

## Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–87): An Ecclesiastical Career in Review

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### ***Introduction***

One of the most enigmatic and certainly most controversial figures of the middle patristic era is Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 313–87). Ordained bishop by a metropolitan considered Arian, ally to moderate semi-Arians, yet in the end dubbed a defender of Nicene orthodoxy – Cyril, at first glance, gives the impression of having led a chameleon-like existence. Not surprisingly, Cyril was the object of a considerably mixed press during his lifetime and immediately following his death,<sup>1</sup> and contemporary assessment of his legacy appears to be no less vexed.<sup>2</sup> Any attempt to disentangle the seeming web of contra-

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<sup>1</sup> Ancient commentary issues from Rufinus, Jerome, Sozomen, Socrates, Theodoret, Epiphanius, and the second session of the Council of Constantinople (382).

<sup>2</sup> Though not an exhaustive list, the principal English and French modern sources of evaluative commentary are the following: P. van Nuffelen, “The Career of Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 348–87): A Reassessment,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007): 134–46; J.W. Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); A.J. Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: the Authorship of the Mystagogic Catecheses* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2001); E. Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3–7, 56–64; R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 398–413; R.C. Gregg, “Cyril of Jerusalem and the Arians,” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, ed. Id. (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 85–109; F.M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 124–33; A.A. Stephenson, “S. Cyril of Jerusalem’s Trinitarian Theology,” *Studia Patristica* 2 (1972): 234–41; Id., Introduction to *The Works of Saint Cyril of*

dictions surrounding his church life has so far proven to be a daunting, if not elusive, task. A number of reputable studies over the years, however, have taken up the challenge of trying to identify the cardinal points unifying Cyril's ecclesiastical career. The body of modern commentary on Cyril from the last century is considerable. Notable among the research of late is J.W. Drijvers's monograph, which gives focused attention to Cyril in the social-historical context of late antique Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> and P. van Nuffelen's meticulous paper, which responds critically to a number of the former's historical conclusions.<sup>4</sup> The goal of the present brief study will be to converse with this literature, recent and remote, by: (1) modestly engaging the exchange between Van Nuffelen and Drijvers through the adoption of a joint historical-theological lens on Cyril; (2) synthesizing much of the sizable corpus of prior contemporary opinion on Cyril, and via these two lines; and (3) attempting to outline the basic lineaments of a sympathetic reinterpretation of Cyril's much disputed clerical life.

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*Jerusalem*, 2 vols. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1969–70), 1:1–65; Id., "Cyril of Jerusalem," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4 (1967): 576–8; J. Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols (Westminster: Newman Press, 1960), III:362–77; H.A. Wolfson, "Philosophical Implications of the Theology of Cyril of Jerusalem," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 11 (1957): 3–19; W. Telfer, Introduction to *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Nemesa*, The Library of Christian Classics 4 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 19–63; G. Touton, "La méthode catéchétique de St. Cyrille de Jérusalem comparée à celles de St. Augustin et de Théodore de Mopsueste," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 1 (1951): 265–85; J. Lebon, "La Position de Saint Cyrille de Jérusalem dans les luttes provoquées par l'arianisme," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 20:2 (1924): 181–210, 357–86; T.H. Bindley, "On Some Points Doctrinal and Practical in the Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril of Jerusalem," *American Journal of Theology* 21 (1917): 598–607; X. Le Bachelet, "Cyrille," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 3 (1908), 2527–77; A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 7 vols, trans. 3<sup>rd</sup> German ed., E. Buchanan (New York: Dover, 1895–1900), 4:71–2; E.H. Gifford, Introduction to *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 14 vols, eds. P. Schaff & H. Wace (Oxford: Parker 1894; repr. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994), 7: i–lviii.

<sup>3</sup> Van Nuffelen, "Cyril."

<sup>4</sup> Drijvers, *Bishop and City*.

### *Controversial Cyril*

*The Essential Facts.*<sup>5</sup> Cyril was ordained deacon by the anti-Arian bishop Macarius of Jerusalem c. early 330's<sup>6</sup> and was ordained priest by Macarius' pro-Nicene, pro-Athanasian successor, Maximus of Jerusalem, c. 342–43.<sup>7</sup> After either the deposition or death of Maximus c. 348, Cyril was consecrated

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<sup>5</sup> The English version of Cyril's Catecheses [hereafter Cat.] used in this study is E. Yarnold's chapter-select (and sometimes passage-select) translation of S. Patris Nostri Cyrilli Hierosolymorum Archiepiscopi Opera quae supersunt Omnia, eds. W.K. Reischl and J. Rupp (Munich: Libraria Lenteriana, 1848–60), found in Yarnold, Cyril, 89–168. This is a basic outline of Cyril's life focusing on clerical benchmarks and doctrinal commitments, but eschewing most contentious facts. Concerning dates, which vary among sources, a policy of citing an approximate range (*circa*) is adopted. Ancient sources for Cyril's clerical life are the following: Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (hereafter for all *Church Histories* HE) 10.24, 38; 11.21; Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 112 and *Chronicon* an.348; Sozomen, HE 3.14; 4.5, 20, 25; 7.7, 14; Socrates, HE 2.38, 40–42, 45; 3.20; 4.1; 5.3, 8, 15; Theodoret, HE 2.22, 27; 5.8–9; and Epiphanius, *Panarion (Adversus haereses)* 66.20.3; 73.23.1, 27.1. Corresponding English translations: *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia*, trans. P.R. Amidon (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), esp. 33; *Lives of Illustrious Men*, trans. E.C. Richardson, NPNF, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., vol. 3, 382; *A Translation of Jerome's Chronicon with Historical Commentary*, trans. M.D. Donalson (Lewiston: Mellen University Press, 1996), 45; Sozomen, *Church History*, trans. C.D. Hartranft, NPNF, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., vol. 2, esp. 315, 380; Socrates, *Church History*, trans. A.C. Zenos, NPNF, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., vol. 2, esp. 65, 121; Theodoret, *Church History*, trans. B. Jackson, NPNF, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., vol. 3, esp. 87, 138; *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis*, trans. P.R. Amidon (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. 311.

For reasons of scope, this study will not consult late antique, medieval, Byzantine and miscellaneous other sources on Cyril such as that of Alexander Monachos, Theophanes, et al. For mention of these, see Drijvers, *Cyril*, xiii and passim.

Additional modern sources (descriptive only) on Cyril's life not mentioned above (n. 2) are the following: G. Röwenkamp, "Cyril of Jerusalem," in *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature*, eds. Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 157–8; B.A. Altaner, *Patrology*, trans. 5th German ed., H.C. Graef (Freiburg: Herder & Herder, 1958), 361–3; G. Bardy, "Cyrille de Jérusalem," *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques* 3 (1956): 1181–85; Id., "Cyrille de Jérusalem," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 2 (1953): 2683–87.

<sup>6</sup> Drijvers, *Bishop and City*, 32; Gifford, Introduction, ii.

<sup>7</sup> Röwenkamp, "Cyril," 157; Drijvers, *Bishop and City*, 32.