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Letter as Spirit in Cyril of Alexandria: Typology and the Christological Defense of Literal Exegesis

NATHAN E. PORTER

Cyril of Alexandria, often regarded as a mediating voice between Antiochene and Alexandrian exegetes, frequently cites his distinctively unitive Christology as warrant for literal interpretations of the Old Testament. That is, what scholars have regarded as rapprochement with Antiochene exegetes was partly motivated by a Christology with which they were at odds. For Cyril, christological interpretation underwrites the integrity of the literal sense, for he holds that a typological connection with the self-humbling of the Word is often good reason also to accept the truth of the *ιστορία*. I consider several passages from Cyril's writings on the Old Testament, but special attention is given to a narrative that troubled many patristic commentators: the prophet Hosea's marriage to Gomer. Cyril maintained that it must be interpreted literally, precisely because Hosea's union with Gomer reflects the incarnate humility of Christ. To insist on the prophet's moral purity would, in Cyril's language, be to demand that Hosea be "holier than the all-holy God." This reading appears to be unique among patristic commentators, and I argue that this should be attributed specifically to Cyril's opposition to Antiochene dual-subject Christologies.

Σεμνότερον γὰρ, ὡς ἔοικε, τὸν προφήτην εἶναι γοῦν βούλεται τοῦ παναγίου Θεοῦ.¹

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1. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:21): "For it appears that he [Didymus the Blind] wants the prophet to be holier than the all-holy God." Except where noted, all translations are my own. Cyril's commentaries on Hosea, Habakkuk, Micah, Jonah, and Malachi are quoted from P. E. Pusey, ed.,

INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have seen the overturning of traditional dichotomies between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis. The impact of the rhetorical and grammatical schools on both Antiochene and Alexandrian readers has commanded a particularly large share of attention.² It has been suggested, for example, that the distinction between literal and allegorical interpretations should be replaced with more complex hermeneutical categories,³ while Margaret Mitchell has powerfully argued that the distinction, in its ancient usage, was a rhetorical device deployed in the *agōn* of textual interpretation.⁴ As several writers have correctly pointed out, however, the origins of the controversy lie not only in the influence of the schools, but also in the theological disputes that raged in the late fourth

Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in xii prophetas, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1868).

2. This has been most influentially argued by Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 161–85, 285–99; “The Rhetorical Schools and their Influence on Patristic Exegesis” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); etc. Earlier accounts of the influence of the schools are to be found in Christoph Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese*, Theophania 23 (Köln–Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1974); Bernhard Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe*, 2 vols., Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18 (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Verlag, 1987). For the influence of the schools on Cyril, see J. David Cassel, “Cyril of Alexandria and the Science of the Grammarians: A Study in the Setting, Purpose, and Emphasis in Cyril’s Commentary on Isaiah” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1992); “Key Principles in Cyril of Alexandria’s Exegesis,” *SP* 37 (2001): 413–20; John J. O’Keefe, “Interpreting the Angel: Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentators on the Book of Malachi” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1993). It has even been argued that Cyril taught these methods to Alexandrian clergy; see J. David Cassel, “Cyril of Alexandria as Educator,” in *In Dominico Eloquio, In Lordly Eloquence: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken*, ed. Paul M. Blowers et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 348–68.

3. See especially Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 161–85, 285–99, and Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

4. Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); see also Mitchell’s earlier article, “Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory: Origen and Eustathius Put 1 Samuel 28 on Trial,” *JR* 85.3 (2005): 414–45, at 421. Other critiques of the old dichotomy include John David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Margaret Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

and early fifth centuries.⁵ Alongside an interest in preserving key doctrinal commitments (such as the creation and the resurrection, which some took to be compromised by “allegorical” interpretations of the biblical text),⁶ competing understandings of the unity of Christ also shaped the dispute. There was, of course, the question of how (and whether) partitive exegesis should be practiced in the interpretation of the New Testament; that is, whether and how christological predicates should be differentiated as proper to Christ’s divinity or humanity.⁷ But rival Christologies were also reflected in the exegesis of the Old Testament. Recent scholarship has repeatedly suggested, for example, that there is a certain conceptual fit between typically Antiochene exegetical concerns and Christologies that emphasize the integrity of Christ’s human nature.⁸ Likewise, the approaches to christological prophecy of Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Mopsuestia have been linked to their respective views of the incarnation’s

5. So Hauna Ondrey rightly notes that “The fathers’ primary purpose in writing biblical commentary was not to use grammatically correct methods of interpretation, even if they drew on these” (*The Minor Prophets as Christian Scripture in the Commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018], 13). So also Frances Young, “The Fourth Century Reaction against Allegory,” *SP* 30 (1997): 120–25; John J. O’Keefe, “‘A Letter that Killeth’: Toward a Reassessment of Antiochene Exegesis, or Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret on the Psalms,” *J ECS* 8.1 (2000): 83–103; and others.

6. See, for example, Young, “The Fourth Century Reaction Against Allegory”; earlier, Rowan Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (Westminster: Faith Press, 1961). Elizabeth A. Clark has likewise argued that doctrinal motivations drove other parties who were involved in the hermeneutical debates surrounding the Origenist Controversy (*The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992], 85–158).

7. On which see, e.g., Andrew Hofer, “Scripture in the Christological Controversies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 455–72; Christopher Beeley, *The Unity of Christ* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 256–84; Robert Wilken, “Tradition, Exegesis, and the Christological Controversies,” *CH* 34.2 (1965): 123–45.

8. So, for example, Robert Hill writes: “They saw and appreciated in such texts the same human accents they would discern also in the humanity of Jesus, in the process of Christian salvation, in morality and the spiritual life” (*Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 19). So also Bradley Nassif, “The ‘Spiritual Exegesis’ of Scripture: The School of Antioch Revisited,” *ATR* 75.4 (1993): 437–70; Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 167; etc. Against the tendency to correlate Antiochene exegesis with a Christology that emphasizes the integrity of the human nature, see John J. O’Keefe, “Impassible Suffering: Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology,” *TS* 58 (1997): 39–60. This will be discussed further below.

acting subject,⁹ and it has been demonstrated that Cyril used typological readings of Adam and Moses as scriptural warrant for his insistence on the uniqueness of Christ's humanity.¹⁰

This paper suggests a further connection between the christological and exegetical controversies that appears to have gone unnoticed. Cyril of Alexandria, often seen as a mediating voice between Antiochene and Alexandrian exegesis, frequently cites his distinctively unitive Christology as warrant for *literal* interpretations of the Old Testament. That is, what appears to be rapprochement with Antiochene exegetes is partly motivated by a Christology with which they were at odds. The theological connection between a Cyrilline view of the incarnation and literal interpretation is evident, for a robust doctrine of the unity of Christ, such as that which Cyril defended,¹¹ undermines an assumption that was basic to certain ways of distinguishing between the senses of scripture in much patristic exegesis. As found in Origen, the distinction between "letter" and "spirit" explicitly serves to guarantee the integrity of various theological polarities, such as those between divinity and humanity, nobility and baseness, and virtue and vice. To the extent that Christ's humanity and divinity are denied the distance required by dualist Christologies, however, these distinctions are problematized. For if it is true that the Son of God humbled himself and

9. For Theodore, Hauna Ondrey argues, christological prophecy always refers only to the *homo assumptus* and never to the divine Word, because the prophets had no knowledge of the Trinity (and hence of its second person), while according to Cyril, for whom there can be no pointing to Christ's humanity that is not ultimately pointing to God's humanity, it refers always to "the eternal Son of God, *homoousios* with the Father." Theodore's view, like Cyril's, was motivated by his Christology (Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 143). This has also been noted by Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2:822–24. For a similar argument, see John Behr, *The Case Against Diodore and Theodore*, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35–47. On Theodore's Christology, especially in connection to the *communicatio idiomatum* and the exegesis corresponding to it, see now Frederick G. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 196–204, and the earlier treatment of Rowan Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 132–36.

10. Robert Louis Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971); John A. McGuckin, "Moses and the 'Mystery of Christ' in St. Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis, Part 1," *Coptic Church Review* 21.1 (2000): 24–32; "Moses and the 'Mystery of Christ' in St. Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis, Part 2," *Coptic Church Review* 21.2 (2000): 98–114.

11. On Cyril's Christology as unitive, see especially Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, 256–84. For a different and controversial reading of Cyril's Christology, see Hans van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

made a human body his own, and along with it the shame and infirmity of the human condition, then many assertions that would otherwise appear unfitting for God can be affirmed.¹²

Cyril's Old Testament commentaries, I will argue, frequently refer to his Christology as the rationale for literal readings of passages that had often been thought to require strictly non-literal interpretations. Cyril does not reject spiritual exegesis outright, but he regards the πνευματική θεωρία (his usual designation for the "higher" sense of scripture)¹³ as itself the grounds for literal interpretation. In other words, for Cyril, christological interpretation underwrites the integrity of the literal sense, for a typological connection with the self-humbling of the Word is often good reason also to accept the truth of the ἰστορία. That God can exist not only in the heights but also in the depths, not only in divine purity but also in communion with sinners, offers a word of caution to those who assume that "shameful" statements about God must be rejected. Whatever reflects this divine humility in scripture must also be reevaluated in its light.

I will consider several passages from the *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, the *Commentary on Isaiah*, and the *Glaphyra*, but I will give special attention to a narrative that troubled many patristic commentators: the prophet Hosea's marriage to Gomer. Of this passage, Jerome wrote, "Who would not be immediately scandalized at the beginning of the book and say: Hosea, the first of all the prophets, is commanded to take a prostitute as a wife, and he does not protest?"¹⁴ Cyril maintained that it must be interpreted literally, precisely because it reflects the incarnate humility of Christ. To insist on preserving the prophet's moral purity would, in Cyr-

12. There were, of course, other reasons to offer a spiritual interpretation; indeed, I will argue that Cyril's christological critique of certain forms of spiritual interpretation is itself grounded in a particular form of typological exegesis. For an accessible account of the diverse rationales for patristic spiritual interpretations, see John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 69–113. A more technical discussion of the motivations of spiritual interpretation in Cyril can be found in Alexander Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, Interpreter of the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1952).

13. So Matthew Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 217; and Steven A. McKinion, *Words, Imagery, and the Mystery of Christ: A Reconstruction of Cyril of Alexandria's Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 25. Alexander Kerrigan demonstrated that Cyril tends to avoid the use of ἀλληγορία in favor of phrases such as this one (*St. Cyril*, 115).

14. Jerome, *Comm. in Hos.* pref. (CCL 76:1.14–17; trans. Maria Veritas Marks and Thomas P. Scheck, in *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets*, ed. Thomas P. Scheck [Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2017], 2:148).

il's language, be to demand that he be "holier than the all-holy God."¹⁵ This reading appears to be unique among patristic commentators, and I will argue that it should be attributed specifically to Cyril's opposition to christological dualism.¹⁶ In order to show the distinctive character of his interpretation, I begin with a survey of the interpretations offered by his predecessors and contemporaries.¹⁷

PATRISTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF HOSEA'S MARRIAGE

The earliest extant readings of the passage on Hosea's marriage appear to be those of Clement of Alexandria¹⁸ and a so-called Sethian Gnostic named Justin,¹⁹ both highly idiosyncratic and of little relevance here. Among subsequent writers, Irenaeus offers the closest parallel to Cyril. Hosea's marriage really took place, Irenaeus argues, yet it was also a spiritual image of Christ's union with the church. As the church is sanctified by communion with Christ, so Gomer is sanctified by marriage to Hosea.²⁰

Origen

Although Eusebius tells us that Origen wrote twenty-five books on the minor prophets,²¹ two of which were on Hosea, according to Jerome,²²

15. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:21).

16. I continue to speak of "literal" and "spiritual" senses, though advisedly and with sensitivity to Cyril's own terminology. I offer extensive discussion of his use of the term ἰστορία below, arguing that it must be understood as (sometimes) indicating an event that really took place (i.e., that it has a corresponding πράγμα), and not simply as a concern for narrative coherence. I also draw a distinction between Cyril's use of the word γράμμα and a closely related phrase, τὸ γράμμα τὸ ἱερὸν, the latter not connoting anything like a literal sense. On the literal sense of scripture in Cyril, see also Kerrigan, *St. Cyril*, 35–110; "The Objects of the Literal and Spiritual Senses of the New Testament according to St. Cyril of Alexandria," *SP* 1 (1957): 354–74; McKinion, *Words*, 26–32; Lois M. Farag, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, a New Testament Exegete: His Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 149–98.

17. The history of the interpretation of Hosea's marriage is also discussed in Stephen C. Kessler, "Le Mariage du Prophète Osée (Os 1,2) dans la Littérature Patristique," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 73 (1999): 223–28 and Maria C. Pennacchio, *Propheta Insaniens: L'esegesi Patristica di Osea tra Profezia e Storia* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2002): 239–53.

18. Clement of Alexandria, *Eclg. Proph.* 3.2 (GCS 17:138).

19. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.27.4, ed. and trans. M. David Litwa, *Refutation of All Heresies*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 40 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 352.

20. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.12 (SC 100: 668–74).

21. Eusebius of Caesarea, *H.e.* 6.36.3 (SC 41:138–39).

22. Jerome, *Comm. in Hos.* pref. (CCL 76:4.119–24).

Origen's *Commentary on Hosea* is not extant. None of the fragments preserved in the *Philocalia* treat these verses.²³ He cites the passage twice, however, in his *Commentary on Matthew*, which was likely written around the time when he composed the *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets*.²⁴ While he interprets the passage christologically, he does not deny that Hosea's marriage took place. He does, however, suggest that Gomer must have reformed her behavior prior to the marriage,²⁵ contrary to Irenaeus's insistence that the marriage itself purified Gomer. An additional reference to the passage is found in Origen's *Homilies on Joshua*, where he interprets Gomer as a "figure" (*figura*) of the church, again without denying that the marriage took place.²⁶

We cannot be certain of what Origen wrote in his *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, although his legacy in the subsequent tradition of commentary on Hosea suggests that he may have rejected a literal interpretation. Jerome enthusiastically acknowledges his dependence on Origen's commentary, and he himself denies that the marriage took place, according it only a spiritual meaning referring to Christ and the church.²⁷ Together with the report of Julian of Eclanum that Origen's followers tended to reject the story's literal sense,²⁸ this may suggest that Origen offered a similar reading in his commentary. However, Jerome also claims that Didymus of Alexandria, at his bidding, wrote three books on Hosea to complete the work that Origen began; they were dictated to Jerome and apparently addressed to him as well.²⁹ From Cyril's discussion of those books in his own *Commentary on Hosea*,³⁰ it seems that Didymus also rejected a lit-

23. See Origen, *Comm. in Hos.* (fragments) in J. Armitage Robinson, *The Philocalia of Origen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 52–54.

24. Ronald Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in Service of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 220.

25. Origen, *Comm. in Mt.* 16.4, 19.3 (GCS 40:69.19–75.15, 319.16–325.4, 341.15–345.7).

26. Origen, *Hom. in Jos.* 3.4 (GCS 17:305).

27. Origen, *Comm. in Hos.* pref. (CCL 76:1–5, 8–12).

28. Kerrigan notes that, according to Julian of Eclanum, "whole regions were divided with regard to the interpretation of this chapter: Palestine, Egypt, and generally speaking, all those who rallied to the authority of Origen held that the marriage did not take place in reality, whereas the Antiochians held that it did" (*St. Cyril*, 356–57).

29. Jerome states that they were addressed to him in *Vir. Il.* 109 (PL 23:706) and that they were composed at his request and dictated to him in *Comm. in Hos.* pref. (CCL 76:5.129–37).

30. Most scholars agree that Didymus was the target of Cyril's criticism in his *Commentary on Hosea*. See Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 66n87; Kerrigan, *St. Cyril*, 356–61; Cyril of Alexandria, *Select Letters*, ed. and trans. Lionel Wickham, OECT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 210.27. On Didymus's generally keen interest in the literal meaning of scripture, see Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle*

eral interpretation. It is possible, then, that Jerome's reading rather reflects dependence on Didymus, his esteemed teacher, though the latter may also have learned his interpretation from Origen.³¹

Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa belongs to this interpretive tradition as well. In his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, he argues that if one stops short at the mere events (ψίλα τὰ πράγματα), that is, at the literal sense (ἡ λέξις), then the story yields no profit. Gregory does not elaborate on this claim, however, so we cannot be sure that he denied the veracity of the literal sense; at the very least, however, he maintained that it was unhelpful and dangerous.³²

John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom's brief reference to the passage in his *Homilies on Galatians* aligns him partly with Didymus, Jerome, and Gregory. Hosea's marriage, he argues, should be handled in the same way as texts such as Isa 49.15, which compares God to a woman nursing a child. In Hosea, we are given a human example (ἀνθρώπινον παράδειγμα) in which "a man is represented (μυῖται) as humiliated by his wife."³³ Chrysostom does not express embarrassment over the text to the same extent as other writers,

in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 26–28.

31. That there is some relation of dependence is indicated by the echo in Jerome of Didymus. Jerome writes that Hosea "does not wrinkle his forehead, does not witness to his grief by growing pale, does not show his shame by blushing, but proceeds to the brothel and leads a whore to his bed" (*Comm. in Hos.* pref. [CCL 76:2.28–32; trans. Marks and Scheck, *Commentaries*, 148]). Didymus (quoted or paraphrased by Cyril) writes, "Hosea, by contrast, on hearing that he had to have relations with a vile prostitute of execrable life, did not decline, did not show any reluctance, did not fall to supplication and beg an exemption. Instead, like someone quite inclined to lewd behavior, and, as it were, with no reservations, he grasped the opportunity, perhaps attracted to sexual pleasures" (Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2-3 [Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:16; trans. Robert Hill, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, FC 115, 3 vols. [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007], 1:411:41). No comparable reviling of Hosea is to be found in other commentators, so Jerome's dependence on Didymus is likely, though we should not exclude the possibility that Cyril drew on Jerome to amplify Didymus's language, as scholars have long maintained that Cyril had direct knowledge of Jerome's commentaries. For details, see Matthew Crawford, "Scripture as 'One Book': Origen, Jerome, and Cyril of Alexandria on Isaiah 29:11," *JTS* 64.1 (2013): 137–53, esp. 137–38.

32. Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. in Cant.* pref., ed. Hermannus Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni opera* (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 6:7.

33. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gal.* 3.15 (PG 61:653).

though the parallel drawn with Isa 49.15 suggests that he regarded the narrative as not literally true.

Pseudo-Basil of Caesarea

A different tradition of interpretation also existed, one that located no christological meaning in the narrative and insisted that the marriage took place as described.³⁴ In the commentary on Isaiah attributed to Basil of Caesarea,³⁵ a related passage is discussed in which Isaiah receives a command to bear a child by an unnamed prophetess. Since there is no indication that Isaiah rejected God's command, Basil or Pseudo-Basil argues, we should assume that it was carried out. The case of Hosea is invoked as support. Given that we are explicitly told that Hosea bore children by Gomer, we should believe that Isaiah's marriage truly took place.³⁶

Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore of Mopsuestia interprets the marriage as a comparison (παράθεσις), arguing that it was commanded by God in order to provide an image of his relationship with the idolatrous Israelites. It both afforded Hosea the opportunity to instruct Israel in its duty to God and also demonstrated God's condescension:

The novelty of the event gave the prophet an opportunity to expound the people's duty to them, showing, by a potent comparison (πολλῇ τῇ παραθέσει), that if it was a marvel for a prophet to accept his duty and be intimate with a prostitute, it was still greater for God to freely condescend to care for ungrateful people.³⁷

Theodore avoids the language of typology (τύπος).³⁸ Like Pseudo-Basil, he also argues that the narrative's concern for apparently insignificant

34. The earliest example of this is to be found in Tertullian, who argued strenuously that Hosea's marriage should not serve as a model for Christian life, contrasting it with Christ's own purity (*De pud.* 6.6–14 [SC 394:170–73]).

35. For an argument in favor of Basil's authorship, see Nikolai Lipatov, "The Problem of the Authorship of the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah attributed to St. Basil the Great," *SP* 27 (1993): 42–48.

36. Basil of Caesarea, *Comm. in Is.* 8.3, ed. Pietro Trevisan, *San Basilio. Commento al profeta Isaia* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1939), 1:207.

37. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2, ed. Hans Norbert Sprenger, *Theodori Mopsuesteni commentarius in XII Prophetas*, Göttinger Orientforschungen V, *Biblica et Patristica* 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), 1.2b.19–24. This work is cited according to Sprenger's section and line numbers rather than by page.

38. On Theodore's view of typology in the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, see Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 147–166. On his typological interpretation in general, see McLeod, *Christ's Humanity*, 47–53. Greer's discussion remains useful (*Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 107–11).

details suggests that we are meant to understand the event as having literally occurred. The name of Gomer's father is mentioned, for example, "so that one should not think what was said a mere invention, but rather a true account of the events" (ὡς μὴ πλάσμα ψιλόν τι δοκοίη τὸ λεγόμενον ἱστορία δὲ ἀληθῆς πραγμάτων).³⁹ Moreover, Theodore adds that Hosea likely made Gomer chaste by their union. In this he resembles Irenaeus, yet Theodore's motivation is to ensure that Hosea's moral integrity was not compromised rather than to illustrate Christ's sanctification of the church. Theodore's reading is entirely lacking in explicit christological content. Nonetheless, as we will see, there are a few elements of his interpretation that bear comparison to Cyril's, especially Theodore's reference to divine condescension.

Jerome

Jerome's interpretation of Hosea's marriage in his *Commentary on Hosea* is not fully clear. In the preface, he seems to oppose a literal interpretation of the passage. He first objects to Hosea's apparent eagerness to marry Gomer, adducing the examples of Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, who protested what seemed to be unreasonable divine commands. Unlike them, he writes, Hosea "does not wrinkle his forehead, does not witness to his grief by growing pale, does not show his shame by blushing, but proceeds to the brothel and leads a whore to his bed." Jerome gives several examples of other biblical persons who had questionable sexual encounters: Judah with Tamar, Samson with Delilah, Salmon and Rahab, Boaz and Ruth, and David and Bathsheba. When given a literal interpretation, Jerome thinks, these cases imply that "not only prostitutes but also adulteresses seem pleasing to God," a consequence that he finds intolerable. He further adduces examples from Jesus's association with prostitutes, such as Mary Magdalene's anointing of his feet. He notes the possible rejoinder that Hosea's actions could not have been shameful if God commanded them but replies that God never commands anything that is shameful, and in any case his commanding would not change the impropriety of Hosea's behavior.⁴⁰

In the main body of the commentary, he likewise emphasizes that the story is to be taken as a type of Christ and the church. He adds, however, that if someone wishes to deny the figurative sense so as to deride the

39. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2 (Sprenger, *Theodori Mopsuesteni*, 1.2b.38–40).

40. Jerome, *Comm. in Hos.* pref. (CCL 76:1–3; trans. Marks and Scheck, *Commentaries*, 148–51).

prophet, it should be recalled that Socrates took Phaedo from a brothel to his Academy and that Xenocrates likewise “made Polemon, an exceedingly wanton youth . . . obey wisdom, and he changed a most vile young man into the wisest of philosophers.”⁴¹ In the same fashion, Hosea taught Gomer chastity without losing his own. Anyone, however, “who wishes to receive the truth” should attend to the verse in which it is written, “For the fornicating land shall fornicate from the Lord,” which clearly shows that the narrative is meant to be taken as a figure.⁴² So, then, Jerome gave the story a purely typological interpretation, though he made provision for anyone who, through naiveté, felt compelled to interpret it literally.

The interpretation offered by Theodoret of Cyrus, which is dependent on Cyril’s, will be discussed in the final section of this paper.

Conclusion

Although there are clear differences between each of these interpreters, they share several family resemblances. If a literal interpretation is offered, every attempt is made to mitigate the difficulties of the narrative (Origen and Theodore, though not Chrysostom). Spiritual interpretations, when they are offered, are set over against the veracity of the literal sense (so Jerome, and possibly Origen and Nyssen, though not Pseudo-Basil). The exception is Irenaeus, who held that the passage could be legitimately interpreted either spiritually or literally. Cyril’s reading differs considerably from all of these. He embraces the theological and ethical challenges of the narrative, and he offers a spiritual interpretation as the *grounds* for a literal one. Hosea, precisely because he is type of Christ, can be said to have married Gomer in reality.

CYRIL’S INTERPRETATION OF HOSEA’S MARRIAGE IN THE COMMENTARY ON HOSEA

Cyril’s text of Hos 1.2–3 reads as follows:

The Lord said to Hosea, “Go, take for yourself a wife of prostitution and children of prostitution, for the land in its prostitution will prostitute itself away from the Lord.” He went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.⁴³

41. Jerome, *Comm. in Hos.* pref. (CCL 76:9.121–31; trans. Marks and Scheck, *Commentaries*, 153–54).

42. Jerome, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2b (CCL 76:9.131–36; trans. Marks and Scheck, *Commentaries*, 152–54).

43. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:15.8–11).

Cyril comments:

No argument will convince us to reject the γράμμα, to regard the ἰστορία as useless,⁴⁴ to condemn the unseemliness of the event, or even to imagine, as some do, that it did not take place in this way, that Gomer was not really taken in marriage, in a real marital union. For the holy γράμμα says further that a conception and a birth took place. It mentions the child's name, refers to the woman's father, and with them mentions the woman's own name.⁴⁵

Like Pseudo-Basil and Theodore, Cyril points to narrative details that seem to indicate that the marriage took place according to the ἰστορία.⁴⁶ His main target, who most agree was Didymus the Blind (though his commentary is not extant),⁴⁷ had apparently used the Origenian slogan “the letter kills,” drawn from 2 Cor 3.6,⁴⁸ to argue that the ἰστορία of Hosea is detrimental

44. McKinion lists several nearly verbatim statements in Cyril (*Words*, 28).

45. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:15.12–19; trans. Hill, *Commentary*, 1:39–40, with changes).

46. Cyril's use of the phrase τὸ γράμμα τὸ ἱερὸν appears to be among its first occurrences in patristic literature and is one of his favorite pieces of exegetical terminology. A TLG search for the phrase shows that it occurs no less than 142 times in his corpus, including thirty-five times in the *Commentaries on the Minor Prophets*. Previously, it is found only in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Commentary on Isaiah* (Joseph Ziegler, *Eusebius Werke*, vol. 9, *Der Jesajakommentar*, GCS 60 [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975], 317–18) and *Commentary on the Psalms* (PG 23:1225), and it is rarely used by subsequent writers. A TLG search shows that close variants of the phrase (such as its anarthrous and plural forms) are also surprisingly rare. Its usage in Cyril's predecessors comes nowhere close to the 362 instances of the phrase and its variant forms in his corpus, with the singular form preponderating. Despite this, the phrase does not seem to have served a particularly distinctive purpose in Cyril's exegetical corpus. More weight can be placed on the other terms used, such as ἰστορία (on which see below) and τὸ γράμμα (without the adjective modifier). Cyril uses both in the passage above (*Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 [Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:15.17]). He may have learned his usage of τὸ γράμμα τὸ ἱερὸν from Eusebius, for he quotes a large portion of the above passage from Eusebius's *Commentary on Isaiah*, without attribution, nearly verbatim in his own commentary (PG 70:1084), while the closest parallels to Eusebius elsewhere are found in Chrysostom (*Hom. in Ps.* [PG 51:71]) and twice in Theodoret (*Comm. in Is.* 40.12 [SC 295:2.46.142–43]). Cyril's wording, however, is closer than that of either writer, and Theodoret may be dependent on Cyril.

47. This was first proposed by F.-M. Abel, “Parallélisme exégétique entre S. Jérôme et S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie,” *Vivre et Penser* 1 (1941): 212–30 and is supported by Manlio Simonetti, “Note sul commento di Cirillo ai Profeti Minori,” *Vetera Christianorum* 14 (1977): 301–30; Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 66n87; Kerrigan, *St. Cyril*, 356–61; Wickham, *Select Letters*, 210n27. For a different view, see Dimitrios Zaganas, “Cyrille d'Alexandrie aux prises avec un exégète allégoriste au début de son In Oseam: Didyme l'Aveugle ou Piérius d'Alexandrie?” *VC* 64.5 (2010): 480–91.

48. On this phrase in relation to Didymus, see Christopher A. Beeley, “The Spirit and the Letter,” 206–10. On Didymus's exegesis in general, see Jonathan Hicks Douglas, *Trinity, Economy, and Scripture: Recovering Didymus the Blind* (Ann Arbor, MI:

to the life of virtue. Cyril reports that Didymus (like Jerome) berated Hosea for failing to contest God's demand. Hosea showed no reluctance, "but like a licentious person took the opportunity without hesitation, immediately giving in to the pleasure of a woman." Hosea's apparent sleaziness, however, shows that the marriage could not have happened according to the *ιστορία*. The prophet knew that God was only asking him to engage in a spiritual union, argued Didymus, "not to be defiled by shameful and disgusting intercourse."⁴⁹ He thus spiritualizes Hosea's account:

He transferred the force (τὴν δύναμιν) of the *ιστορία* to a spiritual concept, saying that Gomer is a type of the soul that has chosen to live in a disgraceful and unseemly manner, whereas the prophet provides a likeness (εἰκόνα) of what is lofty and heavenly, namely, the Word from God the Father, who joins himself intellectually to our souls, implanting the seeds of the life of a lover of virtue.⁵⁰

Cyril objects to Didymus's spiritual interpretation on several counts.⁵¹

1) It is problematic to think that God commanded something he ought not to have commanded. Anything commanded by God should be followed without hesitation, even if it seems distasteful. Cyril cites cases in which God commanded obedience in matters that seemed equally offensive, such as when Saul was ordered to execute the captive king Agag. When Saul

Eisenbrauns, 2015), esp. 235–72; Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind*; and Justin M. Rogers, *Didymus the Blind and the Alexandrian Christian Reception of Philo* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 119–208.

49. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:17).

50. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:17).

51. Since we no longer possess Didymus's commentary on Hosea, we of course cannot be entirely certain that Cyril is reading him charitably. There are other cases, however, in which Didymus appears to do precisely that of which Cyril accuses him. For example, in his *Commentary on Zechariah*, he interprets the "filthy clothes" of Joshua in Zech 5 as signifying the "grief and compassion" of the prophet at the sins of his people, although the clothes are described by the passage itself as Joshua's own iniquities. The angel commands that his clothes be removed, but, apparently in order to preserve the moral purity of Joshua, Didymus understands this rather as removing Joshua's grief (which had been caused by the people's sins). Remarkably, however, when he turns to read the passage typologically, he reads *Christ's* bearing of human sin quite differently, in terms of Paul's words in 2 Cor 2.21: Christ put on human sins for our sake (*Comm. in Zech.* 3.3–5 [SC 83:310–22; trans. Robert Hill, FC 111 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 66–73]). Here, as apparently in the case of his *Commentary on Hosea*, Didymus tends to balance the weights of types and antitypes rather differently. Jonathan Hicks Douglas also notes Didymus's concerted effort to "distance Joshua from participation in those sins of which he stands accused" (*Trinity, Economy, and Scripture*, 235–72, here 242).

spared him, God slew Agag himself and revoked Saul's kingship. Like Origen, and against Jerome and Didymus, Cyril asserts that it would be arrogant to refuse to comply with God, no matter what he commands.⁵²

2) Cyril points out a strange contradiction in Didymus's attempt to save the moral purity of the prophet:

[Didymus] rejected the affair as unseemly, brazenly insisting that the prophet had no intercourse (κεκοινώνηκεν) with the unfaithful woman, even though [he conceded that] the divine Word sometimes has communion (συνάπτεται) with unfaithful souls . . . It therefore seems that he wants the prophet to be holier than the all-holy God. Might not someone likewise say, with no change in meaning, that the prophet had communion (συνάπτεσθαι) with a prostitute, and that the Word of God chose to have intercourse (κοινωνεῖν ἐλέσθαι) with an unclean soul? I see no difference at all. Therefore, let them either reject both as out of place, or let human affairs proceed in obedience to the divine will.⁵³

Against the apparent sophistry of Didymus's argument, Cyril contends that there is no theologically relevant difference between communing (συνάπτεσθαι) with an unclean soul and having intercourse (κοινωνεῖν ἐλέσθαι) with it. The more important point, however, and the one that occupies the greater part of Cyril's remaining comments on the passage, is that the willingness of the Word of God to suffer shame and disgrace justifies an interpretation of Hosea's sexual relationship with Gomer according to the ἱστορία of scripture. Surely, if Didymus is unwilling to attribute impurity to Hosea, he should be even more reticent to attribute it to the Word. Instead, he "wishes the prophet to be holier than the all-holy God."

Cyril reiterates this argument in several different ways. He notes Jesus's reply to the Pharisees who condemned him for eating with tax collectors and sinners: "It is not the healthy who need doctors but the sick" (Luke 5.31). Unlike Origen, who seems to have believed that Gomer repented before the marriage was consummated, Cyril sees that it is precisely in the extremities of human sin that communion with the Word is most necessary:⁵⁴

52. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:18–20).

53. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:21.12–23; trans. Hill, *Commentary*, 1:45, with changes).

54. Donald Fairbairn has argued that Cyril's notion of grace involves personal communion with God rather than simply outside assistance from him (*Grace and Christology in the Early Church* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 63–132).

No one doubts that God, because of his immeasurable love for humans, accepts those who are defiled and not yet cleansed of their sins. So, then, you must under no circumstances condemn the story of what happened to blessed Hosea as unseemly. For what is written beautifully depicts for us the divine Word's bestowing communion with himself upon those who are still loathsome and unclean.⁵⁵

Just as Cyril would later oppose the Christologies of Nestorius and Theodoret on the grounds that they "destroy the mystery" of the incarnation,⁵⁶ so he writes that readers of scripture must preserve the unseemly and even repulsive character of Hosea's marriage because it reflects what Christ did for sinful humanity.

3) Cyril provides a further argument for a reading according to the *ιστορία*. Surely, he argues, it is not problematic for someone to enter a disgraceful situation in order to save another person. But that is exactly what Hosea did for Gomer, drawing her into a life of marital fidelity. Rather than being inappropriate for a virtuous person, such an act of kindness is eminently fitting: "It would seem to be an endeavor worthy of a holy person to choose to fulfill the needs of another and what is necessary for their salvation."⁵⁷ Unlike Theodore, then, Cyril does not see Gomer's moral reformation as a means of making the story more palatable. It is the fact that Hosea did what he did *for Gomer*, and not that she had previously cleansed herself, that justified the marriage. Yet for Cyril it is not enough to say this alone. He justifies it with a litany of scriptural parallels, culminating in the supreme example of Christ's beneficence. Do we not also admit, he asks, that Isaiah went around virtually naked in order to symbolize the coming exile, and that Paul went to Gentiles and became as they were, and above all,

that the only begotten Word of God, in order to save humanity, *did not regard equality with God something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of a human being, and being found in appearance as a human being, he endured the cross, despising its shame?* There is nothing to wonder at, therefore, if the prophet, humbly taking leave of what was fitting, saved Gomer.⁵⁸

Cyril's Christology is on full display in this amalgam of scriptural texts, each of which was central to his unitive understanding of Christ's self-humbling

55. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:21.30–22.6; trans. Hill, *Commentary*, 1:45, with changes).

56. E.g., Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Creed* 15 (ed. Wickham, *Select Letters*, 110.29–112.2); *Ep. 2 ad Succ.* 4 (Wickham, *Select Letters*, 90.23–30); etc.

57. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:23).

58. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:23).

(Phil 2.5–11 and Heb 12.2). Because the Word of God endured the lowliness of human life and the shame of crucifixion, we must expand what we take to be possible for other human beings, including Hosea.

Cyril describes Hosea using language drawn from these scriptural texts:

Therefore, the God of all said to Hosea, “Arise, take for yourself a wife of fornication and children of fornication.” Hosea accepted Gomer, but he did not make the matter a pretext for lust. Rather, he performed the deed out of obedience as a servant, becoming a minister of the type. And it is this typology itself, articulated in fleshly and earthly terms, that we identify most of all with the spiritual meaning (πῆρέτης τοῦ τύπου γινόμενος, ὃν αὐτὸν δὴ μάλα ἐροῦμεν, ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς καὶ γεωδεστέροις διαμορφούντες, ὡς ἔνι, τὰ πνευματικά).⁵⁹

Cyril here applies Phil 2.6–11 to Hosea. As a “minister of the type,” all that Hosea is and does stands under the sign of the incarnation. In the very lowliness of his obedience, the heavenly is translated into earthly terms, and the letter is rendered as spirit.

CYRILLINE EXEGETICAL PRINCIPLES

The following exegetical principles are discernible in Cyril’s reading of Hosea:

1) *The spiritual meaning* (πνευματική θεωρία) *must be invested with as much theological gravity as the ἱστορία.* Cyril’s primary complaint about Didymus’s spiritual exegesis is that it dissolves the narrative’s δύναμις, its ethical pressure, dulling the edge of the ἱστορία. Indeed, for Cyril, Didymus’s reading is ultimately more scandalous than the ἱστορία itself, since he supposes that a union between the Word and a sinful soul is less problematic than one between a prophet and a prostitute. This is possible only because he implicitly sees the spiritual meaning as weakening the challenge of the ἱστορία. Yet this undermines the basic character of christological typology, which regards the person and work of Christ as *magnifying* the theological force of their Old Testament antitypes. If a typology is to have any real significance, its antitype must exert at least as much theological pressure as the type. In other words, the interpreter must preserve *antitypological gravity*, transposing the force of the type to the antitype.

59. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:22).

2) *Spiritual interpretations rooted in conceptual polarities that are undermined by the incarnation are unsuccessful.* The incarnation allows us to use language about both God and humanity that we otherwise could not. For it shows that holiness is not compromised by communion with the sinful, and divinity is not degraded by the lowliness of human flesh. Indeed, it is precisely because we can say such things about God that we can also say them about human persons like Hosea. Thus, just as Christ's humanity cannot be used to bar human properties from being predicated of God, it likewise cannot be used to spiritualize difficulties in the biblical text, as Didymus evidently wished to do.⁶⁰

3) *History ("what really happened") matters to Cyril.* Although it is not the principle aim of this paper, it should be noted that what Cyril has in view is not mere narrative coherence.⁶¹ He is arguing, against Didymus, that what the scriptural narrative describes *really* took place. Consider, once again, his opening discussion: "We will not think, as some writers do, that the event did not occur in this way (μη οὕτως πεπράχθαι), that Gomer was not taken in marriage or in a marital union. For the holy letter says that a conception took place (σύλληψιν γεγενῆσθαι φησί), and a birth along with it, and it mentions the name of the child, and it speaks of the woman's father and the very name of the woman."⁶² Cyril points out these details not for the sake of the narrative's integrity, but (explicitly) because he believes that they were included to indicate that the event took place in reality, as he emphasizes with the verbs πράσσω and

60. C.f. the comparable argument *a fortiori* in Augustine concerning the participation of believers in Christ's body: "From believing things that are more difficult to believe, one comes to believe things easier to believe. For the divine substance, which is far more remote and loftier by reason of its incomparable superiority, was able on our account to take up a human substance so that there came to be one person, and thus the Son of Man, who was on earth on account of the weakness of the flesh, is himself in heaven by reason of the divinity in which the flesh shares. Hence, how much more believable is it that other holy human beings who believe in him become one Christ with the man Christ" (*Pecc. mer.* 1.31.60 [CSEL 60:59-61; trans. Roland J. Teske, *Selected Writings on Grace and Pelagianism*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (New York: New City Press, 2011), 137]). As with Cyril, the humility of the divine Son (and the exaltation of his flesh) justifies our faith in the possibility of ordinary humans participating in the divine life.

61. This view, which Frances Young advanced as an interpretation of Antiochene exegesis, was applied to Cyril by O'Keefe ("Christianizing Malachi: Fifth-Century Insights From Cyril of Alexandria," *VC* 50.2 [1996]: 136-58, at 142-43).

62. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2-3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:15).

γίγνομαι. This is not, of course, to suggest that Cyril wished to apply proto-historical critical methods to the text of scripture, as is often said to be the implication of speaking of “history” in this context.⁶³ Even Francis Young has acknowledged that “it is true that *historia* meant *pragmata* (deeds) or *res gestae* (things that happened),” even though “the distinctive thing about historical writing was not ‘single-minded pursuit of facts’ but their presentation as morally significant, their interpretation in terms of ‘virtue’ and ‘vice’ and ‘fortune.’”⁶⁴ This qualification can be safely acknowledged while recognizing that Cyril was at pains to affirm that the events of the biblical narrative took place, not because of a concern for the bare facts, but because of his insistence that the truth of Christ’s self-humbling requires us to affirm the reality of Hosea’s humiliation.

Despite this, the term ἱστορία, as Cyril uses it, cannot simply be identified with a concern for the reality of events, and so it would be quite mistaken to translate it as “history,” even in the qualified sense to which I have referred.⁶⁵ It is rather that, in some cases, the ἱστορία (which I take to be adequately translated by “narrative”) provides indications that what it records took place, that the γράμμα has corresponding πράγματα. The story of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer is one such case, according to Cyril, since it contains various narrative details that seem to indicate that Hosea’s marriage truly occurred.⁶⁶

CYRIL’S EARLIER INTERPRETATIONS OF HOSEA’S MARRIAGE

The role of Cyril’s Christology in his reading of Hosea is confirmed by the interpretations of the passage that he produced in an earlier stage of

63. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 167: “No Antiochene could have imagined the critical stance of the Biblical Theology movement, explicitly locating revelation not in the text of scripture but in the historicity of events behind the text, events to which we only have access by reconstructing them from the texts, treating the texts as documents providing historical data.” See also Behr, *Case*, 37; O’Keefe, “Impossible Suffering,” 40–42; etc.

64. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 166–67. For a fuller argument, see especially Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 1–46.

65. Steven A. McKinion consistently assimilates the meaning of the two (*Words*, 33–35 and *passim*).

66. Further studies of the meaning of ἱστορία in Cyril, particularly those that do not pertain to the question of whether or not the recorded event occurred, may be found in Kerrigan, *St. Cyril*, 35–110; “The Objects of the Literal and Spiritual Senses”; and Farag, *St. Cyril*, 149–98.

his theological development. In the *Glaphyra*, he comments on a story related to Hosea's marriage: Judah's sexual encounter with a disguised Tamar (Gen 38), another biblical incident that caused some ancient readers to squirm. Cyril assures the reader that the scandal was only apparent. Tamar wished only to have children, and Judah's wife had died relatively recently, so neither of them was doing any serious wrong. In fact, "to us, their coming together was really a spiritual communion and an intellectual child-bearing"⁶⁷—a claim that is strikingly similar to Didymus's interpretation of Hosea. Moreover, Cyril does not find in this story a likeness of Christ and the church; rather, Judah and Tamar represent God and the synagogue. Just as Judah withheld the last of his sons from Tamar, God keeps the church from the synagogue, which is now an abandoned widow like Tamar (though it will eventually be reconciled to God, Cyril adds). Here Cyril invokes the story of Hosea's marriage, not as a type of Christ's union with the church but as a prophetic depiction of God's own abandonment of the synagogue for the Gentiles.⁶⁸ The Word is only mentioned in relation to Judah's marriage, which Cyril compares to God's relationship to Israel. Just as "Judah went down to Hirah" (Gen 38.1), so the Word "went down to Moses" and was united through him to "the synagogue." Moses's mediation thus serves to distance the Word from the impurity of Israel.⁶⁹

Cyril's reading of Hosea in the *Glaphyra* is notably different from what we find in the *Commentary on Hosea*. In the *Glaphyra*, he tries to mitigate the scandal of Judah's relationship with Tamar, while in the *Commentary on Hosea* he explicitly adduces cases in which God commanded far more scandalous deeds, such as Elijah's killing of the priests of Baal. Moreover, in contrast to the tradition reaching back to Irenaeus and Origen with which he would later align himself, but in agreement with Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril finds a likeness only of God and the synagogue. Even when the Word makes a brief appearance in Cyril's interpretation, the mediation of Moses keeps God at a distance from the synagogue. The Word is not associated with Tamar, but with the virgin daughter of Hirah, and he is only united to Israel through Moses.⁷⁰ There is no mention of Christ's self-emptying,

67. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaph. Gen.* 6.2 (PG 69:313.5–7).

68. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaph. Gen.* 6.3 (PG 69:316–17).

69. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaph. Gen.* 6.3 (PG 69:313.19–48).

70. See also his interpretation of Exod 24.1–2, where he notes that Moses's going into the presence of God while the rest of Israel remained "at a distance" is paralleled by the way in which "the Son, being near to God the Father, came to be with us in our nature at a distance, as our innocent and undefiled high priest, so that through him and also with him, we too might find ourselves near" (*Glaph. Ex.* 10.524 [PG 69:524; trans. Nicholas P. Lunn, *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol. 2, *Exodus through Deuteronomy*, FC 137 [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, Press, 2019], 115).

a standard feature of Cyril's later work, even in the pre-Nestorian commentaries.

This suggests an early date for the *Glaphyra*. Its more hopeful view of Israel's future is not usually found in Cyril's later writings,⁷¹ and it bespeaks a much less tumultuous context than his tenure as bishop of Alexandria.⁷² He assumed the episcopacy in 412, and the commencement of the conflict with the Jews of Alexandria is usually dated to 414,⁷³ so it was likely written before then. Moreover, as several scholars have noted, although Cyril is aware in the *Glaphyra* of problematic tendencies in Antiochene Christologies, he is considerably less preoccupied with them than he is in his later works.⁷⁴ Some of his christological statements in the *Glaphyra* would be problematic from his later theological perspective. For example, he interprets the halving of the victims in the covenant sacrifices between God and Abraham as a type of the two natures of Christ. Although he qualifies this by asserting that it does not imply "two Christs," and that the

71. Though it is not wholly absent from, e.g., his *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*; see Hauna Ondrey, "Cyril of Alexandria's Hermeneutics of Identity in the Commentary on the Twelve Prophets," in *Doing Theology for the Church: Essays in Honor of Klyne Snodgrass*, ed. Rebekah Ecklund and John E. Phelan, Jr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 233–46, 241. On Cyril and supersessionism, see now Daniel Keating, "Supersessionism in Cyril of Alexandria," *SP* 68 (2013): 119–24; McGuckin, "Moses and the 'Mystery of Christ,' Part 1," 29–34; Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 192–94.

72. The *Glaphyra* as a whole is notably less concerned with Judaism than Cyril's later works. A TLG search counts 256 instances of *ioudaios* in the *Glaphyra* but over 820 in the *Commentary on John*. Indeed, the *Commentary on John* has more instances of the word than any other work in the TLG canon besides Josephus's *Antiquities*, with Cyril's *Commentary on Isaiah* coming fourth on the list (673) and the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets* seventh (482). Each of these works is, of course, longer than the *Glaphyra*, but not enough to explain this difference. Robert Wilken, *Judaism*, 86: "In the *Commentary on Isaiah* as well as the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets* the themes sounded in the earlier works [i.e. the preoccupation with Judaism in the *Glaphyra* and *Adoration in Spirit and Truth*] appear with almost monotonous regularity." This is noted also by John J. O'Keefe, "Christianizing Malachi," 136–58, here 143–44.

73. See Wilken, *Judaism*; Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 45; Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets*, 33. It is not a new suggestion that Cyril's exegesis was influenced by the controversy with Alexandrian Jews (so, e.g., Kerrigan, *St. Cyril*, 385–87; Robert Louis Wilken, "Exegesis and the History of Theology: Reflections on the Adam-Christ Typology in Cyril of Alexandria," *CH* 35.2 [1966]: 139–56, 151; etc.).

74. Gregory K. Hillis, "Introduction," in *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, *Genesis*, trans. Nicholas P. Lunn, FC 117 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 27–29: "Christological issues were, at least to Cyril's mind, relatively uncontroversial at the time he was writing the *Glaphyra*."

natures cannot be separated after the union, his willingness to make this connection at all suggests an earlier stage of his theological development.⁷⁵

It seems most likely, then, that Cyril wrote the *Glaphyra* earlier than any of these works, which suggests that his exegesis of Hosea took an important turn along with his Christology. This is confirmed by a passage in the late *Doctrinal Questions and Answers*, in which he addresses the question of Hosea's marriage once more: did he *really* marry a prostitute, or was it merely spoken *προφητικῶς*? Cyril replies that his readers will have to read his commentary to know what he thinks.⁷⁶ Once his Christology had matured, then, his reading of Hosea remained constant.

CHRISTOLOGY AS A RATIONALE FOR LITERAL EXEGESIS ELSEWHERE IN CYRIL

Cyril's reading of Hosea represents a pattern found throughout his *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*. Consider the final verse of Jonah, which was controversial among patristic writers because of its implication that God was concerned with animal suffering. Cyril's Christology provides him with an unusual solution. It should not surprise us that God would save animals because Christ also saved us:

In just this way Christ saved everyone, giving himself as a ransom for small and great, wise and foolish, rich and poor, Jew and Greek, concerning whom it might indeed rightly be said, "Human beings and animals, O Lord, you will save, you will save human beings and animals alike, since you have multiplied your mercy, O God; and the sons of men will hope in the shelter of your wings."⁷⁷

Christ's willingness to save animals, Cyril continues, makes sense in view of his salvation of the lowly Gentiles. Although Christ's self-humbling is not mentioned, it is likely implicit, since Cyril regularly says that Christ's self-emptying allowed him to save what was lowly and degraded through sin. For example, in his exposition of Joel 2.28, Cyril says of Christ that "the Spirit is proper to him, in him, and from him" because he is God, yet because he became man, "he is said to have the Spirit imparted to him . . . since the Only-begotten, though rich, became poor, and with us as man received the Spirit that was proper to him as though it were imparted." And yet, because he remains God, he also pours out his Spirit on us: "while

75. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaph. Gen.* 3.8 (PG 69:128–29).

76. Cyril of Alexandria, *Doctr.* 9–10 (Wickham, *Select Letters*, 208–10).

77. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Jo.* 4.10–11 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:598; trans. Hill, *Commentary*, 2:177, with changes).

as man he receives from the Father what is in him by nature, he ‘pours it out richly on us,’ because he is by nature God, even if he became flesh,” quoting Titus 3.6.⁷⁸ Cyril interprets “he pours it out on all flesh” as signifying that there is no distinction between recipients of the grace of the incarnate Son:

“He pours it out upon all flesh.” This is clear, that it is not only upon those of the circumcision, but on absolutely everyone who is called through faith, whether from among the erring pagans, whether great or small, slave or free, Barbarian or Scythian. For the grace of salvation in Christ open to all under heaven, since he is “the hope of nations.”⁷⁹

Here, then, the self-emptying of Christ is understood as the context within which God’s grace is made available to all, no matter their status—“small or great, slave or free,” and so on.⁸⁰ In the *Commentary on Jonah*, then, it seems that Cyril’s unitive Christology grounds his affirmation of the literal sense. Cyril does not refrain from typologizing animals; they are the types of Gentiles, while the humans are types of Jews. But this typology is used as a means of affirming the literal sense, not escaping it.

Consider a further example of Cyril’s christological exegesis. In commenting on Isa 49.16, “I have drawn your walls upon my hands, and you are always in my sight,” Cyril notes that God’s “hands” often refer simply to his powers of action. Christians, however, can take it differently, as a reference to the hands of the crucified Christ:

As I see it, nothing should prevent a disciple of Christ from assigning the following meaning to the passage. Sion accused the Lord of forgetting her, but our Lord Jesus Christ tried to prove this false when he became human, because of what happened in the incarnation and what he suffered for us. He was well within his rights to be in the form of the Father and equal to him, but he rather descended into emptiness. He took the form of a slave and became obedient to the Father unto death, death on a cross. And when he was hung upon that cross, he was nailed by his *hands*.⁸¹

For Cyril, then, Christ’s self-emptying constitutes a critique of the very charge of anthropomorphism in scriptural exegesis. One can attribute human properties to God *when referring them to the incarnate Word*, as

78. *Comm. in Jl.* 2.28–29 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:337–39).

79. *Comm. in Jl.* 2.28–29 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:339; trans. Hill, *Commentary*, 1:297).

80. So also *Comm. in Mic.* 7.17–20 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:739).

81. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Is.* 49.16 (PG 70:1065.46–57; trans. Robert Hill, *Commentary on Isaiah*, vol. 3, *Chapters 40–50* [Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2009], 212, with changes).

Cyril does here. Cyril is quite emphatically opposed to the “blasphemy,” as he describes it in several places, of anthropomorphism.⁸² But precisely because Christ’s body is, in Cyril’s delightful phrase, *God’s body*, some (though not all) apparently anthropomorphic claims can be affirmed.

THEODORET ON HOSEA

It is clear, then, that Cyril’s Christology motivated important aspects of his exegesis of scripture’s *ιστορία*. While a full answer to the question of whether a link can be found between the exegetical approaches of Cyril’s Antiochene counterparts and their more dualistic Christologies is beyond the scope of this paper, I will suggest that Theodoret’s literal interpretation of Hosea’s marriage reflects theological concerns that informed his Christology. From Cyril’s commentary, he learned the possibility of justifying a literal reading using typology.⁸³ But Theodoret maintains that it is the *distance* that Hosea kept from Gomer that is a type of God’s relationship to Israel. He thus finds a typological connection (though one that is “vertically” rather than “horizontally” oriented, pointing to God’s encounter with Israel rather than to the future action of Christ) that closely resembles a guiding principle of his Christology, namely, that the Word must be kept securely remote from the baseness of human life.⁸⁴

Theodoret’s commentary, which likely dates to the 430s,⁸⁵ expresses surprise at the tendency among some commentators to deny the literal interpretation of the story. Theodoret sees the marriage of Hosea and Gomer as a *τύπος* of God and the synagogue, demonstrating the influence of both Cyril (in using the language of typology rather than of “comparison” [παραθέσις]) and Theodore (in drawing the connection between God

82. On Cyril’s opposition to anthropomorphizing, see Alexander Golitzin, “The Vision of God and the Form of Glory: More Reflections on the Anthropomorphite Controversy of AD 399,” in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West*, ed. Andrew Louth et al. (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 273–97.

83. It is widely recognized that Theodoret knew Cyril’s commentary on the minor prophets. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament*, 147: “In Cyril he had found a commentator who avoided hermeneutical extremes.”

84. On his christological dualism, see especially Paul B. Clayton, *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus: Antiochene Christology from the Council of Ephesus (431) to the Council of Chalcedon (451)*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Others have attempted to find a more unitive Christology in Theodoret, e.g., Vasilije Vranic, *The Constancy and Development in the Christology of Theodoret of Cyrrhus* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 196–212; and Donald Fairbairn, “The Puzzle of Theodoret’s Christology: A Modest Suggestion,” *JTS* 58.1 (2005): 100–133.

85. Clayton, *The Christology of Theodoret of Cyrus*, 167–70.

and the synagogue rather than between Christ and the church).⁸⁶ Moreover, in defending a typological reading, Theodoret argues that it justifies a literal interpretation of Hosea's marriage:

If the God of all endured the licentious and adulterous synagogue, and the fountain of holiness was not defiled by that abominable and disgusting thing, neither was the prophet defiled by that lewd woman. For he endured that relationship, not because he was enslaved to wretched lust, but in fulfillment of the divine commandments.⁸⁷

Theodore had also argued that the *παράθεσις* justifies the literal sense of the text, but this played a relatively minor role in his interpretation in comparison to the justificatory function of typology for Theodoret and Cyril. Like Theodore, however, Theodoret connects the narrative to God and Israel rather than to Christ and the church.

The typologies of Cyril and Theodoret diverge at a deeper level. For Cyril, as for Irenaeus, Hosea's specifically *sexual* relationship with Gomer is a type of the spiritual communion that Christ possesses with sinners. For Theodoret, on the other hand, the typology lies in Hosea's passionless engagement with Gomer, which reflects the distance that God maintains from sinful Israel. In other words, Hosea's relationship was justified because of its resemblance to God's aloofness from Israel.

The wondrous Hosea took the prostitute, not because he was enslaved to lust, but because he yielded to God's commandments. And that union was holier than any [other] marriage, not only because it happened according to God's commandment, but also because it exhibited a *τύπος* of God and the manner in which the Holy One, while still reposing among the holy ones, was called (*ἐχρημάτιζε*) a bridegroom of the incontinent crowd of Israelites.⁸⁸

Hosea's marriage is a type, not of God's intimate communion with humanity, but of his ultimate distance from them despite being *called* a bridegroom. The antitype is not of the Son of God who emptied himself and communed with defiled humanity, as it is for Cyril, but of the God who remains on high, reposing among the angels, while being styled the husband of sinners. While Cyril also emphasizes that Hosea did not marry Gomer out of lust, he does not claim that this required any distance between them. Hosea, without compromising his own moral purity, purified Gomer by their intimate communion. Similarly, the Word is not defiled by his communion with sinners; rather, sinners are purified by his holiness.

86. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.3 (PG 81:1557.25–26).

87. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.2 (PG 81:1556.41–48).

88. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 1.3 (PG 81:1557.21–27).

The full extent of the difference between Theodoret and Cyril is clear from their interpretation of a subsequent narrative in the same book. In Hos 3, the prophet is commanded to begin a new relationship, this time with an adulteress (whom the text leaves unnamed):⁸⁹

And the Lord said to me, “Continue to go (ἔτι πορεύθητι) and love a woman who loves what is evil, even an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the children of Israel, and they turn away to foreign gods and love pastries and raisins.” And I hired her for myself (ἐμισθώσαμην ἑμαυτῷ) for fifteen pieces of silver, an omer of barley, and a jar of wine. And I said to her, “For many days you shall wait for me and not prostitute yourself or be with another man, and I [will wait] for you.” For the children of Israel will wait for many days without a king, a sacrifice, an altar, a priesthood, and the Urim. And after these things the children of Israel will turn and hope on the Lord their God and on David their king. And they will be amazed by the Lord and by his blessings in the last days.⁹⁰

Both Cyril and Theodoret interpret the prophet’s actions in Hos 3 as a type of God’s relationship to Israel, but their typologies differ widely. Theodoret, unsurprisingly, seeks to ensure that Hosea remains detached from the impurity of the adulteress. He first says (likely echoing Cyril,

89. The ambiguous relationship between Hos 1–2 and 3, which seem at least partly redundant, has been the subject of much discussion. The debate concerns whether i) chap. 3 is late redaction, as a duplicate of chaps. 1–2 or as a later division between an initially unified episode; or ii) chap. 3 is dealing with a different episode altogether; or iii) chap. 3 describes the same event as chap. 1. For discussion (and with reference to patristic commentators) see Eugen J. Pentiu, *Long-Suffering Love: A Commentary on Hosea With Patristic Annotations* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2008), 23–27. I am inclined to think that the LXX interprets the MT as affirming the third option (iii). The Hebrew adverb *תֵּן* could mean either “again” or “still,” but the LXX translates it with *ἔτι*, the usual meaning of which is “still.” In other words, one could reasonably interpret Hos 3.1 LXX as stating that the Lord told Hosea to *continue* loving the adulterous woman with whom he was united in 1.2–3. This would be especially fitting after the description of Israel’s continuing unfaithfulness in 2.1–13 and of God’s promise to restore Israel anyway in 2.15–23. In any case, Cyril does not believe that the adulterous woman of 3.1 (“the first woman” [τὴν πρώτην]) is the same as the woman of 1.2, whom he refers to as ἕτερος γύναιος (Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos. 3.1* [Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:82.1–2]). Theodoret’s position is less clear. He writes, “After the promises of good things [as described in Hos 2.15–23], God again commanded the prophet to make an arrangement/covenant with an adulterous woman (αὐθις ὁ Θεὸς τῷ προφήτῃ παρακελεύεται περὶ γυναῖκα διατεθῆναι μοιχεύτριαν), to live with a base person, so that he might again (πάλιν) show through his deeds an image of divine love for the unworthy” (Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos. 3.1* [PG 81:1568.31–35]). No subsequent indication seems to be given of his view of the matter. Their respective views, however, will make no decisive difference in what follows.

90. Hos 3.1–5 LXX.

as we will see) that God commanded this “so that he might again show through his deeds an image (εικόνα) of divine love for the unworthy,”⁹¹ yet the real depiction of God lies in the distance Hosea maintained prior to her reformation:

The prophet fully did what was commanded him, and he offered a sort of payment to the woman, and made a kind of agreement with her. “For I told the adulteress,” he says, “to shun all sexual intercourse with other men and to keep herself untouched for me.” And [in this way] he pointed to the archetype of the image (τῆς εικόνας τὸ ἀρχέτυπον).⁹²

Moreover, Hosea also reflects God’s relationship to his people in withholding sexual intercourse, just as God providentially cared for Israel but removed the means by which they could discern his providence (that is, the Urim by which the priests and prophets told the future, according to Theodoret).⁹³

It was for this purpose that the prophet lived and cohabited with the base woman as he had been commanded. But he rejected marital intercourse with her, even as the God of all neither stripped the people of his own providence nor made it obvious and easy to see.⁹⁴

Cyril reads the passage quite differently. The typology lies not in God’s self-withholding, but in the great concern that Hosea expresses and the promise of marital relations. The former reflects God’s tender compassion for Israel even in its disobedience, while the latter points to the incarnation and the eventual reconciliation of Israel to Christ:

In my view, the mystery is elegantly pictured for us again in the very same way as it was before [i.e., in the marriage to Gomer]. For as a type (εἰς τύπον), the prophet of God accepts “the adulteress who loves what is evil,” cherishing her and encouraging her with promises and the hope of blessings not to fall into despair. For God discloses the whole mystery when he says to the prophet, “Love the adulteress who loves what is evil, just as God loves the children of Israel, and they turn away to foreign gods and love pastries with raisins.” For it means that even when they chose to disobey

91. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.1 (PG 81:1568.31–35).

92. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.1 (PG 81:1568.40–45): Παραντίκα δὲ τὸ προσταχθὲν εἰς πέρας ἤγαγεν ὁ προφήτης, καὶ λέγει τίνα τε μισθὸν ὑπέσχετο τῇ γυναίκι, καὶ ποίας πρὸς αὐτὴν ἐποιήσατο συνθήκας. Εἶπον γὰρ αὐτῆ, φησὶ, πᾶσαν ἄλλοτριαν φυγεῖν συνουσίαν, ἐμοὶ δ’ ἐαυτὴν διαφυλάττειν ἀνέπαφον. Ὑποδείκνυσι δὲ καὶ τῆς εικόνας τὸ ἀρχέτυπον.

93. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.4 (PG 81:1569.2–3); c.f. Hos 3.5, which Theodoret correctly takes to signify the Urim by the word δῆλος (so Lev 8.8).

94. Theodoret, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.4 (PG 81:1569.7–12): Τοῦτου γὰρ χάριν καὶ ὁ προφήτης τῇ πονηρίᾳ συζῶση γυναίκι συνῶκει μὲν, ὡς προσετάχθη, τῆς δὲ γαμικῆς ὁμιλίας ἀπέιχετο· ἐπειδὴ καὶ ὁ τῶν ὄλων Θεός, οὔτε πάντα ἐγύμνωσε τὸν λαὸν τῆς οἰκείας προνοίας, οὔτε πρόδηλον ταύτην αὐτοῖς ἐποίησε καὶ φανεράν.

and gave their love to false gods, wishing to fulfill their desires by [the false gods], God loved them out of his innate kindness, as the one who “desires all to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.”⁹⁵

He continues:

The prophet therefore compensated her, settled her in his home, and told her to put away the base way of life and to give up the defilements of adultery. He even promised that if she chose to be self-controlled, and if she chose to look to him alone, he himself would also be with her—that is, would make her his own wife and be one with her (“For the two will become one flesh”).⁹⁶

Cyril recognizes that (as the biblical text explicitly states) sexual relations were conditional. Yet Hosea is not a type of this self-withholding from Israel, but of God’s promise to give himself fully to his people when they return to him.⁹⁷ The reference here is also christological, for Israel’s repentance will be a return to God and his Christ: “Israel . . . will know the God of all, and with him David, that is, Christ, who is ‘descended from David according to the flesh,’ the king and Lord of all.”⁹⁸

Thus, although both Cyril and Theodoret accept a literal reading of the passage and ground it in typology, the differences between the typologies they defend reflect matters of fundamental importance in the christological controversies. Cyril’s distinctive christological emphases govern his literal exegesis in several cases, while Theodoret’s characteristically Antiochene conceptualization of divine purity grounds his reading of Hosea. Theodoret knew and took up some elements of Cyril’s interpretation, but he also reworked them to conform to his Christology.

CONCLUSION: EXEGESIS AND CHRISTOLOGY BETWEEN ANTIOCH AND ALEXANDRIA

This preliminary study, then, confirms the recognition in contemporary scholarship that underlying doctrinal disputes, especially those about Christology, must be factored into any adequate account of the fifth-century debates about exegesis. More research will be required to show that this holds across Cyril’s entire exegetical corpus, and it will be especially necessary to consider the cases in which Cyril’s literal readings are not justified on christological grounds. However, given that Cyril’s unitive Christology has a clear conceptual link to literal interpretation, one that he explicitly

95. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.1 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:83.9–23).

96. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:84.7–13).

97. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.2–3 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:84.13–21).

98. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Hos.* 3.4–5 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:89.8–12).

recognized and used on several occasions, the notion that his attention to the literal sense of scripture places him midway between Antioch and Alexandria cannot be sustained. What is most surprising, perhaps, is the tension that this reveals between Antiochene Christology and exegesis. As was previously noted,⁹⁹ many scholars have held that characteristically Antiochene practices of interpretation have a certain conceptual fit with their christological emphases, particularly their supposed prioritization of Christ's humanity. Yet, in view of Cyril's grounding of literal exegesis in his unitive Christology, we must ask whether the dualist Christology that prevailed among Theodore, Nestorius, and Theodoret is more at home with the kind of spiritual interpretation practiced by Nyssen, Didymus, and others like them.

The problem can partly be resolved, it seems, by recognizing that writers like Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus did not have the integrity of Christ's humanity as a theological priority in itself, but rather were ardent defenders of the impassibility of God.¹⁰⁰ It is clear that Theodoret, for example, held that Christ's flesh was transformed with apparently divine properties, especially immortality and immutability, after the resurrection, though he will not speak of divinization or of a change *into* the divine nature.¹⁰¹ Yet it is noteworthy that Theodoret's version of the *communicatio idiomatum*, if it can be so called, runs in one direction only: divinity does not receive or appropriate human attributes, but the human nature is transfigured by divine qualities after the resurrection. Cyril, on the other hand, insists on a form of single-subject predication that attributes human weakness to the divine Son himself insofar as he has become incarnate, even as he also emphasizes the transformation of Christ's human finitude by its union with the divine nature.¹⁰² God is disclosed not only in creatureliness suffused with divinity, but also in his

99. See above, note 9.

100. This has been ably demonstrated by O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering," 463–83.

101. Thus, Vasilije Vranic writes, "The final question relating to the *communicatio idiomatum* in Theodoret's Christology is not whether he accepted it, which evidently he did, but rather when it is thought to occur" (*Constancy*, 200). Brian Daley regards the eschatological transformation of human nature as a distinctive mark of Antiochene soteriology (*God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018], 174–98), as does Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 237.

102. This transformation is especially evident when Cyril speaks of Christ's body as *life-giving* in virtue of its union with the Word. He viewed the incarnation itself, and not only the resurrection, as bringing about the transformation of Christ's flesh; see, e.g., *Comm. Jn.* 6:51 (Pusey, *In xii prophetas*, 1:520). On Cyril's single-subject exegesis, see Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, 256–84, where it is shown that Cyril differentiated predicates between the divine Son *as incarnate* and the divine Son *apart from the incarnation*, and not between the Son as divine and the Son as human.

communion with what is defiled by sin and limited by human weakness. If there is indeed a connection between typically Antiochene exegetical practices and Christologies, then, it does not lie in the degree to which the integrity of Christ's humanity in its finitude was prioritized. Both Cyril and his Antiochene opponents held that the finite character of Christ's human nature was transformed because of the incarnation, even though Theodoret maintained that this transformation occurred only after the resurrection. It was Cyril, moreover, who relentlessly maintained that divinity is revealed not only in a human nature transfigured by immortality and impassibility, but also in the limitations of our creatureliness, since their appropriation by the Word discloses the humility of God and his love for humanity. We may conclude, then, that a Christology like Cyril's, which requires not only a thoroughgoing transformation of Christ's human nature, but also the appropriation of human attributes by the divine nature, provided a theological motivation for affirming the literal sense of Old Testament typologies in virtue of their connection to the lowliness of the incarnate Word. Whether a comparable link can be discerned in Antiochene Christology and exegesis—whether divine impassibility, as a christological priority, motivated Antiochene interpretive practices—must be addressed elsewhere.¹⁰³

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103. This essay has focused on the influence of Christology on Cyril's exegesis, yet it is important to consider the impact of biblical exegesis on his Christology as well. It is clear that the New Testament profoundly shaped Cyril's understanding of the incarnation, yet there is also evidence that his exegesis of the Old Testament informed the distinctive shape of his Christology. As was previously noted, for example, Cyril's typological interpretation of Adam and Moses seems to have provided him with scriptural language for conceiving of Christ's humanity as both genuinely human and unlike any other instance of human nature (Wilken, *Judaism*, 93–119 on Adam, 143–61 on Moses; McGuckin, "Moses and the 'Mystery of Christ,' Part 1," 24–32; "Moses and the 'Mystery of Christ,' Part 2," 98–114). The Adam typology was thus both "a key theological concept and a versatile and plastic exegetical key" (Wilken, "Reflections on the Adam-Christ Typology in Cyril of Alexandria," 142). It also allowed Cyril to explain Christ's reception of the Spirit at his baptism in a uniquely unitive way. Christ received the Spirit, he argued, not simply because he was condescending to our weakness, and still less because he received it only "according to the human nature," but because he was the Second Adam, the one through whom the Spirit lost by the first Adam would be recovered. See Wilken, *Judaism*, 132–142; and his earlier essay, "The Interpretation of the Baptism of Jesus in the Later Fathers," *SP* 11 (1972): 268–77. Cyril's interpretation of Hosea did not occupy a comparable place in his theology, of course, and further exploration of the extent to which his Old Testament exegesis informed and inspired his Christology must be undertaken elsewhere.