed and arrested. By September, the emperor had given up on forcing a compromise, Nestorius had returned to his Antiochian monastery and Cyril and Memnon were released.

By the end of 432, the two sides of the controversy were getting closer to reconciliation. Late in the year, Cyril and John of Antioch reached agreement. John accepted Nestorius' deposition and Cyril did not insist on his 'Twelve Chapters.' From that time on, Nestorius' cause lost ground steadily inside the empire, and gained ground outside the empire. (It was the Nestorian school of Nisibis which eventually spread Nestorianism east into Asia and as far as China.)

In 436, the emperor decided to exile Nestorius to Arabia, partially because of the complaints of John of Antioch, although Nestorius is eventually found in exile in Egypt.³ In 444, Cyril died and was succeeded by Dioscurus.

The 'reaction' to Ephesus began in 448, when the monk Eutyches mentioned to a visitor that Ephesus had condemned the doctrine of 'two natures.' Therefore, he believed that after the incarnation there was only one nature, the divine. In November of 448, at a council in Constantinople presided over by Bishop Flavian, Eutyches was condemned for his

³Friedrich Loofs, Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine (New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, 1975), p. 57. Loofs here is quoting a report of Evagrius that Nestorius had continued to teach his Christology in Antioch after his deposition.

heresy, who then very quickly wrote to Leo of Rome and Dioscurus for help against his 'Nestorian' persecutors.

In March of 449, the emperor called for a general council to meet at Ephesus in August, to deal with the new 'Nestorianism' that had broken out. In August, that council met, refused to seat or listen to those who had condemned Eutyches, and condemned Flavian of Constantinople and Eusebius of Dorylaeum (Eutyches' accusers). Bishops who attended this council later swore that they had been coerced to sign the acts and decrees of the council by the use of military force.

The Western church, especially Leo of Rome, protested the 'Robber Synod,' but it did no good, since Emperor Theodosius was firm in backing what that meeting had accomplished. However, in July of 450, Theodosius died suddenly in a riding accident. The new emperor, Marcian, willingly called a new council to meet at Chalcedon in 451, which condemned Eutyches and Dioscurus. Sometime after the Council of Chalcedon, Nestorius wrote his Bazaar, an apology for his position. In this defense, he pointed to the decrees and proceedings of Chalcedon and claimed that Chalcedon had accepted his position, and had therefore condemned Cyril (who had died in A.D. 444).

Historical Problems in the Controversy

In the last century or so, a revisionist school (including such scholars as R. Seeberg and Friedrich Loofs) has been raising numerous objections to the 'received' interpretation of the controversy. In particular these objections relate to (1) the characters of Cyril and Nestorius, (2) the conduct of the Council of Ephesus and the council of John, (3) the 'transfer' of money to the emperor after the council, and (4) the relative orthodoxy of the opposing Christologies.

Until roughly the last century, Cyril was universally admired and respected as a Doctor of the church and one of her great theologians. However, revisionists, reviewing some of the other incidents occurring in Alexandria (Cyril's forceful closing of the pagan temples, and the murder of Hypatia), have decided that Cyril's temper and ambition were the chief causes of the controversy.

On the other hand, Nestorius is depicted as a somewhat naive, but basically harmless, individual, who was more sinned against than sinning.⁴ However, the historian Socrates recorded his impression that Nestorius' main problem was his ignorance, and also that Nestorius caused great concern in his own parish by his eagerness to persecute inoffensive dissenters in Constantinople.⁵

It is clear that the revisionists have perhaps overstepped the facts in their interpretation. The controversy would never have broken out if Nestorius had not objected to a term that had been used for centuries in the church. There is this in favor of the revisionist school, however, that they have emphasized the good intentions that Nestorius had. Nestorius was as eager to defend the reality of the incarnation (using his own terms) as Cyril was.

Secondly, many objections have been raised about whether or not the Council of Ephesus was conducted properly and decently. There are

⁴Loofs goes so far as to say "I do not mean that Nestorius was altogether guiltless in his life's misfortune. He was incautious, passionate and reckless. . . . But no hero of a tragedy is quite guiltless." Ibid., pp. 60-61.

⁵Socrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, VII, 29, NPNF², v. 2, p. 169. His opinions were "Having myself perused the writings of Nestorius, I have found him an unlearned man. . . ." "From that time, however, they branded Nestorius as an 'incendiary,' and it was not only the heretics who did this, but those also of his own faith."

statements that Cyril, as accuser, should not have been the judge, that is, the presiding officer of the council. It is also suggested that the majority of the bishops⁶ should have waited for John of Antioch, no matter how long he would have taken to arrive. Also, considering what happened in A.D. 449 at the 'Robber Council,' there are accusations that Cyril forced agreement to his views with the assistance of the "turbulent monks" of Ephesus.

Unfortunately, since Alexandria contained one of the greatest eastern churches and Nestorius was the one accused of false doctrine, it would be highly surprising if Cyril were not the president of the council. It is also incorrect to say that Cyril was Nestorius' accuser at the council; although he was the chief theological opponent, there were numerous others who accused Nestorius of heresy.⁷

Emperor Theodosius had ordered the council to begin on Pentecost, June 7, and yet, two weeks later, not only was John of Antioch not present, but he informed Cyril that he was going to be delayed even more, and that the council should not wait.⁸ It seems to have been the opinion of most of the council members that John was deliberately trying to delay the proceedings, an opinion that was shared by some Nestorians

⁶Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, From the Original Documents, points out that there were 160 bishops at the beginning of the first session and 198 at the end (p. 46), that over 200 subscribed eventually to Nestorius' deposition (p. 51), while before John arrived Nestorius had only 10 bishops (p. 54) and after John arrived there were only 43 bishops with Nestorius and John (p. 56).

⁷Officially, Nestorius' accusers were Acacius of Melitene and Theodotus of Ancyra. It is also probable that Eusebius of Dorylaeum and Proclus of Cyzicus would also have been happy to accuse Nestorius formally. Kidd, A History of the Church to A.D. 461, cited in the Bazaar p. xix.

⁸See footnote 2, above.

also.⁹ With Nestorius' attempts to portray the council as being called to deal with Cyril's heresy, it would have been surprising if the council had waited.

As far as the conduct of the two councils is concerned, there seems to be little problem in deciding which was conducted more decently. Nestorius brought an armed escort to Ephesus, acknowledging that he was virtually in command of those troops.¹⁰ The Nestorian council prevented any news of the council from reaching the emperor for several weeks. When the emperor heard both sides in September, A.D. 431,¹¹ the Nestorian council was ignored and the council's decisions were upheld.

Thirdly, when Cyril was released from arrest, he was accused of bribing the emperor to release him and to persecute Nestorius. The acceptance of bribes was a common complaint against many emperors, and the accusation against Cyril's good name is lessened by the fact that Nestorius himself admits that these were only rumors, and that this money was "exacted" from Cyril.¹²

⁹Mentioned in the introduction of Cyril of Alexandria: Library of the Fathers, preface by E. B. P. "Why should he delay, except that he did not wish to be there? Even Eutherius, a Nestorian, thought that he delayed on purpose.", pp. lxxix-lxxx.

¹⁰Nestorius, *idem*, p. 135. Nestorius mentions that in fear for his life ". . . , I had need to post soldiers around my house to guard me, . . ." Any bishop who could so casually claim to "post soldiers around my house" must have been virtually, though not formally, in control of them.

¹¹Kidd, A History of the Church to A.D. 461, cited in the Bazaar, p. xxii. Driver and Hodgson also cite p. 284 and 287-8 in the Bazaar where Nestorius talks about it. Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, From the Original Documents also mentions this on p. 101.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 279-281. It must be noted that Nestorius is reaching for any accusation against Cyril in this work. Immediately after this accusation, Nestorius lambasts Cyril for "calling an oecumenical council," which the emperor had actually called, and two pages later, Nestorius calmly talks about how he called an 'oecumenical' council (the 40 bishops who met with him and John).

Lastly, the revisionists have represented Nestorius as orthodox, and Cyril as confused and heretical.¹³ A thorough examination of the Christologies of the two men eliminates any possibility of the validity of the idea of Cyril's 'heresy.' It needs to be remembered that for some 1100 years, the Western Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches were unanimous in their approval of Cyril's Christology and their condemnation of Nestorius' Christology.

Nestorius' Christology

The controversy started because of Nestorius' objections to the term *Θεοτόκος*. His main objection seems to be that he was afraid someone would believe that Mary had given birth to the divinity.¹⁴ That being the case, Nestorius was insistent on keeping a clear distinction, even a separation, between the Word that came into the world, and the man that was born from Mary.

In Nestorius' first sermon on the incarnation, he quotes 'Paul' in Hebrews 7:3 to prove that God did not have a mother, going on to say "No, good man, Mary did not bear God." and then quotes John 3:6 as further proof that Mary could not possibly be the mother of God.¹⁵ In this ser-

¹³ See especially Grillmeier's appendix, "The Nestorius Question in Modern Study, in his Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 1 (Atlanta: John Knox Press, second ed., 1975). According to Grillmeier, Scipioni holds that Nestorius 'anticipated' Chalcedon (p. 566), Prestige believes that the substance of Nestorius' doctrine was accepted at Chalcedon (p. 566), Loofs said that Nestorius was shown to be orthodox by Chalcedon, and Seeberg taught that there was nothing heretical about Nestorius (p. 567).

¹⁴ See Hefele's discussion of Nestorius' concern on this point, based on Nestorius' first sermon on the term *Θεοτόκος*, found in A History of the Councils of the Church, From the Original Documents, pp. 12-13 (where Hefele cites Mercator's translation in the Garnier-Migne edition, p. 757 sqq.).

¹⁵ Nestorius, Sermon I, trans. Marius Mercator, Migne, PL, 48:760A.

mon of his, Nestorius is clear in his statements that whatever was born of Mary was not God.

Other sermons and statements of his are similar. In his second sermon against Proclus (in the Easter season of A.D. 429), Nestorius again expressed concern about the mixing of the natures (in saying that God was born). He said "That God passed through the Virgin, the Christ-bearer (Χριστοτόκος), is taught by Scripture; that He was born is not taught." Then Nestorius goes on to quote Matthew 2:13 as showing that God was not born of Mary at Christmas, since the angel said to take the boy to Egypt, not to take God to Egypt.¹⁶

Perhaps the most telling statement in this regard is the statement that so aroused the Council of Ephesus, that Nestorius could not confess that God was two or three months old.¹⁷ Nestorius later protested that he thought everyone was talking about the Godhead being two or three months old, but the point was well understood at Ephesus that Nestorius drew such a distinction and difference between the two natures of Christ that the birth could not be attributed to God. The problem was that if the birth could not be ascribed to God, neither could the death, and then what happened to the sacrifice on the cross?¹⁸

¹⁶Idem, Sermon V, trans. by Marius Mercator, Migne, PL, 48:787c.

¹⁷Socrates, *ibid.*, VII, 34, NPNF², v. 2, p. 172. Socrates reports his words as being "When many had declared that Christ was God, Nestorius said: 'I cannot term him God who was two or three months old. I am therefore clean of your blood and shall in future come no more among you.'"

¹⁸Throughout his writings to the people of his diocese, Cyril continually reaffirms the soteriological importance of the incarnation. For him the question is not an intriguing academic debate, but a question of whether God, or simply a man, "issued from woman for us and for our salvation," Wickham, Introduction to Select Letters, by Cyril of Alexandria, p. 7 (reference is from the Second Letter to Nestorius, section 4).

Nestorius objected strongly to Cyril's formulation of a hypostatic union, or a union of natures. He felt that this meant that God was forced, unwillingly, to change into man (something that was carefully denied by Cyril). One of the main reasons for this understanding of Cyril's Christology may be due to what Socrates called Nestorius' "extreme ignorance."¹⁹

Since the time of the Cappadocian Fathers, a distinction had been drawn between the terms ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, in order to define more adequately trinitarian relationships. It is acknowledged that Cyril also made this distinction. However,

Nestorius generally used ὑπόστασις in the older sense, as equivalent to οὐσία, though there are a few passages in which he shows himself to be acquainted with, and even accepts the newer usage.²⁰

Although it is difficult to understand why Nestorius would prefer to use an outmoded definition of a key technical term, it certainly helps to explain Nestorius' concern and outrage against Cyril's Christology. However, it was still necessary for Nestorius to postulate some kind of union between God and man.

This could not be a union of natures; in fact, Nestorius explicitly says in some of his earlier sermons that he divided the natures. However,

¹⁹Socrates, *ibid.*, VII, 34, NPNF², v. 2, p. 171. "The fact is, the causeless alarm he manifested on this subject just exposed his extreme ignorance; for being a man of natural fluency as a speaker, he was considered well educated, but in reality he was disgracefully illiterate. In fact, he contemned the drudgery of an accurate examination of the ancient expositors: and, puffed up with his readiness of expression, he did not give his attention to the ancients, but though himself the greatest of all."

²⁰Leonard Hodgson, "The Metaphysic of Nestorius," The Journal of Theological Studies 19 (October 1917):47, reprinted as an appendix to Nestorius, Bazaar, p. 412.

in those early sermons, he proposed a unity of honor and/or adoration.

On account of what is hidden I adore what the eye beholds, God is inseparable. I do not separate that which bears his dignity, for it is inseparable; I separate natures, but I unite the reverence.²¹

What Nestorius finally decided upon was a prosopaic union, a union of *πρόσωπα*. To illustrate this, he used the example of a king putting on the uniform of a private soldier.

But when he (a king) wishes to condescend and to become one of the soldiers, (wearing) the clothing of one of these soldiers, as if he had become a soldier, and not (that) of royalty, and concealing himself in it and talking with them on equal terms and persuading them without constraining them, he so performs the duties of royalty in the schema of a soldier.²² Thus also God, when he wished to become incarnate, . . .

While this illustration shows how completely Nestorius separated the divine and human natures,²³ there are other aspects of this prosopaic union that are important. First, it must be remembered that Nestorius' proposal of this 'prosopaic' union was put forward in his Bazaar, written twenty years after the start of the controversy, fifteen years after his exile, and after the Council of Chalcedon had again condemned him and approved Cyril.²⁴

²¹Nestorius, Sermon VII, Migne, PL, 48:798A.

²²Idem, Bazaar, p. 21.

²³While Nestorius did teach a "connection," *συνάφεια*, between divine and human natures, the illustration given above, that of an emperor and his clothes, indicates that there was no more of a union between human and divine than between a man and his clothes. The difference between Nestorius' illustration and Cyril's illustration of human soul and body is very clear.

²⁴From the Bazaar, it can be clearly seen that Nestorius not only thought of himself as orthodox, he actually wanted to be orthodox. It would not be surprising then, if in the fifteen years of his exile, he were able to refine his ideas and formulations to the point where they certainly looked more orthodox. This is not to suggest that Nestorius was trying to deceive anyone, but simply assumes that over the years, Nestorius, perceiving himself to be orthodox, changed his statements slightly to sound more orthodox.

The main problem, however, came from the definition of the term πρόσωπον which Nestorius used. Loofs, one of Nestorius' apologists, conceded

For Nestorius who . . . was influenced by the manner of speaking common at that time, the main thing in his notion of prosopon, according to the etymology of the word, was the external undivided appearance. . . .²⁵

While Hodgson points out that the word most likely meant, for Nestorius, an appearance that reflected an underlying οὐσία, the fact remains that πρόσωπον concentrated the union in the appearance of Christ. It is even possible to point out places in Nestorius' writings where πρόσωπον is used only of a false appearance, since he can mention the putting on of 'the πρόσωπον of piety' by those who accuse him.²⁶

The difference between Nestorius and Cyril is that whereas Nestorius is throughout perfectly consistent, and his theory a brilliant attempt to solve the problem on the basis of a principle which renders all solution impossible, Cyril's greatness lies in the very fact of his inconsistency. He would no more question the antithesis between godhead and manhood than would Nestorius, but where the truth was too much for his system, he preferred the truth to the system, and by his self-contradiction (which Nestorius exposes again and again) left room for further development of christological doctrine in the future.²⁷

Cyril's Christology

Briefly summarized, Cyril's Christology is basically what has been taught by the Christian church since the time of Ephesus and Chalcedon.²⁸

²⁵Loofs, Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine, p. 76, quoted in Hodgson, "The Metaphysic of Nestorius", p. 49, and reprinted in Bazaar, p. 414.

²⁶Friedrich Loofs, Nestoriana: Die Fragmente des Nestorius (Halle, 1905), fragment 262, translated in Bazaar, p. 390.

²⁷Hodgson, "The Metaphysic of Nestorius," p. 54-55, reprinted in the Bazaar, p. 419-420.

²⁸The Council of Ephesus approved of Cyril's Christology, and, according to the records, the Council of Chalcedon considered itself to

There is a real union between God and man in Christ Jesus, a union so real to the point that it can, in a sense, be said that God the Son was born of the Virgin Mary and that God the Son impassibly suffered on the cross of Calvary.

Cyril, however, is also very careful not to get too bogged down in explaining exactly how this union came about. He clearly maintains that there is no mixing or confusing of the two natures, and that there is no change of one nature into the other.

Yet, there is a union of natures, in one $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\acute{o}\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, not of persons (in one $\pi\rho\acute{o}\sigma\omega\pi\omicron\nu$), ". . . for the Scripture has not said that the Word united to himself the person of a man, but that he was made flesh." The birth, suffering, and death, though, is not ascribed to the deity, but to the flesh which the Word made His own.²⁹

. . . no, what is said is that he underwent fleshly birth united from the very womb, making the birth of his flesh his very own.

This is what we mean when we say he suffered and rose again; not that God the Word suffered blows, nail-piercings or other wounds in his own nature (the divine is impassible because it is incorporeal) but what is said is that since his own created body suffered these things he himself 'suffered' for our sake, the point being that within the suffering body was the Impassible.³⁰

One of the best summaries of Cyril's Christology can be found in the same letter to Nestorius.

In this way we shall confess one Christ and Lord, not 'worshipping' a man 'along with' the Word (in case the idea of division should be brought in through the use of the phrase 'along with') but worshipping one and the same Christ because the Word's body is not dissociated from him; with it he presides jointly with the Father

be Cyrilline, to such an extent that Leo's Tome was judged on the basis of whether it agreed with the teaching of Cyril. (See the extracts from session II, p. 259 in The Seven Ecumenical Councils, NPNF², v. 14.)

²⁹Cyril, ad Nestorius II, translated in Select Letters, ed. Lionel Wickham, p. 9.

³⁰Ibid., p. 7.

himself---not that there are two jointly presiding sons, but that there is one in union with his own flesh.³¹

The question is, however, how much of his Christology was clearly expressed to the people of his patriarchate. Those people who would soon join the Monophysite movement claimed that Cyril had taught only one nature, that he had used ὑπόστασις and φύσις as equivalent terms. Is that what Cyril said and wrote to the people of Alexandria?

³¹Ibid., p. 9.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LETTERS OF CYRIL

There are in existence twenty-nine Paschal Letters written by Cyril during his years as bishop of Alexandria. Each letter was originally intended to announce the date that Easter would be celebrated during that specific year, along with whatever else the bishop wanted to communicate to the flock. The letters were probably circulated everywhere where the authority of the patriarch of Alexandria was in force.¹ Undoubtedly, though, from a very early time, they were used as a vehicle to instruct the people of Egypt.

One would expect, from the way in which a significant segment of Alexandrian Christianity turned "quickly" from orthodoxy to Monophysitism, to find in these letters little in the way of detail about the union of natures in Christ. In particular, one could expect language that could either support the orthodox or the Monophysite Christology. One could expect a difference between letters before and after the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, reflecting the events in the Nestorian controversy. One would also expect that even after Ephesus, Cyril's exposition of the two natures to the people of Alexandria was not as clear as it should

¹It is impossible to know how wide a distribution these letters received. It would seem safe to assume that they were at least read in Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis since, according to 'ancient usage' and canon VI of Nicea (NPNF², v. 14, p. 15), those areas all fell under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Alexandria.

have been. Otherwise, Egypt's adherence to Monophysitism would be harder to explain.

The Pre-Nestorian Letters

The years before the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy were the years in which Cyril spent most of his time (in dogmatic and other writings) combating the remnants of Arianism in Alexandria. Some writings were also directed against Jews and pagans.² That this was an anti-Arian era can also be seen in Cyril's references to Christ, most of which seem to emphasize Christ's true divinity and consubstantiality ($\delta\mu\omicron\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\varsigma$) with the Father. At the same time, considering the perception of the Alexandrian school's "preoccupation" with the divine nature, there is a surprising emphasis on the humanity of Christ, and on Cyril's "favorite" text of John 1:14. Mention is even made of the union of the natures, though the reference is not clear.

The letters written before the beginning of the controversy curiously fall into three different periods. The first period, from 414 to 420 (letters 1-7), is characterized by few and infrequent references to the hypostatic union. In fact, even the references to Christ's incarnation are relatively few.

The second period, from 421 to 426 (letters 8-13), is a period of extended discussion of Christ and his incarnation. During this time,

²Robert L. Wilken, Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 1, suggests that Cyril was violently anti-Semitic. It must be recognized, though, that Alexandria, even at the time of Cyril, had a large Jewish population, which undoubtedly insured ongoing Jewish-Christian arguments. On the other hand, Wilken acknowledges that John Chrysostom was the worst anti-Semite in the early church, yet he did not have a large Jewish population in Constantinople to deal with.

there are references to a union or synod (σύνσδοξ) of the two natures of Christ, and, in general, more interest and concern about both natures of Christ and their relation to each other.³ The last period, the years 427 to 429 (letters 14-16), is also a time when there are few references to the incarnation and the union.

In the first period, Cyril mentions the consubstantiality of Christ with the Father, though without using the term ὁμοούσιος. "Indeed, the only-begotten Word of God came, the most exact representation [χαρακτῆρ] of the substance [οὐσία] of the Father, undergoing the likeness to us, and becoming man, . . ."⁴

One of Nestorius' accusations against Cyril was that he was proclaiming a change in God. However, in the very first Paschal Letter Cyril wrote, he clearly refuted that charge.

'And he remains,' just as Paul says, 'yesterday and today the same and into the ages' [Hebrews 13:8]; not altering the divinity in some way through [δὲ] the incarnation;⁵ however, being who he was, he also will be throughout [δὲ παντός].

Even more frequently mentioned than Christ's consubstantiality with the Father is his becoming flesh. Cyril mentions that the Savior "received our likeness," "became man," and "underwent our likeness."⁶

³The increased references to Christ and the incarnation would suggest a period of greater theological and philosophical debate in Egypt. It would be an attractive hypothesis to place Cyril's earlier troubles in this period (A.D. 421-426). Cyril's troubles with the prefect Orestes, leading up to the death of Hypatia, could well have been accompanied by an increase in theological arguments. In fact, it is difficult to imagine a major ecclesiastical even in the ancient world that was strictly "political."

⁴Cyril of Alexandria, Paschal Homily #4, Migne, PG, v. 77, 469B. In the rest of this chapter, references to the Paschal Letters will be given by the number of the Paschal Letter and the column in Migne.

⁵Ibid., 1:424D.

⁶Ibid., 1:407A, 1:424C, 4:469B.

In a number of places he also says that Christ became man "through [$\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$] the Virgin Mary," a phrase that could be used in a Nestorian sense.⁷

Though he used that phrase, Cyril also clearly stated that the body and blood that were born 'through' Mary were the body and blood of the Word. "And the Logos reasonably makes the suffering [$\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$] his own; for the body is his [$\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$], and not something of another."⁸

Cyril does not speak of a union of the divine and human natures in these early letters. In fact, in his first letter, he even mentions a 'division' or an 'interval' between the divine and human natures.⁹ However, this does not seem to be the separation that Nestorius thought of. Rather, it was the preserving for each nature, the characteristics proper to it.

. . . who, undergoing the cross, suffering disgrace, and the bitterness of death, even as God being impassible [$\alpha\pi\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\varsigma$], and undying [$\alpha\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$] as the subsisting [$\upsilon\pi\acute{\omicron}\rho\chi\omega\nu$] Logos, and only-begotten of the Father,¹⁰

Another important emphasis in these early letters is Cyril's emphasis on soteriology. Cyril's objection to Nestorius' teaching was based at least partially on his fear of what Nestorius' teaching would do to the proclamation of the cross.

. . . born [$\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon\eta\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\varsigma$] from [$\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$] a woman, and being born man on the earth, in order that, just as Paul says [Hebrews 2:17] that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest [549D] toward God; in order that all of our sins, just as it is again written [1 Peter 2:24]

⁷Ibid., 1:424C, 2:448D, 6:532A. Nestorius did use the phrase "through Mary" in later years. Cyril used "through Mary" but seems to have meant "from Mary." See below, footnote 11.

⁸Ibid., 5:496D.

⁹Ibid., 1:407A. "This is because there is a division/interval [$\delta\iota\omega\sigma\tau\eta\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$] between much of the human nature and the Word of God."

¹⁰Ibid., 7:537D. Other somewhat similar references are in 2:433B, 5:496C and 7:552A.

might be nailed in his body [ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ] to the wood, . . .¹¹

A precursor of the Nestorian and Eutychian controversy can also be in Cyril's letters. There he comments that the Word was born through Mary, "whom he was not taking up [ἀναλαβών], whom he was not receiving in addition to [προσλαβών], . . ."¹² Cyril's emphasis here seems to be twofold. In opposition to what would be Nestorianism, Cyril seems to be saying that the humanity was not something extra that was added to the divinity; and in opposition to what would be Monophysitism, he seems to be denying a reception of the human nature into the nature of the Word.

In the middle of this pre-Nestorian period, there was an increase in the number of references to Christ and his two natures. Once again, one of the main points Cyril makes is that Christ is the Word, consubstantial [ὁμοούσιος] with the Father. "For he was, and he is, and he will be God according to nature [φύσει], both before [πρό] the flesh and with [μετά] the flesh."¹³

Just as often, if not more so, than in the earlier letters, Cyril also points to the true humanity of Christ, "And becoming thus [man] in truth, and receiving [λαβών] flesh from [ἐκ] the woman, I say indeed [of] the holy Virgin [τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου], . . ."¹⁴ The Arians he was dis-

¹¹Ibid., 7:537D. See also 1:408B where Cyrils says he "became from a woman, the things according to flesh, in order that he might save [διασώσῃ] man out of woman, and destroying the prison of death."

¹²Ibid., 1:424C-D.

¹³Ibid., 8:568B. Also 8:576B-C, 9:581C, 10:617B, 10:628C, 11:661C, 12:681C and 12:688A.

¹⁴Ibid., 11:664A. Also 8:568D, 10:609C, 12:692B. Nor was this a becoming in appearance, as Nestorius tried to say. In 13:705A, Cyril says ". . . we do not worship [him] as being made in man, however his-own-according-to-nature he became man," and Cyril made up the word "αὐτοκατάφυσιν" to express this concept.

puting with recognized, in a sense, the humanity of Christ;¹⁵ Cyril's emphasis was always to follow the proclamation of Christ's divinity with the assertion of his humanity as well.

Even though Cyril spoke about the union of the two natures of Christ, it is somewhat surprising to find that he warns against separating the two natures from each other in these years before the Nestorian controversy. The interesting question is raised here of what Cyril was speaking against. It is not known whether this was a 'general' warning to his people or whether there was a 'pre-Nestorian' group that was tending to divide the two natures of Christ.

For indeed thinking rightly, we do not say two sons, nor two Christs, or Lords, but rather one Son and Lord, and before [πρὸ] the incarnation, and that he had the sheath [περιβολήν] of the flesh. For not dividing into two [εἰς δύο], and knowing man privately [ἰδίᾳ], and again making [it] his own [ἰδίᾳ] δούτως we worship the Word as God receiving from [ἐκ] the substance [οὐσίᾳ] of God the Father; however wholly cutting or dividing according to the word of the sonship is not allowed with [μετά] the union [σύνθεσιν] towards [πρὸς] the flesh; and knowing the son one and only, only-begotten . . .¹⁶

Whereas in the earlier letters (letters 1-7) the union had been implied and not clearly stated, in the letters of the years 421-426 (letters 8-13), the concept of 'union' is put forth, although in different words and without any great precision in the choice of words. The rela-

¹⁵Nestorius claimed that Cyril was Arian since Nestorius' understanding of Arianism seems to be dominated by the 'minor' Arian point of the Word dwelling in a soulless body. "The Arians confess that he [Jesus] is half God and half man of soulless body and of created divinity; . . ." Nestorius, The Bazaar of Heracleides, ed. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 8. Grillmeier points out, in his discussion on Arianism, that the Arians ". . . professed a 'formal' denial of the soul of Christ." Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 1: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), second ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 239.

¹⁶Cyril of Alexandria, Paschal Letter #11, Migne, PG, v. 77, 664A-B.

tionship between the two natures if referred to as a "synod" [σύννοδος], a "sharing" [κοινωνίαν], a "union [ένότητι] of the inexpressible synod, one both before [πρό] the flesh and with [μετά] the flesh," even as "blended [συνκεκραμένος] according to the union [καθ' ένωσιν]."¹⁷

However, though Cyril had not settled on one phrase yet, it is evident what he had in mind.

. . . the canon of the orthodox faith is undistorted, two things [πραγματων] unlike according to nature [κατά την φύσιν] in this become united [σύννοδος], clearly both divinity and humanity. And Christ is one out of both [έξ άμφοίν].

[Commenting on Matthew 18:13-16["You are the Christ, the son of the living God." He did not say "In [έν] you is the son," but knowing one and the same, both before [πρό] the flesh, and with [μετά] the flesh, he said "You are the son of the living God."¹⁸

Since there was a union, whatever it was called, the flesh was not something outside of the Word, but it was the Word's. "Since indeed not another he considers the flesh, but rather he made the same [αυτήν] his own temple [ἕξου ναόν], and becoming man, he was worshiped also by the holy angels."¹⁹

Contained in the last three letters (letters 14-16) Cyril wrote before the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy, there are, once again, fewer references to the two natures. In Letter 14, from 427, Cyril mentions that the Word remained what he had been, though he emptied himself.²⁰

The next year (letter 15, 428), he repeats much the same thing, emphasizing that the Word was begotten and did not change into the substance of that which was born. In that year (the year in which Nestorius

¹⁷Ibid., 11:664A, 10:609D, 8:569C, 13:705B.

¹⁸Ibid., 8:572A (where he is quoting Athanasius), 8:576A.

¹⁹Ibid., 8:572A.

²⁰Ibid., 15:757C, 16:765C.

became the bishop of Constantinople), Cyril repeats that the only-begotten became man. However, he then goes on to warn that, the economy and union being above reason and mind, it was not profitable to 'meddle' in trying to find out the manner in which the union took place.²¹

The Nestorian Letters

With the outbreak of the Nestorian heresy in the winter of 429, Cyril's concentration was shifted from the Arians to Nestorius and his friends. In the Paschal Letters written from 430 to the end of Cyril's life (letters 17-30), much more discussion is found on the subject of the two natures of Christ.

Though little is actually new, in terms of what Cyril had said in years before, there are at least two points to be found apparently directed primarily toward Nestorius. Cyril, in these letters also emphasized the voluntary emptying of Christ (partially because Nestorius believed that a "union" would be forced and coercive) and that Christ was a true man with a rational soul (in opposition to the accusation of Apollinarianism against Cyril).

The anti-Nestorian Paschal letters also can be divided into two main groups. The first group of letters, from 430-433 (letters 17-20), are letters written during the height of the controversy. In these letters Cyril discussed the incarnation of Christ at some length. The second group, written from 434-443 (letters 21-30), seem to reflect Cyril's opinion that the controversy was over. These letters still mention almost all of the emphases that were to be found earlier, but the discussion is shorter and more scattered.

²¹Ibid., 15:757C, 16:765C.

The seventeenth Paschal Letter was written in the spring of 430, following the distribution of Nestorius' sermons in Egypt and Cyril's letter to the monks of Egypt. As such, one would expect that it would be a very important statement of Cyril's Christology to the people of Alexandria and Egypt.

The letter is that, an important statement of Cyril's Christology, but it is not a systematic treatment of Christology. When Cyril gets around to discussing the christological problems, he begins by pointing out that Christ ". . . reached down to our station [τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς], and he submitted voluntarily to the emptying [κένωσιν]; . . ." ²²

The Word, Cyril says, was given together into unity [ένωσιν]. This unity was ". . . from both [natures] [ἐξ ἀμφοῖν] being braided together into one thing [εἰς έν τι], in order that he might not be considered simply as a God-bearing [θεοφορήσας] man, but rather as God enhumanized [έν-ἡνθρωπικῶς], . . ." Both of the natures are to be considered one Christ and one Lord, Cyril insisted. It was wrong to say that part went into man, to "cut God short" after the "inexpressible intertwining [συμπλοκήν]," the "commingling into unity [εἰς ένότητα συνδεδραμηκότων]." ²³

Cyril is emphatic on the point that the union is ". . . together both divine and human, in order that in the same thing it might be considered both man according to us [καθ' ἡμᾶς] and God on account of us [ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς]; thus both only-begotten and firstborn." ²⁴

While Nestorius, at Ephesus, could say "I cannot term him God who was two or three months old," Cyril has no trouble in saying that the Word came out of the Virgin and was an infant. Mary can be considered

²² Ibid., 17:773B-C.

²³ Ibid., 17:776A.

²⁴ Ibid., 17:776B. Emphasis added.

the mother of God, Cyril says, since Mary did not give birth to ". . . simple [ἀπλῶς] flesh and blood, . . ." and did not give birth to a man on whom the Word descended, as He did in the prophets.²⁵

The divinity was not naked here on earth, but was

. . . rather enhumanized and the Word from [ἐκ] God the Father was united [ἐνωθέντα] to the flesh born from the Virgin, . . . And the infant was not according to us [καθ' ἡμᾶς], that is, not nakedly and alone [ψίλη καὶ μόνη] in the likeness towards us; however in humanity, on account of [διὰ] the flesh, and divinely, as above [ὑπὲρ] us and from heaven.²⁶

While Christ was in swaddling clothers [σπαργάνοις] on account of his humanity, he was also by nature God, with inexpressible power raiding the domain [σκεύη] of Satan. On one hand, the birth was not a birth of a deity, but on the other hand Emmanuel was God according to nature [κατὰ φύσιν], and the swaddling clothers were His.²⁷

Some, Cyril says, could dare to suggest that the increasing in age and wisdom [Luke 2:52] was to be applied to the man. This, however, ". . . is nothing other, than to divide into two [εἰς δύο] the one Christ, . . ." Some will then ask, Cyril says, how it was possible for the human nature to make room for the divinity, how this union [ἑνωσεως] could take place. To this Cyril replies that it is a wonder [θαῦμα] beyond reason [πέρα λόγου], and the manner of the economy is not easy for humans to understand.²⁸

Using the illustration of the burning bush that was not consumed, Cyril says that the bush is a type of Christ. Then,

. . . on the other hand incompatible to each other reasonably

²⁵Ibid., 17:776C-777A. The quote from Nestorius is taken from Socrates, Ecclesiastical History, vii, 34, NPNF², p. 172.

²⁶Ibid., 17:777C.

²⁷Ibid., 17:780C.

²⁸Ibid., 17:780D, 17:781A.

[εἰκότως] they might be in a physical unity [ἐνότητά φυσικῆν], divine and human. And therefore likewise he fits together, as one Christ, and one Emmanuel out of both [ἐξ ἀμφοῶν]. And the one indeed who places one separately [ἀνά μέρος], and raises it to us, and another son by itself, to the thing from [ἐκ] God according to nature [κατὰ φύσιν], he does not accurately understand the depth of the mystery. For we have not served a man, . . . ; but rather God, as he said, enhumanized [ἐνῆθρωπήκοτι], and the Word out of the Father being, considered²⁹ as one with his own body [ὡς ἐν νοούμενῳ μετὰ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος].

Those who do not confess a union (though Cyril does not mention anyone by name) are doing what Romans 1:23 warns against, exchanging the glory of God for an image in the form of a man.

. . . unbroken the union, the union towards [πρός] the Word from [ἐκ] God the Father, [and] we guard the nature to the humanity, in order that as God he might be worshipped, towards [πρός] both the human [τε ἡμῶν αὐτῶν] and divine [καὶ τῶν ἁπῶ πνευματικῶν].³⁰

Towards the very end of this seventeenth letter, Cyril once again attacks his unnamed opponents, and compares them to the Jews of John 10:33.

For someone must be without understanding [ἄσυνέτων] to babblingly contend and greedily assault the small things concerning him [περὶ αὐτοῦ] on account of the flesh, both making excuses in sins, and accusingly saying, 'For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God.'³¹

Cyril's writings in this first response to Nestorianism are not phrased very clearly (for example, the union being a 'comingling' [συν-

²⁹ Ibid., 17:781D-784A.

³⁰ Ibid., 17:785B. G. L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought (London: SPCK, 1952, reprinted 1969) comments that one of the big problems in understanding patristic thought is that the Fathers used 'spirit' as a synonym for the divine nature (p. xix).

³¹ Ibid., 17:785C. Cyril's argument here is not that Nestorius is denying the divinity of Jesus, as the Jews did, but rather that Nestorius is just as "offended" of God becoming flesh as the Jews were. Therefore, just as the Jews did, Nestorius looms at the human nature and insists that this cannot be God, but can only have God dwelling in the human nature.

δεδραμηκότου]), yet the main thought of Cyril is basically understandable. To the people of Alexandria, Cyril had proclaimed that there was one Lord and one Christ, who was both divine and human, united in a way beyond describing. However, the union had taken place in such a way that, though the divine nature did not change, yet the Word suffered and died. No division or separation was to be made in this union of the divine and human.

This is the same message that Cyril continued to tell the people of his diocese in the other letters (numbers 18-20) written during the 'height' of the controversy. He continued to state, almost at the beginning of every discussion, that the Word was from the father,

. "For the one from [ἐκ] God the Father being God by nature [κατὰ φύσιν]. . . ." ³²

Nestorius having protested against a forcible union, Cyril repeated that the emptying had been voluntary.

The only-begotten Word of God subsisting [ὑπάρχων] [as] life according to nature [κατὰ φύσιν], therefore came down emptying himself voluntarily [εἰς ἑκούσιον], and became according to us [καθ' ἡμᾶς], that is, man, . . .

Against Nestorius' complaint that such a birth involved a change in the substance of God, Cyril continued to state that there was no change in the divine nature or substance. ". . . not submitting to a change of things from his own nature [τῆν ἀπὸ γε τῆς ἰδίας φύσεως] into flesh, the things from [ἐκ τῆς] the earth; . . ." ³⁴ Yet, though there was no change into the flesh, the Word became flesh, flesh having a real

³²Ibid., 20:840C. The quote continues with John 1:14, "The Word became flesh." See also 18:817C, 19:836B.

³³Ibid., 18:813B-C. See also 20:841C.

³⁴Ibid., 18:813C. See also 20:840C, 20:841A.

human soul and mind.

For we confess, that the Word was God, he became flesh, that is, man, not receiving body without soul or mind [ἐψυχου ουδέ άνου], but rather with soul [ἐψυχωμένον] and mind [έννοου], so that according to all things he³⁵ is made one, [ένωθεις] [with] his brothers, except for sin, . . .

The body and blood of the Word, Cyril continues to say, were his own. Therefore he suffered like us, since ". . . he received the seed of Abraham, and made common [κεκοινώηκεν] [the] blood and flesh, the body his own according to nature [κατά φύσιν], that he might be called our brother, . . ." ³⁶ This was the union of God and man in the Emmanuel.

And the Logos became flesh, according to the voice of the divine John, and they have commingled [συνδεδραμηκασι] toward union [πρός ένωσην] inexpressibly . . . ³⁷ both the life-giving divinity, and the humanity from [έκ] earth.

Throughout these letters, Cyril emphasizes, more than any other point, the fact that the union and the incarnation are necessary for our salvation. The Word had to be flesh so that he could rise from the dead for our benefit. He received his body from Mary so that he could kill sins in the flesh. He became a slave, though he was free, to free us from punishment. He rose on the third day making "his own temple" alive so that the nature of man could be made stronger than death and corruption. ³⁸

Cyril left no doubt what he thought about the teachings of Nestorius, though he never does mention him by name to the people of Alexandria. It is inventors of "impious dogma" who, understanding little, set aside

³⁵Ibid., 20:841C. See also 18:813B, 19:833A.

³⁶Ibid., 19:836B. See also 19:829A.

³⁷Ibid., 18:813C.

³⁸Ibid., 18:813D, 19:829A, 19:836B, 20:848B.

the glory of the incarnation.

Therefore they despise the birth of the only-begotten according to the flesh [κατὰ σάρκα]; they say that God is not born from the holy Virgin [ἀποτεκεῖν τὴν ἁγίαν Παρθένον] in truth according to the flesh, as indeed from the voice of the holy evangelist 'The Word became flesh.' But rather they say that the Word of the Father lived in a man [ἐνθρώπῳ], in order that in the same rank as the prophets the Savior is found to be a God-bearing [θεοφόρος] man, . . .³⁹

In view of the Monophysite heresy, there is one noteworthy statement made in these letters. The Monophysites claimed that Cyril and Ephesus had taught that there was only one nature after the incarnation. However, in 431 (letter 18), Cyril states that Christ became

. . . the door and gate and the first of human nature [ἀπταρχὴ τῆς ἐνθρώπου φύσεως] stepping up into incorruptability [ἀβθαρσίαν], he ascended into heaven to the God and Father, and he is co-enthroned and is ruler over all. . . .⁴⁰

In view of this definite statement, that Christ was the first of human nature to ascend, and since Cyril was always so definite about the Logos being present in the union, it becomes hard to see how Cyril was claimed as the source of the teaching that there was only one nature after the incarnation.

In the remaining Paschal Letters (written from 434 until 443, numbers 21-30), one can see a 'slowing down' of the controversy, since Cyril speaks less often in each letter, and at less length in each letter, about the Nestorian controversy. Since an agreement had been reached with John of Antioch in 433, there apparently was less of a need for Cyril to continue the arguments about the two natures.

However, the same points that Cyril had made in the years before, continue to be made. The Word is begotten, ἑμοούσιος with the Father,⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 20:840D.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18:820B.

⁴¹ Ibid., the Word is equal in majesty and dignity, co-eternal, and is Maker [κτίστης] and creator [δημιουργός] of heaven and earth, 21:852C;

yet he was not changing into flesh, but ". . . remaining what he was [μείνου ὁ ἦν]. . ."⁴²

Though the Word did not change into flesh, yet the Word became flesh economically.⁴³ The Word became true man, taking to himself ". . . both bones and flesh, I say, according to the things born together in humanity [κάτα τὸ ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι συγγενές]."⁴⁴ Since he took the body, the body and blood are his, and the death is also the Word's;

Indeed willingly he suffered [in the] flesh the things of its own and having remained passionless [ἀπαθής] in his own nature [τῇ ἰδίᾳ φύσει]. And we say that he suffered. For his own body suffered [ἴδιον αὐτοῦ πέπονθε σῶμα], in order that we might be led out of suffering.⁴⁵

This suffering could happen because of the union. Cyril at one place described that union as

. . . placing himself all together, in order that as one [ὡς εἷς] with things according to us, both coming to one and the same place and living together [συνδικαιτῶμενος], . . .

He could also describe this union as

. . . receiving body and blood, and having the form of a servant

"We confess ὁμοούσιος the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.", 21:856C; ". . . subsisting [ὑπάρχων] [as] God according to nature [κατὰ φύσιν] and indescribably [ἀπορρήτως] begotten from [ἐκ] God the Father" 22:868C; ". . . subsisting [ὑπάρχων] equal in dignity and power, as ὁμοούσιος to him [αὐτῷ]. . . ." 25:901C; "The Word produced [ἀναφύς] from the same substance [ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς οὐσίας] of God the Father. . . ." the quote continues with Philippians 2:6-7, 26:924B; "For the Word taking fire [ἀναλάμψας] from the substance [ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας] of God the Father, . . . the image, the reflection of his glory, the co-throned and co-eternal Son, . . ." 27:937A; after quoting Heb. 1:3, John 14:9, and John 17:22, "And indeed in all, according to, I say, the identity of substance [ταυτότητα τῆς οὐσίας]. . . ." 29:961C.

⁴²Ibid., 25:909D. See also 26:925C, 27:940D, 30:977C.

⁴³Ibid., 22:861A. See also 22:869B, 23:880B, 24:888A, 24:896D, 25:901C, 26:924B, 26:925C, 27:937A, 28:953A, 29:961B, 30:997C.

⁴⁴Ibid., 23:880B.

⁴⁵Ibid., 27:941A. See also 30:977C.

[δούλου μορφήν] as his own [ὡς ἑδίδακ] . . . becoming man and not coming into [εἰς] man, or joining [συνάφας] man to himself, . . .⁴⁶

The communication of attributes is mentioned by Cyril only so far as the Word made the flesh his own and suffered and died in that flesh. It was necessary for Cyril to say at least that much for soteriological reasons. Since this was always important for Cyril it is not surprising to find it mentioned a number of times. Nor is it surprising for Cyril to speak on this point in terms of 'deification,' that we are saved by being made like God.

. . . but rather in an assumption [ἐν προσληψει] becoming flesh and blood, in order that we might become united to the divine nature [τῆς Θεϊκῆς φύσεως γενώμεθα κοινωνοί], receiving spiritual benefits from being joined [συναφεία] to Him, . . .⁴⁷

One of the crucial questions, especially in this latter period of Cyril's episcopacy is whether Cyril expressed himself in terms that could have ruled out the Monophysite heresy (the view that there was only one nature in Christ after the incarnation). Cyril had always strongly emphasized the divine nature of Christ. At least in one place, he definitely speaks of a human nature in the incarnate Christ, not only after the incarnation, but also after the resurrection and ascension. "For living again, and ascending to the Father, [he is the] firstfruits [πρωτόλειον] of humanity to be made new in immortality."⁴⁸

Summing up Cyril's statements regarding his Christology in the Paschal Letters, there is certainly an emphasis on the Word's being consubstantial [ὁμοούσιος] with the Father, and on the 'economy' of the Word

⁴⁶Ibid., 30:980B, 27:937A.

⁴⁷Ibid., 25:901C. Note that συναφεία is the relation of the 'deified' man to the divine nature, not the relation of the Logos to the . . . See also 21:852C and 21:956A.

⁴⁸Ibid., 26:928B. See footnote 40 above.

becoming flesh. The next point that seems to receive emphasis is the soteriological one, that the Word had to become flesh in order to bring about the salvation of the world.

Cyril did tell his people that the Word became a true man, that the body and blood were the Word's, and that there was a union of the divine and human natures. However, in none of the Paschal Letters does Cyril clearly explain or explicitly define what this union was (for example, the term 'hypostatic union' is not used in his Paschal Letters), as he did in his letters directed to theologians.⁴⁹

The 'Personal' Letters

There are eighty-one letters of Cyril's 'personal' correspondence preserved in Migne's collection of the Greek fathers. Most of those are letters to "important" people, written by Cyril to Nestorius, John of Antioch, and other theologians and bishops. However, seven of those letters were written to groups of people in Cyril's diocese (letters 1, 20, 21, 24, 25, 79, and 81).

Cyril wrote four letters to the clergy and people of Alexandria (letters 20, 21, 24, and 25), one to the bishops of Libya and the Pentapolis (letter 79), and one to the monks of Phoura (letter 81). None of these letters, though, present Cyril's Christology in any way. Even letter 24, written from Ephesus, mentions only that Nestorius was deposed because of his impiety, and that Ephesus had approved the term 'theotokos.'

While six of the seven surviving letters addressed to Egyptians are

⁴⁹Perhaps this was so because of Cyril's insistence that the incarnation was a deep mystery that was beyond words and reason. However, it is equally likely that he could have also realized there would be problems if he did explain further, as can be seen by the complaints against him when he signed the Formula in A.D. 433.

silent about Christology, the first letter of the collection is the exact opposite. Written to the monks of Egypt, who had been bothered by Nestorius' sermons on the incarnation, the letter deals with little else but the incarnation and the union of natures in Christ.

At the very beginning of the letter is found Cyril's answer to the question that Nestorius had addressed. Nestorius had been worried and upset about the use of the term "theotokos," since someone might think that Mary had given birth to the deity. The sermons of Nestorius, therefore, denounced the term "theotokos," and suggested the term "Christotokos." Cyril, however, said

I am amazed that there are some who are extremely doubtful whether the holy Virgin should be called Mother of God or no. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is God, then surely the holy Virgin who gave him birth must be God's mother.⁵⁰

After stating so clearly that Mary was God's mother, Cyril went on to examine who had been born from Mary. First, he points out that Christ had been declared at Nicea to be with the Father.⁵¹

. . . and following the faith of the holy Fathers, we say [that] the Son was begotten [γεγεννησθαι] from [ἐκ] the substance [οὐσίας] of God the Father truly and divinely and inexpressibly [ἀπορρήτως], and is discerned in his own person [ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὑποστάσει], and is discerned as one [ἐνοῦσθαι] [in] the identity of substance [οὐσίας] with the Begetter [γεγεννηκότι], and is in [ἐν] him, and again has the Father in [ἐν] himself. And we confess [him] to be light from [ἐκ] [17C] light, God from [ἐκ] God according to nature [κατὰ φύσιν], both equal in dignity and power, both representation and reflection, and therefore according to all things equal in measure, in no way having too little. For numbered thus the holy Spirit, the holy and consubstantial [ὁμοούσιος] Trinity is discerned as one [ἐνοῦται] in one divine nature [φύσιν].

However, the inspired Scripture says [that] the Word from [ἐκ] God became flesh, that is, was united [ἐνωθησάτω] to flesh having a

⁵⁰Cyril of Alexandria, Letter 1, ad monachos Aegypti, quoted by Henry Bettenson, The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 252.

⁵¹Cyril, ad monachos Aegypti, Migne, PG, v. 77, 16B.

rational soul. And following the evangelical proclamation the holy and great synod, said [that] the one begotten [γεγεννημένον] [from Mary is the] only-begotten from [ἐκ] the substance [οὐσίας] of God the Father, the one through whom all things and in whom all things [are] [Col. 1:17], on account of us men and on account of our salvation he descended from [ἐξ] heaven, and was enfleshed [σάρκω θῆναι] and enhumanized [ἐνανθρωπήσαι, from ἐνανθρωπήσω] both to suffer [παθεῖν] and to rise again, . . . and he is named the Word from [ἐκ] God, one Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore observe indeed in what way [you are] saying one Son, and he is named Lord and Christ Jesus, and say [φωσεν] [that he] is begotten from [ἐκ] God the Father, and is the only-begotten, and God from [ἐκ] God, and light from [ἐκ] light, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father [ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί].⁵²

The Son is truly God, Cyril says, even though Scripture calls us gods by grace. Then, in dealing with the question of whether Mary gave birth to the deity, Cyril goes to some lengths to confess that the Word is truly God, consubstantial [ὁμοούσιος] with the Father.

. . . the divine and enhypostatic [ἐνυπόστατος] Word of him from [ἐκ] the substance [οὐσίας] of God the Father . . . became flesh, that is, he was made one [with] flesh having a rational soul, he is said to have been begotten [γεγεννηθη] in a fleshly way [σάρκε κῶς] through [διὰ] a woman.⁵³

Although Cyril did confess there was a difference between the human and divine natures, he also points out that there is also a difference between the flesh and the rational soul, yet a mother gives birth to both soul and body. For example, Elizabeth was the source of the flesh of John the Baptist, not his spirit, yet she is called the mother of John the Baptist, not the mother of the flesh.⁵⁴

Cyril warns against cutting in two the one Lord Jesus Christ, making one into the man and the other into the Word of God. The Word, out of the substance of the Father, dwelt in man, being born through a woman. In answer to Nestorius' fear that someone might say the deity was born,

⁵²Ibid., 17B-D.

⁵³Ibid., 21B.

⁵⁴Ibid., 21C.

Cyril says,

. . . but rather bringing together into union [συνενεγκόντες εἰς ἐνώσειν] the Word begotten from [ἐκ] God, and the complete man from [ἐκ] the holy Virgin, and worshipping one Christ Jesus and Lord, not seeing the divinity placed outside [ἔξω] on account of [δὲ] the flesh, and not bringing into humanity bare [ψελλήν] on account of [δὲ] the likeness towards us

And now he received the seed of Abraham and the Word of God was united [κεκοινώηκεν] to blood and flesh, making the body from [ἐκ] the woman his own, in order that he might be not only subsisting [ὑπάρχων] as God, but also as becoming man, considered according to us on account of [δὲ] the union [ἐνώσειν]. Therefore confessed from two things [ἐκ δυοῦ πραγμάτων], both divinity and humanity, [he is] the Emmanuel. Indeed one Lord Jesus Christ, both one and truly Son, the same both God and man; not being made God [θεοποιηθῆς] in equality to those [divine things] according to grace, [29A] but rather truly God appearing in human form [ἄνθρωπείᾳ μορῇ] on account of us.⁵⁵

Christ is called Lord and God, and so he is not simply a man who bears God, not an instrument who must receive from someone else, but rather he is the Emmanuel, truly God who is 'enhumanized.' The union becomes necessary then, Cyril says, because the body is not someone else's, but the body is that of the Word who is begotten by the Father.⁵⁶

The problem with such a Christology, as Cyril himself realized, was the question of what then happened at the crucifixion.

Since his death was the salvation of the world, he underwent the cross and the disgrace of condemnation, and indeed life subsisting [ὑπάρχων] according to nature [κατὰ φύσιν]. Therefore, how can it be said that life died? Suffering death in his own flesh [τῇ ἰδίᾳ σαρκί], in order that life might appear [φάνηται] again, making it [αὐτῆν, the flesh] alive.

Since Christ is truly God, and since the one who was crucified is called the Lord of glory, how can anyone, Cyril asks, doubt that the holy

⁵⁵Ibid., 28B-29A.

⁵⁶Ibid., 32C. ". . . for [the] body is not of another certain [someone] according to us, but rather his own of the same Word being from [ἐκ] the Father, . . ."

⁵⁷Ibid., 36B-C.

Virgin is the *θεοτόκος*? It is the 'insanity' of the Jews to doubt that the one who appears a man is also God. However, Christians do not worship a bare man, but rather the one who is God according to nature, who became flesh like us, though he remained what he had always been.⁵⁸

As in his other writings, in his letter to the monks Cyril lays great emphasis on the fact of the Word's consubstantiality [*ὁμοούσιος*] with the Father. In fact, that is one of the main emphases of the letter, since it receives more attention than any other emphasis. This Word became flesh, even though there was no change of the Word into anything else.

However, in this letter Cyril also emphasized the union of the two natures, and insisted that even talking about the Word as opposed to the man in Christ was splitting the one Christ into two. The body that was born of the Virgin Mary was the body of the Word, and the suffering that that body underwent was also the suffering of the Word (though the Word cannot and did not suffer in his own nature).

It is also in this letter that Cyril discusses at some length his illustration of the union. While Nestorius used the analogy of a man dressing in his clothes, Cyril used the analogy of the human being, who is born composed of both body and soul. A mother is not the source of the human soul, God is, yet the union between body and soul is so close that the mother is said to be the mother of the one individual who is made up of body and soul.

In the same way, the union between divine and human is close. Even though Mary is not the source of the human soul, or of the pre-existent Word, the union is so close that Mary can be called the *θεοτόκος*, the

⁵⁸Ibid., 40A-B.

Mother of God (that is, she who bore, as far as his human nature is concerned, the one who was God).

In his letters to the people of his diocese, Cyril continually makes a number of important points. He constantly emphasizes that the Word of God was consubstantial with the Father. Cyril firmly states that there is a union between the divine nature and the human nature in Christ Jesus, while also insisting that the divine nature did not undergo a change in entering this union. At the same time, the human nature was not a 'bare' man who bore God in some way, but God the Word united to himself human nature which included flesh, soul and mind. Since a union had occurred between these two natures, there could be no dividing of the one Christ into two persons.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SERMONS OF CYRIL

In Migne's edition of the Greek fathers, there are two sermons (in fragments) that are labeled as having been preached at Alexandria (number 21, On Faith, and number 22). There is also one sermon, labeled as being preached against Nestorius (number 16), and two others that seem to deal directly with the Nestorian controversy (number 15, On the Incarnation of the Word of God, and number 20, 'whose argument is that it is not said a God-bearing man, but God humanized').¹

These sermons are fragmentary, with little remaining of them. Sermon 22 mentions only one thing in reference to the two natures.

The Virgin bore for us [ἡμῶν] the Emmanuel, according to the divinity homoousios with the Father [τῷ Πατρὶ], according to the humanity homoousios with us [ἡμῶν]; according to the divinity impassible; according to the humanity suffering. . . .²

In Sermon 21, Cyril talks about the one Christ being confessed in both natures, ". . . being both God and man together [ὁμοῦν] . . .," not joined [κεκραμμένον] or mixed, but united in one [ἓνα μόνον ἐνωθέντα]. The sermon is emphatic that there is no mixture of natures [ἀμφοτέρων ἀσυγχύτους τὰς φύσεις], for then, according to Cyril, there would have to be confusion in the one Christ.³

¹Cyril of Alexandria, Sermon 20, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 1112A.

²Idem, Sermon 22, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 1116A.

³Idem, Sermon 21, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 112C. In this sermon Cyril

Cyril told the Alexandrians in this sermon that there was no separation or division of the human and divine until the death of Christ. At that time, ". . . the spirit separate from [ἀπὸ] the body descends into hell with [μετὰ] the divinity, and the body separate from [ἀπὸ] the spirit is placed into a new tomb. . . ." While there may be a separation of body and soul at the time of death, there is not separation as such between the divinity and the human spirit.⁴

The sermon also speaks about preserving the properties of the different natures.

. . . and united to the same inexpressible [ἀρρήτως] and [1113A] unutterable word [ἀβράστῳ λογῳ], not joined in [ἐν] him, or made flesh separately [ἀποσσεσρκωμένος], but preserving [ἀποσώζων] in himself the natures of different substances [τῶν φύσεων τῶν ἑτεροουσίων] unmixed the properties [ἀσυγχύτους τὰς ἰδιότητας].⁵

Cyril also quotes Athanasius in this sermon as saying, "Saving two natures of different substances [δύο φύσεων τῶν ἑτεροουσίων] in one Christ the Son of God, not confused, nor destroyed, or divided."⁶ Then Cyril spells out the union explicitly.

For he was made like us in all things, without sins, not changing the divine nature, or joined to [συγκραθείσης] the human nature, but united to it [αὐτῇ] not according to change [τροπῆν], joining [κράσεν], mixture [σύγχυσεν], confusion, alteration, commutation, destruction or transformation, but according to an inexpressible [ἀρρήτως] and indescribable [ἀνεκφράστον] union.⁷

The fragment of Sermon 20 that deals with the union points to one

Cyril mentions the four qualifications of Chalcedon, but not all at the same time or in the same form. The union is unconfused [ἀσυγχύτους], without separation or division [οὔτε χώρισμον ἢ διάρσεν], and without alteration [ἀλλοίωσεν rather than ἀτροπτος].

⁴Ibid., 1112D. It is worth pointing out the uniqueness of this quotation. While Cyril was willing to allow the 'normal' separating of human soul and body in death, the union of divine and human is so unbreakable and indivisible that the human soul accompanies the Word into hell.

⁵Ibid., 1112D-1113A.

⁶Ibid., 1113A.

⁷Ibid.

of Cyril's most important emphases, that it was God who descended and became man, rather than that a man was deified.

. . . that is we acknowledge the Word of God to be united to the flesh; and we do not say the Emmanuel is a God-bearing [Θεοφόρον] man, but we confess that being God by nature, he received the form of a servant [δούλον], and became the son of man; and the same one is together both God and man.⁸

Sermon 15 deals with the incarnation of the Word, and is worth considering, even though it is not known whether the sermon was preached at Alexandria. Cyril speaks of the incarnation as a great mystery (1 Tim. 3:16), a mystery that brings about the forgiveness of sins. What is born from the "holy theotokos" Mary is true God from [ἐκ] God, consubstantial with the Father, the Word who became one of us.

Therefore how did he become as we are [καθ' ἡμᾶς]? Taking [λαβὼν] a body from [σῶμα ἐκ] the holy Virgin; and the body is not without a soul, as is taught by some heretics, but rather being ensouled with a rational soul. Thus a perfect man came forth from woman, without sin . . .

Cyril is also careful in this sermon to rule out any change in the deity, or any division of the union.

. . . for we do not divide into two sons our one God and Savior, the Word of God made man and flesh; not, as some of the heretics and stupid ones do, separating both the divinity and humanity into different things, they consider the Word of God as withdrawing into the nature of the flesh, or the flesh changing into the nature of the divinity; for unchanged [ἀτρέπτος] and completely unchanging [ἄναλλοίωτος παντελῶς] is the Word of God, but that the Word of God united the flesh to himself, ensouled with a rational soul, from the holy Virgin in truth, he is said indescribably [ἀβράστως] to be enfleshed and enhumanized [σεσαρκῶσθαι καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαι].¹⁰

Cyril is also careful to say that Mary did not give birth to the "naked divinity," but rather she gave birth to the Word united to the

⁸Ibid., Sermon 20, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 1112B.

⁹Ibid., Sermon 15, On the Incarnation of the Word of God, Migne, vol. 77, 1092C.

¹⁰Ibid., 1092D.

flesh. This was the only way in which Mary was to be considered the Mother of God. While Cyril is also careful to say that the Christ is ὁμοούσιος (not ὁμοιούσιος) with God the Father, he also insists that Christ is also ὁμοούσιος (not ὁμοιούσιος) with us as well.

. . . the holy virgin became the mother of God giving birth wondrously to the one Christ, equally with us receiving flesh and blood, and homoousios both with her [ἀνθρώπου] and to us [ἡμῶν] according to humanity, as being the flesh from [σάρκα ἐκ] Mary the mother of God; for not homoiousios, as some of the heretics teach, but homoousios, that is, out of our substance [οὐσίας] . . .¹¹

One comment that Cyril makes has to do with whether or not Mary should be called ἀνθρωποτόκος as had been suggested. As far as Cyril is concerned, it is not necessary to say ἀνθρωποτόκος if you have already said θεοτόκος. It is enough to say θεοτόκος since saying that Mary is the Mother of god is ". . . our confession of the mystery . . ." of the incarnation.¹²

While these five sermons or sermon fragments are the only sermons left in the Greek that Cyril preached to the people of Alexandria, a set of sermons on the Gospel of Luke were preserved in Syriac. While these 156 sermons do not deal with every passage of Luke, they are an extensive treatment of most of the Gospel, and considered as a whole, give a fairly complete representation of what the people of Alexandria were told about the two natures of Christ.

The two things that Cyril stresses more than anything else in these Lucan sermons is that Christ was the Word of God and that he became flesh. It becomes almost a cliché for Cyril to use those two phrases, and it

¹¹Ibid., 1093B.

¹²Ibid., 1093C. It is fascinating that Cyril really has no argument with ἀνθρωποτόκος. His point is that if one cannot use the term θεοτόκος for Mary then there is no way to express the incarnation of Christ.

becomes apparent that those two phrases represent Cyril's basic understanding. The incarnation meant that God the Word came down to earth and became a human being.¹³

There are, in fact, many places in the sermons on Luke where Cyril makes a strong statement about the fact that Christ was God the Word, God by nature, even though he also became a man.

. . . that Christ, by Whom they were honored with the dignity of the Apostolate, was not some ordinary man of those in our degree, but, on the contrary, God, as being the Word that was made man, but retained, nevertheless, His own glory. For power went forth from Him, and healed all [Luke 5:17]. For Christ did not borrow strength from some other person, but being Himself God by nature, even though he had become flesh, He healed them all, by the putting forth of power over the sick.

Observe again, I pray, that the Incarnate Word of God exceeds the measure of humanity, and is radiant with the dignities of the Godhead. For it transcends the limits of human nature, to give authority over unclean spirits to whomsoever He will; as does also the enabling them to deliver from sicknesses such as were afflicted with them. . . . But Christ bestows them, as being God, therefore, and as out of His own fullness; for He is Himself the Lord of glory and

¹³It is important to note that Nestorius did object to Cyril's emphasis on the Word 'becoming' flesh. See Nestorius, Bazaar of Heracleides, edited by G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), book I, ii, pp. 93-94. The quotation in "And the properties of God the Word they set at nought and make them human; he would have acted naturally in nature and suffered in the sensibility of nature, accepting sufferings in his own ousia naturally, as the body (accepts those) of the soul and the soul (those) of the body. / Surely it is an awful and dreadful thing to conceive this and to tell men what and what sort of thoughts they have concerning the Son, the he is both made and created, and that he had been changed from impassible to passible and from immortal to mortal and from unchangeable to changeable." On the other hand, the Monophysites had a radically different outlook on the incarnation. Instead of God becoming flesh, a significant group of Monophysites emphasized the humanity being "absorbed" into the divinity. The 'direction' of the 'motion' here is the exact opposite of that in Cyril. Cyril has God coming to and becoming man with both natures remaining in the union, while all Monophysites insisted that there was only one nature after the incarnation. [One group of Monophysites taught that the human nature was absorbed, another that the divine nature 'disappeared' or 'emptied itself,' and two other groups either taught a mixture or composition of the natures. See F. Cayre, Manual of Patrology and History of Theology, 2 vols. (Paris: Desclée & Co., 1940), 2:58-59.

of powers.¹⁴

Strangely enough, Cyril does not stress, in these sermons on Luke, the fact that Christ was homouousios with the Father (in so many words), although he does make reference to that consubstantiality.

The reason, however, for which he [Peter] was thus admired is a very just one; for it was because he believed that He Whom he saw as one of us, that is, in our likeness, was the Son of God the Father, the Word, namely, That sprang forth from His substance, and became flesh, and was made man.¹⁵

However, it is clearly stated that Christ is God of God, and Cyril repeatedly points to the miracles that Jesus performed as absolute proof of the divine nature of Christ.

And next who is he that was sent, and who it also says was a slave? Perchance Christ Himself; for though God the Word is by nature God, and the very Son of God the Father, from Whom He was manifested, yet He emptied Himself, to take the form of a slave. As being, therefore, God of God He is Lord of all; but one may justly apply the appellation of a slave to the limits of His humanity. Yet though he had taken, as I said, the form of a slave, He was even so Lord as being God.¹⁶

This event, the Word becoming man, took place only through the voluntary emptying of the Word, through the Word humbling Himself.

¹⁴Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, trans. R. Payne Smith (Astoria, NY: Studion Publishers, 1983), p. 127 and p. 207. Other places where Cyril similarly emphasizes that Christ is the Word of God are pages 154, 157, 169, 172, 193, 208, 235, 261, 272, 281, 323, 335, 355, 391, 401, 418, 467, 508, 509, 545, 576, 591, and 620. Unfortunately, Smith does not give the appropriate Syriac word when he translates key terms. Smith also holds the interesting idea that the Council of Chalcedon had rejected the Christology of Alexandria, changed the confession of Ephesus, and adopted the Christology of the Antiochan school. He also seems to be of the belief that the Monophysite heresy held that it was 'no longer lawful' to distinguish the limits of the two natures in Christ, rather than the accepted view, that they held only one nature after the incarnation.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 418. Cyril specifically stresses the divine powers that Christ had on p. 156, 192, 199, and 261.

For what things are written of Him as a man show the manner of the emptying. For it were a thing impossible for the Word begotten of God the Father to admit nothing like this into His own nature; but when He became flesh, even a man like unto us, then He is born according to the flesh of a woman, and is said also to have been subject to the things that belong to man's state; . . . therefore, he gave the habits and laws of human nature power even over His own flesh.

For He was made flesh and became man, not to avoid whatever belongs to man's estate, and despise our poverty, but that we might be enriched with what is His, by His having been made like unto us in every particular, sin only excepted.

To save men He yielded Himself to emptiness, and became in fashion like unto us, and clothed Himself in [428] human poverty.¹⁷

Though there was this emptying, Cyril emphasized that there was no change in the divinity. There was especially no change of divinity into the humanity. ". . . He is the Son of God the Father by nature, even when He had become flesh: for He continued, as I have said, to be that which He had ever been, . . .¹⁸

But perchance some one will say, "What then? Having ceased to be Word, did He change into being flesh? Did He fall from His Majesty, having undergone a transformation unto something which previously He was not?" Not so, we say. Far from it. For by nature He is unchangeable and immutable. . . . While, therefore, He immutably retains that which He was, yet as having under this condition assumed our likeness, He is said to have been made flesh.

And now let him who thinks that Jesus was a mere man learn that he is in error, and far gone from the truth. For let him know, that though God the Word became flesh, yet that it was not possible for Him to cease to be that which He was, and that He continued to be God. For to be able to search the hearts and reins, and know their secrets, is the attribute of the supreme God alone, and besides Him of no other being whatsoever.¹⁹

Even though Cyril preserves the immutability of God, he is even

¹⁷Ibid., p. 63, p. 86, and p. 427-428. See also pages 81, 157, 159, 298, 337, 418, 555, 576, and 615.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 78, and p. 236. See also pages 76, 108, 331, 418, and 569.

more insistent upon the fact of the Word becoming flesh, taking on our form. As mentioned above, this is one of the two points that Cyril stresses the most. In fact, it is the most frequently mentioned christological point in his sermons on Luke. It was, for Cyril, of extreme important to emphasize that God the Word had become flesh, and not just that He had come to live in it.

God was in visible form like unto us: the Lord of all in the likeness of a slave, albeit the glory of lordship is inseparable from Him. Understand that the Only-begotten was made flesh; that He endured to be born of a woman for our sakes, . . .

The Only-begotten Word of God, therefore, crowned human nature with this great honor by becoming flesh, and taking upon Him our likeness. And thus, without in one single particular departing from the glories of His majesty -- for He wrought deeds worthy of God, even though He became, as I said, like unto us, and was of flesh and blood -- He broke the power of Satan by His almighty word.²⁰

God the Word not only became flesh, but He became flesh in a way that was above and beyond our understanding. The manner of the incarnation is unique to Christ, and is not like God's indwelling in us at all.

And let none of those whose wont it is to disbelieve say, "Since, therefore, the Word of God, being by nature life, dwells in us also, is the body of each one of us too endowed with the power of giving life?" Rather let him know that it is a perfectly different thing for the Son to be in us by a relative participation, and for Himself to become flesh, that is, to make that body His own which was taken from the blessed Virgin. For He is not said to become incarnate and be made flesh by being in us; but rather this happened once for all when He became man without ceasing to be God. The body, therefore, of the Word was that assumed by Him from the holy virgin, and made one with Him; but how, or in what manner this was done, we cannot tell; for it is incapable of explanation, and altogether beyond the powers₂₁ of the mind, and to Himself alone is the manner of the union known.

²⁰Ibid., p. 52, and p. 208. See also pages 39, 53, 86, 127, 149, 169, 172, 193, 208, 234, 236, 272, 281, 285, 288, 301, 323, 331, 355, 378, 391, 409, 467, 487, 500, 508, 509, 538, 555, 569, and 615.

²¹Ibid., p. 570. It must be pointed out, however, that while in the great majority of cases Cyril speaks of the Word as becoming flesh, there are exceptions. At one point Cyril speaks of the Word as ". . . in His holy flesh as in an ark, . . ." (p. 288), which certainly would

In becoming flesh, the Word became a true man, having a rational soul, and everything else that was needed to be truly human. The Word, Cyril says, limited Himself to all human limitations. In this way, Cyril apparently attempted to dismiss the charges of Apollinarianism against him.

So the all-powerful Word of God also, having joined by a real union unto Himself the living and intelligent temple taken from the holy Virgin, endowed it with the power of actively exerting His own god-like might.

Observe, I pray, that He does not yet quit the limits of humanity, but for the present confines Himself within them, because He has not as yet endured the precious cross; for He speaks as one of us; but, after the resurrection from the dead He revealed His glory, . . .²²

Having been born as a man, having emptied Himself, and made Himself subject to human limitations in the incarnation, Cyril states that the body and blood that were born of Mary were the Word's body and blood. What was born of Mary was not the flesh and blood of someone else, but was God's own flesh and blood.

have been appreciated by Nestorius. In that context, however, Cyril is trying to point out that while Christ was in our 'evil' form, He was not evil, being by nature good. In the other exception, Cyril is speaking of Malachi 3:1 ["And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; . . ."], and he comments "Now by the temple he here means the body, holy of a truth and undefiled, which was born of the holy virgin by the Holy Spirit in the power of the Father." (p. 3780 In Cyril's sermons on Luke, though, these are the only two times when he makes any reference to the Word being "in" the flesh, rather than becoming flesh. It is also noteworthy that Cyril never attempts to explain the union, and in all of the Lucan sermons he gives only one illustration of the union. Most often, he merely stressed that the manner and mode of the union were in comprehensible.

²²Ibid., p. 100, and page 574. See also pages 208, 356, 418, 510 and 608, and especially p. 63 (the first quote mentioned in footnote #17). This is an important point in dealing with Cyril's supposed Monophysite leanings. The decision over the Apollinarian controversy had already settled the question of whether Christ possessed everything a true man would have. If here, and elsewhere, Cyril stresses that Christ was true man, he could not also hold that, as true man, Christ had no human nature. Since Cyril was always insistent on the presence of the divine nature in the union, and since he also spoke of the human nature as being present

It was, my beloved, that thou mightest learn that the holy body of Christ is effectual for the salavation of man. For the flesh of the Almighty Word is the body of life, and was clothed with His might. . . . so, because it became the flesh of the Word, Who gives life to all, it therefore also has the power of giving life, and annihilates the inflence of death and corruption.

And hence, too, it is possible to see that His holy flesh bore in it the power and activity of God. For it was His own flesh, and not that of some other Son beside Him, distinct and separate from Him, as some most impiously imagine.²³

Since the body was the Word's, Cyril had no trouble postulating that the Word suffered, but suffered only in the flesh, not in His own divine nature. This suffering also included the passion on the cross, and death on the cross. All of this can be ascribed to the Word, because it was the Word's flesh and blood that was undergoing all these things.

It was, therefore, no unavailing sign, but rather one sufficient to convince all the inhabitants of the whole earth, that Christ is God, that of His own choice He suffered death in the flesh, but rose again, having commandd the bonds of death to depart, and overthrown corruption.

. . . but He submitted to suffer, because He knew that His passion would be for the salvation of the whole world. For He endured indeed the death of the flesh, but rose again, . . .

And this too I think it necessary to add to what has been said; that the passion of grief, or malady, as we may call it, of sore distress, cannot have reference to the divine and impassive nature of the Word; for that is impossible, inasmuch as it transcends all passion; but we say that the incarnate Word willed also to submit Himself to the measure of human nature, by being supposed to suffer what belongs to it.²⁴

The body and blood are the Word's because there was a union between the humanity and the divinity in Christ. While Cyril is very careful not to describe the union in detail, he not only clearly teaches a union, but he is also careful to say what the union is not (it is not the natures confused or mixed).

²³Ibid., p. 155, and p. 391. See also pages 47 and 63.

²⁴Ibid., p. 335, 498 and 583. See also pages 108, 227, 323, 355, 467, 509, 555, 603, 615, and 620.

The natures, however, which combined unto this real union were different, but from the two together is one God the Son, without the diversity of the natures being destroyed by the union. For a union of two natures was made, and therefore we confess One Christ, One Son, one Lord. And it is with reference to this notion of a union without confusion that we proclaim the holy Virgin to be the mother of God, because God the Word was made flesh and became man, and by the act of conception united to Himself the temple that He received from her. For we perceive that two natures, by an inseparable union, met together in Him without confusion. For the flesh is flesh, and not deity, even though it became the flesh of God; and in like manner also the Word is God, and not flesh, though for the dispensation's sake He made the flesh His own. But although the natures which concurred in forming the union are both different and unequal to one another, yet He Who is formed from them both is only One; nor may we separate the One Lord Jesus Christ into man severally and God severally, but we affirm that Christ Jesus is One and the Same, acknowledging the distinction of the natures, and preserving them free from confusion with one another.

For no one whose mind was awake would say, that the Word, while still incorporeal, and not as yet made like unto us, had feet and shoes, but only when He had become a man. Inasmuch, however, as He did not then cease to be God, even so He wrought works worthy of the Godhead, by giving the Spirit unto them that believe in Him. For He, in one and the same person, was at the same time both God and also man.

When you cast a piece of bread into wine or oil, or any other liquid, you find that it becomes charged with the quality of that particular thing. When iron is brought into contact with fire, it becomes full of its activity; and while it is by nature iron, it exerts the power of fire. And so the life-giving Word of God, having united Himself to His own flesh in a way known unto Himself, endowed it with the power of giving life.²⁵

It needs to be pointed out that this last quotation, while it appears to be Monophysite in implying an absorbing of one nature into the other, is actually postulating the exact opposite of Monophysite teaching. The Monophysites insisted that after the incarnation, there were no longer two distinct natures, but only one nature. Cyril is saying something totally different here. Instead of one nature being absorbed

²⁵Ibid., p. 47, p. 76, and p. 570. See also pages 75, 100, 272, and 569, as well as other passages which do not clearly speak of a union, but which do state that Christ was God and man at the same time. Smith points out that the quotation from p. 47 is not found in the Syriac but was preserved in a Greek fragment collected by Cardinal Mai.

or disappearing, Cyril depicts the divinity as penetrating the humanity, and thus communicating its life-giving power to the humanity. Cyril's emphasis is on the divinity becoming man, and in his illustration he gives no indication that only the fire or only the iron remains 'after the union.'

The union is real and the natures are indivisible to Cyril. That, of course, is his objection to the ideas of Nestorius; that is, Cyril believed that Nestorius' distinction between the humanity and divinity were so emphasized that it was a separation rather than a distinction. In any case, Cyril was very emphatic in his sermons on Luke to insist that as there was no confusion of natures in Christ, there was also to be no dividing of the natures which are united in the one person, Christ.

But to this, it may be those will object who divide the one Christ into two sons -- those I mean who, as Scripture says, are animal, and dividers, and having not the Spirit -- that he who baptizes in the Holy Spirit is the Word of God, and not He Who is of the seed of David. What answer shall we make, then, to this? Yes! we too affirm, without fear of contradiction, that the Word being God as of His own fullness bestows the Holy Spirit on such as are worthy; but this He still wrought, even when he was made man, as being the One Son with the flesh united to Him in an ineffable and incomprehensible manner.

The Indivisible, therefore, is divided by you into two sons; and because He was baptized when thirty years old, he was made holy, as you say, by being baptized. Was He, therefore, not holy until He arrived at His thirtieth year? . . . But this we affirm; that He was not separate from Him, and by Himself when baptized and made partaker of the Holy Spirit; . . .

We however agree with the divine Paul, who says: There is one Lord; one faith; one baptism; for we divide not Him who is indivisible, but confess one Christ, the Word, Who is from God the Father, Who was made man, and incarnate, Whom the heavens worship, and the angels honor, not so much as a man Who was made God, but as God Who became man.²⁶

If there is an indivisible union of two dissimilar natures, there

²⁶Ibid., p. 75, p. 79, and p. 272. See also pages 47, 108, 221, and 500.

should be some kind of communication of attributes between the two natures. It would be very surprising to find Cyril teaching his people a fully developed communicatio idiomatum, and he does not. However, considering the Nestorian and Monophysite claim that Cyril taught that there was only one nature, it is somewhat surprising to find that Cyril recognizes and preserves the differences of the natures as well as he does.²⁷

To say that the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him, must be taken as referring to His human nature. And examine, I pray you, closely the profoundness of the dispensation; the Word endures to be born in human fashion, although in His divine nature He has not beginning nor is subject to time; . . .²⁸

Of course, Cyril mentions Nestorius and his heresy. However, although Nestorius and his heresy are only mentioned once by name, there are a number of other times when reference is made to those who divide the two natures.

What, therefore, do those mistaken innovators say to this, who unwarrantably pervert the great and adorable mystery of the incarnation, and fall from the right way, walking in the path of crookedness? For

²⁷ Cyril falls short in teaching the communicatio idiomatum mainly in the area of preciseness of terminology and systematic organization. The first genus, that all the properties of both natures are attributed to the one Christ is very evident throughout Cyril's writings (see especially the quotations of footnote 26). The second genus, both natures cooperating in the actions of the one Christ can be seen in Cyril's comments on the various miracles of Christ. (As one example, Cyril's comments on the young man of Nain, Luke 7:11-18, "He touched the bier, and by the utterance of his godlike word, made him who was lying thereon return again to life; for He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise; and immediately that which was commanded was done; the actual accomplishment attended upon the words, . . .") The third genus, that supernatural and divine gifts were given to the human nature, can be seen in one of the quotations mentioned in footnote 28, when the flesh is given the power of giving life.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 63. See also pages 201, 218, 297, 391, and 465. as well as the last quotation mentioned in footnotes 25, and the last quotation in footnote 24. The quotations mentioned above all make some kind reference not only to the distinction of the natures, but also to the fact that the distinction of those natures remains even after the incarnation.

the wise Peter acknowledged one Christ; while they sever that One into two, in opposition to the doctrines of truth.

The disciples also of the vain babbling of Nestorios [sic] deny Him by acknowledging two sons, one false, and one true; the true one, the Word of God the Father; the false one, to whom the honor and name of a son belongs by imputation only, who in their phrase is the son only, and sprung from the seed of the blessed David, according to the flesh.

And we too will put to the Pharisees of later days a similar question; Let them, who deny that he who was born of the holy virgin is very Son of God the Father, and Himself also God, and divide the one Christ into two sons; let them, I say, explain to us, in what manner David's son is his Lord, and that not so much with regard to human lordship as divine.²⁹

What is even more surprising, though, is that Cyril spends as much time, if not more time, in his sermons on Luke discussing the Arian heresy. In one case, Cyril spends almost one entire sermon warning his people about the Arian heresy. In another place, the only one where both Arian and Nestorian heresies are mentioned together, the Arian heresy is mentioned first.³⁰

There are in the world many heresies; false apostles, and false teachers, who gathering the wearisomeness of frigid inventions, and glorying in the arts of worldly wisdom, adulterate the language of the sacred proclamations, and multiply blasphemous words against their own pates [sic]: and as the Psalmist saith, they set up their horn on high, speaking iniquity against God; yea, and against God

²⁹Ibid., p. 219, p. 357, and p. 545. See also pages 79, 221, 272, and 500.

³⁰The quotation that includes both Arius and Nestorius is found on page 357 in the Commentary on St. Luke (see footnotes 29 and 30). In that sermon Cyril is commenting on Luke 12:8-10 (" . . . whoever shall confess Me before men . . .") and he quotes the heretics as being examples of those people who deny Christ. The only two heresies that are mentioned in this sermon are Arianism and Nestorianism. It would seem to be an indication of the seriousness of the Arian problem among the populace of Alexandria, and the lesser importance of Nestorianism among the Alexandrian people, that Cyril describes Arians as "the followers and teachers of heresy," while the less serious (in Alexandria) Neestorians are described as "the disciples also of the vain babbling of Nestorios [sic]." This sermon gives every impression that Arianism was a continuing problem in Alexandria, while Nestorianism (as far as Alexandria was concerned) was ranked second.

the Word the Maker of all, Who, they say, is to be reckoned among those things that were made by Him; and is a servant, and not a son; and a creature, and not the Lord.

And in like manner both the followers and teachers of heresy deny him. For they venture to say that the Only-begotten Word of God is not by nature and in truth God; and they traduce His ineffable generation, by saying that He is not of the substance of the Father; yea rather, they count among things created Him Who is the Creator of all, and wickedly class with those who are under the yoke Him Who is Lord of all; . . .

But those, perchance, will not assent to the correctness of this explanation, whose minds are perverted by sharing in the wickedness of Arius. For they make the Son inferior to the supremacy and glory of God the Father; or rather, they contend that He is not the Son; for they both eject Him from being by nature and verily God, and thrust Him away from having really been born, lest men should believe that He is also equal in substance to Him Who begat Him.³¹

However, the really crucial question is whether Cyril used language in his sermons on Luke that could be identified as teaching two natures in Christ, rather than one. The answer seems to be that Cyril's thinking deals with two natures in Christ.

In Cyril's fifth sermon on Luke, he said, "For what things are written of Him as a man show the manner of the emptying. For it were a thing impossible for the Word begotten of God the Father to admit nothing [sic] like this into His own nature; . . ."³² If Cyril held that human things could not be accepted into the nature of the Word, then it is difficult to accept the Monophysite claim that Cyril's teaching included only one nature, the divine nature. In order to do so, Cyril would have had to teach a 'union' in which the human nature did not unite with God, since the Word could not admit human properties into his own nature.

Speaking on Christ's temptation in the desert, Cyril points to His

³¹Ibid., p. 319, p. 357, and p. 487. See also pages 271, 281-283, 484, and 486.

³²Ibid., p. 63.

fasting for forty days and His feeling hungry. Then Cyril says, "That skillfully by means of the two [fasting and feeling hungry], He Who is at once both God and Man, might be recognized as such in one and the same person, both as superior to us in His divine nature, and in His human nature as our equal."³³ If Cyril can mention the human nature of Christ at the time of the temptation, it is difficult to see how he can be the source of the Monophysite teaching that there was no human nature intact after the incarnation.

Commenting on the authority that Christ had while on earth, Cyril mentions

The Only-begotten Word of God, therefore, crowned human nature with this great honor by becoming flesh, and taking upon Him our likeness. . . . For He, as the Only-begotten Son of the Father, and the Word, both was and is omnipotent, and there is nothing that is not easy to Him; but inasmuch as He rebuked evil spirits while He was man, human nature was triumphant in Him, . . .³⁴

In his sermon on Luke 11:19-26, Cyril depicts Jesus Himself as saying, "Therefore, if, He says, I, being a man, and having become like unto you, cast out devils in the Spirit of God, human nature has in Me first attained to a godlike kingdom."³⁵

Finally, in speaking about the events following the resurrection, Cyril remarks,

And to prove, moreover, in another way both that death is conquered, and that human nature has put off corruption in Him as the foremost, He shows His hands and His feet, and the holes of the nails, and permits them to handle Him, and in every way convince themselves that the very body which had suffered was, as I said, risen.³⁶

³³Ibid., p. 88.

³⁴Ibid., p. 208. It must be admitted that this quote and the two that follow only imply a continuation of the human nature after the incarnation, rather than specifically saying so.

³⁵Ibid., p. 331.

³⁶Ibid., p. 619.

In all of these instances, the question that needs to be asked is how Cyril could be a precursor of the Monophysite heresy and yet still say these things. Cyril was very emphatic in proclaiming that the divine nature was present in Christ, so there is no possibility of him taking an "Arian" stand and not teaching the full deity of Christ.

Could Cyril then be classed as a Monophysite if he also said that human nature had triumphed in Christ, that human nature had attained a godlike kingdom in Him, that human nature had put off corruption in Christ? Cyril, in his sermons, gives a number of examples that Christ had, after the incarnation and even after the resurrection, a divine and a human nature. In his proclamation to his people, then, there were clearly times when Cyril spoke about the two natures of Christ as distinct from one another.

CHAPTER FOUR

CYRIL AND MONOPHYSITISM

Soon after the death of Cyril in 444, the majority of Alexandrian people became supporters of the Monophysite movement. Even Cyril's nephew Dioscurus insisted that Cyril had taught only one nature of God in Christ. While the Council of Chalcedon disputed that and even went to the lengths of checking Leo's Tome against letters, the identification of Cyril with Monophysitism is widespread.¹

Kurt Aland says that Nestorius was theologically correct, that he was attacked by Cyril, and that Cyril refused to comply with the decision of the Council of Ephesus.² J. L. Neve states that Cyril had taught two natures in theory but really only one divine-human nature after the incarnation.³ J. N. D. Kelly, on the basis of the Bazaar of Heracleides, concludes that Nestorius was not really Nestorian, and if Cyril had rejected the "two natures" it was because of the dangers of separating the two, not because of the doctrine itself.⁴

¹Jean Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, trans. Fr. Yves Dubois (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Sem. Press, 1975), p. 27.

²Kurt Aland, A History of Christianity: Volume 1, From the Beginnings to the Threshold of the Reformation, trans. James L. Schaaf, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 201.

³J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1943), p. 134.

⁴J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), p. 316 and p. 323. Kelly notes that the Bazaar was written

Perhaps the most clear example of this kind of thinking is to be found in Paul Tillich. According to Tillich, Alexandria was always Monophysite in doctrine, since they were not able to explain salvation without having the humanity swallowed up by the divinity. Supposedly Alexandria taught that the humanity was only a 'gown' for the divinity, and Chalcedon was the triumph of Antioch allied with Rome.⁵

It is certain that Cyril said some things that could be taken as Monophysite doctrine, whether that is what he intended or not. However, it is also important to note that there were others who also made statements that could be taken with a Monophysite meaning.

For example, Cyril had quoted Athanasius as talking about the ". . . one nature of God the Word enfleshed . . .", which is usually assumed to be a Monophysite statement.⁶ Gregory Nazianzus had taught that by mixing, the humanity disappeared in the divinity, and Gregory of

twenty years after the controversy began, but still feels it is useful in determining what Nestorius taught at the beginning.

⁵Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought, ed. by Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 80-81 and 85-86. As only one example of the problems here with Tillich, while he says that it was Alexandria that taught the humanity as a gown for the divinity, that was the illustration that Nestorius himself used to describe the relations between the two natures of Christ. See page 11.

⁶Athanasius, de Incarnatione Christi, quoted by R. Payne Smith in the preface to Cyril, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke (Astoria, NY: Studion Publishers, 1983) p. 28. The problem, however, is that this formula, ". . . *μία φύσις* . . .", is currently believed to be (exclusively?) an Apollinarian formula. Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, specifically refers to "Apollinarius, Ad Jovianum, in H. Lietzmann, Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule (Tubingen, 1904). p. 250-1; Apollinarius' text is quoted in extenso, with its attribution to Athanasius, in Cyril's De recta fide ad reginas, PG, 86 [sic], 1212-1213.", p. 217. Perhaps the best was of considering this formula is to acknowledge that both Apollinaris and Athanasius used it. Cyril, who rejected Apollinarianism, seems to have followed Athanasius as closely as possible in his christological formula. In any event, the use of the formula by Apollinarius does not necessarily invalidate the usefulness and truthfulness of the formula.

Nyssa taught that the passive body, being mixed with the active divinity, was transformed into the divinity.⁷

If such eminent theologians could be claimed as holding Monophysite views, it is hardly surprising that the same thing could be said about Cyril. The main question is whether or not Cyril unequivocally supported and taught his people at Alexandria the doctrine of two natures before the incarnation, but only one nature after the resurrection.⁸

The main problem with deciding Cyril's relation to Monophysitism has to do with what the various key terms in the controversy mean, and especially how they were used by Cyril. It, unfortunately, is not as easy as Martin Chemnitz suggested;

Damascenus tells us that according to the usage of the ancient church the terms essence or substance (οὐσία), nature (φύσις), and form (μορφή) are synonyms and designate the same thing. . . . Thus in the language of the church of our day . . . the terms subsistence (ὑφίσταμενον), hypostasis or substance (ὑπόστασις), person (πρόσωπον), and individual (ἄτομον) are all synonyms, . . .

The confusion over terminology can be seen by the fact that even Nestorius himself was confused by the whole problem of words. Even after the Council of Chalcedon, he professed not to understand what had been

⁷Neve, A History of Christian Thought, p. 131.

⁸This is a simplification of the Monophysite teaching. All Monophysites basically agreed with Cyril's statement of *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη*, which they understood to mean only one nature remaining after the incarnation. What happened to the other nature depended on which group of Monophysites answered the question. The Theopaschites taught that the humanity was 'absorbed' into the divinity. The Kenotic Monophysites held that the divinity 'emptied itself' and disappeared into the humanity. The Mixed Monophysites held there was a mixing of the two natures, while the Composite Monophysites taught that, without confusion, the two natures had combined into one new whole. See F. Cayre, Manual of Patrology and History of Theology, 2 vol., trans. by H. Howitt (Paris: Desclée & Co., 1940), 2:58-59.

⁹Martin Chemnitz, The Two Natures of Christ, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: CPH, 1971), p. 29.

by Cyril's terms.

If thou speakest of the hypostatic union, speak clearly; for I confess to not understanding either then or now; thou needest to instruct me in such wise that I may agree with thee. . . . Dost thou wish to regard a hypostasis as a prosopon, as we speak of one ousia of the divinity and three hypostases and understand prosopa by hypostases? Thou callest therefore the prosopic union hypostatic; yet the union was not of the prosopa but of the natures.¹⁰

Even modern scholars seem to be confused. Bengt Haggglund understands that Cyril held οὐσία and ὑπόστασις to be the same thing.¹¹ Kelly maintains that the school of Antioch took φύσις to be a collection of attributes, while Cyril understood φύσις to be a concrete individual, that is, that φύσις approximated ὑπόστασις without being synonymous.¹²

Sellers selects Cyril and Apollinaris (not Athanasius) as the representatives for the school of Alexandria, in fact as "earlier" representatives of the "same" movement that Dioscurus and other Monophysites represented. Sellers suggest that Cyril carried over from Apollinaris the use of φύσις as meaning πρόσωπον, and that Cyril taught that the union was of two essences (ὑπόστασις), although Cyril was using his "opponents'" terminology when using the term φύσις.¹³

It becomes even more confusing when Sellers defines οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, and φύσις in the same way. According to him, all of these words had the meaning of first 'individuality,' and secondly 'substance.' Unfortunately, Sellers does not seem to take into account that the mean-

¹⁰Nestorius, The Bazaar of Heracleides, ed. by G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 156.

¹¹Bengt Haggglund, History of Theology, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: CPH, 1968), p. 97.

¹²Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p. 318.

¹³R. V. Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 148.

ing of words changed with the passage of time, for example, that the words *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* were no longer seen as synonymous after the Cappadocians made a distinction between them.¹⁴

Aloys Grillmeyer sees Cyril's ('Apollinarian') formula, *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη*, as being the same as *μία ὑπόστασις*. Although Grillmeyer acquits Cyril of being Apollinarian or Monophysitic, yet he says of Cyril's phrase *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη* that ". . . physis-hypostasis means here the 'divine substance'."¹⁵

G. L. Prestige, even though he deals primarily with Trinitarian terminology, is much more helpful, and detailed in understanding the meaning of key terms. Although Prestige admits that even the term *οὐσία* was used in a number of different ways, yet he maintains that the primary meaning was ". . . individual substance, the 'primary ousia' of Aristotle's definition."¹⁶

In regard to *πρόσωπον*, Prestige points out that while it originally meant mask, and came to mean an "individual self as presented to an on-looker," the word was relatively unused in Greek theology until the Arian controversy. At the time of the controversy, writers before the "Cappadocian settlement" avoided using either *πρόσωπον* or *ὑπόστασις*, and writers afterwards used either term "without prejudice or partiality."¹⁷ Apparently, from that time on, both words were seen as referring primarily

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 138-9, footnote 7. In the footnote, Sellers cites his own Two Ancient Christologies and Prestige's God in Patristic Thought as a source for these definitions.

¹⁵Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, Vol. 1, From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), second ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 473 and p. 481.

¹⁶G. L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought (London: SPCK, second ed., 1952, reprinted 1969), p. 191.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 157 and 162.

to the individuality of the subject, with *πρόσωπον* mainly referring to the outward expression of that individuality.

The situation with regard to *ὑπόστασις* is more complex, according to Prestige, because of the different meanings given to the Word.

In the beginning, as has been said, hypostasis and ousia amounted to the same thing. There was, however, another and a much more frequent use of hypostasis, in which the emphasis was different. It is important to remember that this second is the normal sense. Ousia means a single object of which the individuality is disclosed by means of internal analysis, an object abstractly and philosophically a unit. [169] But in the sense of hypostasis to which we shall now turn, the emphasis lay not on content, but on externally concrete independence; objectivity, that is to say, in relation to other objects.¹⁸

Finally, in regard to the meaning of *φύσις*, Prestige emphasizes that the term is more of a descriptive word.

This word is an empirical rather than a philosophical term. . . . It refers to much the same thing as ousia, but it is more descriptive, and bears rather on function, while ousia is metaphysical and bears on reality. . . . Physis, therefore, more readily than ousia, supports a generic meaning. At the same time it must be remembered that this meaning is by no means necessary. A number of instances could be quoted in which 'one physis' signifies 'one object possessing a certain character of displaying a certain function.' . . . this fact . . . is chiefly important in connection with the Cyrilline doctrine of the unity of Christ.¹⁹

Cyril's use of these terms in his writings to the people of his

¹⁸Ibid., p. 168-169. Emphasis added. It is also important to note what Prestige mentions about the corresponding adjective, *ἐνυπόστατος*, "The adjective enhypostatos has a corresponding sense, meaning simply 'that which has an objective individual existence,' unlike an accident or attribute or other mental abstraction which is not a concrete object or thing.", p. 174.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 234. Prestige also makes a very important point on p. 235 when he mentions that "as applied to the being and the Persons of the deity, in the classic exposition of Trinitarian doctrine constructed by the Fathers of the fourth century, *prosopon*, *hypostasis*, and *ousia* all equally denote single concrete entities, and *physis* denotes the characteristics of such a single entity." The reason for this, Prestige says, is because of the unitary being of God. Also, according to Prestige, the equation of *φύσις* with *οὐσία* is an "aberration" of Leontius of Byzantium (p. 277.)

diocese seems to be along the general lines given by Prestige. In his writings to his people, Cyril seems to have used the word *πρόσωπον* only once, when he refers in Paschal Letter 24 to Adam's transgression happening *ἐκ πρόσωπον*. Here the emphasis would seem to be that the sin did not proceed from the *οὐσία* which God had created, but rather came from Adam's "outward appearance," that is, from the observable acts of disobedience which Adam committed.²⁰

As far as *οὐσία* is concerned, Cyril used the word, in connection with Christology, approximately twenty-four times. Some sixteen of these of these occurrences were when Cyril was describing the consubstantiality (*ὁμοούσιος*) of the Word with God the Father. Twice *οὐσία* is used of substance in general, once in Sermon 21, when Cyril is talking about 'two natures of different substances.' The last six times Cyril uses the term, it is used in reference to human nature; twice for Cyril to say that the Word was not changed into the substance of that which was born, and four time to say that Christ was *ὁμοούσιος* with us in His human nature.²¹

With the term *ὑπόστασις* it is also relatively easy to indicate Cyril's usage, for in his writings to the people of his own diocese he uses it rarely. Cyril uses *ὑπόστασις* only three times, and the related adjective *ἐνυπόστατος* only once. Two of the three times that *ὑπόστασις* is used, Cyril is obviously quoting Hebrews 1:3.

²⁰Cyril, Paschal Letter 24, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 900B. The numbers used in the following paragraphs to indicate the frequency of use of certain terms are not meant to be taken as absolutely accurate. However, it is the belief of the writer that the numbers are reasonably accurate as far as Cyril's use of these terms in clearly Christological passages (of his works under consideration) are concerned.

²¹Interestingly enough, four of the times that Cyril makes reference to Christ being *ὁμοούσιος* to us fall in one section of Sermon 15, On the Incarnation of the Word of God, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 1093B.

The other time that Cyril uses ὑπόστασις is in his letter to the monks of Egypt, where, after saying that the Word is from the substance (οὐσία) of God, Cyril says that the Word exists in his own hypostasis (ἐν ἰδίᾳ ὑποστάσει). The single time that Cyril uses ἐνυπόστατος is also in the letter to the monks where Cyril says that the "living and enhypostatic Word" is from the same substance with the Father.²²

The real problem with Cyril's terms, as he used them with his own people, is centered in his use of φύσις. While the other important terms are used only a relatively few times, Cyril uses φύσις approximately two hundred times. In almost half of the cases, Cyril uses the word in what seems to be a favorite phrase, κατὰ φύσιν. In the vast majority of cases (173 out of 194 times), Cyril uses the word φύσις to refer to the divine nature of God (around 105 times), the human nature of Christ (around fifty-eight times), or to the human nature in general (around ten times).

Most of the time, then, Cyril used the term φύσις as meaning, not the substance or matter in and by itself (οὐσία), and not a concrete individual (ὑπόστασις), but rather as meaning the characteristics or attributes of a certain οὐσία; ". . . possessing a certain character or displaying a certain function."²³ It is true that most of the time Cyril's use of the term is also indicative of a single individual, but that is because Cyril is talking about the single individual Jesus Christ.

This meaning of the word φύσις is demonstrated in a number of places. Cyril often points to the miracles that Christ did, miracles above the measure of human nature, as proof that Christ was God κατὰ

²²Cyril, Letter 1, ad monachos Aegypti, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 17B, 21A.

²³Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, p. 234.

φύσει.²⁴ The Word is God κατὰ φύσει because the Word is ὁμοούσιος with the Father.²⁵ Cyril speaks of some things as impossible because they contradict a known attribute of God, that is, it goes against God's 'nature.'²⁶

There are places where Cyril's use of φύσει seems to be monophysitic. One example is in Paschal Letter 8 when he speaks about ". . . the one and only incarnate Son according to nature, and he is named Christ, and Jesus."²⁷ However, at the same time, Cyril could say that Christ was ὁμοούσιος with us, or that Christ dies in his human nature.²⁸

It would seem doubtful that Cyril is using two different meanings for the word φύσει. If for no other reason than the small number of times φύσει is used in a way that could be understood as Monophysite (four times in his writings to the Alexandrians), it is more probable that Cyril is only emphasizing in these passages the unity of Christ, a unity in which the divine nature of Christ was most important.²⁹

²⁴Cyril, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, p. 127. ". . . but being Himself God by nature, even though He had become flesh, He healed them all, by the putting forth of power over the sick."

²⁵Cyril, Paschal Letter 26, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 924B-924C. ". . . who was born from the substance of God the Father. . . . On account of this the only-begotten Word of God is life according to nature"

²⁶Cyril, Paschal Letter 10, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 617B. "For being unchangeable, according to nature, and not suffering personally,"

²⁷Cyril, Paschal Letter 8, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 568C.

²⁸Cyril, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, p. 108.

²⁹Meyendorff, in Christ In Eastern Christian Thought, p. 15, points out that in the Arian and Apollinarian controversies, the schools of Antioch and Alexandria took positions with different viewpoints. While Antioch concentrated on being anti-Apollinarian, ". . . the Alexandrians remained fundamentally anti-Arian." This anti-Arian bias in Cyril has already been pointed out, and it helps to explain why Cyril emphasizes the divine nature of Christ, and why he prefers to leave the separation of the nations unemphasized.

With a better conception of Cyril's use of the various key terms, it becomes easier to understand Cyril's Christology and his supposed relation to Monophysitism. The main reason that Cyril was claimed as a Monophysite is his use of the term *μία φύσις*, but the Monophysites chose to understand this phrase in an absolute sense, rather than in the anti-Arian sense that Cyril had used.

It is also important to note that Cyril, in his writings and sermons to the people of Alexandria, had clearly spoken on numerous occasions of the existence of both natures in Christ after the incarnation. While Cyril did not use a technical and precise definition of the two natures after the incarnation (excluding the precise language of his letter to the monks), the fact that Cyril did speak of the two natures of Christ after the incarnation is inescapable.

Cyril spoke of Christ's rising and becoming the first of human nature to ascend,³⁰ of Christ's human nature being made immortal,³¹ and of the human nature in Christ being a blessing to all of us.³² Christ is spoken of as dying in His human nature,³³ as standing in the limits of human nature,³⁴ and as receiving the Holy Spirit in His human nature.³⁵ Cyril even speaks of Christ as being our equal "in His human nature,"³⁶ and of Him as being *ἑμοούσιος* with us according to the humanity.³⁷

³⁰Cyril, Paschal Letter 18, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 820B.

³¹Cyril, Paschal Letter 21, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 856A.

³²Cyril, Paschal Letter 27, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 940D-941A.

³³Cyril, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, p. 108.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 591. ³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 92. ³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁷Cyril, Sermon 15, On the Incarnation of the Word of God, Migne,

When the emphasis in these passages is placed alongside Cyril's emphasis on the divine Word being present in Christ, it is clear that Cyril accepted the doctrine of two natures in [ἐν] Christ, even though he himself preferred to speak of the one united Christ being from [ἐκ] two natures.

Cyril's teaching is then, that 'before the union' there was only the Person of the Logos (ἡ φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λογῶν), not yet incarnate (σεσαρκώμενη); and when, in connection with the process of 'recognizing the difference' of the two elements in Christ, he uses the expression 'after the union, one nature' -- which, as he is careful to say, is an 'incarnate' nature -- his point is that after embarking on this process and 'seeing' the two elements in their reality, one must return to the cardinal truth of the unity of the Person, the Logos incarnate, into whom Godhead and manhood concur.³⁸

Sellers³⁹ and Grillmeier⁴⁰ both agree, mainly on the basis of Cyril's polemical and dogmatic writings, that Cyril was not Monophysite, although

PG, vol. 77, 1093A-B. In this sermon, Cyril is quite emphatic that Christ is not ὁμοιούσιος with us but ὁμοούσιος.

³⁸Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, p. 155. Just before this quotation, Sellers says that Cyril uses φύσις here as 'person,' which is not exactly correct. It can be interpreted as 'person' here because Cyril is speaking about the absolutely unique (and personal) identity of the Word of God. Just as when Cyril speaks about God's nature (which is also unitary), Cyril is speaking of the something that displays the particular function or characteristic under discussion.

³⁹Ibid., p. 156. "Yet in postulating 'two natures after the union,' they were but expressing what Cyril himself had taught. For what difference is there between the Chalcedonian statement, 'We confess . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures,' and the Alexandrian doctrine that Jesus Christ is one Person, the incarnate Logos himself, and that in him one perceives, remaining in their difference, both real Godhead and real manhood? As we shall see, this was one of the main arguments used by the defenders of the Council against the post-Chalcedonian upholders of the 'one nature'."

⁴⁰Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, p. 475. "Cyril will now admit the validity even of language about the 'two natures,' though his recognition of the complete human nature does not prevent him from keeping his μία φύσις formula. It is not immediately plain here where Cyril differs from Apollinarius; the difference can only be worked out in the light of the vital, dynamic physis concept of the Laodicean. In this way, however, Cyril can be acquitted of all suspicion of an Apollinarian, Monophysite tendency -- a suspicion which has occasionally been

a superficial reading of Cyril's works could give that impression. This understanding of Cyril is supported by Cyril's writings to the people of his diocese, even though the expressions that Cyril uses are far less complex and technical.

Even though Cyril preferred to use the formula *μία φύσις*, the Monophysites misunderstood Cyril's dogmatic writings and must not have listened to his pastoral writings. While the Monophysites assumed that *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη* meant only one nature after the incarnation, they did not realize or understand that while Cyril placed the greatest emphasis on the divine nature of the Logos, he also understood the phrase *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη* to refer to the human nature of Christ.

Cyril had specifically taught his people that the divine Word had become flesh, taking our nature upon Himself and becoming a true and complete man. Cyril had, moreover, made specific references not only to the divine nature of Christ after the incarnation, but also to Christ's human nature after the incarnation.

raised against him in recent times."

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Christology that Cyril proclaimed to the people of his diocese is basically little different from the Christology that is found in his other works. Both the divinity and the humanity of Christ are continually mentioned, and the union of both natures is also stressed. The biggest difference, however, would probably be in the lack of technical terms and precise definitions, since Cyril makes a point of not defining exactly what the union is, or how it takes place.

More than that, there is also a slight difference in emphasis to be found in Cyril's writings to his own people. While Cyril's dogmatic and polemic writings can be clearly separated into two groups by their anti-Arian or anti-Nestorian content, Cyril's letters and sermons to the people of Alexandria, even after the outbreak of Nestorianism, continue to react against both Arianism and Nestorianism (with slightly more attention paid to Arianism in his sermons).

Having seen those differences in what Cyril said to the people in his parish, it is important to recognize that basically the same Christology is being proclaimed. It could well be asked, then, what one could have expected Cyril to say. From the standpoint of ecclesiastical peace in the empire, it would have been better if Cyril had precisely defined christological terminology during the Nestorian controversy. If the ter-

minology had been more precisely stated during the controversy, many of the events that followed might have been dramatically changed, and perhaps the Monophysite schism might not have taken place.¹

Cyril could have, as Grillmeier suggested, given up "the 'Apollinarian' language of the *μία φύσις* formula once and for all."² However, while the form of Cyril's Christology would have been changed by that action, the content of Cyril's Christology, as he proclaimed it to his people, would not have changed, since Cyril did not use the phrase *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη* to the people in his diocese. Could Cyril have stressed the human nature of Christ more and the divine nature less? If he had, would that have made much of a difference?

It has already been seen that Cyril did specifically mention in his letters and sermons to the people of Alexandria and Egypt the two natures of Christ after the incarnation.³ However, this does not seem to have had much effect on those who were concentrating on the phrase *μία φύσις* rather than on the doctrine behind the words.

Then, also, it must be understood that Cyril had no desire to be original. "If we examine the characteristics of the christology of the

¹Charles Hefele, A History Of The Councils Of The Church, From The Original Documents, 5 vol., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), mentions that the Niobite schism leads one to suppose that the opposition to Chalcedon was more one of words than substance. "They [the Niobites] were expelled by the other Monophysites, and many of them afterwards returned into the Catholic church.

"The very opposition of the Niobites to the ordinary Monophysites leaves us to suppose that many Monophysites, since they distinguished the divine and the human in Christ, deviated from the doctrine of the Church only in words, and that their Shibboleth, 'only one nature,' did not quite agree with their own views." (3:462).

²Aloys Grillmeier, Christ In Christian Tradition, vol. 1: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), second ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 476.

³See pages 63-65 above.

earlier works of Cyril, we find nothing but Athanasius."⁴ Cyril even said that he was obliged to follow Scripture and to be "loyal in following the opinions of the fathers."⁵

By contemporary standards the lack of theological detail is hardly surprising, for few modern sermons and newsletters go too deeply into the theological problems of today. It would seem, though, that the attitude of the Greek populace of the fifth century was different, in that theological problems and arguments became a part of the intellectual and political atmosphere of the day.⁶

The reactions of the monks of Palestine, Egypt, and Ephesus during the Nestorian and Monophysite controversies are also worth considering. Considered by some to be "unlearned," they were extremely involved in all the major controversies, even to the point of rioting and murder.⁷

⁴Grillmeier, Christ In Christian Tradition, p. 414. Only when he was "forced" to by the new problems of Nestorianism did Cyril move beyond what Athanasius had said. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 13, where he describes the 'unchanging' nature of Greek thought; "Everyone on both sides of each of the controversies with which we shall be dealing accepted the principle of a changeless truth. Monotheletes and Dyotheletes, iconoclasts and iconodules, Greeks and Latins -- all laid claim to this principle and insisted that they held to this changeless truth." While Pelikan is describing the Eastern church of the 600's, it is just as accurate a depiction of things in the 400's.

⁵Jaroslav Pelikan, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 243, where Pelikan is quoting Cyril, de Incarnatione Unigeniti, Sources chretiennes, Paris, 97:298.

⁶Socrates, Ecclesiastical History, VI, 16, NPNF², p. 149, gives the account of the riots that were occasioned by Chrysostom's deposition. The charges of violence at Ephesus and at the Robber Synod, the rioting of monks and people after Chalcedon in Palestine and Egypt (see Hefele, History of the Councils, pp. 449 and following) would indicate that religion was of intense interest to the entire populace.

⁷Hefele, History of the Councils, p. 449, mentions that "almost all of the more than 10,000 monks of Palestine" ". . . stirred up an insurrection, drove away Juvenal [of Jerusalem], raised the monk Theodosius,

All this would tend to indicate that what was confessed of Christ was of vital interest to many people. If that were the case, it is more puzzling that Cyril said so little to the people of his diocese about the Nestorian controversy.

There are two reasons, perhaps equally valid, why Cyril spoke so little about the Nestorian controversy (and even so little about Nestorian Christology). First of all, Cyril agreed with the later declaration of Chalcedon that the union of Christ was 'inexpressible' [ἀρρήτως], but on one occasion even that expression was not strong enough for Cyril. Not only is the union inexpressible, he said, but it is "above mind and reason [ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ λόγον]."⁸ Such an attitude on the part of Cyril would have prevented him from saying much on a subject that was, in his opinion, beyond comprehension.

The other reason, which is important for understanding Cyril's Christology, is that Cyril's predominant focus, even in the years after Ephesus, was anti-Arian, rather than anti-Nestorian, as far as the diocese of Alexandria was concerned. Cyril seems to have regarded Nestorianism, not so much as a wide-spread movement, but rather as a small group gathered around a particular individual.⁹

already named, to the patriarchate, even set fire, in the tumult, to some houses, and killed several of the leading Dyophysites." Since Marcian had put this down by 453, most of the trouble had probably taken place in 452, soon after the Council of Chalcedon. In 457, after the death of Marcian, the Chalcedonian bishop of Alexandria, Proterius, was murdered, and Timothy Aelurus was elected in his place.

⁸Cyril, Paschal Letter 16, Migne, PG, vol. 77, 765D.

⁹Hefele, History of the Councils, p. 131 and following, points out how Cyril, in signing the Formula of Reunion, was willing to accept "the two natures," and to forget all that had happened to himself, Memnon, or John at Ephesus, but he insisted on the deposition of Nestorius and those who agreed with him. It can be argued that these things were done because Cyril's controversy was against Nestorius, not against Antioch. See also

Jean Meyendorff pointed out "that Nicene orthodoxy as expressed by the Cappadocians was defined by a simultaneous opposition to Arius and Apollinarius." The school of Antioch concentrated on the errors of the Alexandrian heretic, Apollinaris, while Alexandria concentrated on the errors of the Antiochan heretic Arius.¹⁰

This anti-Arian emphasis in Cyril is seen in all his writings to the people of his diocese, both those before Ephesus and those after. In those writings, he emphasizes that the Word of God is God by nature, or that the Word is homoousios with the Father, more than he emphasizes anything else. This anti-Arian emphasis would be uncalled for, unless Arianism was still a problem in Alexandria. The fact that Nestorianism was not more dealt with in Cyril's letters and sermons would tend to imply that Nestorianism was a problem that was contemporary, yet not widespread in the Alexandrian diocese.¹¹

Cyril's Christology reflects the great emphasis of this anti-Arian polemic, even to the point, mentioned above, that though he accepted the

pages 50-51 where the Arians are described by Cyril as "followers and teachers of heresy" while the Nestorians are called "disciples of the vain babbling of Nestorios [sic]."

¹⁰Jean Meyendorff, Christ In Eastern Christian Thought, trans. Fr. Yves Dubois (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), p. 15. Even though Arius was a priest in Alexandria, he was a student of the school of Antioch, and had studied under Lucian of Antioch.

¹¹While we do not know how concerned people in Alexandria were about Nestorianism, none of Cyril's writings (and apparently no other Egyptian writers before Chalcedon) give any indication of any significant Nestorian group or movement in Egypt. On the other hand, while there is no data specific to Alexandria about Arianism, Sozomen records that after Theophilus became bishop of Alexandria (A.D. 385) there was an Arian schism in Constantinople, as a result of which ". . . a division still subsists; so that in every city, they have separate churches." (Ecclesiastical History, VII, 17, NPNF², vol. 2, p. 387). If there were two Arian sects in Constantinople, the same division was most probably to be found in Alexandria also, indicating a continuing Arian presence there.

"two natures" in Christ, yet his personal choice of terms was still "the one nature of the Logos enfleshed." The phrase *μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη*, apparently Apollinarian in nature, had first been used against Arius to emphasize the consubstantiality [*ὁμοούσιος*] of the Word with the Father. Even though the divinity of the Word was not the point of controversy, Cyril could not part with such a bulwark against Arianism as *μία φύσις* in his polemic and dogmatic writings, and did not eliminate the emphasis in his writings to the Alexandrian people.

The Christology of Cyril, and his emphasis on the Word, also reflect what Grillmeier refers to as the "Logos-Sarx" Christology that was prevalent in Alexandria.¹² In Grillmeier's distinction between "Logos-sarx" and "Logos-anthropos" Christology, one can see the major difference between Cyril and Nestorius; the difference between the Logos taking flesh (even though the flesh was a complete man) and the Logos taking man (as someone who was separate and distinct from the Logos).

Cyril's emphasis on excluding Arian thought in his Christology and the complimentary emphasis on the Logos and de-emphasis on the flesh led him to speak much more about the divine nature of Christ than about the human. This gave the impression to some that the human nature was being mixed or confused with the divine, or that the human nature was incom-

¹²Grillmeier, Christ In Christian Tradition, p. 477 (Grillmeier refers to the distinction between Logos-sarx and Logos-anthropos Christology throughout his book). Meyendorff, Christ In Eastern Christian Thought, however, warns that Grillmeier "exaggerates, however, the value of what he calls 'Logos-sarx Christology,' which he considers as the primitive error of almost all the christological heresies of the fourth and fifth centuries. Useful as a working hypothesis, Grillmeier's position loses some of its convincing power as the author goes on to apply it in a general way to all the heresies of the time. His book, however, represents today the best introduction to the study of the christological debates of the fifth century.", note 3, page 217. It also must not be forgotten that to Cyril, "flesh"="man," see page 26, note 32 and page 43, note 17.

plete, as Apollinaris had taught.

It has been amply pointed out¹³ that Cyril rejected Apollinarianism, that he taught that the incarnate Logos is complete man [τέλειος ἄνθρωπος] and that the divinity was not changed, nor was there any mixture or confusion. However, that was what the theologians of Antioch saw when Cyril insisted upon using the phrase "The Word became flesh."

Nestorius decided this meant that the divine nature had changed, and that Cyril was even combining the two οὐσίαι of God and man into one.¹⁴ In fact, it was not even enough for Cyril to have clearly stated (against Apollinarian charges) that Christ had a rational soul, because moral autonomy was necessary for the moral example required of Christ by the school of Antioch.¹⁵ Such moral autonomy could not exist if there were a "forced" union of natures in Christ.

Yet Cyril insisted that the union was not forced, but that the Word had voluntarily taken it on Himself.¹⁶ Once the union had taken place,

¹³See especially Grillmeier, Christ In Christian Tradition, p. 473 and 476; Meyendorff, Christ In Eastern Christian Thought, p. 20; see also page 26, and pages 42-43.

¹⁴Nestorius, The Bazaar of Heracleides, ed. G. R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 294. ". . . indeed [Cyril] predicates of God the Word, God whole and man whole who in ousia is both . . ."

¹⁵D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 130. "But Nestorius asks repeatedly, is the experience that Cyril describes as human experience really human at all? For Nestorius, as for his Antiochene predecessors, real humanity implies moral autonomy. . . . Had he [Jesus] therefore the freedom to break his association with the Word and live simply as a good carpenter? Was he therefore free to choose disobedience and sin if he had willed to do so? The Antiochenes would have been forced by the logic of their position to answer in the affirmative. Cyril's position on the other hand did not demand such an answer, . . ."

¹⁶Cyril did not answer the question specifically of whether the union had been forced on the flesh. Such a question in itself would have

there was to be no longer a separation of the natures. Even though Cyril was willing to recognize a distinction between the two natures, a "separation in thought,"¹⁷ that was something far different than what he saw in the teaching of Nestorius. The union was indivisible (though Cyril did not use the Chalcedonian adjective in his writings to his people), and that meant, for Cyril, that the body and blood that suffered and died were the Word's and not someone else's.

Cyril came to his Christology (at least as he expressed it to his people) with a definite anti-Arian bias. For a century, the diocese of Alexandria had been battling Arianism, at home as well as abroad, and Alexandrian Christology had been "slanted" to emphasize the true divinity of God the Word. Until Nestorius, the Alexandrians had been facing a denial of the Word's full divinity, and so Alexandrian Christology, both before and after Cyril, emphasized the divine nature of Christ.

When challenged on the relationship of the two natures in Christ, though, Cyril was led beyond the emphasis on the divine nature to insist also that the divine Word had become flesh. The Word did not change His nature, nor was the Word transformed into something else. Cyril did not

been seen by Cyril as suggesting a separation of the natures, a 'time' when the flesh was by itself, before it was united with the Word. To Cyril the Word was pre-existent, but not the flesh. See page 38, note 5, where the human nature is not "made flesh separately."

¹⁷Sellers, The Council of Chalcedon, p. 151; Hefele, History of the Councils of the Church, p. 141; Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, p. 479. While Cyril does not clearly recognize this distinction in his writings to his own people, it is clearly stated in other works, especially in his letter (number 44) to Eulogius. "The point is that man results from two [65] natures -- body and soul, I mean -- and intellectual perception recognizes the difference; but we unite them and then get one nature of man. So, recognizing the difference of natures is not dividing the one Christ into two." Cyril of Alexandria, Select Letters, ed. and trans. Lionel Wickham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 63-65.

understand the word "become" in John 1:14 as saying this.

Instead of changing one of the natures, God brought about, according to Cyril, the incarnation, a union of two different and unequal natures. While Cyril described this in his polemical and dogmatic writings as a hypostatic union, ἕνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν, he did not put this phrase to work when speaking to the people of his diocese. Cyril was content to affirm that the only-begotten Word had become flesh, that the Word had united to himself a true and complete man, and that the union was indivisible and unconfused.

However, as Meyendorff points out, ". . . Cyril was either not able or did not want to apply to Christology the Cappadocian definitions of ὑπόστασις, οὐσία, and φύσις. This step was to be taken by the Council of Chalcedon . . ." ¹⁸ In the case of Cyril's writings to his own people, it was more likely the case of not wanting to clearly define what the union was or answer the question of how the union came about. While there was ample opportunity for Cyril to have told his own people an exact definition of the union, ¹⁹ he did not do so. Instead, Cyril preferred to stress the fact of the union, and to fight against any attempt to divide or separate the two natures of Christ.

Cyril is the only theologian of genius there has ever been of whom it is true to say, almost without metaphor, that his theology was 'Christocentric.' He draws the mind always back to the Jesus Christ who is the point to which all the Bible's proclamation immediately

¹⁸ Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, p. 22. It is doubtful whether Cyri would have been bothered by this remark, for, after all, Athanasius had defended the ἁμοούσιος, the Cappadocians had defined it. Cyril was probably content to defend the θεοτόκος and it was left to Chalcedon to define it more exactly.

¹⁹ There was ample opportunity for a clear definition of the union, considering the thirty Paschal Letters, some of which are very lengthy, and the Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, as well as other sermons which have not survived.

relates.²⁰

Because of the anti-Arian bias that Cyril began with, and because of the emphasis on the divine nature that was derived from that bias, Cyril preferred to use a phrase that has been judged Apollinarian, *μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λογοῦ σεσαρκίωμενη*. There were followers of Cyril who even before his death complained that to even speak of "two natures" was to separate the one Christ. These followers insisted that *μία φύσις σεσαρκίωμενη* meant "only" one nature. However, Cyril himself was willing to accept the doctrine of "two natures" in Christ, and he wrote and preached to his people not only the divine nature of the Logos in the union but also the human nature whose suffering and death were His also.

Not only in Cyril's works against Nestorius and his dogmatic writings explaining his Christology, but also in his letters and sermons to the people who were under his care, Cyril taught that there is in the one Christ Jesus a union of two different natures. This union was of [ἐκ] two natures, but the divine and human natures were both still present after the incarnation, at the temptation, and at the crucifixion and resurrection.

. . . Cyril of Alexandria tended to stress mainly that salvation is given and accomplished by God alone. The power of death and sin could not be defeated by the human merits of the man Jesus. The Word assumed the human nature and made it really his own. . . . He maintained that the relationship between the divine and the human in Christ does not consist of a simple cooperation, or even interpenetration, but of a union; the incarnate Word is one, and there could be no duplication of the personality of the one redeemer God and man. Salvation consists precisely in the fact that the Word was present in all the stages of the human life of Jesus. To him the Virgin Mary gave birth. To refuse to call her Mother of God amounts to a rejection of the mystery of the incarnation, since in Christ there is no other subject but the Word to whom she could have given birth. There

²⁰Lionel Wickham, Introduction to Cyril of Alexandria, Select Letters, p. xxxiv.

are not two sons, but only two births of the same Word, [19] who by nature remains immutably God, but adds a whole human nature to his being in order to restore mankind to its primitive state and free it from death and sin. It is also the Word who died on the cross. For this reason the death of the Word was really redemptive, since the death of a man, even the most righteous²¹ of all, would have remained merely the death of a human individual.

²¹Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought, p. 18-19.

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