



Commentary on the Twelve Prophets (Fathers Of The Church), Vol.3

By Cyril of Alexandria

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This final volume in a series of three contains Cyril's commentary on Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Applying his knowledge of ancient Israelite history in his analysis of the immediate context for each of these prophetic books, Cyril believes that Zephaniah was addressed to the residents of Jerusalem in the years preceding the Babylonian Exile, and the other three were addressed to a newly repatriated, post-exilic nation.

An emphasis on theodicy is a primary theme of this book. God's love for humankind, says Cyril, is expressed in the many warnings sent through the prophets and in the ample amount of time that God allows for people to repent. When no repentance ensues, God sends harsh but just punishments, employing the brutality of enemy nations as his instruments, yet always doing so with the loving purpose of returning his people to himself.

Cyril's focus on the historical details of the Old Testament is matched by his concern for the Church of his own day. Where the prophetic oracles mention the Jewish priesthood, altar, or sacrifices, Cyril takes the opportunity to exhort Christian priests to preserve their moral purity and to fulfill their liturgical duties with devotion. This extrapolation from the ancient to the contemporary, from Israel to the Church, is compatible with the typological interpretation that Cyril utilizes in conjunction with his literal, historical approach. The Temple is a type, or foreshadowing, of the Church, and the sacrificial lamb of the Passover prefigures Christ. Thus Cyril maintains his connection with the Alexandrian tradition of allegorical exegesis while presenting a balanced, multi-faceted interpretation that applies passages from many other parts of the Bible to extract a wealth of meaning from the prophetic books.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR:

Robert C. Hill, a founder and honorary fellow of the Australian Catholic

University's Centre for Early Christian Studies, was a distinguished biblical scholar best known for his prodigious talent as a translator of patristic biblical commentaries on the Old Testament. Nearly 30 volumes of his translations have been published, many of them in the Fathers of the Church series, others in the Library of Early Christianity series. In recognition of this work he was awarded the papal cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice by Pope John Paul II.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #1731632 in Books

- Published on: 2012-03-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.20" h x 5.70" w x 8.50" l, 1.32 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages

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