

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cyril of Alexandria's Renunciation of Religious Violence

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Abstract

Scholarly accounts of the violent events that occurred early in Cyril of Alexandria's episcopal tenure rely most of all upon Socrates's *Ecclesiastical History*, Damascius's *Philosophical History*, and John of Nikiu's *Chronicle*. In contrast, Cyril's own corpus is almost never consulted or engaged by scholars working on these topics, which has resulted in the complete neglect of certain passages that are directly relevant to these well-known events. Surprisingly, on at least three occasions Cyril explicitly rejects religiously motivated violence, while, in contrast, in two other passages he theorizes about it in positive terms as a means of protecting the integrity of communal boundaries. The analysis of these passages reveals that, in certain works, Cyril employed a violent rhetoric that plausibly contributed to creating the environment that resulted in Hypatia's murder. In contrast, however, he seemingly shifted his rhetoric at a certain point in his career, going out of his way to disavow precisely the kind of actions with which he is usually associated, perhaps doing so as a response to Hypatia's horrific death. With these complementary insights, this study contributes to the growing scholarly interest in how violent rhetoric can lead to actual violence. Moreover, Cyril's disavowal of religious violence complicates the simplistic image of him that holds sway as the dominant interpretation of his legacy among scholars of late antiquity.

Keywords: Cyril of Alexandria; violence; Hypatia; rhetoric

Among historians of late antiquity, Cyril of Alexandria, who served as bishop of Egypt's capital from 412 until his death in 444, is known above all for his ruthless power politics and willingness to use violence to accomplish his goals. Indeed, he has one of the worst reputations among late antique bishops, being paradigmatic for the use of violent means to enforce an uncompromising vision of an orthodox empire. Representing the consensus view, Michael Gaddis refers to him as “violent and power-hungry,” Thomas Sizgorich calls him “violent and powerful,” and Edward J. Watts says he was “a tough, resolute leader who had neither the inclination or the temperament to forgive people who dared to challenge him . . . [but] respond[ed] to any challenges he faced

with threats of violence.”¹ Most recently Silvia Ronchey has referred to him as “the terrible patriarch of Alexandria” who used “squadrons of violent men” to effect the “violent religious colonization” begun by Theophilus.² Although there are reports of violence carried out by his supporters at the Council of Ephesus in 431,³ the most notorious episodes occurred in Alexandria itself early in his episcopacy, specifically the expulsion of Jews from the city and the lynching of the philosopher Hypatia, which occurred in 415.

Scholarly accounts of these events rely most of all upon book seven of Socrates’s *Ecclesiastical History*, supplemented by a handful of other sources, most prominently Damascius’s *Philosophical History* and John of Nikiu’s *Chronicle*.⁴ Cyril’s own corpus is, in contrast, almost never consulted or engaged by those working on these topics,⁵ presumably because it consists overwhelmingly of dogmatic and exegetical treatises,

¹Michael Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 283; Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 110; Edwards J. Watts, *Hypatia: The Life and Legend of an Ancient Philosopher* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 108. A similar portrait of Cyril’s character is presented in Edwards J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 196–203.

²Silvia Ronchey, *Hypatia: The True Story* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 24–25.

³It should, however, be noted that it is unclear just how much actual physical violence took place at the council or how much of it was directly under Cyril’s control. Both of the opposing sides used accusations of violent behavior to discredit the other, and most of the reports consist of threats of violence rather than actual violence taking place. Moreover, among the Cyrillians, at times it was Memnon, bishop of Ephesus, rather than Cyril himself who was singled out for using violence to advance his cause. Cf. George A. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428–451 CE* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2016), 150, 153, 156–158, 160–163, 166, 175, 192. The famous incident reported by Besa in which Shenoute struck Nestorius with a gospel book could not have occurred since Nestorius never appeared before the council led by Cyril. Cf. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 252, 284–287. See further Hans Van Loon, “Violence in the Early Years of Cyril of Alexandria’s Episcopate,” in *Violence in Ancient Christianity: Victims and Perpetrators*, ed. Albert C. Geljon and Riemer Roukema (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 108–131, at 108n1.

⁴On Socrates’s account, see now the detailed commentary in Mareile Haase, “Appendix B: Hypatia’s Death According to Socrates, *Hist. eccl.* 7.15: A Textual Commentary,” in *Hypatia of Alexandria: Her Context and Legacy*, ed. Dawn LaValle Norman and Alex Petkas (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 255–284.

⁵Cf. Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 115–117; Maria Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Johannes Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt: Studien zu den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Christen, Heiden und Juden im Osten des Römischen Reiches (von Konstantin bis Theodosius II.)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 110–114; Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 220–222; Luciano Canfora, “Cirillo e Ipazia nella storiografia cattolica,” *Anabases* 12 (2010): 92–102; Watts, *Hypatia*; Dawn LaValle Norman and Alex Petkas, eds., *Hypatia of Alexandria: Her Context and Legacy* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); Ronchey, *Hypatia*. Rare exceptions are Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 308–309; Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint and a Heretic* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50–51; Watts, *City and School*, 202; and Van Loon, “Violence in the Early Years,” 129–131. None of these authors, however, considers any of the passages discussed in this study. Recently Zawadzki has highlighted the two contrasting images of Cyril one finds in the account of his early years in Socrates’s *Ecclesiastical History* and in his exegesis of 2 Corinthians 10:1–2 (discussed below) and has called for “weiter historischer Untersuchungen” to study these competing portrayals of his character (Konrad F. Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von*

which would appear to be the domain of the historical theologian rather than the historian of late antiquity. This approach has, however, resulted in the complete neglect of certain passages that are directly relevant to these well-known events. The aim of this article is, therefore, to collect and examine his statements on religious violence, so that his own voice can be taken into account in future scholarly reconstructions.⁶ Of course, the very notion of “religious violence” has been undergoing revision of late.⁷ For the present study I focus solely on violence in the sense of bodily harm inflicted upon other human persons since this is the form described in the passages I will examine. With respect to the term “religious,” I mean no more than that the physical harm being considered is a result of one’s devotion to God and to the community defined by the worship of that deity, since, once again, this is the theme that emerges in the passages that follow.

Surprisingly, on three occasions Cyril explicitly denounces religiously motivated violence with respect to three distinct scenarios (apostasy, self-defense, and conversion), while, in contrast, in two other passages he theorizes about it in positive terms, though he stops short of explicitly calling on Christians to engage in such acts.⁸ This article will summarize and contextualize each of these five passages, considering them in roughly chronological order, and will then finally consider how we might understand them in relation to one another as well as to the aforementioned events described in other sources. This analysis reveals that in certain works Cyril employed a violent rhetoric that likely contributed to creating the environment that resulted in Hypatia’s murder.

Alexandrien zum 2. Korintherbrief: Einleitung, kritischer Text, Übersetzung, Einzelanalyse [Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2019], 529). The present study aims to take up this challenge.

⁶Scholarship on violence in late antiquity has been steadily growing over the past two decades. For recent surveys of the literature, see Wendy Mayer, “Religious Violence in Late Antiquity: Current Approaches, Trends and Issues,” in *Religious Violence in the Ancient World: From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*, ed. Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Christian R. Raschle (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 251–265; Peter van Nuffelen, “Religious Violence in Late Antiquity,” in *The Cambridge World History of Violence. Volume 1: The Prehistoric and Ancient Worlds*, ed. Garrett G. Fagan et al. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 512–529. Prominent recent studies include David Frankfurter, “‘Things Unbefitting Christians’: Violence and Christianization in Fifth-Century Panopolis,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 273–295; Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt*; Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*; Johannes Hahn, Stephen Emmel, and Ulrich Gotter, eds., *From Temple to Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2008); Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*; H. A. Drake, “Intolerance, Religious Violence, and Political Legitimacy in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79 (2011): 193–235; Brent Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Johannes Hahn, ed., *Spätantiker Staat und religiöser Konflikt: Imperiale und lokale Verwaltung und die Gewalt gegen Heiligtümer* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); Wendy Mayer and Bronwen Neil, eds., *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); Albert C. Geljon and Riemer Roukema, eds., *Violence in Ancient Christianity: Victims and Perpetrators* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014); Wendy Mayer and Chris L. de Wet, eds., *Reconceiving Religious Conflict: New Views from the Formative Centuries of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Dijkstra and Raschle, *Religious Violence in the Ancient World*; Kate Cooper and Jamie Wood, eds., *Social Control in Late Antiquity: The Violence of Small Worlds* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁷As summarized in Mayer, “Religious Violence,” some have called into question whether “religion” is a suitable category for late antiquity while others are expanding the scope of what constitutes “violence.” By limiting this study to violence in the sense of bodily harm, I do not mean to discount other forms of violence, some of which will be considered in the conclusion.

⁸A passage I will not examine in this study is *hom. pasch. 7.2*, in which Cyril denounces some kind of violent actions that have recently occurred, since it is unclear whether these were religiously motivated.

In contrast, however, he seemingly shifted his rhetoric at a certain point in his career, going out of his way to disavow precisely the kind of actions with which he is usually associated, perhaps doing so as a response to Hypatia's horrific murder. With these complementary insights, this study contributes to the growing scholarly interest in how violent rhetoric can lead to actual violence.⁹ Moreover, his renunciation of religious violence complicates the one-sided image of Cyril as a power-hungry and violent tyrant that holds sway as the dominant interpretation of his legacy among scholars of late antiquity.

Three of the five passages that will be discussed in what follows focus specifically upon apostasy and the appropriateness of violence against would-be apostates and those deceivers who lead them astray. We should recall that, according to two of the three aforementioned historical sources, this is exactly the issue at stake in the Hypatia affair. What began as a dispute between Cyril and the imperial prefect Orestes, himself a baptized Christian, extended to include the philosopher when Orestes was seen in her company. Given that, according to Socrates, the Nitrian monks who had flooded the city to support their bishop had already accused the prefect of being a "sacrificer and a Hellene,"¹⁰ Orestes's professed faith was clearly doubted by some Christians. His frequent meetings with Hypatia would only have strengthened the impression that she was leading him to abandon his Christianity or that his supposed faith was merely a cover for his real allegiance to Hellenism.¹¹ In fact, John of Nikiu's later account makes this point explicit, claiming that Hypatia had beguiled Orestes with her magic and convinced him to stop attending church.¹² Therefore, despite the other factors that were undoubtedly in play in this tragic episode—such as the power struggle between church and state, gender dynamics,¹³ tensions between the monks of the desert and an urban Christian elite,¹⁴ divisions among the Christians within Alexandria itself¹⁵

⁹Mayer, "Religious Violence," 263–264, points out that an emerging new path in the study of religious violence in late antiquity is to examine "to what extent the rhetoric of violence produces violence." See, for example, Ellen Muehlberger, *Moment of Reckoning: Imagined Death and Its Consequences in Late Ancient Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 183–216.

¹⁰Socrates, *HE* 7.14.3. I use the edition of P. Maraval and P. Périchon, *Socrate de Constantinople, Histoire ecclésiastique (Livres I-VII)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004–2007).

¹¹Socrates does not say this explicitly but reports that the Christian populace came to believe Hypatia was the one who "would not allow Orestes to be reconciled to the bishop" (*EH* 7.15.4). It seems probable, nonetheless, that her status as a non-Christian was thought to be central to the perceived roadblock.

¹²John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 84.88. For John's work, I rely on the English translation in R. H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1916). Cf. Watts, *Hypatia*, 113.

¹³Though it is usually overlooked that Cyril himself endorsed the idea of female philosophers; see *Juln.* 6.36.

¹⁴Implied by the fact that the citizens of Alexandria rushed to rescue Orestes as he was being assaulted by the Nitrian monks. Watts, *Hypatia*, 2, has Cyril himself "summon[ing] a mob of monks to Alexandria," though our sources do not say so, and it may be that the monks were acting on their own initiative. We simply do not know.

¹⁵The Christian populace was divided from the moment of Cyril's elevation as bishop in 412 since different groups supported different candidates in the struggle over who would succeed Theophilus. Cf. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 297–299; Susan Wessel, "Socrates' Narrative of Cyril of Alexandria's Episcopal Election," *Journal of Theological Studies* 52 (2001): 98–104. Moreover, as discussed below, Socrates's account reveals that not all of the Christian community endorsed Cyril's actions during the conflict with Orestes and forced him to shift his tactics.

and even within the town council,¹⁶ and a rivalry between the city's renown educational tradition and the growing dominance of the church¹⁷—at the heart of the matter was a perceived apostasy from the Christian community. This background should be kept in mind as we consider the passages.

I. “And that prophet or that diviner by dream shall die.” (Deut. 13:1–5; 17:2–7)

Four of the five passages I will treat in this study come from Cyril's voluminous exegetical works, which seem to have been his main literary focus for the first half of his episcopal career.¹⁸ I begin with a passage from his treatise *De adoratione*, which is a seventeen-book dialogue consisting of exegesis of the Pentateuch focused on ethical guidance for his Christian community and may have been his first work, perhaps written even before he became bishop.¹⁹ The topic of religious violence occurs in book six of the treatise, which bears the title “That we must be devoted to the one who alone is

¹⁶As implied by the imperial legislation from this period, on which cf. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 315; Walter F. Beers, “Bloody Iuvenalia: Hypatia, Pulcheria Augusta, and the Beginnings of Cyril of Alexandria's Episcopate,” in *Hypatia of Alexandria: Her Context and Legacy*, ed. Dawn LaValle Norman and Alex Petkas (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 67–86, at 81. It is possibly relevant that John of Nikiu identifies the ringleader of the group of murders as a “magistrate” named Peter (*Chronicle* 84.100), though Socrates says he was a reader in the church. It is difficult to decide which of these two identifications is correct since each role would plausibly align with the dynamics at play in the tense struggle, though they would support different reconstructions, with the impetus for the murder arising either from a block of Christians in the town council or a group of Cyril's own clergy. Watts incorrectly claims that John of Nikiu refers to Peter as a “presbyter” (*Hypatia*, 114, 182n31) and completely overlooks the division in Alexandria's town council, contrasting Hypatia's world of the wealthy and highly educated elite with the oppressed and disgruntled lower class who murdered her (*Hypatia*, 7). The *parabalani* are often mentioned in relation to the incident, though there is no clear evidence to connect them with Hypatia's murder, and the imperial legislation usually cited as proof does not mention murder but seems to be concerned instead with tax-dodging or fomenting discord within the city council. Cf. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 313–315; Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy*, 56–57; Beers, “Bloody Iuvenalia,” 79–81; Van Loon, “Violence in the Early Years,” 127–129.

¹⁷Cf. Matthew R. Crawford, “Cyril of Alexandria's *Contra Iulianum*: Imperial Politics and Alexandrian Philosophy (c. 416–428),” in *Eastern Christianity and Late Antique Philosophy*, ed. Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides and Ken Parry (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 110–132.

¹⁸On Cyril's biblical exegesis, see Alexander Kerrigan, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, Interpreter of the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1952); Robert L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971); Lois M. Farag, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, a New Testament Exegete: His Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007); Matthew R. Crawford, *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014); Hauna Ondrey, *The Minor Prophets as Christian Scripture in the Commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018); Dimitrios Zaganas, *La formation d'une exégèse alexandrine post-origénienne: les Commentaires sur les Douze Prophètes et sur Isaïe de Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2019).

¹⁹The most recent complete edition of *De adoratione* is in PG 68, which is but a reprint of Aubert's seventeenth-century edition. However, a new edition and translation of book 1 has recently appeared: Barbara Villani, ed., *Kyrrill von Alexandrien: De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate. Buch 1. Einführung, kritischer Text, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021). On the intent of the work to provide ethical guidance, cf. Matthew R. Crawford, “The Preface and Subject Matter of Cyril of Alexandria's *De Adoratione*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 64 (2013): 154–167. Villani, *De adoratione Buch 1*, 12–20, says that a date around 406–412 is plausible.

God by nature and must love him from our whole soul and heart.”²⁰ The topic of the book is thus the need to reject the worship of false deities, which leads Cyril into a discussion of apostasy. He first quotes Deuteronomy 12:1–3 in which God commands Israel to destroy the sites where foreign deities are worshipped. In so doing, Cyril explains, God was “establishing fear of being punished as a kind of instructor or noble guardian for us” in order that he might “bring us in every respect around to what pleases him.”²¹ Immediately following the quotation of Deuteronomy 12:1–3, he refers to the “wise men of the Greeks and their elite ranks, and especially the poets,”²² suggesting that Israel’s temptation to worship foreign gods is identical to the attraction of pagan sacrifice in his own day. This elision of the world of the Pentateuch with the religious landscape of fifth-century Alexandria is a persistent motif in *De adoratione*, which frequently makes it difficult for the modern reader to determine when he is simply describing events in the past and when he is prescribing practices for his contemporary audience.

This ambiguity becomes acute as Cyril next quotes Deuteronomy 13:1–5 in which God orders the Israelites to execute a false prophet or diviner who seeks to lead them astray to other gods. His immediate reaction after quoting the passage is not just approval but praise:

Oh how holy the law is and how God-befitting! For if those who murdered bodies must without exception certainly be met with the legal penalty of execution, is it not reasonable that the one who conveys a destructive error to the soul and plunges the soul, which is superior to the body, into the pit of destruction should also be placing himself in danger?²³

Moreover, Cyril does not stop here but goes on to speak approvingly of the execution of the apostate as well as the deceiver, quoting Deuteronomy 17:2–7, which commands that an Israelite man or woman found worshipping other gods must be stoned by the community. He seemingly senses no compassion for such a person, stating that they could “easily have escaped” the deceptive error but chose to do wrong “voluntarily.”²⁴ As before, the severity of the penalty is due to the high stakes of the crime: “For when God is wronged with respect to the worship proper to him, there is no certainty that he will have compassion.”²⁵ Quoting Jesus’s command that his disciples love him more than father or mother, Cyril says that, when it comes to potential apostasy, “everything pertaining to love of humanity . . . must depart” and Christians should instead “serve God with a pious severity” (δι’ εὐσεβοῦς σκληρότητος).²⁶

In this passage of *De adoratione*, Cyril therefore endorses the execution of both the person who would lead a Christian into apostasy as well as a potential apostate himself. Given that *De adoratione* is a treatise that aims to provide ethical guidance, it is tempting to see this exegesis as a prescription for contemporary practice, though we

²⁰Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.408). I am grateful to Thomas Pietsch for drawing my attention to this passage.

²¹Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.417b).

²²Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.417c).

²³Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.420d). Ὡς ὁσίοις τε καὶ Θεῷ πρέπων ὁ νόμος! Εἰ γὰρ τοι τοῖς τῶν σωματῶν φονευταῖς πάντα τε καὶ πάντως τὸ ἐκτεθάναι δεῖν ἔψεται κατὰ νόμους, πῶς ἂν οὐχὶ κινδυνεύσειεν εἰκότως ὁ ψυχῆν τὴν ὀλέθριον ἐπιφέρων πλάνησιν, καὶ βόθροις τῆς ἀπωλείας ἐνιεις τὴν ἀμείνω σώματος.

²⁴Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.421a).

²⁵Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.421b).

²⁶*Ibid.*

should note that Cyril stops short of making this point explicit. Moreover, he focuses on God as judge, rather than the human agent, and seems to be attempting to use fear as a pedagogical tool for his own community rather than trying to intimidate non-Christians with threats of violence. As he says just a little further on, sometimes “one of those enrolled amongst us” is “not yet firmly established” and may “practice a love towards Christ that is artificial and counterfeit.”²⁷ Such insufficiently devoted Christians are the likely target of the warning he issues in this passage, whom he is intending to frighten by the threat of divine punishment. Despite this fact, Cyril does not clearly demarcate the boundaries of the “pious severity” Christians should use when serving God and, therefore, leaves open the possibility that some might understand this to mean they should literally implement the Mosaic regulations in the contemporary Roman imperium.

II. “Phinehas . . . has put a stop to my wrath.” (Numbers 25:1–13)

The next passage to be considered is found in Cyril’s *Against Julian*, a lengthy apologetic treatise written in response to the Emperor Julian’s *Against the Galileans*. Once thought to come from the last years of Cyril’s career, *Against Julian* has recently been redated to the period 416–428.²⁸ As an illustration of the morally debased depiction of God found in the Hebrew scriptures, Julian had adduced the story from Numbers 25:1–13 in which Phinehas is said to have restrained God’s anger against Israel by taking a spear and driving it through an Israelite man and a foreign woman as they were having sex.²⁹ Cyril, in response, points out that the biblical passage says the foreign women were leading Israel astray by initiating them into the worship of other deities. Consequently, this episode is actually about religious apostasy, and Phinehas’s execution of the couple was intended to prevent others from following their example.³⁰ As in the passage from *De adoratione*, so here again Cyril stops short of explicitly advocating that Christians use Phinehas as a model for their own behavior, though neither does he exclude the possibility that they might do so. In addition, once more in his interpretation of the Phinehas story he consistently presents God as the main actor who dispenses capital punishment. It is an act of God’s providence, so Cyril argues, that the Craftsman “reins in [his wayward creatures] with terrifying

²⁷Cyril, *ador.* VI (PG 68.424b). ὁ μὲν τις ἔσθ’ ὅτε τῶν τελούντων ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐρηρσιζόμενος δὲ οὐπω λίαν, κατὰπλαστον δὲ καὶ νόθην τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν ἐπιτηδεύσας ἀγάπησιν.

²⁸Editions: Emanuela Masaracchia, ed., *Giuliano Imperatore, Contra Galilaeos: Introduzione, testo critico e traduzione* (Rome: Edizioni dell’ateneo, 1990); Christoph Riedweg and Wolfram Kinzig, eds., *Kyrrill von Alexandrien I: Gegen Julian. Teil 1: Buch 1-5* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); Wolfram Kinzig and Thomas Brüggemann, eds., *Kyrrill von Alexandrien I: Gegen Julian. Teil 2: Buch 6-10 und Fragmente* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017). On the dating, cf. Riedweg and Kinzig, *Gegen Julian. Teil 1*, CXV; Marie-Odile Boulnois, “Le livre du *Contre Julien* de Cyrille d’Alexandrie: éléments pour la datation, le plan et la méthode de refutation,” in *Interreligiöse Konflikte im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert: Julian ‘Contra Galilaeos’ – Kyrrill ‘Contra Iulianum’*, ed. Gerlinde Huber-Rebenich and Stefan Rebenich (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 165–194. I am currently preparing an English translation of the treatise, in collaboration with Aaron P. Johnson.

²⁹Julian, *c. Gal.* fr. 33 Mas., *ap.* Cyril, *Juln.* 5.13. Phinehas is presented as an exemplary model of zeal for God in Isidore of Pelusium, *ep.* 1.418. On the influence and reception of the Phinehas story, see Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 182–183; Hans G. Kippenberg, “Sacred Precognitions of Violence: Religious Communities in Situations of Conflict,” in *Religious Violence in the Ancient World: From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*, eds. Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Christian R. Raschle (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 17–45, at 29–35.

³⁰Cyril, *Juln.* 5.18–19.

warnings (τοῖς δειμασιν), even adding the required beating (τό γε δὴ δεῖν καταπαίεσθαι) as the best means of aiding them.³¹ Or, again, one should “permit [God], like a judge, to use legal regulations to rein in his subjects by the removal of bad people.”³² Cyril never specifies what these legal regulations might consist of, or whether they are enacted solely by God himself or might be carried out by the intermediary of imperial or ecclesiastical officials. The closest he comes to any further concrete specificity is when he points out that Julian himself was an apostate and so naturally finds it disagreeable that God would punish such persons.³³ It therefore at least remains possible that in this passage he is solely envisioning divine retribution, perhaps to be doled out in the afterlife, and is not advocating for any earthly enactment of it by human agents. Even if so, the biblical episode upon which he is commenting presents eerie parallels to the accounts of the relationship between Orestes and Hypatia, with the supposed female seductress leading the pious male away from his community of faith to embrace other deities, requiring a violent act to safeguard the community’s integrity.

III. “You have made me hateful.” (Genesis 34:1–31)

The passages in which Cyril rejects religious violence are found in three of his exegetical works: his treatise devoted to the Pentateuch known as the *Glaphyra*, his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, and his *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*. These passages are united in that they all set forth a prohibition against religious violence, though three distinct scenarios are envisioned in which such violence might be likely to occur. Cyril’s *Glaphyra* probably postdates *De adoratione*, since he refers to the latter in its preface, and is usually thought to have been written between 412 and 423.³⁴ Rather than take a lemma-by-lemma approach as his other commentaries do, it instead focuses only on select passages from the Pentateuch, showing how they all point to what he calls “the mystery of Christ.”³⁵ The topic of religious violence arises in Cyril’s interpretation

³¹Cyril, *Juln.* 5.14.30–31.

³²Cyril, *Juln.* 5.22.23–24. Immediately prior to this statement, Cyril has quoted Porphyry who similarly explained that God sometimes removes bad people from the human community for the overall good, like a doctor amputating a limb for the patient’s health. Porphyry makes the analogy between divine governance of the cosmos and imperial rule explicit by pointing out that imperial officials act in this manner, so we should not be surprised if God also does so (*Pros Nemert.* Fr. 278; 279; 282 Smith). On the use of such imagery amongst Neoplatonists, see Peter van Nuffelen, “Coercion in Late Antiquity: A Brief Intellectual History,” in *Religious Violence in the Ancient World: From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*, eds. Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Christian R. Raschle (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 266–285.

³³Cyril, *Juln.* 5.23.1–6. See also *Juln.* 6.2 where Cyril revisits the Phinehas episode and argues, “It is a holy thing that those who have prepared a net of death for others ought entirely to be destroyed, root and branch.” He cites as supporting evidence Homer, *Il.* 6.58–59 and Euripides, *Or.* 413.

³⁴Cyril’s *Glaphyra* is found in PG 69 and was recently translated by Nicholas P. Lunn, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 1: Genesis* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018); Nicholas P. Lunn, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Glaphyra on the Pentateuch, Volume 2: Exodus through Deuteronomy* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019). I have consulted Lunn’s translation though all translations here are my own. The reference to *De adoratione* is at *glaph. Gen.* 1 (PG 69.16b). The two works form companion pieces since they together treat almost the entirety of the Pentateuch, mostly without overlapping in terms of the individual passages considered. Lunn, *Glaphyra Volume 1*, 9, dates the *Glaphyra* to the period 412–423, following Georges Jouassard, “L’activité littéraire de Saint Cyrille d’Alexandrie jusqu’à 428,” in *Mélanges E. Podedchard* (Lyon: Facultés catholiques, 1945), 159–174.

³⁵Cyril, *glaph. Gen.* 1 (PG 69.13b).

of Genesis 34:1–31. In the biblical text, Dinah, a daughter of the patriarch Jacob, leaves her father’s tent to mingle with other local girls and is seized and raped by Shechem, the son of the ruler of the area. In response, two of Dinah’s brothers, Levi and Simeon, exact revenge by convincing the men of the city to be circumcised and then murdering, not just Shechem, but every male in the city. The passage closes with Jacob rebuking his two sons for their violent act.

Cyril first recounts the basic narrative, concluding with a condemnation of the actions of the two brothers who, he says, were “killers” who failed to “moderate their anger-driven deeds (τὰ ἐξ ὀργῆς),” but instead “fixed their mind on something that should be avoided at all costs,” namely the murder of people who had agreed to join their religious faith.³⁶ Cyril therefore begins by highlighting the biblical passage’s negative verdict on violence, specifically violence against potential converts. He then takes up each of these plot points and turns them into a sort of allegory for communal life in his own day, broadening the scope of the prohibition to exclude the bodily harm, not of potential converts as in the biblical text, but instead of those who would lead Christians into apostasy. Dinah, represents the “soul” that has been “reborn through baptism” and is thus “ranked among the children of God.” Such a soul “. . . might be corrupted by those accustomed to do such or be led astray into choosing to set their minds on fleshly realities or be misled into ideas about God that are twisted out of place (for the paltry opinions of the unholy heretics are truly of such a nature).”³⁷ Cyril speaks first in rather generic terms about anyone who is accustomed to corrupting a Christian soul or leading it astray. It is unclear if he has a specific group in mind, but the fact that the people of Shechem in the passage are foreigners to Jacob and his family would suggest that he is referring to people external to the Christian community, presumably adherents of traditional Greco-Roman or Egyptian religions. The reference to a specific group becomes clearer in the next clause when he refers explicitly to the “heretics” who hold twisted ideas about God, though even here the use of the pronoun *τοιαῦτα* might indicate that Christians with deviant theology are but one example of a larger category in view. Cyril’s exegesis of the biblical passage seems, therefore, to be designed to be as broad a reference as possible to potential corrupting influences, whether they be non-Christians or Christians who think differently.

The Alexandrian bishop next turns to the vengeful actions of the two brothers in response to their sister’s violation:

If this happens, then those who in light of their faith are brothers to the injured soul, whether they have a clerical position—as of course Levi himself did—if they are perhaps understood as Simeon, that is, those who have the position of being subordinate [to the priests] (for Simeon is translated as “obedience”)—they ought, on the one hand, to be indignant, since one of those belonging to their household of faith has been taken advantage of. They should not, however, proceed still further and demand blood, nor should they demand a savage penalty from those who have caused the corruption, lest they should hear Christ saying to

³⁶Cyril, *glaph. Gen. 5* (PG 69.280b–c).

³⁷Cyril, *glaph. Gen. 5* (PG 69.280c). καταφθαρήναι τυχόν ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦτο δρῶν εἰωθότων, ἢ εἰς τὸ φρονεῖν ἐλέεσθαι τὰ σαρκικὰ παρενηνεγμένην, ἢ ὡς εἰς ἐκ τοποῦ διεστραμμένης ἐννοίας τὰς περὶ Θεοῦ (τοιαῦτα γὰρ ἀληθῶς τὰ τῶν ἀνοσίων αἰρετικῶν δοξάρια).

them, “You have made me hateful, so that I am evil to the inhabitants of the land.”³⁸

Here Cyril speaks clearly of two different groups of people.³⁹ Each of the brothers represents a different part of the Christian community. Levi, being a priest, obviously stands for those who hold a “clerical position,” a vague enough reference that it might refer to anyone from a bishop down to a reader in the church.⁴⁰ Simeon, since his name in Hebrew means “obedience” (ὕπακοή), depicts those who are “subordinate” (τῶν ὑπηκόων), probably an allusion to the rest of the Christian community that is subordinate to the clerical hierarchy. In other words, Cyril uses these two brothers to represent the entire Christian community, whether ordained or laity.

In terms of the actions the Christian community should undertake when one of their own is corrupted by either insiders or outsiders, Cyril concedes that it is appropriate “to be indignant” at those exerting the nefarious influence but draws a clear line by insisting that Christians must never engage in vengeful bloodshed against the wrongdoers.⁴¹ In a striking move, he then places Jacob’s words from the biblical episode in the mouth of Christ himself, implying that, if Christians use violence in defence of their community, they will cause outsiders to despise Christ and his church. He strengthens his prohibition against violence by adducing several supporting arguments, pointing to Christ’s rebuke of Peter’s use of a sword on the Mount of Olives (quoting Matt. 26:52) and calling on Christians to entrust their cause to God who “judges justly” rather than seeking to take matters into their own hands.⁴² The ethical ideal he valorizes is thus to be “long-suffering” (τληπαθής), which seems basically synonymous with the “forbearance” (ἀνεξικακία) he will mention twice in the passage from Johannine commentary, which is considered in the next section.⁴³

Cyril’s exegesis of the Genesis passage under analysis here is creative, demonstrating an eagerness to find nonviolent application in texts that could easily have been historicized or allegorized in very different directions. The analogy he sketches might seem designed to incite the Christian community to anger, since he compares the corruption of a Christian soul to the rape of one’s sister and exhorts his followers to be indignant at

³⁸Cyril, *glaph. Gen. 5* (PG 69.280d). οἱ τῆς ἡδικημένης κατὰ πίστιν ἀδελφοί, κὰν εἰ τάξιν ἔχοιεν τὴν ἱεροουργόν, καθάπερ ἀμέλει καὶ ὁ Λευῖ, κὰν εἴτε Συμεὼν νοοῖντο τυχόν, τουτέστιν, οἱ ἐν τάξει τῶν ὑπηκόων κείμενοι (ἐρμηνεύεται μὲν γὰρ ὑπακοή Συμεὼν), ἀγανακτοῦντων μὲν, ὅτι πεπλεόνεκταί τις τῶν κατὰ πίστιν οἰκείων αὐτοῖς· μὴ μὴν καὶ εἰς αἴμα χωροῦντων ἔτι, μήτε μὴν ἀγρίας τοὺς κατεφθορκότας ἐξαιτουῦντων δίκας, ἵνα μὴ ἀκούσειαν Χριστοῦ λέγοντος αὐτοῖς· «Μισητόν με πεποιθήκατε, ὥστε πονηρόν με εἶναι τοῖς κατοικοῦσι τὴν γῆν.»

³⁹This point is unfortunately obscured in Lunn, *Glaphyra Volume 1*, 268, whose translation implies both brothers represent the priestly class.

⁴⁰Recall that, according to Socrates, the leader of the group who conspired to murder Hypatia was “a certain reader named Peter” (*EH* 7.15.5), though, as noted above, John of Nikiu labels him a “magistrate” (*Chronicle* 84.100).

⁴¹In his endorsement of anger and attempt to moderate its expression, Cyril is aligned with Lactantius and Augustine. Cf. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 179.

⁴²In a final short paragraph (PG 69.281a–b), Cyril goes on to point out that Dinah would never have suffered her rape if she had not left her father’s tent. Analogously, Christian souls can avoid being corrupted if “they are careful” (Παραφυλακτέον) not to depart from “the house of God” or “to come into contact” (προσβάλλειν) with those of other religious views.

⁴³Note his pairing of the two terms in his allusion back to the moral lesson of the Dinah story in the next section of the *Glaphyra* (PG 69.281d–284a): ἀγιοπρεπές ὅτι [τὸ] ἀνεξικακὸν καὶ τὸ τληπαθές ἐν τοῖς πειρασμοῖς, διὰ πραγμάτων ἡμῖν ἀποφαίνων.

such a violation. Nevertheless, while this could be an attempt to rouse people to anger, it might just as likely be a recognition of the community's own likely response to such a violation, even without any prompting from their bishop. Whatever the case, the negative verdict upon the brothers' actions in the biblical account affords him with a means of restraining the community's reaction by allowing for them to express outrage but demanding that they not seek bodily harm. The fact that he creatively finds warrant in the story to extend this prohibition to all members of the Christian community, both ordained clergy and the laity, further emphasizes the significance of this issue in his mind.

If resonances with our surviving accounts of the Hypatia affair, especially John of Nikiu's, were evident in Cyril's comments in *De adoratione* and *Against Julian*, the same is true here as well in the *Glaphyra*, with Orestes being the Christian soul corrupted by the Platonist philosopher. This similarity throws into sharper relief the tension between the first two passages and the latter one, insofar as the execution of a would-be apostate and the one deceiving him is entertained as a positive notion in both *De adoratione* and *Against Julian*, while it is explicitly proscribed in the *Glaphyra*. Further consideration of how to resolve this tension will be given below. For now it is sufficient to note that, while the possibility of religious violence remained merely notional in *De adoratione* and *Against Julian*, here in *Glaphyra* Cyril is explicitly commenting upon acts of bodily harm carried out by his contemporary followers to safeguard their communal integrity, and he unambiguously denounces such endeavors.

IV. "Put your sword back into its sheath." (John 18:10–11)

At nearly 393,000 words despite the loss of two of its original twelve books, Cyril's *Commentary on the Gospel of John* is one of the longest works in all of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and consists of a lemma-by-lemma exegesis of each passage of the fourth gospel.⁴⁴ The date of its composition is hard to pin down, but it certainly precedes the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy in 429 and most likely comes after 424 when a concern for Arianism appears in Cyril's annual festal letters.⁴⁵ The discussion of religious violence is occasioned by his treatment of two verses in succession, John 18:10 and 18:11 (3.22–27 Pusey).⁴⁶ The setting of these verses is the Mount of Olives on the night before Jesus's crucifixion, when Roman soldiers arrive to arrest him. John 18:10 reports that Simon Peter drew his sword to defend his master and struck the slave of the Jewish high priest, succeeding in merely slicing off his right ear. In the subsequent verse, Jesus commands Peter to put his sword away since he must "drink the cup" that his Father has given him.

⁴⁴The most recent complete critical edition is P. E. Pusey, ed., *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium*, 3 vols. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1872), though a new edition of the commentary's first book, including a French translation, was recently published by Bernard Meunier, ed., *Cyrille d'Alexandrie: Commentaire sur Jean. Tome 1 (Livre 1)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2018). A complete English translation can be found in David R. Maxwell, *Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on John, Volume 1* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013); David R. Maxwell, *Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on John, Volume 2* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015). All translations in the present article are my own, though I have consulted Maxwell.

⁴⁵Meunier places the commentary between 425 and 428/9 (*Commentaire sur Jean. Tome 1*, 10–18).

⁴⁶Maxwell observes in a footnote on this passage: "The murder of Hypatia illustrates that the kind of violence Cyril is warning against here is not hypothetical" (*Commentary on John, Volume 1*, 316n243).

Despite Peter's status as the chief of the apostles, Cyril does not, for the most part, attempt to defend his actions but states at the outset that he was "stirred up more intensely and harshly than was fitting."⁴⁷ Why, then, would the evangelist record such a misstep? Cyril asserts that he did so to provide a "model" (ὕπογραμμὸν) for readers, so that they "may learn how far the zeal of our devotion to Christ may proceed without blame and what we may choose to do in conflicts like this without stumbling on something displeasing to God."⁴⁸ In short, Peter is a negative exemplar, representing someone who has gone too far in their devotion to Christ by using violence and force to accomplish what he took to be a righteous goal. As is clear from the mention of "devotion to Christ" above, Cyril is specifically referring to religiously motivated violence, a point that he reasserts slightly later by stating that this principle applies when "we are contending for our devotion to Christ." Moreover, he broadens the applicability of the episode. Although Peter used a sword, the passage "prohibits" one from using any weapon against opponents, whether a sword or stones or a club.⁴⁹ Rather, the proper response is "to exhibit gentleness (ἡπιότητα) even to our murderers."⁵⁰

Not content with a bare prohibition on violence, the Alexandrian bishop then offers two rationales for it. First, it is "better" for Christians to allow God "who judges justly" to "correct" people for their wrongs instead of "making their devotion an excuse (πρόφασιν)" for engaging in bloodshed.⁵¹ Cyril here uses law court language, and it is probable that he has in mind the legal consequences for illicit violence, namely being called to account by the imperial prefect or even the emperor himself. Second, given that Christ himself "cheerfully suffered death," it would be "utterly bizarre" for Christians to attempt "to honor" him with the death of their persecutors. In other words, Christians "must follow Christ himself in this respect."⁵² Cyril then elaborates on this point by deriving an ethical principle from his Christology. Christ, being God, could of course have completely overcome his opponents without any difficulty, as evidenced by the fact that the group sent to apprehend him fell to the ground when he merely spoke a word (cf. John 18:4–6). This demonstrates that he "was not summoned to death by necessity and compulsion." Had he been unable to defend himself, suffering harm "against his will," Peter and the others who "love him" would have been right to "rescue" him by force. But since Christ had the power to defend himself and refused to do so, his followers likewise should not "proceed to lengths that he did not go" by indulging "in unbridled and uncontrolled wrath" (ὄργαῖς).⁵³

In short, Christ's purpose in coming was "to teach us the fullest extent of forbearance and to set forth an example of a complete freedom from anger."⁵⁴ This is an ethical ideal that, Cyril argues, "surpasses the [Mosaic] law." Peter's attempt to defend Christ did not in fact violate the *lex talionis* prescribed in the Pentateuch, since it

⁴⁷Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.22 Pusey).

⁴⁸*Ibid.* εἰσόμεθα γὰρ διὰ τοῦ γεγονότος, μέχρι μὲν τίνος ἀκατηγόρητος πρόεισι τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν εὐσεβείας ὁ ζῆλος, τί δὲ διὴ δρᾶν ἐθέλοντες ἐν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ἀγῶσιν, οὐκ ἂν τι προσπαισίσαιμεν τῶν ἐφ' οἷς λυπεῖται Θεός.

⁴⁹Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.22 Pusey).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.* On the idea that Christians should leave judgment to God rather than seeking to enact their own vengeance, cf. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 178–179.

⁵²Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.22 Pusey).

⁵³Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.22–23 Pusey).

⁵⁴Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.23 Pusey). τῆς εἰς ἄκρον ἡμῖν ἀνεξικακίας γενέσθαι διδάσκαλος, ἀοργησίας τε τῆς ἀπάσῶν ἀνωτάτω καταστήναι τύπος.

permitted people to act upon certain “impulses” that “failed to attain the perfect accomplishment of what is truly good,” which consists of showing “meekness” (ἡμερότητα) and “the highest forbearance” (ἀνεξικακία . . . ταῖς ἀνωπιάτω) exhibited by Christ himself.⁵⁵ In his brief comment on the subsequent verse in which Christ tells Peter to put away his sword, Cyril claims that this is no mere occasional instruction but instead “an ordinance of the gospel way of life with the force of a commandment,” which “forbids” Christ’s followers not only from using swords, but from “offering any resistance” to those who would harm them, just as Christ commanded that one turn the other cheek (cf. Matt. 5:39).⁵⁶

The specific scenario envisioned in Cyril’s treatment of these verses is a Christian being attacked for his or her faith, with those in his community being identified as Christ and his disciples and with their fifth-century persecutors being identified as the Jews who have come to arrest Jesus. The emphatic prohibition upon violent retaliation or even self-defence stands at odds with the standard depiction of Cyril in historical scholarship, as noted above. One might be tempted to explain this discrepancy by offloading the moral imperative from Cyril’s own mindset onto the text itself, since this episode in the Garden of Gethsemane is, after all, a classic scene used to argue for nonviolence.⁵⁷ Perhaps, then, Cyril had no choice but to interpret the passage in this manner in light of the way the text runs, in which case he is here merely begrudgingly or duplicitously denouncing violence. In response to such a hypothetical objection, we should note that the potentiality of the text could have been actualized in other ways to decidedly different ends. To take just one example, Cyril’s contemporary Egyptian Isidore of Pelusium adduces Peter’s wielding of a sword in a list of similarly violent acts found in Christian sacred texts, all taken to demonstrate that “scripture turns the gentle person into a fighter.”⁵⁸ The case of Isidore reveals that the text does not require a nonviolent reading and in fact can be put to diametrically opposed purposes, with Peter being viewed not as a negative exemplar but as someone whose aggression should be emulated. Isidore’s contrasting approach suggests that Cyril’s reading of the text in line with what seems to be its plain sense was an interpretive choice. Moreover, he goes beyond highlighting the mere historical sense of the passage by turning Christ’s command to Peter into a universally binding gospel ordinance, broadening the scope of the prohibition, and giving it a robust theological rationale.

Finally, we should note that in his exegesis of John 18:10–11, Cyril has recourse to similar language that we saw above in his treatment of the Phinehas episode in *Against Julian*. Whereas he earlier praised Phinehas’s “zeal for God” (τὸν ὑπὲρ γε τοῦ θεοῦ ζῆλον), which motivated his violent act,⁵⁹ he here clarifies that one’s “zeal” (ὁ ζῆλος)

⁵⁵Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.23–24 Pusey).

⁵⁶Cyril, *Jo.* 18:11 (3.25 Pusey). On the reception of the dominical command to love one’s enemies, see Riemer Roukema, “Reception and Interpretation of Jesus’ Teaching of Love for Enemies in Ancient Christianity,” in *Violence in Ancient Christianity: Victims and Perpetrators*, ed. Albert C. Geljon and Riemer Roukema (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014), 198–214.

⁵⁷See, for example, Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1997), 333, commenting on Luke 22:49–51.

⁵⁸Isidore of Pelusium, *ep.* 1.418 (PG 78.416b). Τὸν πρῶον μαχητὴν ἢ Γραφῆ ἀπεργάζεται.

⁵⁹Cyril, *Juln.* 5.22.29. Cf. *Juln.* 5.19.28 (τῷ τῆς φιλοθείας καὶ γνησιότητος ζῆλῳ). The word ζῆλος and cognate verb ζηλόω are also used with reference to God himself in Num. 25:11, cited by Julian in *c. Gal.* fr. 33 Mas.

can proceed so far as to become blameworthy,⁶⁰ and whereas he earlier denounced an “excessive forbearance” (τῷ λίαν ἀνεξικακῶ) that would “widen the path to apostasy,”⁶¹ he here says Christ came “to teach us the fullest extent of forbearance” (τῆς εἰς ἄκρον ἡμῖν ἀνεξικακίας).⁶² These sets of claims stand in some tension with one another, but this tension is somewhat lessened if we recall that in the earlier passages Cyril emphasized God as the judge who does not show “excessive forbearance” and that his praise of human-enacted violence on God’s behalf remained a reference to Israel’s distant past rather than his own contemporary moment.

V. “The gentleness that is fitting for the saints.” (2 Corinthians 10:1)

The final passage advocating for nonviolence derives from Cyril’s *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*, which survives only in fragments in the catena tradition.⁶³ As with his other works, a precise date cannot be given for this exegetical treatise, though it certainly postdates the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy in 429.⁶⁴ The specific passage that occasioned Cyril’s remarks is 2 Corinthians 10:1: “I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”⁶⁵ His exegesis of the verse is brief and begins by historically contextualizing it. Paul, Cyril explains, faced opposition in Corinth both from “Athenian wise men,” who regarded the cross as “foolishness,” as well as from Jews who thought he “was impiously making war against the ancient oracles.”⁶⁶ As a result, “Those in Corinth who were zealous for the faith were quite understandably

⁶⁰Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.22 Pusey).

⁶¹Cyril, *Juln.* 5.14.21–22.

⁶²Cyril, *Jo.* 18:10 (3.23 Pusey).

⁶³We are fortunate to have an excellent new edition accompanied by an extremely thorough commentary in Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von Alexandrien zum 2. Korintherbrief*. An English translation has also just been published: David R. Maxwell, *Cyril of Alexandria: Commentaries on Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, and Hebrews* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022). Note, however, that Maxwell’s translation is based on the previous critical edition of P. E. Pusey, *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis evangelium*, vol. 3 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1872), 320–360. I here use Zawadzki’s edition and have consulted Maxwell’s translation, though all translations are my own.

⁶⁴On the dating, see Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von Alexandrien zum 2. Korintherbrief*, 87–101, who concludes it certainly postdates 428 and probably was written after 433.

⁶⁵The fragment in question is found in Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von Alexandrien zum 2. Korintherbrief*, 226–228, with accompanying commentary on 518–529. I am grateful to David Maxwell for drawing my attention to this passage. Zawadzki’s commentary discusses the relation of this passage to the violent events of Cyril’s early years and observes the striking contrast between the “peace-loving” Cyril of the *Commentary on 2 Corinthians* and the image one finds in other historical sources. He does not, however, attempt to resolve this tension, leaving it as a task for future research (p. 529). Similarly, Maxwell mentions that the murder of Hypatia is “perhaps . . . in the background” of Cyril’s exegesis of this passage (*Commentaries on Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, and Hebrews*, 102n118).

⁶⁶About the Jews, Cyril says “κατεπεφύοντο . . . τῶν πεπιστευκότων,” which Maxwell translates as “were implanted among the believers,” while Zawadzki translates it as “griffen . . . die Gläubigen” (“grabbed the believers”) and later paraphrases with “handgreiflich wurden” (“were violent”). The verb κατεπιφύω is exceedingly rare and mostly survives in Cyril’s corpus. Lampe gives the definition “attack” (s.v., κατεπιφύομαι) but only lists passages from Cyril’s corpus. LSJ, s.v. κατεπιφύω says the middle form is equivalent to καταφύω (“to implant, to insert”) and also refers to Hesychius’s lexicon where the verb is glossed with κατατρέχει (“to run down”). In light of this linguistic ambiguity, it is difficult to determine whether Cyril here is saying the Jews mocking Paul had inserted themselves among the believers or were attacking them. If the latter, then the imagined situation would be comparable to the episode in John 18:10–11 discussed above, in which Christians are facing violent opposition from outsiders.

stirred up against these people, and they wanted to lay hands on them as enemies of the divine proclamation. But ... to do so was exceedingly unbecoming and far removed from the gentleness that is fitting for the saints.”⁶⁷ Cyril’s description of these individuals as those who are zealous (οἱ ζηλωταὶ) recalls his use of the term ζῆλος to describe Phinehas and Peter in the passages discussed above. Moreover, his remark that their arousal at Paul’s opponents was “quite understandable” (μόλα εικότως) performs the same rhetorical function as his exhortation in the *Glaphyra* that Christians should “be indignant” when one of their own is violated, insofar as it grants some degree of legitimacy to their reaction. Yet, like Dinah’s brothers and Peter, the Corinthian zealots went too far by wishing to enact bodily harm upon their opponents and failing to exhibit the “meekness and gentleness” of Christ mentioned by Paul in the passage. Cyril strengthens this moral point by citing 2 Timothy 2:24–25, Philippians 1:21, 1 Peter 2:23, 2 Corinthians 10:2, and 1 Corinthians 3:3. Furthermore, as he did in his exegesis of the Dinah episode, he calls on his Christian readers to consider how they might appear from the perspective of those who are outside the community of faith—“those who want to follow the Savior’s gentleness ought to be beyond the suspicion of those people,” that is, they should do nothing to make outsiders suspect them of wrongdoing.

Up to this point one might think that Cyril’s point in this passage is about nonretaliation against hostile opposition, as it was in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, but in the concluding sentence of the fragment his interpretation takes a surprising turn: “After all, if some do not believe, we should not force them by striking them with clubs, but should instead wait for their voluntary conversion to God.”⁶⁸ Perhaps inspired by the setting of this passage in the context of Paul’s missionary journeys, Cyril applies the passage to the topic of proselytism and claims that physical coercion is an inappropriate means of securing the conversion of nonbelievers. Christians should instead wait patiently for them to convert voluntarily, in the meantime doing nothing to cause themselves to be brought into disrepute in the eyes of such would-be converts.⁶⁹ In taking this approach, they are but following the example of Christ, who, as Cyril explains elsewhere, did not become incarnate as a human ruler “ordering those on earth to believe in him” but as an ordinary man with “a restrained and submissive mindset” so that people would “choose a better way,” “not with compulsion hanging over them but rather by persuasion.”⁷⁰

VI. Reassessing Cyril and Violence

Now that I have surveyed five key passages from Cyril’s corpus relevant to this topic and highlighted their resonances with Hypatia’s murder, a reassessment of Cyril’s relation to late antique religious violence is in order. I will briefly address four topics: (1) what these texts imply about Cyril’s responsibility for Hypatia’s death; (2) the degree to

⁶⁷πρὸς δὲ τοὺς τοιοῦτους παρωτρύνοντο μὲν καὶ μάλα εικότως τῶν Κορινθίων οἱ ζηλωταὶ, χεῖρας δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐπιφέρειν ἠθέλον, ὡς ἐχθροῖς τοῦ θεοῦ κηρύγματος· ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἦν ἀκαλλῆς λίαν τὸ χρῆμα, καὶ τῆς ἁγίου πρεπούσης ἐπεικείας ὡς ἀπωτάτω·

⁶⁸εἰ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦσιν τινες, οὐ ξύλοις αὐτοὺς καταπαίοντας καταβιάζεσθαι χρῆ, περιμένειν δὲ μᾶλλον τῆν ἐκούσιον αὐτῶν πρὸς Θεὸν ἐπιστροφῆν.

⁶⁹On voluntary conversion as an ethical ideal among late antique Christians, see van Nuffelen, “Religious Violence,” 524–527, who examines the case of intercommunal violence on the island Minorca in early 418, which resulted in the conversion of the island’s Jewish population.

⁷⁰Cyril, *Juln.* 6.45.12–30. Cyril is here answering Julian’s denigration of Jesus as merely “one of Caesar’s subjects” (c. *Gal.* fr. 50 Mas, ap. Cyril, *Juln.* 6.42.7–8).

which they evince a shift or development in his thinking and/or rhetoric; (3) their relation to the competing perspectives on the acceptability of violence evident in the other ancient sources that recount this event; and (4) the way in which they complicate the image of Cyril commonly found in scholarship on late antiquity.

Interpretations of Hypatia's murder both ancient and modern are divided on the degree to which Cyril is directly to blame for the event. As argued by Edward Watts in a 2006 study, while the ancient authors "describe the actual murder in broadly similar terms," each of them nevertheless "comes from a distinct tradition with its own ideas about the murder, its larger significance, and, ultimately, its acceptability."⁷¹ For Socrates, the episode provides a concrete instance of the principle that disorder in the church is entangled in disorder in society more broadly.⁷² Moreover, although he stops short of saying the Alexandrian bishop directly ordered the murder, he does suggest Cyril was at least responsible for fomenting the conditions that led to it, and he condemns the actions of the perpetrators as "altogether foreign to those who set their minds on Christ's affairs" (ἄλλότριον γὰρ παντελῶς τῶν φρονούντων τὰ Χριστοῦ).⁷³ For the Neoplatonist Damascius, Hypatia's death is an instance of a larger pattern of violence against philosophers who bravely resisted arbitrary and oppressive Christian power. His Hypatia was the entirely innocent victim of the envy-driven plot concocted by Cyril himself.⁷⁴ Finally, John of Nikiu, somewhat akin to Damascius, implies that the bishop was directly responsible for the murder, though he views her grisly death as not only acceptable but necessary for the common good. Though he makes no mention of Cyril hatching a plot and directing the perpetrators, his account concludes with the bishop receiving praise from the people for having purged the city of a corrupting influence as had Theophilus before him.

The passages from Cyril's own corpus considered above do not tell us whether Cyril himself plotted Hypatia's murder, as Damascius claims, but they do show that on occasion he was willing to use violent rhetoric and imagery, and it is plausible that such language contributed to creating a climate in which executing someone who appeared, to some at least, as a tempting seductress seemed not only thinkable but obligatory. This would be true whether or not Cyril himself intended for his followers to take such actions. The passages in *Against Julian* and *De adoratione* in which he engages in positive theorizing about religious violence as a means of protecting communal integrity are open-ended and vague about real-world violence enacted by one person against another. This might be because Cyril was in fact seeking to incite such acts and was politically savvy enough to recognize that he had to be guarded in his speech. Alternatively, it might be because he was an inexperienced bishop who was naïve about the prospect of actual physical violence, not realizing he was playing with

⁷¹Edward Watts, "The Murder of Hypatia: Acceptable or Unacceptable Violence," in *Violence in Late Antiquity*, ed. H. A. Drake (London: Routledge, 2006), 333–342, at 341. I leave to one side here John Malalas who claims the murder of Hypatia occurred because the Alexandrians "were given license to do so by their bishop" (παρηρσίαν λαβόντες ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου; *chron.* 14.12.1–3), since Malalas's report is brief and it is unclear what sources he was relying upon or how trustworthy they may have been. Ronchey, *Hypatia*, IX, 142, 145, 179, seems to me too confident in identifying the sources lying behind Malalas's account of events, basing herself upon the equally speculative remarks in Canfora, "Cirillo e Ipazia," 100–101.

⁷²Cf. Beers, "Bloody Iuvenalia," 72–73.

⁷³Socrates, *HE* 7.15.6. Cf. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 280.

⁷⁴Damascius, *Isid.* 43E; text and translation available in Polymnia Athanassiadi, *Damascius: The Philosophical History* (Athens: Apamea, 1999), 130–131.

rhetorical fire. Deciding between these options depends upon the more general profile of Cyril's character that one arrives at via other lines of evidence. Whatever the case, emphasizing that God will one day judge the sinner does not necessarily oblige his earthly followers to enforce that punishment in the present day, but to some minds the latter will always seem like a logical inference from the former. It is, therefore, possible, perhaps even probable, that, thanks to the violent rhetoric he employed in these passages, those Christians who conspired to murder Hypatia imagined themselves to be obeying their bishop by executing the outsider corrupting their community, regardless of what Cyril's own perspective on such violent acts may have been.

This raises the second issue, since the vagueness of the two passages that positively theorize religious violence form a striking contrast with the passages in the *Glaphyra*, the Johannine commentary, and the *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*, which are more explicit and direct in addressing real-world religious violence. How might we account for the fact that in three works Cyril senses a need to issue an emphatic prohibition upon religiously motivated violence while in two other works he is at best oblivious to its possibility and at worst implicitly encouraging of such deeds? Although certainty is impossible here, it may be that this contrast reveals a shift in his use of violent rhetoric over the course of his career. Dating Cyril's works is difficult to do with precision, as indicated by the wide chronological ranges given for most of these works in the preceding discussion. Nevertheless, if Villani is correct that *De adoratione* was his earliest work, it may not be coincidental that we find in that treatise his closest dalliance with Christians using violence against would-be apostates and those who would lead them astray. Conversely, in the works that we can most securely date later than *De adoratione*, namely the *Glaphyra*, the Johannine commentary, and *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*, we find explicit renunciation of religious violence.

If there is a discernable shift here, it is important to characterize its nature and its cause with care and nuance. These passages do not necessarily tell us that Cyril's own thinking on religious violence changed, as if he approved of it initially and then later changed his mind. Such a development in his view on the acceptability of violence is possible but difficult to confirm, both because the earlier passages do not speak clearly to his own view on real-world violence and because one might be tempted to read his later disavowal of such actions as disingenuous. Rather, what we observe is, at a minimum, a development in his rhetoric away from using vague language that might incite violence to using direct and explicit language to denounce it. With respect to the cause of this shift, again, we must recognize how little we know and should exercise caution in filling in the gaps in our evidence. Cyril may have changed his tone only reluctantly and in response to imperial displeasure over Hypatia's murder. Alternatively, he may himself have been shocked by the outburst of violence among his followers and realized in its aftermath that he had a responsibility to restrain their worst impulses.

A willingness to shift tactics to achieve one's goal is also apparent in the version of Cyril's actions leading up to Hypatia's murder found in the history of Socrates, who was himself no supporter of the Egyptian bishop. After the Jewish riot and their expulsion from Alexandria, with tensions running high between the bishop and Orestes, Cyril sent his representatives to the prefect to mediate a reconciliation, "doing so," Socrates tells us, because "the people of Alexandria forced him to" (τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ λαὸς τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων αὐτὸν ποιεῖν προσηνάγκαζεν).⁷⁵ Orestes rebuffed the attempted reconciliation and tensions continued mounting, leading to an attack on Orestes's life by a

⁷⁵Socrates, *HE* 7.13.19.

Nitrian monk named Ammonius who was duly arrested and died under torture. Cyril initially declared his fallen supporter a martyr, but then backtracked when “sensible” (οἱ εὖ φρονοῦντες) Christians refused to accept this escalation.⁷⁶ He instead quietly let the matter drop.⁷⁷ In both these instances, the Alexandrian bishop appears to be responsive to his community, correcting his initial missteps in light of communal pressure as he learned what avenues of action were available to him in a moment of crisis to protect his community’s interests and also reestablish the harmony of the polis.⁷⁸ Although Socrates says nothing of Cyril’s response to Hypatia’s murder itself, a prohibition upon religious violence would be in keeping with this pattern of changing his tack in response to a growing awareness of the volatile situation and the constraints under which he had to operate.

As noted at the outset, the historiography on Hypatia’s murder has completely overlooked the above passages, focusing instead on the narratives of Socrates, Damascius, and John of Nikiu. In contrast, the voice closest of all to the events in question, Cyril’s own voice, has yet to be heard in modern scholarship on this topic. Of course, he hardly gives us an unbiased perspective. Moreover, he does not explicitly address Hypatia’s murder in the manner the other three authors do. He does, nonetheless, in *Glaphyra* comment directly on whether violence is appropriate in cases of apostasy, which is precisely the issue at stake in Hypatia’s murder according to two of our other sources. Moreover, he provides us with a further perspective we can use to correct the biases of our other sources. Socrates disliked Cyril because of his actions against the Novatians, and Damascius obviously had no sympathy for him, while, in contrast, John of Nikiu was engaged in a hagiographical attempt to magnify his reputation for a later audience.⁷⁹ In other words, the agendas of each of these other authors would have led them to suppress or at least ignore Cyril’s own perspective on the topic at hand and to amplify his responsibility for Hypatia’s death, whatever the facts may have been. Yet the unqualified rejection of religiously motivated bodily harm in three later works actually places him starkly at odds with the approval of Hypatia’s murder expressed by John of Nikiu, who is usually thought to be passing along the view on the event among Cyril’s local supporters,⁸⁰ and aligns him instead with Socrates’s judgment that such actions are unfitting for Christians. These passages, therefore, complicate Cyril’s endorsement of violence presented by our other ancient sources, since, whatever his perspective on

⁷⁶Cf. Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt*, 111; Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 220–221; Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 110–111; Drake, “Intolerance,” 200–201; Johannes Hahn, “The Challenge of Religious Violence: Imperial Ideology and Policy in the Fourth Century,” in *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD*, ed. Johannes Wienand (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 379–404, at 394–397; Watts, *Hypatia*, 111–12; Geoffrey Greatrex, “The Emperor, the People and Urban Violence in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries,” in *Religious Violence in the Ancient World: From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity*, eds. Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Christian R. Raschle (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 389–405, at 400.

⁷⁷Socrates, *HE* 7.14.11.

⁷⁸Notably, John of Nikiu’s account omits any mention of either of these moments in the conflict with Orestes.

⁷⁹Cf. the assessment of Wessel that John’s designation of Cyril as the “new Theophilus” was “an interpretive gloss later imposed on an embarrassing set of events that required explanation and justification in order to present Cyril’s early episcopacy in the best possible light (*Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy*, 49).

⁸⁰Cf. Alan Cameron and Jacqueline Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 40–41; Watts, *City and School*, 198–199; Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 222n60; Watts, *Hypatia*, 131–134; Ronchey, *Hypatia*, 39, 61.

religious violence may have been at the time of Hypatia's death, by the time he composed his later works he was issuing injunctions against such actions. Furthermore, it is perhaps significant that, in all three of the passages rejecting religious violence, Cyril does not simply state an abstract moral principle but highlights negative exemplars who relied upon violent methods to achieve their pious ends—Dinah's brothers, the Apostle Peter, and the Corinthian Christians. At a minimum, this suggests an awareness that some within his Christian community were prone to conform to the pattern of the negative exemplars and it is possible that these figures are even meant to recall the very attackers of Hypatia, since her murder was the most well-known act of public violence to have occurred in Alexandria since the riots surrounding the destruction of the Serapeum in 391.

We should of course be careful not to make these three renunciations of religious violence say more than they do. Cyril does not provide a blanket rejection of all violence in human society carried out by followers of Christ, nor does he necessarily rule out all kinds of violence against apostates. It is possible, for example, that he would have endorsed the use of coercive means by the state to enforce correct religious views, since state-inflicted violence is not his focus in these passages.⁸¹ Or, again, his rejection of "savage penalties" for apostates leaves open the possibility that lesser penalties not involving physical injury are, in his eyes, permissible. Moreover, his elevation of Ammonius as a martyr for dying under torture after throwing a stone at Orestes is unambiguously an act of condoning such violence, though we must here entertain the possibility of a change of position following this incident, perhaps implied by Socrates's own account. In addition, he elsewhere approvingly mentions violence against non-Christian buildings and other objects,⁸² and the rules he lays down in the above passages could even be compatible with Cyril's famous expulsion of the Jewish population from Alexandria since Socrates mentions no bodily harm that occurred during that event,⁸³ though it is hard to imagine how it could have completely been avoided under such circumstances. All we can say with clarity is that in three instances he attempted to prevent the members of his own community from using their faith as a pretext for harming the bodies of others, whether in cases of potential apostasy of believers, attack by outsiders, or when seeking the conversion of unbelievers.

If so, then there is need for some degree of revision in the common scholarly perception of Cyril, which has at times grown into a grotesque caricature. Not only does one look in vain in his corpus for explicit exhortations that his followers use physical violence, such as can easily be found in his contemporaries (for example,

⁸¹Cyril's claim in *Against Julian* that Christ did not come as a king commanding people to believe in him would seemingly imply that earthly rulers should not do so either, but this is an inference he himself never drew. On coercion in late antiquity, see Van Nuffelen, "Coercion in Late Antiquity."

⁸²At *Juln.* 7.5, Cyril alludes to "the gods' inability to defend themselves when their sanctuaries were torn open, when their altars were uprooted, when every sacrifice was destroyed and their statues burned, and, finally, when all the land under heaven has come to consider them as worthy of no account." He is perhaps referring to the destruction of the Serapeum, which would have occurred only a couple of decades prior. It is important, however, even here to bear in mind certain distinctions. Cyril may be endorsing no more than the orderly destruction of such cult sites and objects by imperial soldiers and not the marauding bands of monks who took matters into their own hands, in keeping with the position of his contemporary Augustine (cf. Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 176). See also Julian's mention of Christians destroying temples in *c. Gal. fr.* 48 Mas. (*ap. Cyril, Juln.* 6.31) to which Cyril responds with implicit approval (*Juln.* 6.32.20–34).

⁸³Cf. Van Loon, "Violence in the Early Years," 119.

Chrysostom: “Slap them in the face, strike them around the mouth”⁸⁴); he instead went out of his way to denounce such behavior and provided an elaborate rationale explaining why it was impermissible for followers of Christ, applying this principle to three specific scenarios. Cyril did, of course, fight vociferously and vehemently in other ways to defend his understanding of the unchanging orthodox faith passed down by the apostles,⁸⁵ and Averil Cameron has argued that the concept of orthodoxy “is itself inherently violent.”⁸⁶ Whether or not orthodoxy is *inherently* violent, it seems undeniable that it, at a minimum, has the potential of being put to violent ends. Yet, given that, as Cameron also observes, late antique bishops like Cyril were deeply committed to the truth of their orthodox beliefs,⁸⁷ it would be absurd to expect to find them embracing a tolerance born of either political liberalism or postmodern relativism. This does not, however, necessarily imply that they did not recognize violence as problematic, and we might optimistically hope to find in our sources moments when late antique bishops and theologians realized that a commitment to orthodoxy could go in this direction. I suggest that such recognition and pre-emptive actions are precisely what we observe in three of the passages examined above, and, given the power wielded by the Alexandrian bishop in late antiquity, it is hard to believe it would have had no influence upon the community he governed. Hence, although his prohibition upon religious violence tragically came too late to save Hypatia’s life, it may have helped prevent other similar events from taking place during the remaining twenty-nine years of his episcopacy.⁸⁸

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⁸⁴John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues* 1.32; quoted in Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 15. See also the passage from Caesarius of Arles quoted in Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 175: “If they are not corrected, strike them if you can; if they are not corrected thus, pull their hair. If they still continue, tie them with bonds of iron.”

⁸⁵On Cyril’s use of rhetoric, see especially Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy*; Majastina Kahlos, “Ditches of Destruction—Cyril of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Public Security,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107 (2014): 659–690. On Cyril as pastoral strategist, see John McGuckin, “Cyril of Alexandria: Bishop and Pastor,” in *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation*, ed. Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 205–236.

⁸⁶Averil Cameron, “The Violence of Orthodoxy,” in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, eds. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 114. It is questionable, however, whether the notion of orthodoxy is *uniquely* violent. Human ingenuity has time and again found creative ways to deploy almost any belief system or set of ethical principles to violent ends.

⁸⁷Cameron, “The Violence of Orthodoxy,” 107, 108, a point reiterated in Averil Cameron, “Patristics and Late Antiquity: Partners or Rivals?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 28 (2020): 283–302, at 293.

⁸⁸The comparative absence of inter-religious violence in Alexandria during the remaining years of Cyril’s tenure is noted in Watts, *City and School*, 202–203; Van Loon, “Violence in the Early Years,” 129–130; and Watts, *Hypatia*, 121. It is naturally impossible to say that this was directly due to the passages analyzed above (and perhaps similar comments Cyril would have made in other contexts), but it seems plausible that these exegetical works could have influenced the *realia* of the ancient world. The best hypothesis regarding the intended audience for his exegetical works is that they were aimed at providing instruction for clergy who would be responsible for teaching the laity throughout Egypt, which suggests an avenue for the dissemination of the notions expressed in the above passages. Cf. J. David Cassel, “Cyril of Alexandria and the Science of the Grammarians: A Study in the Setting, Purpose, and Emphasis of Cyril’s ‘Commentary on Isaiah’” (PhD dissertation, University of Virginia, 1992).

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