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Time and Eternity in Fifth-Century Oikonomic Thought: Cyril of Alexandria on the Only Begotten and the First Born

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Abstract

In this article the author aims to revisit the themes of qualified and unqualified coming-to-be of the Word of God in Cyril of Alexandria. While the first type of coming-to-be of God the Word is depicted by Cyril as being removed from any temporal associations (i.e. his eternal begetting), the second type of coming-to-be, i.e. coming-to-be in human conditions (that is, the Incarnation), attributes temporal characteristics to the Word. The issue of conflicting properties (atemporal vs. temporal) and conflicting names (i.e. Only-Begotten vs. First Born) associated with diverging points of reference of scriptural affirmations (i.e. those of *theologia* and *oikonomia*) is an interesting one in this context. Cyril's *Scholia* offers a set of deductions of both atemporal (or quasi-temporal) and temporal characteristics predicated of the Word and qualified by the following terms: "according to nature" and "according to *oikonomia*." In this article, the author endeavors to critically re-evaluate Cyril's philosophical underpinnings and readmit some Neo-Platonist speculations (in particular emphasizing the creative input of Iamblichus) to early Christian thought. The article also makes an emphasis on the role of the commentaries on the *Parmenides* in the formation of relevant intellectual projections.

Keywords

Cyril of Alexandria, time, eternity, scriptural titles of Christ

Preamble

The relation of God to the realm of becoming, whose existence does not have an integral unity but is rather a flowing multiplicity framed into the schema of before and after, was a subject of scholarly interest since early antiquity. Is God beyond time, eternally resting in his divine *στάσις*? Or, perhaps, even beyond eternity? Is it possible to think of God as being set in motion and as being framed into temporal series arranged within the schema of before and after? To answer these questions we need to critically reassess a few themes associated with temporal characteristics predicated of God. This subject is indeed a tricky one. When we think of the Aristotelian conception of time as a number of change which can be counted in respect of before and after,¹ we immediately link time, change and becoming and then allocate temporal characteristics exclusively to sensible particulars. The reason for this is the “nature” of sensible particulars which is not ontologically stable. The mode of its being is becoming. What is becoming or “coming-to-be” (*γένεσις*)? In general, this term is coextensive with those of motion or change. According to Aristotle, becoming concerns first the change of place (i.e. locomotion), then qualitative and quantitative changes (alteration, increase, and diminution). In the *Physics* he at times classified these types of coming-to-be as the species of motion (*κίνησις*). Albeit becoming here is predicated of the subject with qualifications. Thus, while the subject preserves its essential form, it may replace certain accidental characteristics by their contraries. Hence, the subject comes-to-be such and such, say, from being rested it comes-to-be tired. A formal change, on the other hand, that is, coming-to-be without qualification and passing-away, is just another type of change in which the subject undergoes an essential transformation, a new form being introduced.² Aristotle classified this type of change as mutation (*μεταβολή*).³ However, at

¹ “Ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν ὁ χρόνος ἀριθμὸς ἐστὶ κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον.” Aristotle, *Physics* 220a.24-5. in W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis Physica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950; repr. 1966).

² There are other kinds of change, e.g. incomplete substantial change associated with Aristotle’s conception of mixture. However, in the scope of this article there is no need to review further details associated with all kinds of change.

³ To sum up: “Ὅταν μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὸ ποσὸν ἢ ἡ μεταβολὴ τῆς ἐναντιώσεως, αὐξή καὶ φθίσις, ὅταν δὲ κατὰ τόπον, φορά, ὅταν δὲ κατὰ πάθος καὶ τὸ ποιόν, ἀλλοίωσις, αἴταν

times he also used both terms interchangeably (the above footnote clearly indicates the fact of the matter). In general, becoming entails motion and change. And certain types of change can be measured in the order of before and after. Simplicius would add to this that “change in the flux of existence”⁴ is the property of becoming and time is primarily the measure of such change. Hence, change, becoming, and time are intrinsically connected. That which changes or comes-to-be, and is measured against the before and after, is a sensible particular and not an ontologically stable intelligible being.

Aristotle argued that sensible particulars come-to-be and can be measured in respect of before and after. Before and after are the most basic properties of time. Even so, they do not belong to time exclusively. They are also akin to place, position, magnitude, and change.⁵ Time receives its characteristics from change. The before and after in change applies to both place and time but not in the same sense. Simplicius further elaborated on this topic and argued that:

“in fact there seems to be two types of before and after in change, one derived from place and one from time... A thing gets its place... in so far as its extension has a position, and it gets its time in so far as its existence is in flux. If it had position only it would have had no need of time, for it would have its being at the instant, and if it was pure flux it would have had no need for place.”⁶

He concluded that “the before and after in change, not that according to its position but that according to the extension of its being, is time.”⁷ According to Simplicius, time signifies an extension of being ordered in series according to before and after. A thing whose mode of being is be-

δὲ μηδὲν ὑπομένει οὐ θάτερον πάθος ἢ συμβεβηκὸς ὄλως, γένεσις τὸ δὲ φθορά.” Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* 319b.31–320a.2. in C. Mugler, Aristote. *De la génération et de la corruption* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966).

⁴ Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics 4.1-5, 10-14*, trans. J.O. Urmson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 157.

⁵ Aristotle, *Physics* 219a11-b3.

⁶ Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*. in H. Diels, *Simplicii Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria*, Vol 1. Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 9 (Berlin: Reimer, 1882), 716.3-15. English translation in J.O. Urmson, *Simplicius: On Aristotle's Physics 4.1-5, 10-14* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 125.

⁷ Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*, CAG 9, 720.1-3 (128 in translation).

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coming no longer exists as a simultaneous (though internally differentiated) whole. It is arranged in series and is actually divided into parts some of which no longer exist and some of which do not yet exist; hence, the parts of the whole being come-to-be one after another in successive series. On the contrary, intelligible beings, as we learn from Proclus, are eternal simultaneous wholes.⁸

Meanwhile, Aristotle's definition of time may suggest that at stake is some sort of abstract number with which we count change, since time is not change "but that by which change can be numerically estimated."⁹ Even so, Aristotle thought of time as continuous, made of parts, and divisible, these characteristics being incompatible with the conception of abstract number. Therefore, he immediately makes qualifications and tells us that time is not an abstract number with which one counts but a thing counted. Thus, "time is the countable thing that we are counting, not the numbers we count in."¹⁰ Simplicius explains the rationale of this statement by saying that "the number of numbers would not suit time, for that is discrete and not continuous. But what is numbered can also be continuous, like the eleven-foot spear."¹¹ Moreover, the "number of change" is not "one" but "the many," its most basic unit is two,¹² similar to two extreme points that mark off the line.

A quite peculiar aspect of time, according to Aristotle, is associated with its parts. It is assumed that a part is the measure of the whole. Even so, as far as time is concerned, its parts do not exist (the past no longer exists and the present is not yet in existence). The now, i.e. the number of the moving object, on the other hand, is not a part of time but its limit measur-

⁸ Proclus tells us that "[a]ll that is eternal is a simultaneous whole. If its existence alone be eternal, that existence is simultaneously present in its entirety; there is not one part of it which has already emerged and another which will emerge later, but as yet is not; all that it is capable of being it already possesses in entirety, without diminution and without serial extension. If its activity be eternal in addition to its existence, this too is simultaneously entire, steadfast in an unvarying measure of completeness and as it were frozen in one unchanging outline, without movement or transition." Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* in E.R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963; repr. 1977), 52.1-8.

⁹ "οὐκ ἄρα κίνησις ὁ χρόνος, ἀλλ' ἢ ἀριθμὸν ἔχει ἡ κίνησις." Aristotle, *Physics* 219b.2-3.

¹⁰ "ὁ δὲ χρόνος ἐστὶν τὸ ἀριθμοῦμενον καὶ οὐχ ὃ ἀριθμοῦμεν." Aristotle, *Physics*, 219b.7-8.

¹¹ Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*, CAG 9, 714.10-12 (123 in translation).

¹² "ἐλάχιστος γὰρ κατὰ μὲν ἀριθμὸν ἐστὶν ὁ εἷς ἢ οἱ δύο, κατὰ μέγεθος δ' οὐκ ἔστιν." Aristotle, *Physics* 220a.31-2.

ing beginning and end. Similarly, certain “parts” of a sensible particular (if we are to intellectually grasp it as a simultaneous whole) are also non-existent, being either in the past which is no longer in existence, or in the future which is not yet in existence.

It should be noted in this context that motion or change, according to Aristotle, is always from potentiality to actuality. There is no potentiality in the intelligible. Hence, there should be no change. Whereas intelligible things eternally rest in the state of unity, the mode of their existence being pure actuality, the mode of existence of sensible particulars includes potentiality and imperfection. The unity of sensible particulars is conditional; its wholeness does not signify a mere internal differentiation; instead, it is actually divided thus representing multiplicity whose principle of unity and coherence cannot be immediately grasped. A vivid sign of this state of affairs is the fact that their essence or true being does not correspond with their existence. As we learn from Simplicius,

“there is there [i.e. in the intelligible realm] no differentiation of essence (τό εἶναι) from existence (τό οὖν). But where within what is unified such a differentiation has appeared, there plurality has appeared together with unity, and a whole with parts has come into being, and some preliminary outline of things here that are spatially separated has made its appearance, and essence has become something other than existence.”¹³

An original differentiation and spatial separation then results in the actual self-separation of sensible particulars. They become temporally separated from themselves and others.

If, on the other hand, we are to make use of Plato’s definition of time, that is, an image of eternity moving according to number, introduced in the *Timaeus*,¹⁴ the same intellectual projection comes about, one that con-

¹³ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Physics*, CAG 9, 773.22-26. English translation in J.O. Urmsion, *Simplicius: Corollaries on Place and Time* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1992), pp. 85-86.

¹⁴ “εἰκό δ’ ἐπενόει κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιῆ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ’ ἀριθμὸν ἰούσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον δὲν δὴ χρόνον ὠνομάκαμεν. Wherefore he resolved to have a moving image of eternity, and when he set in order the heaven, he made this image eternal but moving according to number, while eternity itself rests in unity; and this image we call time.” Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d5-7. in J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera*, Vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902; repr. 1968). English translation in R.G. Bury, *Plato’s Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus,*

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ceptually connects time with becoming and eternity with being. Simplicius clarifies it by saying that Aristotle is perfectly in accord with Plato as far as time is concerned. Thus,

“Aristotle said that time was the number of change in respect of before and after, but Plato says that time is “an eternal image proceeding in accordance with number” of the eternity that remains static in unity, contrasting “in unity” with “in accordance with number,” the changing with the static and the image with the paradigm.”¹⁵

It is of no surprise that, according to Simplicius, Aristotle “best of all men well understood Plato’s conception of time.”¹⁶ Plato’s distinction between being and becoming again helps us understand the matter at stake. According to Plato, that which is always exists and does not come-to-be. On the contrary, that which comes to be is never fully existent. One is intelligible and apprehended by thought; the other one is sensible and apprehended by the faculty of sense perception.¹⁷ Intelligible beings exist eternally (τὸ ὄν ἀεί) and sensible particulars exist in time. We may then conclude that the proper subject to which “being in time” is predicated is apparently a sensible particular, and what is at stake is physics, and, more immediately, the physics of our sublunar region.

Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics* gives us an elegant description of the state of affairs by saying that “things that are said to be in time, such as a man or a horse, are so through their essential change, which means that their being is an activity of their essence, an activity that is neither complete nor permanent, but has its being in becoming.”¹⁸ We may note here that according to Simplicius, any kind of change is, in a sense, essential if viewed from this perspective. In general, being in

and Epistles (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 37.

¹⁵ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Physics*, CAG 9, 717.23-27 (126 in translation).

¹⁶ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Physics*, CAG 9, 717.27-29 (126 in translation).

¹⁷ “τί τὸ ὄν ἀεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον, καὶ τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὄν δὲ οὐδέποτε; τὸ μὲν δὴ νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτὸν ἀεί κατὰ ταῦτα ὄν, τὸ δ’ αὖ δόξη μετ’ αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου δοξαστὸν γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, ὄντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν. What is that which is existent always and has no becoming? And what is that which is becoming always and never is existent? Now the one of these is apprehensible by thought with the aid of reasoning, since it is ever uniformly existent; whereas the other is an object of opinion with the aid of unreasoning sensation, since it becomes and perishes and is never really existent.” Plato, *Timaeus*, 27d.6–28a.4.

¹⁸ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Physics*, CAG 9, 737.26-30 (148 in translation).

time is “the extension of their [sensible particulars’] being.”¹⁹ On the other hand, “the things that truly are and do not have their being in becoming, which both Plato and Aristotle call eternal, are not in time but in eternity that is statically in unity.”²⁰ Consequently, there exist two types of entities, sensible and intelligible and we may predicate being in time of sensible particulars and eternity of intelligible things.

Even so, as far as theology is concerned, we also encounter various temporal or quasi-temporal characteristics predicated of God. What should we make of it? In this case we may ask the question about whether time or temporal characteristics can be said-of intelligible things in general and of God, the summit of the Intelligible (or even that which lies beyond the Intelligible), in particular; and if so, then in what respect. We indeed have various classical treatises that present intelligible entities as being parted and framed into temporal series while making transition from there to here, in particular, participated forms becoming immanent in the sensible substrate. Their indivisibly-divisible mode of existence in a sense bridges the worlds. Another aspect of the problem is associated with various contingencies predicated of God. We may encounter from the sacred texts the following affirmations: God said something to Moses, God decided to do something, God will come again, God changed his mind, etc. These affirmations indeed present God’s ἐνέργεια as being framed into temporal series. Another aspect of the problem concerns God as coming-to-be human, growing in statue and wisdom, dying, etc. In general, we learn from the Scriptures that God can be depicted as becoming older or younger or of the same age in relation to itself and others. God’s past thus differs from God’s present; even so, if looked from a different perspective (considered itself by itself), God abides in eternal rest.

Let us first say that Plato, in his great “theological” dialogue, the *Parmenides*, argued that the One of the second hypothesis partakes of being and is thus internally differentiated. The One of the second hypothesis is the whole made of parts; the parts have positions, i.e. beginning, middle, and end. Such One is both in itself (“insofar as it consists of all the parts”²¹)

¹⁹ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Physics*, CAG 9, 737.32-33 (148 in translation).

²⁰ Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Physics*, CAG 9, 737.33-35 (148 in translation).

²¹ “ἢ δὲ τὰ πάντα μέρη ὄντα τυγχάνει, αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ.” Plato, *Parmenides* 145e.4. in J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901; repr. 1967). English translation in S. Chrysakopoulou, *Plato’s Parmenides* (Athens: Parmenides Publishing, 2010).

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and in another (“insofar as the One is a whole”²²). Such One also participates in motion. When it moves or comes-to-be, the beginning part of it “comes into being first, and after the beginning all the different things [i.e. middle parts] until the end.”²³ Hence, the One becomes “both one and whole at the moment of the end”²⁴ when it gathers all parts together. The One, thus, “is younger than the different things and the different things are older than the One.”²⁵ Yet, since each part of the One is itself one, it follows that the One “would come into being at the same time as the first thing that comes into being, and at the same time as the second, and it is not missing from any of the different things that come into being, since in fact it is added to any of them that comes to be one whole by reaching its extreme end”²⁶ (that is, neither from the middle nor from the extremities). Hence, the One “maintains” the same age as all things. It would then follow that the One of the second hypothesis is younger and older and of the same age as itself and others, but not in the same sense.

What is important here is that the category of being in time is predicated (in one way or another) of the One of the second hypothesis (which we assume to be One-being or the hypostatic Intellect). How is it possible, taking into account that becoming cannot be predicated of being and time, as we assumed earlier, measures becoming? One way of answering this question would be to point out at the fact that, according to Plato, the One-being partakes of motion and rest, and time is the measure of both. It would then follow that time, or, perhaps, some sort of intermediary between time and eternity can be said of One-being, the subject of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. Moreover, in his late-period metaphysics, in particular in the *Sophist*, Plato tentatively confined the intelligible universe within the schema of “kinds” (being, motion, rest, sameness, and difference). However, the presence of motion and rest among the kinds clearly entailed the possibility of extending the “schema of kinds” so as to include time.

Iamblichus in the 3rd century AD would justify this inclusion by extending the categorical schema of Aristotle to the world of intelligible beings.

²² “ἢ μὲν ἄρα τὸ ἐν ὅλον, ἐν ἄλλῳ ἐστίν.” Plato, *Parmenides*, 145e.3.

²³ Plato, *Parmenides*, 153c.3-5. English translation in A.K. Whitaker, *Plato's Parmenides* (The Focus Philosophical Library, 1996).

²⁴ Plato, *Parmenides*, 153c.7.

²⁵ Plato, *Parmenides*, 153d.3-4.

²⁶ Plato, *Parmenides*, 153d.8-e.3.

Even so, some sort of transformation in the process of reconciling Plato and Aristotle took place. Hence, each category was in some ways divided into the higher and lower ones. For instance, in order to incorporate the category of “being in time” into the intelligible world, Iamblichus posited some sort of higher time. Since then it was perhaps considered legitimate to predicate time of being. Even so, this predication did not concern the One-being itself by itself but rather signified what would follow if the One is hypostasized as being in relation to others, e.g. as partaking of motion, etc. Being in such relation, the One-being exhibits certain characteristics which it does not possess as far as its “nature” is concerned.

A significant innovation of Iamblichus was his “noera interpretation” (νοερὰ θεορία) of the categories.²⁷ In his commentaries on the *Categories*²⁸ he argued that the area of application of the categories is not exclusively concerned with the perceptible things (thus ruling out the validity of Porphyry’s view of the subject). Hence, things signified by the simple significant expressions via the media of concepts are not perceptible things alone, but also intelligible things, νοερὰ. This is indeed important in the context of this article since Iamblichus does not treat the category of being in time as pertaining to the subject of perceptible things alone but also to their intelligible archetypes. As a result, Iamblichus’ treatment of time necessarily bifurcated; he introduced two kinds of time, flowing and static, the former one classifying the mode of existence of sensible things but not exclusively, and the latter one that of the intelligible.

According to Iamblichus the flow and shifting (ἔκστασις) of time occurs in the things which participate in time. These are always coming into being and “cannot receive the indivisible essence (οὐσία) [of time] motionlessly, but...they partake of it at different times with different parts of themselves.”²⁹ On the contrary, the static time delineates the mode of existence of intelligible beings, those that preserve their essential integrity. Sensible particulars, on the other hand, share in their intelligible para-

²⁷ An excellent contemporary survey of the subject is found in J. Dillon’s “Iamblichus’ Νοερὰ Θεορία of Aristotle’s *Categories*” in *Syllecta Classica* 8 (Iamblichus: the Philosopher), pp. 65-77.

²⁸ Those can be found in Simplicius’ commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories*.

²⁹ Simplicius, *On Aristotle Categories*, in K. Kalbfleisch, *Simplicii in Aristotelis categoriarum commentarium*. Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1907), 354.21-23. English translation in R. Gaskin, *Simplicius: On Aristotle Categories 9-15* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2000), p. 87.

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digms and acquire their integrity; it is added to them when they come-to-be one whole by reaching their extreme end. Iamblichus' conceptions of time came out of his *scholia* on the *Parmenides*.³⁰ There Iamblichus argued that when Plato deduces the notions of younger, older, of same age with itself and others, he clearly delineates two species of time of the One of the second hypothesis, one flowing and shifting and another one – statically unitive.³¹

Even so, Iamblichus only allowed for higher, static time to be predicated of intelligible beings, while the lower, flowing time was designed for sensible particulars. On the contrary, some Christian thinkers took on this thread and successfully allocated temporal characteristics, including those that concern the flowing time, to God and also denied those characteristics of God, but not in the same sense.

I. Scriptural Titles and their Significance

Let us first take a look at some scriptural titles attributed by Cyril of Alexandria to the Word of God to see how time and eternity intertwine in his discourse so that we may discern peculiar features of his conception of being in time, of its application to the Word of God, along with its philosophical underpinnings. Cyril of Alexandria, a great mind of Christian *oik-*

³⁰ Even so, as J. Dillon argued, Iamblichus “was also concerned with this very curious entity, the intellectual monad of Time (which he also discusses in his *Timaeus Commentary*, a propos *Timaeus* 37d), the characteristic of which is to comprehend as a whole, statically, and from above in the intellectual realm, all the flux of physical events. It might be described as ‘sempiternity,’ in contrast to eternity. Indeed, Iamblichus is at pains to distinguish it from eternity, of which it is in fact the primary image.” in Dillon, “Iamblichus’ Νοερά Θεορία”, p. 76. Hence, Plato’s *Timaeus* is just another source for Iamblichus’ theory. R. Sorabji also emphasized the role of Plato’s *Timaeus* in the development of conceptions of time and eternity and of their significance for Iamblichus, among other commentators. See. R. Sorabji, *Time Creation and the Continuum* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 108-112.

³¹ As Richard Sorabji rightly pointed out, “in the *Parmenides* Plato describes time as traveling, and talks of something (the One) traveling with it from the past via the now to the future, which implies that the now stands still and is overtaken. On the other hand, Plato also says that the now is always present to the One, which implies that the now travels along with it. It looks as if Plato needs a static and traveling now.” R. Sorabji, *Time Creation and the Continuum*, p. 43.

oumene, had to work out this issue, especially in the context of *oikonomia* (i.e. God *qua* his salvific presence to the world). Cyril's *oikonomia* was premised on the doctrinal pillars of Nicene *theologia*, representing their conceptual extensions. We learn from Cyril that God the Word is immaterial and ontologically stable, i.e. not subject to change. Thus the Word has to be beyond time if we think of time following Aristotle's definition of it, i.e. the number of change in respect of before and after. There are apparently no successive series in God's being that can be measured against before and after, at least if viewed from the perspectives of divine immutability. Hence, as far as *theologia* (i.e. God *qua* God) is concerned, the Word is apparently beyond time, remaining calm in his divine *στάσις*. Even so, we also learn that God the Word proceeds from the being of the Father. This is the Son's unqualified coming-to-be from the Father. Hence, some sort of change (i.e. *μεταβολή* or mutation, an essential change associated with unqualified coming-to-be) is posited.

Moreover, the Word of God is present to all things, leaving nothing unattended. He is the hypostatic Intellect whose seminal *λόγοι* provide an unlimited multitude with the principle of coherence (thus turning no-things into beautiful bodies endowed with the inner principle of coherence) and whose providential care reaches out to all corners of the universe. Hence, the creator and sustainer of the universe is and is not subject to motion and change. In some ways, the Word, in his divine *στάσις*, remains aloft and, in some other ways he manifests himself in the series of processions. Hence, some sort of *κίνησις* is also akin to the Word. He both remains and proceeds. If so, then some sort "coming-to-be" can be said of the Word. It would then follow that this coming-to-be can perhaps be measured against before and after. Hence, "in the past" and "in the future," "older than" and younger than," etc. can be said-of God. We may conclude that the Word in the aspect of his demiurgy can be thought of as subject to change and thus to time. The same conclusion is indeed applicable to the Word in the aspect of his oikonomic care for the world. Consequently, we may affirm and deny temporal predicates of the Word all at once, but not in the same sense. If we would like to tackle Alexandrian theology as far as it relates to the conception of time, both aspects should be taken into account as co-existing within the same subject.

We learn from Cyril that the Word of God is *the Only-Begotten Son*. Cyril thus tells us about the Word's unqualified "coming-to-be" from the

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being of the Father. Even so, at this stage no time is yet introduced. Thus, the mode of his coming-to-be is eternity without any admixture with temporality. It signifies *the eternal generation of the Word of God*. This conception introduced by Origen of Alexandria became a commonplace in Alexandrian theology since the third century AD. Cyril indeed made use of it quite extensively.³² The conception of eternal generation delineates the Word's unqualified coming-to-be from the Father's being. Since everything is eternal in God, this generating act is eternal also: we learn from Origen that the Son's generation is eternal and everlasting (*aeterna ac sempiterna generatio*).³³ Therefore, the Son has no beginning in time. "There was not when he was not." In other words, although the Father's being is prior and the Son's being is posterior, this relation is being causally determined and conceptually distinct, it cannot be framed into the schema of superior vs. inferior and prior in time vs. posterior in time. We are still on the level of eternity since no time has yet been introduced, although some sort of change is present; and this type of change is indeed an essential change (as a new form or hypostasis is introduced). We may also think of some perpetual or everlasting change, some sort of perpetual creation of the Son by the Father. It may appear that the Father is continuously begetting the Son similar to the sun which always emits its rays. Another way to approach the issue is by positing some generic time in the form of an instant with a certain degree of continuity – a deeply aporetic notion. Even so, this naturally follows from Origen's combination of the notion of unextended eternity and the ever-extended perpetual existence. In general, multiple ἀπορίαι seem to creep into discourse in one way or another as far as a-temporal change is concerned. How should one proceed at this point?

Origen does not seem to immediately rule any of these choices out.³⁴ He applies to this generation the titles given to Wisdom in the *Book of Wisdom* (7:25-26), a breath of the power of God, a very pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty. This notion introduces some sort of motion to the being of the Word, some sort of emanation or outflow or ἐνέργεια of the Father which proceeds and becomes a hypostasis on its own right.

³² See St. Cyril, *Commentary on John*, Introduction, and *Five Tomes against Nestorius*, Book I.

³³ Origen of Alexandria, *De Principiis* 1.2.4. in *Patrologia Graeca* 11:133.

³⁴ The third century theology did not yet fuse the notions of *aionios* (eternal) and *aidios* (everlasting) so that it may speak of eternal motion of the stars; though Proclus in the 5th century will speak of both notions as having the same referent.

We should not confuse this outflow analogy, however, with that which is always coming into being, since that would mean that it would no longer preserve its form. Hence here we have a queerer entity, i.e. an atemporal change. It appears that various confusions may creep into discourse concerning the account of eternal begetting if a proper distinction between everlasting and eternal is not made. We have then to differentiate these terms in order to make sense of Origin's semantic contents. Perhaps we can recall Plotinus' qualification of everlasting existence as "the condition of the [intelligible] substrate [subject], existing from it and in it"³⁵ and of eternity as "the substrate [subject] with the corresponding condition appearing in it"³⁶ in order to clarify the subject in hand. Hence, eternity belongs to and is identical with the Intellect, the second hypostasis, "proclaiming and manifesting himself as he is, that is, as being which is unshakeable and self-identical, and [always] as it is."³⁷ Everlasting existence, on the other hand, is the condition of the eternal subject.

Or, perhaps, Plotinus' example of the universe, which has a cause prior to it but nevertheless has no temporal beginning while existing everlastingly, can provide an analogy for the Word's generation. However, this analogy is imperfect since the universe is not partless (parts here designating not merely internal differentiation of intelligible things but actual scattering asunder). Moreover, as Simplicius rightly noted, everlasting existence in such cases is posited with qualifications, the meaning of it is not "simultaneous unlimited existence but unlimited continuation."³⁸ The universe is not a simultaneous everlasting whole. There thus appear two meanings of everlasting things, one "meaning a simultaneous whole, like the eternal," and another one signifying "becoming throughout inexhaustible time."³⁹ Which kind of everlasting existence should be attributed to the Word? Perhaps the former one! Hence, the analogy of the universe would not suffice.

³⁵ Plotinus, *Enneads*, in P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera*, Vol. 1 Museum Lessianum. Series philosophica 33-35 (Leiden: Brill, 1951), 3.7.5,15-17. English translation in A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinus' Ennead III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

³⁶ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.7.5,17-18.

³⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.7.5,20-1.

³⁸ Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*, CAG 9, 777.13-14 (91 in translation).

³⁹ Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics*, CAG 9, 777.16-17 (91-2 in translation).

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We may assume in this present context that the Word remains, proceeds, and reverts. Procession and reversion are forms of motion. The series of processions are made manifest within the structure of the Intellect itself. For instance, we learn from Syrianus that Plato's deductions in the second part of the *Parmenides* symbolically delineate the divine processions. Abiding, procession, and reversion are akin to rest and motion. Hence, motion is akin to intellect. Then there should be a measure for such motion. According to Aristotle time is the number of change in respect of before and after. Even so, on the schema of beings laid out in Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *Physics*, time is also connected with the soul and its motion. Augustine's account indeed follows this paradigm. However, this line of reasoning necessitates either a complete removal of the notion of time from the inquiry concerning the Intellect, or, following Syrianus, the placement of the soul (at least of its higher phase) within the Intellect, i.e. the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.⁴⁰ In other words, time has its immediate origins in the soul and perhaps more remote ones in the Intellect (as the source of being of the Soul).

One way to escape these difficulties was to think of the subject, as the fifth-century theologians tended to do, by presenting the Word's generation as his peculiar property ruling out the issue of temporal characteristics and their allocation to the Word in the mode of *theologia* all at once. Thus, the Word's coming-to-be out of the being of the Father is a peculiar characteristic of the Word. Here God is tri-hypostatic, the hypostases being distinguished by peculiar generational characteristics such as paternity, filiation and procession.⁴¹ These characteristics were considered relational, indicating the common origins of the Word and the Spirit from the being (οὐσία) of God the Father.⁴² The origin here was presumably apprehended

⁴⁰ As Proclus tells us "he [Syrianus] declares that the whole of the divinized Being is presented in the second of the hypotheses, be it intelligible, intellectual, or psychic." Syrianus, in *Parm.* Fr. 3, 233. in S. Klitenic Wear, *The Teachings of Syrianus on Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). Thus, "the whole divine Soul is comprised in the second hypothesis." S. Klitenic Wear explains that "The second concerns the intelligible/intellective realm, including the pure Soul, while the third concerns souls which proceed from pure soul." in *The Teachings of Syrianus...*, p. 240.

⁴¹ The Cappadocian theologians are credited for this theological stance primarily, albeit Athanasius' input should not be underestimated either.

⁴² Cyril extensively discusses this subject in his *Thesaurus* and the *Dialogues on the Trinity*.

as pertaining primarily to logical precedence and consequence and only secondarily as having temporal or quasi-temporal significance.

Another scriptural term that we should look at is “*born of a woman.*” This title delineates the temporal generation of the Word of God. This title tells us about the qualified coming-to-be of the Word, of his coming-to-be “such and such,” i.e. in human conditions. It also connotes that the Word is the youngest of all creation, a just born. Hence the Word comes into being last. This title is clearly of oikonomic origin. It does not qualify God’s being but rather tells us about God’s care for the world, or, about his salvific presence to the world.

This title was the subject of contention during the 5th century Christological Controversy which broke out when some Antiochene thinkers denied the possibility of allocating temporal characteristics to God as jeopardizing his divine immutability by setting the Word of God in motion and chopping up the unity of his being into ordered series and making the Word mutable (*τρεπτός*). According to the original semantic clichés introduced by Aristotle, mutation should be distinguished from change/motion in that whereas change/motion is allocated to an object which retains its essential form while replacing certain contingent characteristics, mutation is associated with the change of form (coming to be and passing away or generation and corruption). Consequently, the Word could have been thought of as mutable only in the mode of *theologia* (God *qua* God) by receiving his being from the being of the Father. Even so, by the 5th century AD the notion of mutation was apparently extended to both essential and non-essential changes. Hence, it was perhaps appropriate to say that if the subject experiences locomotion, mutation is necessitated. It should be noted in this context that Aristotle himself was not consistent on this subject at times classifying generation and corruption as types of motion/change, and, at times, re-classifying them as mutation. We do not need to go into details so as to analyze very intricate and subtle distinctions between change and mutation in this context. It would be enough to say that in the eyes of certain Antiochene thinkers (e.g. Eustatius of Antioch, Diodore of Tarsus, etc.), any motion/change would jeopardize the divine *στάσις*.⁴³ Hence, the issue of the second birth of God had thus become a stumbling block during the post-Nicene oikonomic developments.

⁴³ See F.A. Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Rome: Analecta Gregoriana, 1956).

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Cyril objected this conjecture of the Antiochenes and argued that the second birth of God the Word is a necessary and sufficient condition for the salvation of humankind. Hence, it can be said-of God. Even so, this predication would not delineate the place of the Word in the schema of beings; it would not classify his nature. Rather, it would indicate God's oikonomic relation to the world, his presence to the world for the sake of its salvation.⁴⁴

Just another title of great significance is the *First Born* of all creation. This title delineates the Word's temporal generation. What does this title tell us about the Word? Does it tell us that the Word is the oldest of all creation? As we learn from the book of *Proverbs* (8:22), Wisdom (which patristic thought identified with the Word) tells us that "God created me as the beginning of his works." The exegetical issues revolving around this proverb caused a significant unrest in the 4th century AD and became one of the main points of contention during the Arian controversy. This title was presented by the Arian camp as pertaining to the issues of *theologia*, i.e. God *qua* God, and thus as indicating a place of the Word of God in the schema of beings.⁴⁵ The Arians argued that the Word was created in the beginning of things (according to the language of Wisdom literature). It is thus older and more venerable than all created things. But it also means that it is created, thus being a "thing made" (i.e. κτίσμα or ποίημα). Now true being cannot be predicated of becoming. And since becoming is predicated of the Word of God, it will follow that his being is a lesser "being" than the being of God the Father who is unbegotten or uncreated.

⁴⁴ Cyril speaks of the Great the mystery of the gift of salvation, saying that "this is the Babe that is seen, this the new-born that appears, this that needed bodily swaddling bands, this the just-born after the essence that is seen, in the hidden part everlasting Son, Son Creator of all, Son Who by the swaddling-bands of His own aid binds the instability of the creation." St. Cyril, *Five Tomes against Nestorius*. in E. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1927-29; repr. 1960-65), 1.1.6, 4.10-13. English translation in E.B. Pusey, *St. Cyril: Five Tomes against Nestorius; Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only Begotten; Christ is One; Fragments against Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and the Synousiasts* (Oxford: J. Parker and Rivingtons, 1881), p. 17.

⁴⁵ They argued that "ἦν ποτε ὅτε ἦν" (there was when he [the Word] was not) and that "πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν" (before he [the Word] came-to-be he was not). See K. Holl, *Epiphanius*, Band 1: *Ancoratus und Panarion*. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 25 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915), 118.13.1-2.

The fathers of the church, on the other hand, classified this phrase as pertaining to the issues of *oikonomia*. Their exegesis of the passage mainly whirled around an eschatological theme of the first one who did not taste death (*Colossians* 1:18). Here the Word of God was presented as the one who first reached completion and came to an end, the “end” indicating salvation of the human kind destined for the total sum of human beings ever lived. He is thus the first one who attained immortality (arose from the dead and was seated at the right hand of the Father) in the aspect of his humanity. He is both, the cause of divine procession bringing salvation to humankind and its first member. It would follow then that the proper referent of the phrase “God created me in the beginning” is the Incarnation, that is, the Word’s qualified coming-to-be (in human conditions). This phrase can by no means qualify the eternal generation of the Word, his unqualified coming-to-be from the being of the Father. To affirm an opposite would amount to overthrowing classical *theologia* all at once.

One of the main aims of Cyril’s theological career was to intellectually deconstruct the foundational metaphysical tenets of the Arian *theologia*. This agenda was intrinsically tied to the exegesis of Christological titles, i.e. the Only-Begotten vs. the First Born. Cyril, following his Alexandrian predecessors, argued that since the Arians allocated all scriptural titles to the Word of God in the mode of *theologia*, an ἀπορία of the compresence of opposites immediately came about: the Word was presented as being creator and creature, omniscient and ignorant, etc. Even so, the Arians did not provide proper qualifications to the subject at stake in order to sustain its coherence (since all contradictory predicates, according to the Arians qualified God *qua* God, or a semi-god *qua* semi-god, thus violating the law of non-contradiction). As a consequence, multiple fallacious inferences necessarily accompanied their intellectual projections.

In order to avoid the Arian fallacies Cyril had to reallocate certain Christological titles. In particular, he reclassified the issue of the First Born as alien to *theologia* and properly belonging to the oikonomic domain.⁴⁶ Thus the same thing, i.e. the Word of God, can at times be thought of as the Only-Begotten, and at times as the First Born, but not in the same sense, the former title accompanying Christological discourse in the mode of *theologia*, and the latter one discerning intellectual foundations of *oikonomia*. The same is true of the Word as being immutable and also the first and the last born.

⁴⁶ See St. Cyril, *Commentary on Luke* 2.7.

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To sum up, we have at least four atemporal (or quasi-temporal) and temporal titles predicated of the Word of God. The issue of conflicting properties (atemporal vs. temporal) and conflicting names (i.e. Only-Begotten vs. First Born; Immutable vs. changing in time, etc.) came about as a result of diverging points of reference of scriptural affirmations (i.e. those of *theologia* and *oikonomia*). In particular remarkable are Cyril's deductions of temporal predicates in the *Scholia*.

II. Cyril's Deductions of Temporal Characteristics

Cyril's starting point and the major axiom of his theology was that the Word of God exhibits two diverging sets of predicates in relation to self (i.e. theologically) and in relation to the world (i.e. both demiurgically and oikonomically). This is just another commonplace of ancient thought. For instance, Plato's *Sophist* tells us that there exist such things as intelligible entities. Things of this kind are primarily themselves by themselves, that is, subsisting on their own (not as mind-dependent entities), and having a nature of their own kind. Consequently, being related to themselves they exhibit certain characteristics (which define their nature), whereas, while being related to other intelligible or sensible things, they may exhibit a different set of properties (not necessarily conflictive with the former one). For instance, Plato's forms hold such relations between one another and exhibit certain characteristics distinct from those intrinsic to their own natures.⁴⁷ Thus, in relation to itself, a form may exhibit one set of properties, and in relation to another – just a different set of properties.⁴⁸ What is im-

⁴⁷ Cf. N. White, *Plato's Sophist* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), Introduction, xvi.

⁴⁸ Syrianus gave us a good illustration of this theory: "But our own Master has solved the objection still more perfectly, saying that it is not the same thing for us to examine how the One is related to itself and how it is related to others, as we have indicated many times before this. Once these problems have been sorted out, it seems reasonable that Plato here, where he is considering what does not follow for the One in relation to itself, has denied it beginning and middle and end; for these would as far as we are concerned have introduced with them multiplicity into the One. The Athenian Stranger [Laws IV, 715 E], on the other hand, is not saying what relation God has to himself but what relations he has to others, and that he possesses beginning and middle and end, these things being present in the universe and not in God, while God himself, because he is prior to everything, is pure from having beginning and middle

portant in this context is that the distinction between “in relation to self” and “in relation to other,” (προς εαυτό vs. προς τ’άλλα) introduces a mode of display of characteristics which are non-relational. For instance, if the being relates to motion, it moves and, perhaps, alters its properties; even so, as far as its own nature is concerned, the being may not entail motion. The characteristics displayed are thus the real properties of intelligible entities. This taxonomy again became a common heritage of Alexandrian thought.

There are again various clear applications of Plato’s deductions in Cyril’s *theologia* and *oikonomia*. For instance, Cyril argues that the Word is either beyond age or, if God’s existence can be measured, its proper measure is eternity. This conjecture comes about as a result of our intellectual projections concerning God itself by itself. Moreover, it is possible to think of the Word’s eternal differentiation in the Iamblichian terms and thus to measure his existence against the static time. Yet, demiurgically and oikonomically the allocation of the measure of existence to the Word is different. It is now both of the same age and older and younger in relation to himself and others. Hence, he displays all these characteristics at once but not in the same sense. One interesting application of the deductions of the second part of Plato’s dialogue can be found in the *Scholia* (and in other treatises as well) in passages where Cyril discusses the issue of the Word as being both the Only-Begotten and the Firstborn. He speaks of two births of the Word, one out of the being of the Father, and another one – oikonomically - from the Virgin Mary.

Here Cyril starts by positing the structure of parts and wholes for the Word in relation to others. Cyril argues that the Word is both πρωτότοκος and μονογενής, the Firstborn among the brethren and the Only Begotten Son of God. The exegetical issue here is to explain how the Word is both

and end, but holds together all existing things, in which these three elements exist. So that even if the discussion does concern the first God in that passage also, it does not contradict what is said here. For the Athenian Stranger is not saying that god possessed this triad in himself and in relation to himself, but that he transcends all the beings in which these three elements are. And if in the Letters [II, 312 E] he declares that all things are about the king of all, and for his sake all things are and he is the cause of all nobility, it is plain that he says this because that entity is the beginning of all things and their end and their middle, but he is not because of this himself possessed of beginning and middle and end; for that passage teaches what relation God has to others, and not what his relation is to himself.” *Syrianus, in Parm.* Fr. 4, 243.

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pre-existent (born of the Father before all ages) and also “comes-to-be” in human conditions at a particular moment in time.⁴⁹ How so? Cyril’s answer is – in one manner and in another manner.⁵⁰ For instance, “[h]e is Firstborn among many brethren on account of the humanity [i.e. oikonomically], but the same one is the Only Begotten since, as God, he alone was born from the only Father.”⁵¹ Thus, the Word eternally rests in his divine *στάσις* (considered in his relation to himself).⁵² Yet, when he “comes-to-be human,” he both *is* and *becomes* older and younger and of the same age as himself and other in relation to all other things.

For instance, he is the Only Begotten. This also means that he is God of God, etc, sharing all generic characteristics with the other hypostases of the Trinity, including eternity. Even so, he goes forward in time and yet preserves his integral unity. He is born of a woman being the youngest of all things (at the point of his second birth). Even so, he is also the First Born, being the first fruit of salvation but also the senior in relation to other beings, etc. It should be noted that Cyril does not follow precisely Plato’s deductions (i.e. by drawing the same implications for the Word step by step). Nevertheless, the logic of Cyril’s exposition of the notion of the Word as coming-to-be a man and thus entering the flux of existence and acquiring various temporal characteristics, corresponds with that of Plato’s *Parmenides*, especially as far as the second hypothesis of the second part of the dialogue is concerned. And we may assume that Cyril studied the commentaries on the *Parmenides* in Alexandria, being indebted to the creative exegetical input of Iamblichus among others.

Now let us look for a moment at some other interpretations of the Word of God as coming-to-be in flesh and experiencing fleshly birth. For instance, we may think of the Word as actually “coming down” to the

⁴⁹ Hence, “[a]lthough he was indeed born before all the ages, nevertheless in an instant of time, because he needed to fulfill the economy, he was also born of a woman according to the flesh.” St. Cyril, *The Scholia on the Incarnation of the Only Begotten*. in P. E. Pusey, *Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli archiepiscopi Alexandrini, Epistolae tres Oecumenicae; Libri quinque contra Nestorium; XII Caputum Explanatio; XII Caputum Defensio utraque; Scholia de Incarnatione Unigeniti* (Bruxelles, Culture et civilisation, 1965), 509. 10-13. English translation in John McGuckin, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (Crestwood: Saint Vladimir’s Press, 2004), p. 299.

⁵⁰ Κατ’ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο.

⁵¹ St. Cyril, *The Scholia*, 568. 15-17 (329 in translation).

⁵² If the Word is “conceived of by us as bare by Himself.” St Cyril, *Five Tomes against Nestorius*, ACO 1.1.6, 37.5 (50 in translation).

realm of sensible particulars, “mixing” with a sensible particular, or, in some ways, altering his properties. Will this interpretation not signify some sort of mythical intervention of the Word to the realm of sensible particulars? Will it not imply passibility and mutability of the Word of God? Another interpretation (on the other side of the spectrum of choices), one that avoids unhappy implications for the Word (associated with change, mutation, passibility, etc.), posits a sensible particular (i.e. οὗτω ταῦτ’ ἔχειν ὑπονοοῦσιν τινές), Jesus from Nazareth and establishes a certain “relation” between this sensible particular and the Word. What is at stake here is the incapacity of such an interpretation to present the subject unitively. A double-subjectivity in Christ, in turn, entails idolatry (worshiping a human being), cannibalism (eating human flesh as the communion), and, more importantly, annihilates the necessity of the oikonomic presence of the Word to the realm of sensible particulars.

Cyril is conscious of these polar interpretations and finds them both unsatisfactory. His interpretation of the nature of the Word of God and of his manner of acting in the realm of sensible particulars allows the Word to preserve an integral unity while affirming his actual presence in “this” realm (in this case not only demiurgically but also oikonomically). And it also allows for the allocation of certain characteristics (normally attributed to sensible particulars) to the Word assuming him as being in the oikonomic relation to the world. Hence, the very fact that the Word displays two sets of properties, goes forward in time and remains at rest, etc. allows Cyril to speak of the second birth in a coherent way, following the exegetical tradition of Plato and the commentators.

According to Cyril God the Word is not present to the world in his nature but rather oikonomically. Christ is the ἔργον of God in the mode of his saving presence in the world. The hypostasis of the Word cannot be arranged into successive series (so that it may be measured against before and after in time) since the mode of its being is not becoming. Even so, his ἐνέργεια proceeds to the world. This ἐνέργεια is complete and simultaneously present as the whole. Even so, when it extends to the sublunar region, it can indeed be arranged into temporal series. Hence, his oikonomic presence is temporal while his being is a-temporal.

I think the issue here is not as much the fact of temporal arrangements of the divine ἐνέργεια as the possibility of its incompleteness. If the Word’s ἐνέργεια is incomplete, his presence would not be unmediated and

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uncreated, so to say, but rather his divine acts would be mere expressions of his divine will, in reality presenting to us things of this world as instruments of his will. In that case, the humanity would lack the salvific presence of the Word and his immediacy; these things would need to go away. To Cyril this conjecture would necessarily entail a complete annihilation of classical soteriology. Classical soteriological thought assumed that only God can save. This axiom was also properly qualified: it is God's salvific uncreated and unmediated presence to the world that can save the fallen humanity (which remains in the state of complete disarray ever since the cosmic catastrophe of fall). Thus, the major premise of Classical soteriological argument was the following: an immediacy of the divine presence can save the world. Now, in order to be present to us, the Word of God must become like us, that is he has to come-to-be a man. It was assumed that Jesus satisfied this condition. Hence, Jesus is God the Word Incarnate. We may then conclude that Jesus can save us.

That which is arranged into the schema of the before and after, assuming that the before and after here signify the flowing time, is incomplete; it attains the state of completeness when it reaches its end, when it becomes a unified whole and gathers all parts together. Is it possible for a sensible particular to attain the state of completeness? It was considered possible by Aristotle. Even so, such possibility was denied of sensible particulars by the commentators. They argued that a thing whose mode of being is becoming can by no means come-to-be a unified whole so as to gather all parts together; to do that would entail for a sensible particular a transition to simultaneity. Thus, it was considered impossible (as that whose mode of being is becoming cannot gather its parts together at any instant). Indeed, this is the fact of the matter. Even so, as far as the hypostatic Intellect is concerned, such state of conditions is not impossible.

When the Word oikonomically proceeds, he creates a series. This series can be measured in respect of before and after. The Word is both the cause of and the first member of the series. The series has its end in salvation. The Word is the cause of the series and, as such, he is present to the entire series statically, so to say. Even so, he is also the first member of the series. As such he is subject to flowing time. He reaches the point of completion at the *εσχατον* when he reverts upon himself. Thus, he is subject to both static and flowing times. What about sensible particulars, or, human beings in our case?

On the one hand, things that are subject to the flowing time cannot attain the state of completeness in time. Perhaps history does not allow for the attainment of such completeness. If, however, we assume that it does, the series reaches the point of completion at *εσχατον* or the end of history when all parts or members of the series are gathered together (through participation and reversion to their cause). On the other hand, if we look at the same subject from a different angle, it would appear that no member of the series is deprived of the salvific presence of the Word. He is present to the entire series throughout. He is simultaneous to the entire series (or, in other words, he is of the same age as other members of the series being compresent with all of them). If looked from that angle, sensible particulars also participate in the static time and in that which certain Christian thinkers designated as *εσχατον* (here indeed the semantic content of the word *εσχατον* does not indicate the end-point of a historical event but rather points out in the direction of that which is beyond history). In other words, the world is saved by God the Word at the even of the Incarnation (which is a necessary and sufficient condition for salvation of the entire humanity, that is, of the total sum of human beings ever lived). Even so, salvation is conditioned on human intentionality. Whereas human nature (and the humanity at the total sum) is saved by being integrated into divine being, each human being is saved through his or her own effort to revert upon the Word. And yet, as God of God, the Word is beyond time abiding in eternity. He both remains, proceeds, and reverts, bringing the fallen humanity with him to be seated at the right hand of the Father.

Now, it has been stated that the Word is equally present to all human beings. Thus, the mode of his presence is immediate and represents a simultaneous whole. Even so, as far as his energy reaches out to all members of the series, to those things whose mode of being is becoming, we may assume that such energy is framed into the schema of before and after. Does it mean that divine energy is incomplete and that, in some ways we are deprived of its salvific efficacy? I would suggest that in order to answer this question we may evoke Proclus' conception of divine foreknowledge. When he discusses the mode of knowledge of contingent things by God, he rejects as false the dilemma that either denies the knowledge of contingencies by God or affirms that God's mode of knowledge of contingent things is itself contingent. Proclus argued that God knows things of contingent

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nature. Even so, the mode of knowledge of such things is non-contingent.⁵³ By analogy, we may suggest that divine energy is present to things that are incomplete and framed into the schema of before and after. Even so, the mode of its presence is complete and simultaneous.

Thus, I may conclude this article by saying that according to Cyril God is both beyond time and is subject to time (both in its static and flowing modes). Moreover, divine energy signifying the Word's salvific presence to the world is complete, and that it is and it is not framed into temporal series. It would then follow that time, being in time, past, future, age, etc. can and cannot be said of God the Word, but not in the same sense. Thus, the Word is both, the Only Begotten Son and the First/Last Born of all creation. Even so, he is also simultaneous with all creation, being of the same age of things in time.

⁵³ See D. Isaac, *Proclus: Trois études sur la providence, Dix problèmes concernant la providence*, Collection des universités de France, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977), Ch 2.