

## CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF EX. 3:

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### ASSIGNMENT:

1. Please read the following:
    - a. The Book of Acts, Ch. 7
    - b. The texts listed below:
  2. Questions to consider as you read:
    - a. What or who is the bush?
    - b. What or who is the fire?
    - c. What is each author trying to establish by referring to the burning bush?
  3. Extra:
    - a. What is Typology? How is it used in interpreting Scripture?
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### CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (d. circa 215 C.E.):

“I can also show you another mystic meaning in it. For when the Almighty Lord of the universe began to legislate by the Word, and wished His power to be manifested to Moses, a godlike vision of light that had assumed a shape was shown him in the burning bush (the bush is a thorny plant); but when the Word ended the giving of the law and His stay with men, the Lord was again mystically crowned with thorn. On His departure from this world to the place whence He came, He repeated the beginning of His old descent, in order that the Word beheld at first in the bush, and afterwards taken up crowned by the thorn, might show the whole to be the work of one power, He Himself being one, the Son of the Father, who is truly one, the beginning and the end of time.”<sup>1</sup>

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### AMBROSE OF MILAN (d. 397), Exposition of the Christian Faith, Book I Ch 12.

“For he himself saw the fire in the bush, and had heard God when the voice from the flame of fire came to him saying: “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” The voice came from the fire, and the voice was in the bush, and the fire did no harm. For the bush was burning but was not consumed, because in that mystery the Lord was showing that He would come to illuminate the thorns of our body, and not to consume those who were in misery, but to alleviate their misery; Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, that He might give grace and destroy sin. So in the symbol of fire God keeps His intention.”<sup>2</sup>

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### JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (d. 407 C.E.):

“This however hath been sufficiently proved by what we have said. But where have the Scriptures said that He was buried, and on the third day shall rise again? By the type of Jonah which also Himself alleges, saying, “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall also the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40.) By the bush in the desert. For oven as that burned, yet was not consumed, (Exodus 3:2.) so also that body died indeed, but was not holden of death continually.”<sup>3</sup>

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### TERTULLIAN (c. 200 C.E.):

“This among Christians is a *season of* persecution. When, therefore, faith is greatly agitated, and the Church burning, as represented by the bush, then the Gnostics break out, then the Valentinians

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<sup>1</sup> *Paedagogas*, Bk 2, Ch 8, ANF v. 2, p. 501.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Holy Spirit*, Bk 1, Ch 14, sec. 165, in NPNF s.2, p. 252

<sup>3</sup> “Homily 38 on 1 Corinthians 15:1-2,” Homilies on 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, from NPNF s.1, v.12, p. 516.

creep forth, then all the opponents of martyrdom bubble up, being themselves also hot to strike, penetrate, kill.”<sup>4</sup>

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**METHODIUS** (260-312C.E.):

“The flame of the grace of my Lord does not consume, but illuminates thee, O thou of men most just. Let the bush which set forth me in type, with respect to the verity of that fire which yet had no subsistence, teach thee this, O thou who art in the law the best instructed. Let that furnace which was as it were a breeze distilling dew persuade thee, O master, of the dispensation of this mystery. Then, beside all this, let my womb be a proof to thee, in which He was contained, who in naught else was ever contained, of the substance of which the incarnate Word yet deigned to become incarnate.”<sup>5</sup>

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**GREGORY OF NYSSA** (d. circa 395 C.E.):

“From this we learn also the mystery of the Virgin: The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Vol XI. The Writings of Tertullian Vol.3; ; T&T Clark 1869, p 1149.

<sup>5</sup> “Oration Concerning Simeon and Anna: On the Day they met in the Temple,” Ch. 7 from ANF v. 6, 739.

<sup>6</sup> *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 59.