

# THE ‘CALVINIST PATRIARCH’ CYRIL LUCARIS AND HIS BIBLE TRANSLATIONS\*

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## Abstract

*Cyril Lucaris’ Bible translation is a curious case from the Middle Ages. This article attempts to bring to the fore Lucaris’ efforts in translating the Bible and its aftermath. We begin by unfolding a few pages from the life of Lucaris in order to situate him in the context of his so-called grand endeavour. Our article then concentrates on his teachings on the Bible. Here focus is placed on his initiatives to translate the Bible into Modern Greek, a language of the masses. This enormous task, however, could not be accomplished individually. It required assistance and collaboration – political as well as intellectual – in order to gift his flock with a translated copy of the Bible. The last part of the essay presents the corrective measures taken by the Eastern Church to condemn the erroneous teachings of Cyril Lucaris. Various anathemas silenced his voice and reaffirmed orthodox teachings on the Sacred Scriptures.*

**Key Words:** Cyril Lucaris; Bible Translation; Confession of Faith of Cyril; Dositheus; the Patriarch of Jerusalem

## Introduction

Martin Luther, through his Ninety-Five Theses, aimed at bringing about a ‘renewal’ within the Roman Catholic Church. When the Western Church was struck hard by the tsunami of Reformation, its waves also reached the shores of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

While the Orthodox Church faced the brunt of Muslim domination, some Orthodox Church leaders were open to the Reformers’ ideas of breaking the shackles of traditions. The headway was made in this regard by Cyril Lucaris (Maloney 1976:125), who is also labelled ‘the Calvinist Patriarch’ (Runciman 1968:272). This essay is aimed at opening a few pages of history from the Early Modern Era, which shows the influence the Western Reformers had on

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<sup>1</sup> The history of Cyril Lucaris is a very complex one and therefore, our aim in this essay is neither to side with his adversaries nor to pass any personal judgement on his character by any means. Of late it is being seen that the Greek scholars look at Lucaris as the one who has been misinterpreted down the centuries. See for example, a reply of Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna to Chris Schlect’s articles *Confessio Fidei* and *The Reformation that Failed*. Cf. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, “The Myth of the Calvinist Patriarch,” [http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/ca4\\_loukaris.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/ca4_loukaris.aspx) [accessed on 20 December 2014]. We do not intend to venture into the complexity of this issue at stake. Our chief purpose here is to try to show how Cyril Lucaris gave an impetus to the translations of the Sacred Scriptures into the ordinary language of the masses, i.e. Modern Greek, and the repercussions this venture had had in the years that followed.

the mind of Cyril Lucaris. Our essay is divided mainly into three parts. The first part is an attempt to introduce Cyril Lucaris to our readers. In doing so, we shall unwrap some of the important events associated with his life, particularly his connection with the Western Reformers and its resultant effects. The second section concentrates on the works and teachings of Cyril on the Bible. The third part of our work highlights the corrective measures undertaken by the Eastern Church to ‘condemn the erroneous teachings’ of Cyril on the one hand, and to reaffirm its teachings on the Sacred Scriptures on the other. We sum up our article with a short conclusion presenting the silencing of Lucaris’ voice through various anathemas.

### **Life Sketch of Cyril Lucaris**

No attempt to see the efforts of Cyril Lucaris can be made without at first looking at his life. This is important insofar as it helps us understand better his teaching that he tried to propagate and the repercussion it had in the years to follow.

#### *Early Life*

Lucaris was born on 13 November 1572 in Candia, on the island of Crete (Maloney 1976:125). It has been said that his childhood was marked with great poverty owing to which he had to become an apprentice to a fisherman in Alexandria when he was barely twelve years of age. There he came into contact with his uncle, Meletios Pegas, who was later to become the Patriarch of Alexandria. Thanks to his uncle, he was afforded the opportunity of a good education, first in Venice and then in Padua (Hadjiantoniou 1960:4). In Venice it was Maximos Margunios, the Bishop of the island of Cythera, who taught him Greek, Latin, Italian and philosophy. This bishop was not allowed to exercise his office on the island of Cythera, under Venetian dominance, for reasons unknown. So he settled in Venice in ‘self-imposed exile.’ Bishop Maximos Margunios is believed to have had ‘a few strange ideas,’ however, which had put him in trouble and very close to being put in a Roman prison. However, young Lucaris was much devoted to him and considered him as his second father, while Margunios called him his ‘son in Christ.’ The influence of Margunios on the young mind of Lucaris was so stupendous that ‘Margunizing’ thoughts later reflected in his own letters (Hadjiantoniou 1961:9-11). It has also been said that during his stay in Venice and Padua at the feet of Maximos Margunios, “the spirit of Italian renaissance humanism with its elegant scepticism rubbed off onto his delicate character” (Maloney 1976:125).

After his studies in Venice and Padua, Lucaris went back to Alexandria, absorbing what some call “a positive view of Roman Catholicism” (Williams 1975:269) and in the year 1594 was ordained a priest in Constantinople. At his ordination, he gave up his secular name ‘Constantine’ and adopted an ecclesiastical name ‘Cyril’ (Fortescue 1929:264; Hadjiantoniou 1961:27).

#### *Poland Mission*

After his ordination, his uncle Meletios Pegas, then the Patriarch of Alexandria, made Cyril Lucaris *Exarch* – the special envoy of the Patriarch of Alexandria – and sent him to Poland with a mission to help the Greek Orthodox Church there. The reason for this mission needs special attention here. A group within the Greek Orthodox Church, under the leadership of Michael, the Metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Church in Poland, and Ignatius Potsi, the Bishop of Vladimir, expressed their desire for union with Rome. A council was held to this

effect, well-known as the first Council of Brest in June 1595, where it was decided and agreed upon to:

...submit to the authority of the Pope and accept the doctrine of the Roman Church, retaining, however, the Eastern form of liturgy, Communion in both forms, the Julian calendar, and the marriage of the priesthood (Hadjiantoniou 1961:27-31).

Hence, the Council commissioned the Bishops to go to Rome, where they submitted their allegiance to Pope Clement VIII (Hadjiantoniou 1961:27-31). This *uniate* took place on Christmas day of 1595 (Hadjiantoniou 19604).

The main task entrusted to Cyril by the Patriarch of Alexandria was to stop such union of the Greek Orthodox Church with Rome (Vischer 1986:167). Since Cyril arrived late in Poland, he could not attend the first Council of Brest. However, he was a witness to the second one held in 1596, which endorsed the union settlement. His participation in this council was futile though (Cooper 1978:425). But one thing is worth mentioning. He came to learn that it was due to the low standard of knowledge of the Greek Orthodox clergy as well as the faithful that such 'incidents' had taken place in Poland. Therefore, staying in Poland for five years, he set up a printing house at Wilna to publish books for his people, and founded a Greek school in Lwow for the education of the Greek Orthodox people (Hadjiantoniou 1961:33). His stay in Poland, moreover, convinced him that 'Counter Romanization' Reformation was direly needed, which could be achieved only through an Orthodox-Protestant alliance (Siecienski 2011:173; Zernov 1961:137).

### *Cyril Lucaris: The Patriarch*

His five year mission to Poland came to an end when he was called back by Meletios, who died later in 1601. Cyril was elected the new Patriarch of Alexandria in 1601 when he was barely 29 years of age, and served in this capacity for about two decades (Hadjiantoniou 1961:36). In 1620, he was elected to the Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople. This election is believed to have taken place in the Dutch embassy in Constantinople. Cyril served as the Patriarch of Constantinople for the next 18 years (Trevor-Roper 1978:227). Cornelius van Haga, the Dutch ambassador in Constantinople, played his supportive role in this election of Cyril as the Patriarch and remained Cyril's closest ally until the end of his life (Tsakiris 2012:478-479). However, as we shall see in the later part of this article for reasons, Cyril's patriarchate in Constantinople was not one of pleasant times. It was, on the contrary, marked by a number of controversies, for which he had to pay a price during several phases of his life.

Due to controversies that followed him (or vice-versa?)<sup>2</sup>, Cyril was banished from his patriarchate as many as four times. It all began in February 1623, when he was banished for the first time, but was reinstated in 1624. The second banishment took place in October 1633; however, he was quickly reinstated this time. A third similar incident occurred in March 1634. He was reinstated three months later in June 1634. Another banishment that came his way was

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<sup>2</sup> Some Church historians present a rather ambiguous character of Lucaris, seemingly oscillating the pendulum of his stances at various intervals. At one point, in order to escape from some political persecution, he is believed to have written a letter to the Latin Archbishop of Lvov, Demetrius Sulikowski, in which he clarified his position against the Protestants, while emphasising that the division between the Church of the East and that of the West was due to a few ignorant individuals. On the other hand, in his letter to Antoine Léger, the Calvinist chaplain of the Dutch embassy in Constantinople, he accepted that he approved and embraced the teachings of John Calvin. Perhaps, on account of these dubious stances, some have even branded him as an 'enigmatic figure.' For more details, see Glanville Downey, review of *Protestant Patriarch: The Life of Cyril Lucaris (1572-1638): Patriarch of Constantinople*, by George A. Hadjiantoniou, *Theology Today* 18, 3 (1961):386; Maloney 1976:128-129.

in March 1635. This time, he was reinstated only more than a year later in July 1636 (Toynbee 1954:154).

### *Lutheran and Calvinist Influences*

During his travels to Poland, Cyril established friendly relations with the Lutherans and the Calvinists. So great was their influence on him that he is said to have started adopting their ideas. It is believed that he was in Wittenberg as well as in Geneva (Fortescue 1929:264; Binns 2002:81).<sup>3</sup> Apart from this, he also established good relationships with the English Reformers. Once he became the Patriarch, Cyril thought it necessary to seek help of the Reformed Churches in order to protect the interests of his own flock. The first step towards this was to obtain some books of Reformers' theology from Holland and to correspond with the Dutch theologians. His intermediary for this task was Cornelius van Haga. Establishing relationships with the English ambassadors, Edward Barton and Sir Paul Pindar, he wrote a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, in 1612 with a request to allow some of his clergymen to study in England. His request was approved by none other than James I. In this way, his relationships with England expanded (Davey 1985:7). All his correspondences and relationships with the Reformed Churches as well as with the English Church were, as some believe, not intended at joining any type of Protestantism that was already set up. On the contrary, he wanted to bring about a reformation of the Orthodox Church, just as the Western Protestants had aimed at doing in the Roman Catholic Church (Fortescue 1929:265).

Some scholars hold that the Calvinists wanted to use Cyril as a means to propagate Calvinism in the Orthodox Church. Hence, people such as van Haga, through the advice of Antoine Léger,<sup>4</sup> proposed three things to Cyril, namely to:

- Establish schools, which could be run and directed by the Protestants;
- Publish a confession of faith that would clearly show that the Orthodox and Calvinists share a common belief;
- Translate the Bible into the spoken or common Greek language (Vaporis 1977:232).<sup>5</sup>

Through his association with Cornelius van Haga, he came into contact with the famous Dutch Calvinist theologian, Johannes Uytenbogaert, whose literature highly influenced the mind of Cyril. David Le Leu de Wilhem was another Dutch Calvinist with whom Cyril corresponded between 1617 and 1619. All these contacts began showing their effects (Maloney 1976:126). What is more, Cyril did found a Greek school in Constantinople for which he appointed a widely-known and outspoken Calvinist, Theophilus Corydalleus (Hadjiantoniou:1960:7). In his sermons in 1610, one could sense, for the first time, citations from Calvin's *Institutes*. Such was the impact of these Reformers on Cyril that he is said to have written in a letter that he had

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<sup>3</sup> There is no unanimity though with regard to Cyril's visits to Wittenberg and Geneva. Some even add France as a place of his visit. While some historians accept that Cyril did visit Wittenberg and Geneva, they contend that he never travelled further west than Geneva. Some other historians believe that the alleged visits of Cyril to Wittenberg and Geneva are also nothing but apocryphal, and that he never visited any protestant centre in Western Christendom whatsoever. For further reference, see Toynbee 1954:155.

<sup>4</sup> NM Vaporis seems to have erroneously written 'Cornelius Leger' as the chaplain at the Dutch embassy in Constantinople. All other literature suggests Antoine Léger to be the said person. See NM Vaporis, "Patriarch Kyrillos Loukaris and the Translation of the Scriptures into Modern Greek," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 59, 1-4 1977:232.

<sup>5</sup> It is said that these same proposals were also made to Patriarch Gerasimos Spartaliotes of Alexandria, who would succeed Cyril Lucaris in that See. However, Gerasimos is said to have declined and rejected such proposals (cf. Vaporis 1977:232).

“recognized the Reformer’s cause as the more correct,” (Vischer 1986:167-168) and “found the doctrines of the Reformation truer to the spirit of the scriptures than those of the Orthodox and Catholic churches” (Kitromilides 2006:195). He began denying the effectual power in the sacraments. Sacraments have their effectual power insofar as the recipient believed. Cyril also held that there are in reality only two sacraments, which have scriptural foundation – Baptism and Eucharist (Maloney 1976:126).

As the Reformers’ ideas began creeping into his mind, Cyril felt that a printing press itself would be a boost for his people. Therefore he began taking measures to bring to actuality his desired thoughts.

### *Setting up a Printing Press at Constantinople – The Confession of Faith*

Cyril realised the need of raising the educational standards of the faithful in Constantinople. To actualise this desire, a printing press in Constantinople was the need of the hour. Hence, in 1627, with the help of Nicodemus Metaxas,<sup>6</sup> a Cephalonian, who had learned the art of printing in London, Cyril achieved his much-desired aim – a printing press, the first of its kind in the Greek world (Kitromilides 2006:196). Once the press was installed, Metaxas, under the instructions and guidance of Cyril, began to print a number of theological works in Greek. Most of these works were anti-Roman in nature (Runciman 1968:272). The setting up of the printing press is considered as a “distinct innovation in the East” (Roberts 1967:13). This printing press, however, could not remain in Constantinople for long. The *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* had already set up a Greek press in Rome a year before. It is alleged that the Ottoman authorities, at the behest of Brèves de Cessy, the French ambassador, who had close association with the Jesuits, sent a military detachment and razed the printing press to the ground in 1628 (Hadjiantoniou 1960:7; Davey 2000:27). When the printing press at Constantinople was destroyed, Cyril found a sympathiser in one of his Calvinist friends, Antoine Léger, who was appointed a new chaplain at the Dutch embassy in Constantinople. Since Léger himself was educated in Geneva, he assured Cyril that his works would be printed and published by the Genevan press (Runciman 1968:275).

Cyril set out to write his *Confession of Faith*<sup>7</sup> – another suggestion of his Calvinist friends – which was published in Latin at Geneva in March 1629. Cyril dedicated this work to Cornelius van Haga (Runciman 1968:276). According to Lukas Vischer, this “text was a clear confessional expression of the teaching of Calvin” (Vischer 1986:170), a document, David Cooper would call “strongly Calvinistic in emphasis” (Cooper 1978:426).<sup>8</sup> It remains to be

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<sup>6</sup> Nicodemus Metaxas was a native of the island of Cephalonia, who met Metrophanes Kritopoulos in London, where the latter was sent by Cyril Lucaris. It is through Kritopoulos’ friendship with Metaxas that Cyril could come to know him and a printing press could arrive in Constantinople. For more details, see Evro Layton, “Nikodemos Metaxas, the First Greek Printer in the Eastern World,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 25, 2 (1967):140, 144-145.

<sup>7</sup> There are doubts about the authenticity of the *Confession of Faith*. Some hold that the *Confession of Faith* was the work of the Jesuits to malign Cyril. A Diomedes Kyriakos is one among such thinkers. M Gedeon and Chrysostom Papadopoulos suggest that it was the work of the Protestants in the name of Cyril Lucaris. A Diamantopoulos argues that it was in fact a malicious act of Léger. For further reference, see Hadjiantoniou 1961:102-103; Kitromilides 2006:197-198. The majority, however, supports the argument that the *Confession of Faith* is indeed the authentic work of Cyril, because he himself signed the Greek text at Geneva. This text has been preserved in the public library at Geneva. Cf., Toynbee 1954:157.

<sup>8</sup> Nearly a decade ago, Colin Davey published an article in which he placed before his readers the *Orthodox Confession of Faith* of Cyril Lucaris. Davey is of the opinion that prior to the publication of his *Confession of Faith*, Lucaris in fact wrote 16 articles of, what Davey calls *Orthodox Confession*, that are, according to him, true

seen whether the remarks of Vischer and Cooper attempt to emphasise Lucaris' orthodoxy and to clear him from all too outspoken Calvinist ideas! The work was later translated into Greek and French in 1631 (Maloney 1976:130)<sup>9</sup> and the English translation appeared in 1671 (Runciman 1968:276). Cyril's *Confession of Faith* is divided into eighteen articles with four questions appended to it (Hadjiantoniou 1960:8). Cyril makes scriptural references at the end of each article in order to strengthen his position and argument (Maloney 1976:130). For our interest, we shall concentrate mainly on Article II, which deals principally with the Sacred Scriptures.

### Cyril's Teachings and Works on the Bible

While the slogan of *Sola Scriptura* was raised in the West by Martin Luther, its reverberation can clearly be seen in Cyril Lucaris. This will become clear to us as we move ahead in our reading of his teachings.

#### *Scriptures are Infallible*

As stated above, Article II of the *Confession of Faith* is devoted to the Sacred Scriptures. In this article, Cyril holds that the Sacred Scriptures have supreme authority in matters pertaining to faith:

We believe ... the testimony of the Holy Scriptures to excel that of the authority of the Church. It is not the same to be instructed by the Holy Spirit and by men. A human may sin or be deceived through ignorance. Holy Scriptures cannot deceive nor be deceived; they are not liable to err for they are infallible and have an eternal authority (Maloney 1976:131).

So emphatic was Cyril to stress the superiority of the Sacred Scriptures that he reiterated that "church can stray from the path and choose error instead of truth," but "the doctrine and illumination of the Holy Spirit," which "was given in Scripture, could counteract this error" (Pelikan 1974:284).

In three of the four questions appended to the *Confession of Faith*, Cyril deals with various issues concerning the Sacred Scriptures. In his vehement exhortation to read the Scriptures, he stressed that every one of the faithful should read the Bible. Depriving a Christian any opportunity to read the Bible was, for Cyril, a real injury. It cannot be suggested that the Scriptures are beyond understanding. They are, rather, intelligible to anyone who has been regenerated and enlightened (Runciman 1968:278). Therefore, he appealed that:

All faithful Christians ought to know, believe, and confess, what is in the Sacred Scriptures; if not in their entirety, at least the necessary parts, and to proclaim what is therein. For neither can we learn from any other source than from the Sacred Scriptures, whether it be by reading the same, or by hearing what is therein expounded by faithful men. For as it is forbidden to no Christian to hear what is in the Sacred Scriptures, so neither is it forbidden to him to read them. For the word is nigh them, and in their mouth, and in their heart. Therefore, the faithful Christian, of whatever rank he be, is manifestly wronged if he be deprived and prohibited, of either the hearing of the Sacred Scriptures, or the reading thereof. For it is the same to deprive a hungry soul, and to forbid it to touch spiritual nourishment (Balmer 1982:53).

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and authentic writings of Lucaris, but of a text which could not be published. For more details, see Davey 2000:19-29.

<sup>9</sup> Vasileios Tsakiris has recently contended that the Greek translation of the *Confession* appeared in 1633. For further elaboration, cf. Tsakiris 2012:476.

In this clarion call Cyril portrays before the reader his bold and loud appeal for access to the Sacred Scriptures by the common masses. He was, nevertheless, conscious also of the fact that there are difficult passages in the Bible. But he argued that:

...the dogmas of the faith therein contained are plain and clear to those who are regenerated and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Whence it is obvious that the reader may indeed fall into some difficulty; but when enlightened by the grace of the All-holy Spirit, may by analogously comparing the verbal interpretation and the literal sense, derive from the same Scriptures both the solution, and therewith the right meaning; wherefore the Scriptures are a lamp and a light enlightening the understandings of the Faithful, and driving away darkness (Balmer 1982:53-54).

In this way, Cyril vehemently supported the idea that any individual who has been inspired and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, could in fact interpret the Scriptures (Cooper 1978:426).

Moreover, he advised that in the case of passages which faithful find difficult to understand, they should seek the help of teachers who are Orthodox. Nonetheless, that does not presuppose that Scriptures are the monopoly of the few learned teachers (Vaporis 1977:233).

In the article on the Sacred Scriptures in his *Confession of Faith*, Cyril also maintained that only those books, which had been approved and accepted as canonical by the Synod of Laodicea in 360 AD should be included in the Bible. He rejected the deuterocanonical books "because they have not the authority of the Holy Spirit" (Hadjiantoniou 1960:8). Moreover, these "books ... our east had not only never seen but had not even heard of" (Pelikan 1974:284).

In one of his writings to Mark Antonio de Dominis, an Italian Catholic archbishop who later became a Protestant, Cyril acknowledged that he had left the Fathers and had taken the Sacred Scriptures as his sole guide. In this writing to de Dominis, Cyril was also critical of men who spoke of commentaries on the Bible (Maloney 1976:127).<sup>10</sup> Cyril stressed that there is a dire need for the Greeks to replace superstition by what he called 'evangelical simplicity' and to depend on the authority of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit alone for that matter. He also held that the doctrines which the Reformers were propagating, were more in accord with the Scriptures than those of the Greek Orthodox or Roman Catholics (Runciman 1968:267).

Cyril did not remain a man of words alone. He wanted to actualise what he wrote concerning the Bible in his *Confession*. This is clear from what we shall see in the following section.

### *Cyril's Works on the Bible*

The launching pad for the works on the Bible was set up with the New Testament. In what follows we shall try to analyse how this work began and what the text of the New Testament in Modern Greek looked like.

#### ▪ The New Testament in Modern Greek

The most important pastoral initiative undertaken by Cyril Lucaris, in the words of Paschalis Kitromilides, is the translation of the New Testament (Kitromilides 2006:200). Cyril wanted

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<sup>10</sup> It has been suggested that letters of this type clearly manifest how Cyril was so extensively influenced by the Reformation literature and theological ideas. Cf. Constantine N Tsirpanlis, "Cyril Loukaris's Vision of Unity and Relations with the Western Churches," *The Patristic & Byzantine Review* 8, 2 (1989):92.

his flock to have access to the Sacred Scriptures in Modern Greek.<sup>11</sup> This would serve a double purpose: it would enable his people to read the Bible on the one hand and help in the eradication of illiteracy on the other, thus illuminating their minds (Vaporis 1977:233). To this effect, he commissioned Maximus Kallipolites, a Greek monk from Gallipoli and a devoted follower of Cyril, to translate the New Testament. Maximus set on this grand endeavour staying in the Dutch embassy at Constantinople, collaborating closely with the Dutch Chaplain, Antoine Léger. Paschalis Kitromilides suggests that Maximus used Giovanni Diodati's modern Italian version of the New Testament as a model for his own translation (Kitromilides 2006:200).

The ground-breaking work on the translation of the New Testament began in March 1629. But Maximus died in 1633 (Vaporis 1977:236), leaving Cyril himself to read the proofs (Runciman 1968:275). The printing of this New Testament finally took place five years later at Geneva in 1638 (Vaporis 1977:236) and it was published by Pierre Aubert (Hadjiantoniou 1961:93). The expenses were met by the Dutch government, "the States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands" (Mackridge 2010:69) to be precise. Unfortunately, Cyril himself could not see the first copy of his work, as he was executed by the Ottoman authorities on 27 July 1638 (Vaporis 1977:236) because he was accused of inciting the Cossacks against the Turks.<sup>12</sup>

Cyril's efforts to render the New Testament in Modern Greek was seen by many Orthodox as unacceptable, for the Sacred Writing cannot be tampered with (Runciman 1968:275). Some others looked at this work as a kind of innovation (Vaporis 1977:235). Cyril viewed the opposition to his endeavour as nothing but sheer envy, since no one before him had undertaken this daunting task. He was convinced that his work was for the glory of God, and he hoped that this would benefit the Church at large. In the preface of the translated text, Cyril also came out openly against "those who would keep this treasure [the Bible] away from the people." He described them as 'employing satanic tools' (Vaporis 1977:235).

### *The New Testament: Physical Product*<sup>13</sup>

Glancing through a digitalised version of the New Testament in Modern Greek<sup>14</sup> we observe some interesting facts. The title of the text is "Η Καινή Διαθήκη του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού Χριστού: Δίγλωττος, Εν η αντιπροσώπως το τε θεϊον πρωτότυπον και η απαράλλάκτως εξ εκείνου εις απλήν διάλεκτον, διά του μακαρίτου κυρίου Μαξίμου του Καλλιουπολίτου γενομένη μετάφρασις άμα ετυπώθησαν."<sup>15</sup> in which "Η Καινή Διαθήκη του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού,"<sup>16</sup> "Δίγλωττος,"<sup>17</sup> and "Μαξίμου,"<sup>18</sup> are inscribed in 'all caps.' There are two prefaces.

<sup>11</sup> Although this was not the first ever attempt to translate the Bible into Modern Greek, this was the first effort to result in a complete New Testament and in, as Vaporis remarks, "controversy which carried into the twentieth century." There had already been attempts to translate individual books into Modern Greek for non-Greeks. Cf. Vaporis 1977:232-233.

<sup>12</sup> 'Cyril Lucaris' <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/350478/Cyril-Lucaris> [accessed on 15 November 2014].

<sup>13</sup> The term 'physical product' is borrowed from Marc Vervenne. Cf. Marc Vervenne, "Current Tendencies and Developments in the Study of the Book of Exodus," in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation*, Marc Vervenne (ed.). BETL 126. Leuven: University Press, 1996:33.

<sup>14</sup> <http://anemi.lib.uoc.gr/metadata/9/3/f/metadata-375-0000000.tkl> [accessed on 16 December 2014].

<sup>15</sup> A rough translation of the title would read thus: "The new covenant of Our Lord Jesus Christ: in two languages, one with the face towards the divine original and precisely similar to the other in a simple language, through the blessed lord Maximus Kallioupolitos a translation was made and simultaneously written down."

<sup>16</sup> The new covenant of Our Lord Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> Two languages.



The first is written by Maximus, with the title “Μαξιμος Ελαχιστος εν Ιερομοναχοις Καλλιουπολιτης, ...”<sup>19</sup> while the second one by Cyril himself commences with the heading, “Κυριλλος Οικουμενικος Πατριαρχεις...”<sup>20</sup> The text is arranged in two parallel columns – the Old Greek, with the header ‘Αϋθεντικόν,’<sup>21</sup> written in the inside while the text in Modern Greek with the header “Νέον”<sup>22</sup> is written in the outside. Both the texts are distinguished from each other in another way insofar as the text type of the New Greek translation is larger than the Old Greek text. One also notices a number of comments in the margins.

In his preface, Cyril stated that the main task of translating and publishing this work was that the “faithful would be able to read the Bible alone and by themselves” (Karalis 2007:161).<sup>23</sup> He stressed that “the Scriptures themselves were written in various languages because it had always been God’s wish that all people should read the Scriptures in their spoken language” (Karalis 2007:161). Moreover, his attempt in particular would help the cause of the education and illumination of the Greeks, as he stated:

It is enough for us to concern ourselves with the Lord’s glory and the benefit of the Church, both of which come to pass with the translation of the Holy Gospel in the simple language and with its continuous reading. This will in time bring forth the results and the benefit we hope for to the Eastern Church (Karalis 2007:161).

Cyril refused to accept that the Gospel has to be read only in its original language, Atticistic Greek, on account of the alleged inadequacy of other languages (Karalis 2007:161). He made it clear that it is the duty of every believer to know the message and the contents of the Gospel. Since the people are now being provided with the text of the New Testament in their own language which they can easily understand, they are duty-bound to read it. Coming down heavily on those who forbade the study of the Bible to the ordinary people and those who opposed the translation of the Bible, Cyril argued, “If we speak or read without understanding, it is like throwing our words to the wind” (Hadjiantoniou 1961:94). He exhorted the readers to profit from the Bible and also to pray for those who made this treasure available to them. In his concluding words of the preface, Cyril wrote: “While you are all reading this divine and holy Gospel in your own tongue, appropriate the profit derived from its reading, and pray for those who have made this benefit possible for you, and may God ever lighten your way to that which is good. Amen” (Hadjiantoniou 1961:94).

In his preface, Maximus too argued that the translation of the New Testament was not something new that he had undertaken. On the contrary, translations were already done in many languages before. In his appeal to everyone to read the Scriptures, Maximus evoked the testimony of Scripture itself (mainly of St. Paul) along with the Patristic fathers such as St. John Chrysostomos, St. Athanasios, St. Basil, who themselves had held that everyone needs to have knowledge of the Word of God (Vaporis 1977:235).

Maximus noted that although all Christians are required to grasp knowledge of the Bible, this comprehension was not found among the Greeks because they were not able to understand the language of the Bible either when they read it themselves or when they heard it being read in the Church. Over and above:

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<sup>18</sup> Maximus.

<sup>19</sup> Little Maximus, a monk of Kallioupolitos.

<sup>20</sup> Kyrillos, Ecumenical patriarch.

<sup>21</sup> Original.

<sup>22</sup> New.

<sup>23</sup> This Greek New Testament was later made the basis for the Greek New Testament printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Cf. Rufus Anderson, *Observations upon the Peloponnesus and Greek Islands, made in 1829*. Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1830:280.

“...this situation was getting progressively worse, due not only to the ‘Turkish tyranny’, but to the ‘villainous’ hierarchs of the Church, who earned this epithet due to their attitude toward education in general and the translation in particular” (Vaporis 1977:235).

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary, held Maximus, that every Christian understands the Scriptures. This would enable them acquire virtue to fight against heresies. It would also help Christians to rise up from ‘ignorance to wisdom.’ Maximus also argued that “the language of the Scriptures was a foreign one and, therefore, “it is better to speak five words that are intelligible to the common people than tens of thousands in a foreign tongue”” (Vaporis 1977:235).

Maximus also claimed that those people who opposed the translation wanted to prevent the ordinary masses from acquiring biblical knowledge so that they could hide their erroneous doctrines. For him it was nothing but an irony that “the Greeks ‘who have lost their wisdom because of the barbaric yoke, and had to suffer and work hard before they could re-acquire wisdom for the common good’ were among those who were persecuting wisdom” (Vaporis 1977:236).

#### ▪ Commentary on the Book of Job and Gifting of *Codex Alexandrinus*

Apart from the translation of the New Testament, Cyril was also working on the books of the Old Testament. Since he had established a good rapport with the English, he sent his manuscripts to England to be printed there. In 1632, he sent a manuscript commentary on the Book of Job to the king of Sweden. Although this manuscript was presented as a complimentary gift, he had his other motives too. Cyril suggested to the king that he could “submit the work to his theologians, and if they agree, have it printed for distribution in the east, where it would be very welcome” (Trevor-Roper 1978:235).

Cyril also gifted the valuable *Codex Alexandrinus* to Charles I, the King of England in 1628. The ultimate motive of this gift is uncertain, although some speculate that it was out of gratitude to the English ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, who had rendered protection to the Patriarch. This *Codex Alexandrinus* is now preserved in the British Library, London (Whitney 1940:472; Hadjiantoniou 1960:3-4).<sup>24</sup> It is suggested by some that Sir Thomas Roe had been helpful to Cyril in his struggles to safeguard his patriarchate, hence this gift (Spinka 1936:17-18). The *Codex Alexandrinus*, once it arrived in England, inspired many to search for similar texts on Mount Athos, the supposed location from where Cyril is believed to have found this codex. Some would speculate that this codex was brought by him from Alexandria, where he had been the Bishop until 1620. Whatever may be the case, one thing is very clear: this gift “generated the belief that this was ‘the true Septuagint, or at least nearest to the true Septuagint of any now extant”” (Mandelbrote 2004:150-151).

<sup>24</sup> *Codex Alexandrinus* also included a “series of commentaries on the Book of Job.” It is held that Cyril was curious “to provide the Greek church with commentaries on Job – no doubt a valuable text for a suffering church.” Cf. Trevor-Roper 1978:235. The Codex was later transferred from the king’s library to the British Museum in 1753. See in this regard, *Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes. Volume I: The History of Creeds*, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1.html> [accessed on 16 November 2014], 65. There are some, however, who hold that this Codex was presented to King James I. Cf. e.g., Scott Mandelbrote, “The Authority of the Word: Manuscripts, Print and the Text of the Bible in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*, Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (eds.). Cambridge, UK: University Press, 2004:150; James A Patrick, ‘Bibles,’ in *Renaissance and Reformation, vol. 1*, James A Patrick (ed.). Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2007:109.

## **The Fate of Cyril's Works**

The storm let loose by Cyril's *Confession of Faith*, and particularly by the position he held with regard to the Sacred Scriptures, was silenced after his death through condemnations by the synods of Constantinople (1638, 1642), Jassy (1642) and Jerusalem (1672) (Trevor-Roper 1978:239). Barely three months after his death, in September 1638, the Synod of Constantinople was convened which anathematised both Cyril and his so-called *Confession of Faith*. A formal declaration came from the Synod of Jassy in 1642 (Hadjiantoniou 1961:101), condemning the *Confession of Faith* as Calvinistic and "very far removed from the Christian and Apostolic religion" (Michaelides 1943:119). The Synod held that Cyril was guilty of "receiving the holy Scriptures stripped as it were of the expositions of the holy Fathers of the Church" (Balmer 1982:54) and also of denying "the traditions which have obtained all along from the beginning throughout the whole world, without which our preaching would be reduced to an empty name" (Balmer 1982:54).

The second Synod held at Constantinople in 1642 witnessed the refutations of Cyril on the Scriptures by none other than one of Cyril's close associates, Meletios Syrigos, whom Cyril had appointed during his life-time in the church of Chrysopoghe to counter the Jesuits (Maloney 1976:142). Participating in the Synod, Syrigos declared that it is not permissible for all Orthodox to read the scriptures because "some were <(babes in knowledge)>" (Vaporis 1977:237). This was particularly true with regard to the Old Testament which has difficult and vague passages for all to grasp (Vaporis 1977:237). Syrigos also rejected the claims that Bible reading was essential for salvation. For him, this principle was nothing but an unbearable yoke upon the common masses, for not all were able to read on account of their different life situations. However, many have been saved without reading the Bible due to their faith lives (Vaporis 1977:238). This can be seen as one of the well-known arguments to deny the people the right to read the Scriptures by themselves.

Another declaration of condemnation came thirty years later in 1672 through the Synod of Jerusalem, held at Bethlehem, which was convened by Dositheus II Notarius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. It is also known as the Synod of Bethlehem (Hadjiantoniou 1961:102). This Synod is of great significance because, while condemning the *Confession of Faith* of Cyril, it drew up what is today known as *Confession of Dositheus*. Moreover, after this synod, no more is heard of Protestantism within the Orthodox Church (Fortescue 1929:268). In the modern history of the Eastern Church, this synod is also compared to the Council of Trent.<sup>25</sup>

The *Confession of Dositheus* is also arranged in the style of Cyril's *Confession of Faith*, viz. divided into eight chapters, with an appendix of four questions and answers, similar to those of Cyril, namely: Can one read the Sacred Scriptures? What are the rules to avoid false interpretation of the Bible? What books are canonically inspired? Can we legitimately venerate saints? (Maloney 1976:153-154)

### *The Synod of Jerusalem and Dositheus' Arguments on Sacred Scriptures*

Affirming the sacredness and divine authorship of the Sacred Scriptures, but "not otherwise than as the Catholic Church hath interpreted and delivered the same" (Balmer 1982:54) Dositheus argued that there were tendencies to misconstrue, twist and abuse the Bible (Balmer 1982:54). He was vociferous in declaring that:

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<sup>25</sup> *Creeks of Christendom, with a History and Critical note*, 68.

... every foul heresy receiveth, indeed, the Divine Scriptures, but perversely interpreteth the same, using metaphors, and homonymies, and sophistries of man's wisdom, confounding what ought to be distinguished, and trifling with what ought not to be trifled with. For if (we were to receive the same) otherwise, each man holding every day a different sense concerning the same, the Catholic Church would not (as she doth) by the grace of Christ continue to be the Church until this day, holding the same doctrine of faith (Leith 1982:486; Balmer 1982:55).

Dositheus also emphasised that the Catholic Church cannot be considered inferior to the Divine Scriptures. Nor is it correct to hold that the Church can err.

For one and the same Holy Spirit being the author of both, it is quite the same to be taught by the Scriptures and by the Catholic Church. Moreover, when any man speaketh from himself he is liable to err, and to deceive, and be deceived; but the Catholic Church, as never having spoken, or speaking from herself, but from the Spirit of God – who being her teacher, she is ever unfailingly rich – it is impossible for her to in any wise err, or to at all deceive, or be deceived; but like the Divine Scriptures, is infallible, and hath perpetual authority (Leith 1982:487).

On the question of whether the Bible could be read in vulgar tongues by all Christians, Dositheus replied in the negative. For him, Scriptures are to be read by those who have a thorough familiarity with matters of faith, viz.:

...only by those who with fitting research have inquired into the deep things of the Spirit, and who know in what manner the Divine Scriptures ought to be searched, and taught, and in fine read. But to such as are not so exercised, or who cannot distinguish, or who understand only literally, or in any other way contrary to Orthodoxy what is contained in the Scriptures, the Catholic Church, as knowing by experience the mischief arising therefrom, forbiddeth the reading of the same (Leith 1982:506-507; Balmer 1982:55).

Declaring that it is difficult to grasp the meaning of the Bible, Dositheus held that “the Scriptures are very profound, and their sense lofty.” Therefore, it is essential to get the help from the “learned and divine men” in order to grasp the true meaning contained in them (Leith 1982:507).

On the question regarding the canonicity of some of the books of the Bible which Cyril had rejected in his *Confession of Faith*, Dositheus vehemently declared that Cyril had ‘foolishly,’ ‘ignorantly,’ and ‘maliciously’ called these books ‘Apocrypha.’ But in reality, they are genuine parts of the Bible. They were delivered as parts of the Scriptures by ancient custom, or rather the Church. To deny these books as genuine is, therefore, equal to rejecting the ancient custom or rather the Church (Leith 1982:508).

Hence, it is evident from the *Confession of Dositheus*<sup>26</sup> that the so-called ‘Calvinistic’ interpretations of Cyril on the issues pertaining to the Sacred Scriptures were tied to the millstone and thrown into the sea. However, as NM Vaporis remarks, neither the *Confession of Dositheus* nor any other synodal declaration in fact did settle the issue of the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular. This is clear from the fact that work on Maximus Kallipolites’ translation was carried on, because a new edition of this translation by Serapheim of Mytilene appeared in London in 1703. Serapheim revised Maximus’ translation and made a number of changes to it. Coming out heavily on “the hierarchs of the Church, who tried to monopolize learning,” Serapheim stressed that this translation was being offered to “all pious and Orthodox

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<sup>26</sup> Some scholars allege that Dositheus was heavily influenced by the Latin sources in this writing. Cf. e.g., Archpriest John W Morris, *The Historic Church: An Orthodox View of Christian History*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011:296; Kitromilides 2006:201; Miltiadis Konstantinou, “Bible Translation and National Identity: the Greek Case,” in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 12, 2 (2012):181.

Christians, even to priests and bishops... so they might be helped in conveying the message of the Gospel for the benefit and salvation of all" (Vaporis 1977:238-239). Another edition of Maximus' original work appeared in Halle, Saxony, in 1710, which was accomplished by Anastasios Michaelos of Naousa, Macedonia (Vaporis 1977:239). Both editions, which were printed outside the Orthodox world, in Protestant countries, met the same fate as that of Maximus' translation undertaken at the behest of Cyril Lucaris. Condemnations were issued to these two editions by the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem. So severe were these condemnations that both "clergy and laity were prohibited under pain of suspension and excommunication" (Vaporis 1977:241) if anyone bought, received or read these texts. In this way, in the words of Vaporis, "the question of a translation of the Scriptures into the spoken language died with the other Loukarian reforms" (Vaporis 1977:241), although a revised version of the Greek New Testament prepared by Maximus under the instructions of Cyril Lucaris was republished by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1810 (Konstantinou 2012:177; Anderson 1830:280).

## Conclusion

Sacred Scripture had been a bone of contention in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era. While the Western Church was swept by the tsunami of the 'Sola Scriptura' slogan of Martin Luther and the Reformation, its effects were also felt in the East. Indeed strong effects! In our analysis of Cyril Lucaris' life, we find that his story is tellingly substantial insofar as it presents how important an influence Reformation had had even on the minds of the 'Orthodox.' More so, it also shows us that the tendencies of bringing about renewals were not spared among the Greek Church.

As head of the Church, Lucaris' intentions of raising the educational standards of his clergy (in particular as regards matters of faith and Scriptures) as well as that of the laity were not unsound though. The methods he adopted were, however, baffling and defective to others. To meet his own desired ends, he could go to the extent of 'joining hands' with the Reformers. In this way, as we have seen, he could sacrifice the age old orthodox legacy and teaching at the altar of his 'reform' initiatives, subduing the authority of the Church and upholding prominence of the Bible. As some historians observe, the Greek printing press too 'played some part' (Roberts 1967:40) in this whole process.

The 'erroneous' teachings of Cyril Lucaris were condemned and the age old traditional teachings of the Eastern Church re-affirmed that silenced the storm let loose by the 'Calvinist Patriarch.' The *Confession of Dositheus* at the Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 was the last nail in the coffin of Cyril's 'reform movement.'

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