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Festal Letters, 13-30 (Fathers Of the Church)

Cyril of Alexandria

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Festal Letters, 13-30 (Fathers Of the Church) Cyril of Alexandria
St. Cyril of Alexandria is best known for his role in the Christological controversies of the fifth century. In recent decades, scholars have been attending more carefully to his exegetical legacy. Most of Cyril's work takes the form of biblical commentary rather than doctrinal treatise. Indeed, during his long career he wrote commentaries on nearly every book of the Bible. Less attention, however, has been given to Cyril's pastoral work as the Patriarch of Alexandria, perhaps because his commentaries and doctrinal treatises do not reveal much about his daily pastoral duties. Here the *Festal Letters* are especially helpful.

Twenty-nine in all, these letters cover all but three of Cyril's years as a bishop. The first twelve were published in 2009 (Fathers of the Church 118). The present volume completes the set. Festal letters were used in Alexandria primarily to announce the beginning of Lent and the date of Easter. They also served a catechetical purpose, however, allowing the Patriarch an annual opportunity to write pastorally not just about issues facing the entire see, but also about the theological issues of the day. Thus, in these letters we catch a glimpse of Cyril the pastor writing about complex theology in an uncomplicated way. These letters also illuminate other realities of the ancient church in Alexandria, especially the relationship with the Jewish community and the rising influence of asceticism.

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