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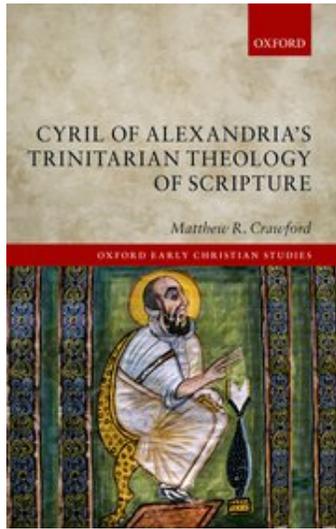
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Matthew R. Crawford

*Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture* (Oxford Early Christian Studies)

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014

Pp. xi + 290. ISBN: 978-0-19-872262-5.  
\$125.00 [Hardback]. Purchase

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Cyril of Alexandria (c. CE 380–444), with the exception of John Chrysostom, is considered a premiere exegete within the eastern tradition. Having more extant works than most, Cyril is further associated with the Christological development of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Matthew Crawford has afforded Patristic scholarship a monograph delineating the intricacies of Cyril's Trinitarianism and theology of Scripture. In *Cyril of Alexandria's Trinitarian Theology of Scripture*, Crawford unearthed wealthy amounts of Cyril's literature in a comprehensive and organized manner. I suspect this work will influence Patristic scholarship, most notably works on Cyril and pro-Nicene theology, for years to come.

According to Crawford, he aims to contribute to a growing discussion currently within pro-Nicene theology that engages reading patterns and theological culture. In other words, by studying Cyril, "I

hope to bring out the pre-understanding that pro-Nicene theologians brought to the text of Scripture, which then guided their reading of whatever individual passages they encountered” (p.3). He proceeds to argue pro-Nicene theology has certain conceptions of Scripture that correspond to the “divine movement towards humanity in revelation” and humanity’s reception of revelation in Scripture (p.3). Thus, Cyril is chosen to demonstrate that pro-Nicene theology is Trinitarian in its doctrine of God and, also, Trinitarian in its theology of Scripture.

Thus, the argument proceeds to touch upon a theology of revelation and theology of exegesis in Cyril. By placing Cyril in a broader ancient and contemporary discussion, Crawford argues “Cyril has intentionally constructed his theology of Scripture such that it is Trinitarian in structure and Christological in focus” (p.7). He argues this by detailing Cyril’s Trinitarian theology of Scripture, Cyril’s arguments for inspiration, how a theology of revelation informs a theology of exegesis, and how Scripture becomes a nourishing word through interpretation. This thesis and argument is all couched within Cyril’s Trinitarian vision and integration.

I would like to note, in particular, two arguments within this monograph. First, Crawford presents Cyril being intimately aware of Trinitarian revelation. According to Cyril, “The Word, who is in the Father and from the Father, transmits the truly extraordinary, lofty, and great will of the one who begot him” (Jo. 17:6–8). So, Cyril is “Trinitarian in structure,” argues Crawford, “and Christological in focus” (p.11). The divine Son, in Cyril’s literature, is the divine revealer in Trinitarian perspective. Crawford notes that recent scholarship on the fourth century has demonstrated the inseparable operations of pro-Nicene theology (p.31). For Crawford, *vis-à-vis* Cyril, the principle of inseparable operations does not argue that the Father, Son, and Spirit all do the same actions; rather, all are *always* at work in a given

action (p.31). Thus, Cyril's Trinitarian axiom, based on the principle of inseparable operations, becomes *from* the Father, *through* the Spirit, *in/by* the Spirit (p.42–45). Therefore, Cyril's Trinitarian theology of revelation, as Crawford masterfully navigates, portrays the Son revealing the Father in the Spirit; or, "otherwise stated, revelation comes from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit" (p.55).

A second, and surely not limited to these two, argument is humanity's experience of revelation in the reverse order of divine acts. Crawford carefully lays out Cyril's comments on the reader of Scripture and one's encounter with God when reading Scripture (ch.6). The exegetical task is in reverse order as the aforementioned Trinitarian actions. "When the Christian engages in the task of theological reflection upon Scripture, the Son is guiding the believer by the Spirit to a greater knowledge of the Trinitarian mystery revealed in the Son himself" (p.223). As the inseparable actions begin with the Father, accomplished through the Son and by the Spirit, now the exegete is guided by the Spirit through the revelation of Son to a greater knowledge of the Father (p.223).

It is hard to underestimate such work. Crawford has not only produced a work that contributes to Cyrilline scholarship, he, essentially, has contributed to the field in ways no one else has. Although Marie-Odile Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (1994), gives an adequate overview of Cyril's exegesis, and Lois Farag, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, a New Testament Exegete* (2007), details some of Cyril's Trinitarian theology, the two topics still remain relatively segregated. Thus, Crawford's work uniquely contributes to Cyrilline scholarship—an intersection of Cyril's Trinitarian theology and his exegetical practices.

Crawford's work is to be commended on multiple accounts. I shall supply three. First, Crawford adequately conversed with current

Cyrrilline scholarship. In doing so, the reader is brought *up-to-date* and is able to hear the distinct voice of the monograph. Second, Crawford is able to put Cyril in conversation with antecedent and contemporary church fathers so as to note theological traditions and divergences. Third, Crawford meticulously and overwhelmingly proves his case while also leaving more room for Cyrrilline scholarship to continue developing secondary and tertiary arguments as presented. Crawford must be commended for providing a text that will be valuable for years to come. Being influenced by Lewis Ayres in scope and approach to the field (p.v), I would encourage any Patristic scholar to pick up this volume with haste and drink deeply the Trinitarianism of Cyril's doctrine of God and revelation, theology of Scripture, and theology of exegesis.

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