

CYRIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (XIII cent.)

Saint, priest

A purely literary figure, Cyril enjoyed wide notoriety within the ambit of the Joachimite tradition and in the Franciscan and Carmelite Orders from the XIII to the XVI centuries. Reputedly, he was a priest and a hermit on Mount Carmel, who received two tablets of silver with prophetic inscriptions written in Greek from an angel, who appeared to him during Mass; these he translated into Latin and sent to the Abbot Joachim da Fiore (d. 1202) and received a letter about them in reply. These prophecies, known as the *Oraculum angelicum* /Angelic oracle/, were highly regarded by the Spirituals, and expounded by John of Rupescissa (1350) and Telesphorus of Cosenza (1386). A supposed letter of Cyril to Eusebius, prior of Mount Neroi near Antioch, was made public after 1378 by the Carmelite, Philip Riboti. John Grossi (c. 1400) listed St. Cyril among the generals of the Carmelite Order – in second place, in the *Viridarium* /Garden/, and in third place, in his edition of the Catalogue of the Saints. Other details of Cyril's life that appeared later are completely legendary, e. g.: that he was born at Constantinople, sent to the pope by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comneno about the reunion of the churches, and instrumental in the conversion of a sultan; that he preached in Armenia, etc.

From the year 1399 the Carmelite general chapter indicated him for veneration as a confessor and doctor. According to many breviaries of the XV and XVI centuries, he supposedly obtained the confirmation of the name of his Order («Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary») at the council of Ephesus. Here there is evident confusion with Cyril of Alexandria; and it is interesting to note that when the distinction between the two men of the same name was clarified, the Alexandrian patriarch continued to be remembered in the Carmelite liturgy as *Ordinis nostri* /of our Order/. After 1585, the lessons of the breviary accepted the notices relating to the *Oraculum* as well as those of the generalate and other legends. Before the actual liturgical reform, the saint's feast was celebrated on March 6.

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ICONOGRAPHY. The limited diffusion of the cult of St. Cyril outside the Carmelite Order has, with all probability, been the reason for the scarcity of iconographic material in his regard. Moreover, the few extant images of the legendary Carmelite do not present iconographic particulars worthy of note. He is, in fact, generally represented in a Carmelite habit, of mature age, and with a short white beard. He appears thus in the frescos of Gerard Starnina (XIV cent.) in the Carmelite church in Florence. In his hand the saint holds an open book in which is written, in Latin: «The poor Cyril, a priest and hermit of Mount Carmel ... he is to be implored in the Lord.»

In memory of the work of St. Cyril as an apostle of the Eastern church, there remains in Rome, in the church of St. Martin of the Mountains, a fresco of John Miel (XVII cent.) which represents the saint baptizing a sultan, probably of Iconium, who, according to the legend, was converted by Cyril.

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