**Physis and Hypostasis**

**In the Writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria**

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It is necessary to clarify or to respond to the concept raised by some Orthodox theologians that the terms physis (fu,sij) and hypostasis (u`po,stasij) are synonymous in the writings and teachings of Saint Cyril of Alexandria.

The Oriental Orthodox do not see that Saint Cyril used the two terms interchangeably. We can see that very clearly in the letter of Saint Cyril to Valerian Bishop of Iconium:

“*If they should say that God and man by coming together in one constituted the one Christ with the hypostasis of each obviously preserved unblended but distinguished by reason, it is possible to see that they are thinking and saying nothing accurate in this”,[[1]](#footnote-1)*  and Saint Cyril continued in the same letter saying “*For if they pretend to say there is one person of Christ, while there are two Hypostaseis separate and distinct, by all means there will be two persons also.*”[[2]](#footnote-2)

It is clear that for Saint Cyril two hypostasis would mean two persons, that is why he refused that the two hypostasis ever to be “distinguished by reason”, while he accepted that for the two natures to be distinguished by reason as written in his letter to Acacius Bishop of Melitene:

*“Wherefore, we say that the two natures were united, from which there is the* ***one*** *and* ***only*** *Son and Lord, Jesus Christ,* ***as we accept in our thoughts****; but* ***after the union since the distinction into two is now done away with****, we believe that, there is one physis of the Son.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

No way to say that for Saint Cyril *Physis* can replace *Hypostasis* and vice versa. He always by “Hypostasis” means personalized nature i.e. the person together with the nature which he processes.

1. Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Letter 40, par. 14, *The Fathers of the Church*, Volume 76, C.U.A., 1987, Letter 50 par. 5 p.214. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. par. 28, p. 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, Letter 40, par. 14 p.160. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)