635

# The Significance of Narrative in Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis

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*Scholars have rightly identified the roles of literal/historical interpretation and noetic/spiritual interpretation in Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis of Scripture. This article argues that narrative contributes to both methods by using events in the past to explain Scripture's meaning. He applies concepts established historically by Exodus' recount of the Israelites' presence in Egypt to his interpretation of the prophetic books. On the one hand, his literal interpretation draws from the Israelites' return to idolatry, detailed in Exodus xxxii. On the other hand, his noetic interpretation relates the Egyptians' oppression of the Israelites detailed in Exodus i to humanity's limitations under the devil.*

Theologians in the fifth century utilised history to protect the Christian faith from non-Christian criticisms. For example, in Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Iulianum* i.14, he defends the Christian faith by emphasising Moses's 'seniorities in time'.[1] To make this argument, he draws from classical and biblical sources to construct a

[1] 'ἐν χρόνῳ τὰ πρεσβεῖα': *Contra Iulianum* i.4, in *Kyrill von Alexandrien I: Gegen Julian*, I/ 1–5, ed. and trans. Christoph Riedweg and Wolfram Kinzig, *GCS*, NF xx, Berlin 2016, 16 line 14. Additionally, I thank Matthew Crawford for sharing his forthcoming translation of Cyril's *Contra Iulianum*, a project jointly conducted with Aaron Johnson and Edward Jeremiah.

historical account that outlines the beginning of time until Moses.[2] Through the connection between primacy and authority, Moses's earlier position in world history, compared to Greek sources, indicates his superiority. Thus, Stefan Rebenich rightly states that 'Cyril's synoptic account of world history and his chronological synthesis of the historical narrative creates the actual beginning of his refutation [of Julian].'[3]

Additionally, Matthew Crawford has recently demonstrated that Cyril and Augustine similarly rely upon Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicon* in their respective apologetic treatises to integrate Scripture's historical account into all of world history. The synthesis supports their argument that the Christian faith properly worships God in contrast to the non-Christians who partake in false worship.[4] This sentiment, shared by Augustine and Cyril, indicates not only the value that these figures place upon the biblical story but also the purpose for which they employ it. While Theodoret of Cyr's *Graecarum affectionum curatio* does not show a direct reliance upon Eusebius' *Chronicon*,[5] this absence does not imply a disregard for this concept. Books II and X, for example, use historical arguments to direct non-Christians to proper worship through Moses[6] and the

[2] See Robert Grant, 'Greek literature in the treatise *De Trinitate* and Cyril *Contra Julianum*', *JTS* xv/2 (1964), 265–79; Marie-Odile Boulnois, 'Cyril of Alexandria reading Porphyry', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* xxviii/3 (2020), 443–65; Matthew Crawford, 'The influence of Eusebius' *Chronicle* on the apologetic treatises of Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo', this JOURNAL lxxi (2020), 693–711; Stefan Rebenich, '"History in Cyril": das historische Argument in der Schrift Contra Iulianum des Patriarchen Kyrill von Alexandrien', in Karen Aydin, Christine van Hoof and Lukas Mathieu (eds), *Ecclesia victrix? Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Spätantike: Festschrift für Klaus Martin Girardet*, Berlin 2021, 169–85.

[3] 'dass Kyrills synoptische Darstellung der Weltgeschichte und seine chronographische Synthese historischer Narrative den eigentlichen Anfang seiner Widerlegung bilden': Rebenich, '"History in Cyril"', 177.

[4] Crawford, 'The influence of Eusebius' *Chronicle*'. On Augustine see also Matthew Crawford, *The Eusebian canon tables: ordering textual knowledge in late antiquity*, Oxford 2019, ch. iv, and Paula Fredriksen, '*Secundum carnem*: history and Israel in the theology of St Augustine', in William Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (eds), *The limits of ancient Christianity: essays on late antique thought and culture in honor of R. A. Markus*, Ann Arbor, MI 1999, 26–41. Jerome would eventually translate Eusebius' work from the Greek into Latin later in the fourth century. For more on the influence of Jerome's translation of the *Chronicle* and his other historical works see Mark Vessey, 'Reinventing history: Jerome's *Chronicon* and the writing of the post-Roman West', in Scott McGill, Cristiana Sogno and Edward Watts (eds), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: later Roman history and culture, 284–450 CE*, Cambridge 2010, 265–89.

[5] Crawford, 'The influence of Eusebius' *Chronicle*', 694.

[6] Just like Cyril in *Contra Iulianum* i.14, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* ii.43 emphasises how Moses was alive prior to Greek philosophers and poets to argue for his authority. He states, 'ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε, ὅτι Μωϋσῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ὁ νομοθέτης πάντων ἐστὶ τῶν ὑμετέρων ποιητῶν καὶ ξυγγραφέων καὶ φιλοσόφων πρεσβύτατος;': *Graecarum affectionum curatio*

prophets.[7] Taken altogether, Augustine, Cyril and Theodoret recognise that Christianity's development within a broader narrative significantly contributes to understanding and worshipping God.

This article adds to this examination of the apologetic utilisation of history by extending it to Cyril's exegesis. In recent decades, there has been a growing appreciation of his exegetical works.[8] Scholars have generally acknowledged his two approaches to Scripture as noetic/spiritual and historical/literal. On the one hand, his noetic or spiritual interpretation refers to the hidden or spiritual significance of words.[9] On the other hand, his historical or literal approach focuses on an object, place or action clearly mentioned in the text.[10] These two exegetical methods are also connected, as the literal component can contribute to the spiritual meaning.[11] For example, Jerome understands Hosea's marriage to a prostitute as symbolic, but Cyril views it as a real action that is foundational to understanding Hosea's prophetic message.[12]

ii.43, in *Theodoret* De Graecarum affectionum curatione*: Heilung der griechischen Krankheiten*, ed. Clemens Scholten, Leiden 2015, 218.

[7] In book 10 of Theodoret's work, he contrasts the non-Christian oracles with the prophets to refute the falsehood of the former while promoting the veracity of the latter. He draws significantly from the Pentateuch, prophetic books and the Psalms to support his point and, therefore, demonstrate that the Christian faith possesses true worship of God: *Graecarum affectionum curatio* x.42–105, *Theodoret* De Graecarum affectionum curatione*: Heilung der griechischen Krankheiten*, 592–623.

[8] Four examples include Daniel Keating, *The appropriation of divine life in Cyril of Alexandria*, Oxford 2004; Matthew Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian theology of Scripture*, Oxford 2014; Dimitrios Zaganas, *La Formation d'une exégèse alexandrine post-origénienne: les Commentaires sur les douze prophètes et sur Isaïe de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, Leuven 2019; Hauna Ondrey, *The minor prophets as Christian Scripture in the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria*, Oxford 2018.

[9] See Alexander Kerrigan, *St Cyril of Alexandria, interpreter of the Old Testament*, Rome 1952, 111–240; Zaganas, *La Formation*, 189–303.

[10] See Kerrigan, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 35–110; Zaganas, *La Formation*, 135–88.

[11] Kerrigan, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 44–51; Zaganas, *La Formation*, 56–60. See also Robert Wilken, 'Cyril of Alexandria as interpreter of the Old Testament', in Thomas Weinandy and Daniel Keating (eds), *The theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: a critical appreciation*, London 2003, 17–19; Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the early Christian mind: a study of Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis and theology*, New Haven 1971, 69–92; John O'Keefe, 'Christianizing Malachi: fifth-century insights from Cyril of Alexandria', *Vigiliae Christianae* l/2 (1996), 138–41; and Manilo Simonetti, 'Note sul commento di Cirillo d'Alessandria ai *Profeti minori*', *Vetera Christianorum* xiv (1977), 302–18.

[12] Ondrey, *The minor prophets*, 66–70. Zaganas's work has challenged the paradigm that Cyril relied on Jerome's commentaries on the prophets when composing his own. He describes the relationship between their works as 'un parallélisme sans rencontre': *La Formation*, 308–25. This view comes against the understanding of previous scholars such as Kerrigan (*St Cyril of Alexandria*, 435–44) and F.-M. Abel ('Parallélisme exégétique entre S. Jérôme et S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie', *Vivre et Penser* i/1 [1941], 94–119).

While *Contra Iulianum* demonstrates Cyril's value of narrative in an apologetic context, this concept also influences his approach to Scripture. This article employs the word 'narrative' in part to differentiate Cyril's historical argument in the apologetic work from his historical/literal interpretation seen in his biblical commentaries. The historical/literal interpretation explains the obvious or plain meaning of Scripture, considering the author's context for understanding a verse or passage. Narrative in an exegetical work, though, contextualises the content of a passage, verse or even a particular word within the broader trajectory of events in humanity's story of salvation. Thus, Cyril's attention to narrative adds to his exegesis by supplying concepts from important events in the past to enhance his literal and noetic interpretations.

Cyril's exegetical use of narrative is similar to the manner in which he apologetically exercises the concept because both applications contrast true and false worship. For this article, the biblical role of Egypt is one example in which narrative supports his exegetical explanation of proper worship of God. According to him, the Israelites adopt the Egyptians' idolatrous practices because of their time spent in Egypt, described at the beginning of Exodus. The present argument is not that his view that Israel learned idolatry from the Egyptians is unique, as John Chrysostom[13] and Theodoret[14] make similar points. However, what is distinct is the extent to which Cyril incorporates Egypt's role in the larger narrative into his exegesis. The Israelites not only adopt idolatrous practices because of their time spent in Egypt but also return to these practices in Exod. xxxii when they worship a golden calf after leaving Egypt. This narrative establishes a direct relationship between Egypt and false worship, which, in turn, influences his historical and noetic interpretations of Israel's idolatry in the prophetic books.

### Narrative and historical events

The significance of Egypt in Cyril's narrative begins with his reading of Exodus. After Genesis closes with Joseph and the line of Abraham moving to Egypt because of a famine,[15] the book of Exodus commences four hundred years later, at which point the Israelites have become

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[13] 'Ὦ τῆς ἀνοίας! Ποίησον, φησὶν, ἵνα προπορεύσωνται ἡμῶν. Ποῦ; Εἰς Αἴγυπτον. Ὁρᾷς, πῶς δυσαποσπάστως εἶχον τῶν ἐθῶν τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν': John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta apostolorum* xvii.2, *PG* lx.136.

[14] 'ἐν γὰρ δὴ τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ πλεῖστον ὅσον τὸν Ἰσραὴλ διατρίψαντα χρόνον καὶ τὰ πονηρὰ τῶν ἐγχωρίων εἰσδεξάμενον ἔθη καὶ θύειν εἰδώλοις καὶ ὀργάνοις μουσικοῖς ἐπιτέρπεσθαι, τούτων ἐν ἕξει γενόμενον ἐλευθερῶσαι θελήσας, θύειν μὲν ξυνεχώρησεν, ἀλλ᾿ οὐ πάντα θύειν, οὐδέ γε τοῖς ψευδωνύμοις Αἰγυπτίων θεοῖς, ἀλλ᾿ αὐτῷ μόνῳ τοὺς Αἰγυπτίων προσφέρειν θεούς': Theodoret of Cyr, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* vii.16, *Theodoret* De Graecarum affectionum curatione: *Heilung der griechischen Krankheiten*, 466, lines 1–8, 466, line 1–8.     [15] See Genesis lxvi–l.

numerous in Egypt.[16] On account of this growth, the Egyptian authorities oppress the Israelites, subsequently leading to God bringing them out of Egypt through Moses.[17] Cyril, in his *Glaphyra*, one of his works on the Pentateuch,[18] interprets these events in his comments on Exod. iv.6–7.[19] These verses outline two movements that he views as representative of the Israelites' state of purity in conjunction with their movements into and out of Egypt. In the first movement, God commands Moses to put his hand inside his robe and, as a result, it becomes leprous. Moses's hand becoming leprous indicates Israel 'degenerating into decay'[20] since leprosy means 'uncleanness and deadness'.[21] The connection between Moses's hand and Israel and between his tunic and Egypt signifies that Israel became impure through its presence in Egypt. Then, for the second movement, God commands Moses to do the same action again and his hand is healed. Cyril views Moses's repetition of this movement to represent God saving the Israelites from Egypt through their exodus.[22] Just as the leprosy is healed, God cleanses the Israelites from the uncleanness that they attained in Egypt.

The Israelites' movement toward impurity implies that they had a degree of purity prior to entering the promised land. Cyril's comments on this passage briefly mention this point by stating how, as a result of living in Egypt, Israel 'sprang from the well-worn goodness of heaven and their fathers'.[23] This

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[16] See Exodus i.1–7; xii. 40–1.          [17] Exod. i.8–14.

[18] Cyril's *Glaphyra* (*PG* lxix.9–678) and *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate* (*PG* lxviii.133–1125) are considered his two commentaries on the Pentateuch. The style in both works is similar in that they approach the text passage-by-passage rather than verse-by-verse, as seen in his *Commentarius in Isaiam* or *Commentarii in Ioannem*. Greater scholarly attention has been dedicated to *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate* than to his *Glaphyra*. See Sebastian Schurig, *Die Theologie des Kreuzes beim frühen Cyrill von Alexandria: Dargestellt an seiner Schrift* 'De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate', Tübingen 2005; Mark Elliot, 'What Cyril of Alexandria's *De adoratione* is all about', in Allen Brent and Markus Vinzent (eds), *Studia Patristica* l (2011), 245–52; Matthew Crawford, 'The preface and subject matter of Cyril of Alexandria's *De adoratione*', *JTS* lxiv/1 (2013), 154–67; and Barbara Villani, *Kyrill von Alexandrien: De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate Buch I*, Berlin 2021, 20–8.

[19] 'Again, the Lord said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh': Exod. iv.6–7 (ESV).          [20] 'βαθύνοντες λίαν εἰς κάθεσιν': *PG* lxix. 473B.

[21] 'ἀκαθαρσίας… καὶ νεκρότητος': ibid.

[22] 'ὡς ἂν εἰδεῖεν ἐντεῦθεν οἱ κεκλημένοι, τουτέστιν, οἱ ἐξ αἵματος Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτι κἂν δυσδιάφυκτον ἔχοιεν τὴν συμφοράν, ταῖς Αἰγυπτίων μοχθηρίαις ὑπεζευγμένοι, καὶ νόσον ὥσπερ τινὰ παθόντες ἐσχάτην, τὴν ὑπ' ἐκείνοις δουλείαν· ἀλλ' εὐμήχανος ὁ ἰατρὸς, καὶ τὰ πολὺ δυσεξίτητα τῶν παθῶν παρενεγκεῖν εὐκόλως εἰδὼς καὶ δυνάμενος, καὶ τοῦτο ἀμογητὶ καὶ οὐκ ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ. Ἅμα γὰρ εἰσήνεγκε ὁ Μωσῆς τὴν χεῖρα ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ, καὶ ἀπήλλακται τοῦ νοσεῖν.': ibid.

[23] 'ἐξέθορον μὲν τῆς ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐκ πατέρων αὐτοῖς ἐντριβοῦς ἐπιεικείας': ibid. lxix. 473A–B.

statement aligns with his understanding of Abraham described in *Contra Iulianum* i.10 and iii.52.[24] In these sections, he explains how Abraham had rejected the Assyrian practice of polytheism and, instead, sought to know the one God.[25] In contrast to the Assyrians, who were 'idolaters and fearers of demons',[26] he was a 'genuine worshipper'.[27] This understanding of Abraham's worship of God clarifies the Israelites' initial position in 'goodness' prior to entering Egypt.[28] Their exodus from Egypt serves as a return to this proper worship, as Moses delivers them away from the Egyptians' idolatry and 'to the knowledge of God according to truth'.[29] Therefore, his comments on Exod. iv.6–7 indicate his attention to the progression of Israel's narrative by detailing the Israelites descending from their state of goodness established by Abraham.

The transition toward or away from correct worship of God defines points of chronological significance for Cyril, an emphasis that is similarly present in his historical argument from *Contra Iulianum*. Instead of living according to their ancestor Abraham, the Israelites had assumed, as Lunn nicely translates, the 'local practices'.[30] Additional support for this idea appears a little later in his *Glaphyra* on Exodus when expounding upon Exod. xix.10–13. Here, God commands Moses to tell the people to cleanse themselves and Cyril relates this command to their uncleanness from adopting Egyptian customs. His explanation of this passage elaborates on the Egyptians' practices by identifying them as 'falling into their false worship'.[31] As a result, the Israelites 'worshipped human inventions',[32] which include creations from stone and other materials.[33] While Eusebius of Caesarea uses Egypt to contrast between the Hebrews and the Jews,[34] Cyril does not apply such a differentiation among the Israelites. Instead, he simply draws on ethnicity to contrast the Israelites' initial true worship

[24] In his *Glaphyra*, Cyril transitions from the tower of Babel in Gen. xi to Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek in Gen. xiv (*PG* lxix.80–1). Additionally, in *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, he introduces Abraham in the context of his movement into Egypt in Gen. xii.10 (Villani, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate Buch I*, 162, lines 5–11). Given the purpose of *Contra Iulianum* 1 described above, it makes sense that Cyril is relating Abraham to the broader historical narrative in this work.

[25] 'τῇ πολυθέῳ πλάνῃ or πολυθέου πλάνης': *Contra Iulianum* i.10, *GCS*, NF xx. 22, line 6 – 23, line 16; iii.52, *GCS*, NF xx. 248, line 18–249, line 28.

[26] 'εἰδωλολάτραι καὶ δεισιδαίμονες': ibid. iii.52, *GCS*, NF 20, 248, lines 19–20.

[27] 'γνήσιον… προσκυνητήν': ibid, line 11.        [28] 'ἐπιεικείας': *PG* lxix.473A–B.

[29] 'πρὸς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ κατ᾽ ἀλήθειαν Θεοῦ': *PG* lxx.469A.

[30] 'ἔθεσί… τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις ἐνιζηκότες': *PG* lxix.473B; Nicholas Lunn, *St Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch,* II: *Exodus through Deuteronomy*, Washington, DC 2019, 74.        [31] 'ταῖς ἐκείνων ψευδολατρείαις': *PG* lxix.500A.

[32] 'ἀνθρωπίνοις μὲν προσεκύνουν εὑρήμασι': ibid.

[33] 'τοῖς ἐκ λίθου πεποιημένοις … ἐξ ἑτέρας ὕλης': ibid.

[34] See Aaron Johnson, *Ethnicity and argument in Eusebius'* Praeparatio evangelica, Oxford 2006, 94–125.

inherited from Abraham with the Egyptians' idolatry and false worship.[35] The Israelites' adoption of Egyptian false worship establishes a defining point in his narrative because of their transition from true to false worship.

While the passages examined so far have provided the foundation for the Israelites learning idolatry from the Egyptians, Exod. xxxii.1–6 contributes to Cyril's narrative by depicting the Israelites' return to Egyptian practices. At this point in Exodus, Moses has led the Israelites out from Egypt and to Mount Sinai. He alone ascended to the top of the mountain for an extended period of time, while the remaining Israelites waited at its base with Moses's brother, Aaron.[36] Exod. xxxii.1–6 outlines how the Israelites became impatient and asked Aaron to make a golden calf, to which the people made offerings after its creation. For Cyril, this action demonstrates the Israelites' return to Egyptian idolatry, which adds to the narrative because of the Israelites' move to false worship despite their departure from Egypt. This event is significant because Cyril refers to it in his commentaries on the prophets as a point of similarity for the Israelites' later turning away from God.

In his interpretation of Exod. xxxii.1–6, Cyril uses two phrases that indicate the Israelites' regression into an old practice. First, he states that they 'have fallen into the deception in respect to Egypt'.[37] The second preposition present here (ἐν) cannot refer to the Israelites' place because they are clearly at Mount Sinai according to the passage. Therefore, Cyril is referring to the Israelites' return to the practices they learned in Egypt. The second phrase from his interpretation that portrays the Israelites' regression is, 'they lapsed into their former thoughtlessness'.[38] The important word in this phrase is the adjective 'former' (ἀρχαῖος) because it describes the Israelites' return to a previous practice. When considering his comments on Exod. iv.6–7 and xix.10–13, Cyril is using ἀρχαῖος to point back to the false worship that they adopted from Egypt.

The form of a calf (μόσχος) is an important detail for Cyril as well. He notes that the calf was 'an object of worship' for the Egyptians as well as those subjected to them.[39] This description suggests the influence of his own context as a bishop in Alexandria on his reading of Scripture. He shows this familiarity with Egyptian cultic religion, for example, in his *Contra Iulianum* i.16, as he discusses the creation of the Egyptian god Serapis under Ptolemy's rule. Serapis comes from two other Egyptian gods, Osiris and Apis, who were foundational components of Egyptian

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[35] See Crawford, 'The influence of Eusebius' *Chronicle*', 708–9.
[36] See Exod. xii–xix.
[37] 'πεπτώκασιν εἰς τὴν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ πλάνησιν': *PG* lxix.528B.
[38] 'ταῖς ἀρχαίαις ὠλίσθησαν ἀβουλίαις': ibid.
[39] 'Μόσχος γὰρ ἦν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τὸ σέβας αὐτοῖς τε τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις, καὶ τοῖς τὴν ἐκείνων ἀπάτην ἠρρωστηκόσιν.': *PG* lxix.528B–C.

cultic thought.[40] While it seems likely that *Contra Iulianum* i.16 comes from Clement of Alexandria's earlier *Protrepticus*,[41] it is important to consider how Alexandria was a diverse metropolis containing people with a variety of different beliefs. There was even a Serapeum until its destruction at the end of the fourth century.[42] Cyril's writing reveals his awareness of these non-Christian practices, as several scholars have discussed the presence of the Isis cult in Alexandria in the fifth century and how it influenced his thought.[43] While he is not explicit, Cyril likely understands the calf from Exod. xxxii.4 to be Apis, a calf deity according to Egyptian belief.[44] In this light, he regards the Israelites' request for a golden calf to portray further their regression back into Egyptian practices.

Thus, through the passages examined in this section, Cyril's understanding of Israel's narrative from Abraham to Sinai develops through worshipping God or adopting idolatrous practices. While Abraham and Moses convey movements toward the former, Cyril argues that Egypt caused the latter, even after the freed Israelites reside at Mount Sinai. In this way, the connection between Egypt and idolatry emerges from the Israelites' time under Egyptian oppression during which they turned away from God toward Egyptian practices. His comments on Exod. iv.6–7 and xix.10–3 refer to the adoption of these local practices through Israel becoming unclean and falling into false worship. Furthermore, his comments on Exod. xxxii.1–6 describe the Israelites' idolatry as a return to these false practices. With this outline of the biblical story thus far, the next two sections of this article turn to how he applies the association between Egypt and idolatry established by his narrative to his historical and noetic interpretations of the prophets.

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[40]  *Contra Iulianum* i.16, *GCS*, NF xx.33–4.

[41]  Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* iv.48, *GCS* xii/37–8.

[42]  For discussion on the cultural climate of Alexandria see Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in late antiquity: topography and social conflict*, Baltimore, MD 1997, 278–316, and Manfred Clauss, *Alexandria: eine antike Weltstadt*, Stuttgart 2003, 246–315. If Cyril was born sometime between 375 and 379 (see John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological controversy*, Crestwood, NY 2004, 1–3), then he was likely old enough to understand the significance of the destruction of the Serapeum temple.

[43]  See John McGuckin, 'The influence of the Isis cult on St Cyril of Alexandria's Christology', in Elizabeth Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* xxiv, Leuven 1993, 291–9; Sarolta Takács, 'The magic of Isis replaced, or Cyril of Alexandria's attempt at redirecting religious devotion', *Poikila Byzantina* xiii (1994), 489–507; Hans van Loon, 'The terminology of mystery cults in Cyril of Alexandria', in Albert Geljon and Nienke Vos (eds), *Rituals in early Christianity: new perspectives on tradition and transformation*, Leiden 2021, 106–34; and Thomas Pietsch, 'St Cyril of Alexandria and the mysteries of Isis in *De adoratione*', this JOURNAL lxxiv/4 (2023), 703–19.

[44]  See Cyril's comments on Hosea iv.15; v.8; x.5. His references to Apis in these comments and the lack of mention of Mnevis (Μνεῦις), a different bull in the Egyptian cultic religions, suggest that Cyril has only the former in mind.

*Narrative and literal exegesis*

Regarding his literal exegesis, Cyril interprets the Israelites' idolatry in the time of the prophets with respect to Exod. xxxii's contribution to the broader narrative. He understands a similarity between their idolatry during this time and the idolatry at Mount Sinai because both instances signify the Israelites' return to Egyptian practices. In the prophetic books, the prophets relay messages from God that mainly call Israel and Judah to repentance or outline the punishment as a result of their disobedience. After the Israelites reached the promised land and developed as a nation, certain kings led the people away from God.[45] The preface to Cyril's commentary on Hosea especially shows his familiarity with Israel's developing narrative and its impact on his thought. While he notes the disobedience of King Solomon, Israel's fall into idolatrous practices begins with the tension between Solomon's own son, Rehoboam, and Jeroboam.[46] 1 Kings xii details how Jeroboam led an uprising against Rehoboam, causing the latter to flee to the south, dividing Israel into two nations.[47] Cyril interjects here, stating that Jeroboam was concerned that Israel would return to 'worship according to the law'.[48] For this reason, he created two golden calves to which the people offered sacrifices. Cyril's recount portrays the Israelites' departure from true worship and toward idolatry as parallel to the earlier Israelites learning false worship from their initial move into Egypt and the worship of the calf in Exod. xxxii.

Cyril describes Jeroboam as 'returning Israel to the object of worship in Egypt',[49] emphasising again his negative view of Egypt and the Egyptians' false worship. While the participle in this phrase, 'ἀναβιβάζων', can refer to an upward ascent, the prefix 'ἀνα-' in the context of his reading refers to a repetition or return. In fact, Cyril is being ironic when using this word because the same verb appears in Exod. xxxii.4, in which Aaron pronounces that the golden calf brought Israel out of Egypt.[50] Additionally, the reference to Exod. xxxii.4 in 1 Kings xii.28 further supports the connection between these verses in Cyril's thought. The verb 'ἀνεβίβασάν' from Exod. xxxii.4 expresses how the calf brought Israel out of the physical

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[45] This narrative is described in 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. In addition to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, there are twelve other prophets generally referred to as the 'minor prophets'. Of these works, Cyril's commentaries on Isaiah and the twelve remain fully extant.

[46] P. Pusey, *Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini in XII Prophetas*, v/1–2, Oxford 1868, i. 3–5.   [47] See 1 Kgs xii. 18–24.

[48] 'τῆς ἐν νόμῳ λατρείας': *XII Prophetas*, i.5, lines 27–8.

[49] 'πρὸς τὸ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ σέβας ἀναβιβάζων τὸν Ἰσραὴλ': ibid. i.6, lines 1–2.

[50] 'καὶ ἐδέξατο ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν καὶ ἔπλασεν αὐτὰ ἐν τῇ γραφίδι καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ μόσχον χωνευτὸν καὶ εἶπεν Οὗτοι οἱ θεοί σου, Ισραηλ, οἵτινες ἀνεβίβασάν σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου.': Exod. xxxii.4 (LXX).

location of Egypt. The participle form 'ἀναβιβάζων' in his preface for Hosea does not convey an ascent from Egypt but a return to it, which aligns with how he views Israel's regression to the Egyptian object of worship.

One may notice that Cyril uses the word 'δάμαλις' for Jeroboam as making 'two golden calves',[51] while his comments on Exod. xxxii.1–6 has the word 'μόσχος'.[52] This difference, though, does not designate an inconsistency in his thought or refer to different idols. Instead, the respective words for the golden objects reflect his close reading of the biblical text. The Septuagint's version of 1 Kgs xii.28 describes Jeroboam as making 'δύο δαμάλεις χρυσᾶς', a phrase that Cyril directly copies. Exod. xxxii.4 in the Septuagint, though, says that Aaron makes a 'μόσχον', which, as noted above, Cyril uses when commenting on this verse. He therefore closely adheres to the verbiage of the biblical text while also conceptually connecting Israel's idolatry in 1 Kgs xii to Exod. xxxii through the Egyptian object of worship. As a result, his preface to Hosea signifies how Cyril views a continuity between the Israelites' idolatry at Mount Sinai and the idolatry beginning in the context of the prophets. In both instances, the Israelites are returning to the Egyptians' practices by worshipping a calf instead of God.

In his comments on Amos v.25–7, Cyril provides a similar explanation of the Israelites lapsing into the idolatry learned from Egypt. These verses do not mention Egypt or a calf, so his exegesis becomes a little creative when relating this passage to the wider narrative. The phrase 'you took up the temple of Moloch and the star of your god Raiphan' from Amos v.26 is particularly important for establishing this connection.[53] To shed light on this line, Cyril immediately turns to Exod. xxxii.1 for Israel's turn away from God and Moses.[54] He relates these passages to one another based on the premise that the Israelites turned away from properly worshipping God and returned to the idolatry that they learned from the Egyptians. Egypt's connotation of idolatry enables Cyril to relate the Israelites' worship of Moloch and Raiphan to Exod. xxxii. His progression from Amos v.25–7 to Exod. xxxii.1, therefore, further supports his consideration of narrative in his exegesis because the passage from the prophetic book does not include a reference to Egypt or a calf. Instead, he relies upon a conceptual similarity to bring the two passages together.

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[51] 'δύο δαμάλεις': *XII Prophetas*, i.6, line 1.

[52] 'Μόσχος γὰρ ἦν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τὸ σέβας αὐτοῖς τε τοῖς Αἰγυπτίοις': *PG* lxix. 528B–C.

[53] Cyril follows the Septuagint's version of Amos v.25–7, 'Μὴ σφάγια καὶ θυσίας προσηνέγκατέ μοι τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ λέγει Κύριος, καὶ ἀνελάβετε τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ Μολὸχ καὶ τὸ ἄστρον τοῦ θεοῦ ὑμῶν Ῥαιφάν, τοὺς τύπους αὐτῶν οὓς ἐποιήσατε ἑαυτοῖς· καὶ μετοικιῶ ὑμᾶς ἐπέκεινα Δαμασκοῦ, λέγει Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὄνομα αὐτῷ.': *XII Prophetas*, i.472, lines 21–5.

[54] Ibid. i.474, lines 9–14.

As a result, he introduces elements from Exod. xxxii's contribution to the narrative into his exegesis of Amos v.25–7. Using a 'μὲν'/'δὲ' construction, he states: 'Therefore, they had made a calf in the wilderness. On the one hand (μὲν), the calf was visible, as if an idol for everyone. On the other hand (δὲ), many were obtaining other idols for themselves.'[55] The 'μὲν' clause provides the initial connection between idolatry and Exod. xxxii through the Israelites' worship of the golden calf. This statement serves to establish the general error of idolatry, which in turn sets up the other practice of idolatry. In the 'δὲ' phrase, he classifies the individual creation of idols as the former deception[56] and an action 'according to their previous practice in Egypt'.[57] In this reading of the Israelites' worship of Moloch and Raiphan, Cyril progresses from the concept of idolatry to the time when Israel regressed to false worship within his narrative. His application of Exod. xxxii shows how the Israelites' idolatry at Mount Sinai contributes to Cyril's understanding of narrative by representing a return to false worship.

Elaborating upon the significance of Moloch and Raiphan, Cyril follows Amos v.26 by detailing how the Israelites made a temple and placed the idol Moloch in it. He then explains that Moloch is an 'idol of the Moabites'[58] and is a stone with precious gems on its forehead.[59] The lack of connection between Moloch and the Egyptian calf leads Cyril to understand the Israelites' worship of this stone with another idol. Still, the calf established by Jeroboam is clearly present in Cyril's thought, as he describes how the Israelites worshipped Moloch in addition to the calf.[60] Therefore, the worship of Moloch is like the past Israelites' worship of individual idols in addition to the golden calf created by Aaron.

Regarding Raiphan, Cyril states that this name means 'darkening or blinding'.[61] He applies this meaning to the phrase 'the star of your god Raiphan' from Amos v.26 by stating that the star produces a flash that causes the blinding.[62] The light of the star is the idolatry that causes the

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[55] Ibid. lines 14–17.
[56] 'τραπόμενοι γὰρ ἅπαξ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχαίαν πλάνησιν': ibid. line 17.
[57] 'κατὰ τὴν ἄνωθεν ἔτι καὶ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ συνήθειαν': ibid. lines 19–20.
[58] 'εἴδωλον δὲ τοῦτο Μωαβιτῶν': ibid. 476, line 4.     [59] Ibid. lines 3–6.
[60] 'πρὸς τῷ μόσχῳ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ Μολὸχ ἀνέλαβον': ibid. line 2.
[61] 'σκοτισμὸς ἤτοι τύφλωσις': ibid. lines 11–12.
[62] Ibid. lines 15–18. Jerome's comments on Amos v.25–7 demonstrate different renditions of these verses in the Greek (see *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets: Jerome volume 2*, ed. Thomas Scheck, Downers Grove IL 2017, 361). For example, he states that Moloch appears as either 'Μολὸχ' or 'Μελχόμ'. Cyril appears to recognise this, as he states, 'κεκλήκασι Μολὸχ ἤτοι Μολχόμ' (*XII Prophetas*, i.476, lines 3–4). Additionally, Jerome describes two variations for the Greek translation of Raiphan. First, he states that Aquila and Symmachus transliterated the word as a transliteration '*Kiun*'. The other rendition, by Theodotion, is ἀμαύρωσιν, which more closely aligns to Cyril's

darkening. His elucidation of Moloch and Raiphan extends the regression beyond just worshipping the golden calf to include additional forms of idolatry and polytheism. The Israelites living during the time of the prophets fell into the same error as the Israelites at the base of Mount Sinai because of the worship of the calf and various other idols.

It should be noted that Exod. xxxii primarily focuses on the creation of the golden calf that Aaron makes in verse 4. He forces the connection to Exod. xxxii by stating that Moses was aware of the individual idols that the Israelites created.[63] Citing Exod. xxxii.31, Cyril draws from this plural noun 'golden gods' to defend his interpretation of the Israelites' individual idols.[64] However, his comments on Exod. xxxii (along with his other comments on Exodus examined so far) do not mention the individual idols despite the plural 'οἱ θεοί' also present in Exod. xxxii.4. Regardless, Cyril utilises the plural noun to connect his notion of individual idols from Exod. xxxii to the worship of Moloch and Raiphan in Amos v.25–7. Thus, his comments on Amos v.25–7 demonstrate how he continues to draw from the narrative that the Israelites learned their idolatrous practices from Egypt even in his reading of the prophetic books. The fact that these verses do not mention Egypt or a calf as an object of worship further supports his use of narrative to elaborate upon his exegesis. He adds the worship of individual idols conveyed in Amos's reference to Moloch and Raiphan to the worship of the golden calf established by Jeroboam. This combination reflects the practices of the Israelites at Mount Sinai, which he understands as the return to Egyptian idolatry.

Thus, his preface to Hosea and comments on Amos v.25–7 exemplify how Cyril considers the broader narrative in his literal interpretation of the Israelites in the time of the prophets. In both passages, he navigates from the prophetic text through Exod. xxxii to arrive at Israel's learned idolatry from the Egyptians. He connects Jeroboam's creation of the two calves with Aaron's making of a golden calf, which, in turn, leads him back to the idolatry that the Israelites learned in Egypt. His comments on Amos v.25–7 similarly return to the events at Mount Sinai through the worship of other idols in addition to the golden calf. Even though these verses do not contain an explicit reference to Egypt, Cyril's explanation still returns to the connection between Egypt and idolatry, depicting his attention to the whole narrative when explaining these verses.

definition of 'σκοτισμὸς ἤτοι τύφλωσις' (*XII Prophetas*, i.476, lines 11–2). However, Cyril does not use the word 'ἀμαύρωσις' in his *XII Prophetas*, which adds further perplexity on his sources.    [63] *XII Prophetas*, i.474, line 28–475, line 2.
    [64] 'θεοὺς χρυσοῦς': ibid. i.474, line 28.

*Narrative and noetic exegesis*

The final section of this article focuses on how narrative affects Cyril's noetic exegesis through Egypt's role in representing humanity's fallenness from God. This understanding enables him to utilise the Israelites' condition under the Egyptians' oppression to signify the spiritual hindrances placed upon humanity. In this way, the narrative of the Israelites' time in Egypt contributes to his noetic exegesis in a slightly different manner than what appeared in his literal exegesis. While his literal interpretation drew from Egypt as the beginning of the Israelites' idolatry through worshipping different deities, his noetic approach focuses more on Egypt's oppression of the Israelites seen at the beginning of Exodus However, his noetic exegesis still utilises the connection between Egypt and idolatry by attributing the wickedness of the Egyptian superiors to their false worship.

Cyril's comments on Micah vi.3–4 provide an example of the connection between narrative and noetic exegesis because these verses outline God rescuing Israel from Egypt and the commissioning of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.[65] While he connects Christ to each of these components (such as Aaron representing Christ's priesthood and Miriam the Church), the main concern for this article is his understanding of the relationship between Christ's salvation and Egypt. He states that 'The Saviour led (ἐξήγαγε) our very selves out of noetic Egypt, that is from the darkness and the demons' oppression, and he removed (ἐξείλετο) us from the mud and the brickmaking, meaning the fleshly passions and unclean pursuit of pleasures.'[66] This statement is particularly significant because Cyril connects the narrative regarding Israel's time in Egypt to humanity's salvation established by the incarnation through his noetic exegesis.[67] In other words, Cyril's noetic exegesis permits him to emphasise explicitly the incarnation's resolution to the idolatry learned in Egypt. There are two main verbs in this sentence that function with 'the Saviour' as the subject.

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[65] 'O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam': Mic. vi.3–4 (ESV).

[66] ''Εξήγαγε δὲ καὶ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ὁ Σωτὴρ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου νοητῆς, τουτέστιν ἐκ σκότους καὶ δαιμονίων πλεονεξίας, καὶ πηλοῦ καὶ πλινθείας ἐξείλετο, σαρκικῶν δηλονότι παθῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτου φιληδονίας': *XII Prophetas*, i.695, lines 17–20.

[67] For more on the incarnation in Cyril's overarching understanding of Scripture see Frances Young, '*Theotokos*: Mary and the pattern of fall and redemption in the theology of Cyril of Alexandria', in Thomas Weinandy and Daniel Keating (eds), *The theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: a critical appreciation*, London 2003, 55–74; Wilken, 'Cyril of Alexandria as interpreter of the Old Testament', 14–21; Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian theology of Scripture*, 220–8; and Zaganas, *La Formation*, 244–52.

Each of these phrases uses Egypt and its oppression to explain the noetic significance of the Israelites' idolatry in the prophetic context.

Regarding the first verb 'ἐξήγαγε', Cyril says that Christ provides salvation by leading the believers from 'noetic Egypt'.[68] This description is significant because it indicates that Cyril is not discussing a physical exodus from Egypt but, rather, a spiritual exodus.[69] The mention of Egypt in Mic. vi.3–4 provides Cyril with a clear opportunity to incorporate Exodus' narrative into his explanation of the passage. Instead of the departure from the geographical Egypt like in Exod. xii, Christ leads people from their mental burdens. Cyril elaborates on from what Christ saves people through the next phrase. The word 'τουτέστιν' further clarifies his understanding of 'noetic Egypt' based on his continued reliance upon the 'ἐκ' preposition.[70] In this way, Christ provides salvation 'from darkness and the demons' oppression'.[71] This clarification is important because it shows how Cyril applies his connection between Egypt and idolatry established by the biblical narrative to his noetic interpretation.

While Cyril does not elaborate upon the meaning of 'darkness and demons' oppression' here, these concepts portray how he understands noetic Egypt to represent false worship and its consequences. The concept of darkness appeared earlier in his comments on Amos v.26 through the reference to Raiphan. People are darkened because of their idolatrous practices, supporting therefore his connection between idolatry and noetic Egypt. Regarding the phrase 'demons' oppression', he employs the same word for oppression (πλεονεξία) that appears in Exod. i.14 for describing the hardships imposed upon the Israelites.[72] He applies this word, though, in a spiritual, rather than physical, manner because the demons are oppressing the minds of humanity. The same phrase, in fact, appears in his comments on Zechariah ix.13 in the context of purifying

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[68] 'ἐξ Αἰγύπτου νοητῆς': *XII Prophetas*, i.695, lines 17–18.

[69] This view establishes a typological relationship between Moses and Christ. Just as Moses led Israel from physical Egypt, so Christ leads humanity from noetic Egypt. Of course, Cyril emphasises how Christ is still superior to Moses. See John McGuckin, 'Moses and the mystery of Christ in Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis – part I', *Coptic Church Review* xxi/1 (2000), 24–32, and 'Moses and the mystery of Christ in Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis – part II', *Coptic Church Review* xxi/2 (2000), 98–114, and Louis Armendáriz, *El nuevo Moisés: dinámica cristocéntrica en la tipología de Cirilio Alejandrino*, Madrid 1962.

[70] 'Ἐξήγαγε δὲ καὶ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ὁ Σωτὴρ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου νοητῆς, τουτέστιν ἐκ σκότους καὶ δαιμονίων πλεονεξίας, καὶ πηλοῦ καὶ πλινθείας ἐξείλετο, σαρκικῶν δηλονότι παθῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτου φιληδονίας': *XII Prophetas*, i.695, lines 17–20.

[71] 'ἐκ σκότους καὶ δαιμονίων πλεονεξίας': ibid. line 18. See also his comments on Isa. xix.20–1 (*PG* lxx.472, lines 44–8).

[72] 'καὶ κατωδύνων αὐτῶν τὴν ζωὴν ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς σκληροῖς τῷ πηλῷ καὶ τῇ πλινθείᾳ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις κατὰ πάντα τὰ ἔργα ὧν κατεδουλοῦντο αὐτοὺς μετὰ βίας.': Exod. i.14 (LXX).

the human mind.[73] The freedom from demonic oppression enables the individual 'to accept the matter of true knowledge of God'.[74]

The connection between the Egyptians' oppression and their idolatry appears in his noetic interpretation of Exod. i.14 in his *Glaphyra*. Here, Cyril likens the corruption of humanity to 'the ones having come out of Canaan into Egypt'.[75] This description draws from his understanding that the Israelites adopted the Egyptian false worship discussed earlier. He first states that the Egyptians are 'the ones being involved absurdly in the worship of demons' before adding that they 'exhibited in themselves as in an image Satan and those under him that they called gods'.[76] Cyril understands the Egyptians' false worship to coincide directly with their oppression against the Israelites.[77] His noetic interpretation further adds that the Israelites' subjection to the Egyptians is equal to humanity's subjection to the devil because of the Egyptians' false worship. In both instances, the oppressive rulers prevent humanity from worshipping God since the Israelites assume Egyptian idolatry and the earthly matters distract humanity from God.[78] Therefore, his description of Christ leading humanity out of noetic Egypt in his comments on Mic. vi.3–4 conveys not only humanity's freedom from the devil and demons but also, consequently, humanity's ability to worship God.

The influence of Exod. i.14 similarly appears in the second phrase from his comments on Mic. vi. 3–4: 'he removed us from the mud and the brickmaking, meaning the fleshly passions and unclean pursuit of pleasures'.[79] The concepts of mud and brickmaking do not appear in Mic. vi.3–4, but, instead, Cyril supplies them from the description of the Egyptian's oppression of the Israelites in Exod. i.14. Just like the first part of the sentence, this second phrase contains a verb with the 'ἐκ-'

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[73] *XII Prophetas*, ii.424, lines 11–19.

[74] 'τὸν τῆς ἀληθοῦς θεογνωσίας παραδέξασθαι λόγον': ibid. lines 18–19.

[75] 'ἐν ἴσῳ γεγόναμεν τοῖς ἐκ Χαναὰν κατοιχομένοις εἰς Αἴγυπτον': *Glaphyra*, PG lxix.389, lines 33–5.

[76] 'καὶ ὑπὸ χεῖρα γεγενημένοις τὴν Φαραώ τε καὶ Αἰγυπτίων, οἳ ταῖς τῶν δαιμονίων λατρείαις ἐκτόπως ἐγκείμενοι, καὶ πᾶν εἶδος φαυλότητος οὐκ ἀνεπιτήδευτον ἔχοντες, παραδείξειαν ἂν ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι λοιπὸν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς αὐτόν τε τὸν Σατανᾶν, καὶ τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτῷ, οὓς καὶ θεοὺς ἐνόμιζον': ibid. lines 35–40.

[77] Further support for the understanding that the Egyptians' oppression subjected the Israelites to their idolatry appears in *Contra Iulianum* iv.37, where he states, 'Καὶ μὴν καὶ τοὺς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ταῖς τῶν εἰδώλων λατρείαις ὑπενηνεγμένους σέσωκε θεὸς διὰ μεσίτου Μωσέως καὶ πεπαιδαγώγηκε νόμῳ πρὸς τὸ εὐθὺ καὶ ἀδιαβλήτως ἔχον': *Contra Iulianum* iv.37, GCS, NF xx.315, lines 6–9.

[78] 'πηλῷ καὶ πλινθείᾳ κατετρυχόμεθα, φημὶ δὴ τοῖς περὶ γῆν τε καὶ τοῖς ἐν αὐτῇ βδελυρωτάτοις σπουδάσμασιν οὐκ ἀνιδρωτὶ τελουμένοις': *Glaphyra*, PG lxix.389, lines 44–6.

[79] 'καὶ πηλοῦ καὶ πλινθείας ἐξείλετο, σαρκικῶν δηλονότι παθῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτου φιληδονίας': *XII Prophetas*, i.695, lines 17–20.

prefix to convey a similar emphasis on Christ's rescuing. His noetic interpretation understands the mud and brickmaking to be 'fleshly passions and impure desires for pleasure'.[80] While Cyril does not expound upon his reasons for making this connection, his comments on Exod. i.14 suggest a similar idea in light of the Egyptian oppression, as seen in the previous paragraph. In this way, Cyril elaborates upon the reference to Egypt in Mic. vi.3–4 by continuing to draw from the Exodus narrative in his noetic interpretation. He implements the historical oppression by the Egyptians against the Israelites in his explanation of the spiritual hindrances of humanity. His reading therefore applies this oppression to the prophet's own context through its representation of distractions from worshipping God. This noetic exegesis also enables Cyril to contrast the difficulties imposed upon the Israelites in Egypt with the relief provided by Christ's salvation for humanity.

A little later, in his comments on Mic. vii.14–5, the idea of Christ's rescuing appears again. While he refers to 'noetic slavery' rather than 'noetic Egypt',[81] he still draws upon the Egyptians' oppression against the Israelites to represent humanity's limitations under the devil. Just like his comments on Mic. vi.3–4, these later ones also use the idea of the Egyptians oppressing the Israelites through mud and brickmaking,[82] a concept that also does not appear in Mic. vii.14–5.[83] He then partially quotes Matthew xii.29[84] to introduce the idea that Christ saved humanity from the devil.[85] This reference further supports how Cyril applies the Exodus narrative to his noetic exegesis by regarding the Israelites' subjection to Egypt as humanity's 'spiritual slavery' under the devil. As a result, he again explains how Christ saves humanity from spiritual oppressions by relating it to the mud and brickmaking forced upon the Israelites.

He subtly references Matt. xii.29 in his comments on Zechariah xiv.18–19 in a similar portrayal of Christ providing salvation. These verses describe Egypt's punishment, which Cyril understands as their rejection of Christ's salvation.[86] In this context, he understands Egypt to be 'those who have

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[80] 'σαρκικῶν δηλονότι παθῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτου φιληδονίας': ibid. lines 19–20.

[81] 'τῆς νοητῆς δουλείας': ibid. 734, lines 2–3.

[82] 'πηλῷ τε αὐτὸν καὶ πλινθείᾳ κατατρύχοντας': ibid. 733, line 25–734, line 1.

[83] 'Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest in the midst of a garden land; let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them marvellous things': Mic. vii.14–5 (ESV).

[84] 'Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house': Matt. xii.29 (ESV). [85] *XII Prophetas*, i.734, lines 3–4.

[86] 'And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and

arrived at the worst form of deception and very abnormally chose to worship idols'.[87] His comments on Isaiah xix.1 echo this idea as he denounces the Egyptians as 'the most superstitious compared to others, even somehow surpassing the Persians and Assyrians in deceit'.[88] This reading supports the notion that Egypt comes to signify idolatry in his noetic exegesis due to its role earlier in the narrative. Christ, though, brings people out of this state through overcoming the devil and demonstrating proper worship of God, thereby rescuing humanity from the error of polytheism. Similar to the other passages examined in this section, his comments on Zech. xiv.18–19 juxtapose the significance of Israel's time in Egypt with the salvation that Christ provides through his noetic exegesis. He bridges these two points in his overall narrative by maintaining that Christ establishing humanity's proper worship of God resolves the idolatry initially learned in Egypt.

Thus, Cyril's understanding of Exodus' contribution to the narrative affects his noetic exegesis through his connection between the Egyptians' idolatry and their oppression of the Israelites. He employs this relationship from the narrative to further his noetic interpretation of the passage toward Christ's salvation for humanity. His comments on Mic. vi and vii utilised language of mud and brickmaking from Exod. i.14 to represent humanity's limitation. This verbiage recalls the Israelites' descent from Abraham's correct practices that resulted from their adoption of Egyptian idolatry. The direct correlation of mud and brickmaking with passions and pleasures signifies the detraction away from properly worshipping God. However, in addition to expressing humanity's negative condition, his noetic interpretation of Egypt's influence on Israel also enables him to emphasise the incarnation as establishing proper worship, saving humanity from the errors of the Egyptian practices.

This article has sought to explain the importance of narrative in Cyril's literal and spiritual exegetical approaches to Scripture. Since his *Contra Iulianum* shows the value of such a narrative for his apology of the Christian faith, it is perhaps not surprising that such an emphasis would also appear in his approach to Scripture. Furthermore, his application of this concept in both types of works focuses on the contrast between true and false worship. His interpretation of Egypt within this narrative provides

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the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths': Zech. xiv.18–9 (ESV).

[87] 'τοὺς εἰς ἄκρον ἥκοντας πλάνης, ἐκτόπως τε ἄγαν εἰδωλολατρεῖν ἑλομένους': *XII Prophetas*, ii.537, line 25–538, line 1.

[88] 'Δεισιδαιμονέστατοι γὰρ γεγόνασι παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, καὶ τάχα που νικῶντες ἐν πλάνῃ Πέρσας τε καὶ Ἀσσυρίους': *PG* lxx.453B. A similar description appears in his comments on Isaiah xix.19–20: *PG* lxx.469C. The word δεισιδαιμονέστατοι and the reference to the Assyrians recall Cyril's description of Abraham from *Contra Iulianum* iii.52.

an excellent example for the relationship between exegesis and narrative. His commentaries on the prophets refer to several elements found in Exodus to underline the connection between idolatry and Egypt. In this way, narrative contributes to Cyril's exegesis by supplying concepts from significant historical events to his literal and noetic interpretations of Scripture.

Beyond considering other instances in which narrative informs Cyril's exegesis, further research can be done on the relationship between narrative and exegesis in other fifth-century theologians. Augustine and Theodoret similarly recognise narrative's contribution to the Christian faith; yet, what remains to be seen is how they apply this concept to their exegesis. While Cyril draws heavily upon Egypt, it is likely that other figures recognise different events in Scripture to contribute in various ways to diverse theological concepts. Equally as significant is understanding the development of narrative in exegesis over the course of the entire Early Church since this concept is not exclusive to the fifth century. Further consideration on these topics will add to the understanding of biblical narrative's influence on Christian exegesis and theology.