

Brian E. Daley, ed., *Leontius of Byzantium: Complete Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, xvii + 616 pp. £140.00

This impressive volume provides the full text, in Greek with an English translation on facing pages, of six polemical works attributed to an accomplished sixth-century monastic theologian. It also includes much of the necessary textual arcana, such as an account of the manuscript tradition, marginal scholia, previous editions, dubious fragments attributed to the same author, and some truly remarkable scholarship identifying the sources of the texts quoted in Leontius' florilegia, along with a chart comparing them to other patristic florilegia. Daley's 100-page introduction is concise but far-reaching; it is the mature work of a senior scholar whose DPhil thesis in 1978 was already a critical edition of Leontius. Rumors of its coming publication have been abroad for decades. This at last is the edition of Leontius for theologians to read and cite from now on.

And systematic theologians ought to take up and read Leontius of Byzantium, for a number of reasons. The main reason is that, as can now readily be seen in the *Complete Works*, Leontius was the theologian *par excellence* of Chalcedonian Christology. All of his detailed argumentation happens within the intellectual framework of the Council of Chalcedon, and he takes its terms to be axiomatic for reasoning about Christology and trinitarian theology. His longest and most programmatic work has a title that shows his approach: *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*. He constantly pairs these archetypal heresies as the extremes ruled out by the orthodoxy of Chalcedon. He calls their champions 'opposite kinds of docetist' (p. 129) in the sense that the Nestorian error leads to the conclusion that Jesus only seems divine, while the Eutychian error results in Jesus only seeming human. For Leontius, this Nestorian–Eutychian polarity is a perennial index of error. It is simply the fifth-century, christological version of an earlier, trinitarian heretical polarity: Nestorius is to Arius as Sabellius is to Eutyches. What Nestorius and Arius have in common is that, focusing on the distinctness of persons, they divide the essence; what Eutyches and Sabellius have in common is that, focusing on the unity of nature, they confuse the persons (p. 129). 'The same arguments that one finds used by earlier writers to divide the Trinity are used later, we discover, to confuse the Incarnation; and the arguments by which our contemporaries divide the Incarnation they used to confuse the

Trinity' (p. 131). Daley paraphrases this as a recognition of 'a common danger in both an exaggeratedly unitive Christology and an exaggeratedly divisive one' (p. 27).

Leontius is confident that Chalcedon provides the solution to both errors, not just by having already drawn the anathematizing boundaries against both, but by furnishing the necessary conceptual distinction that both lack. In order to speak rightly of God and Christ, Christian doctrine needs to distinguish between the individual on the one hand, and that which is individualized on the other. Failure to do this will leave theology under the constant threat of collapsing the categories of person and nature. 'Hypostasis, gentlemen, and the hypostatic are not the same thing, just as essence and the essential are different', says Daley's smooth translation (p. 133), and a glance across the page at the Greek shows that the key terms are *hypostasis* and *enhypostaton*. Leontius is able to make so precise a distinction because of his facility with Aristotelian tools, and he has a lively philosophical interest in the question of what a hypostasis is. But everything he does is in service of demonstrating that the categories of Chalcedon actually function; he is satisfied with them and is willing to do the work of explicating, applying and clarifying them. 'There is no such thing as an anhypostatic nature', he concedes to his imagined Nestorian interlocutor. But because of the distinction he has drawn, he does not have to conclude that the incarnate nature is itself a hypostasis; he can instead simply affirm that it is enhypostatic.

This last word has been the subject of conflicting interpretations since at least the nineteenth century. Daley takes it to mean simply hypostasized, that is, something like concretely instanced or individually realized. His interpretation takes *en-* to be functioning in this case as 'simply the opposite of the Greek "alpha privative"' (p. 73), and therefore not to have locative force, meaning 'in a hypostasis'. Leontius is not making any claims about the human nature of Christ existing within the hypostasis of the Son; he is not relating Trinity and Christology so directly as that. It is enough for him to distinguish the natures and recognize the concrete reality of the incarnate Son. He is willing to work hard at explicating Chalcedon's conceptual presuppositions, but he seems to feel no need to press forward into a further synthesis.

Leontius (485–543) worked several decades after the fourth council (451), but died before the fifth (Constantinople II, 553). The theology of that fifth council achieved a synthesis that is sometimes called neo-Chalcedonian. The 'neo' in neo-Chalcedonian is supposed to indicate a theology that rehabilitated some Cyrillian insights about the unity of the incarnate person, ensuring that Chalcedon's two-natures schema could not be interpreted in a Nestorian direction. These developments also made explicit the shared terminology of Christology and trinitarian theology: the hypostasis of the incarnate Son is after all the second hypostasis of the Trinity, and one of the Trinity therefore suffered in the flesh. Without over-drawing the distinction, it seems that the work of Leontius represents a different strategy. Daley has previously

called him, in contrast to neo-Chalcedonianism, a paleo-Chalcedonian. In this volume Daley recognizes in Leontius a ‘strict Chalcedonian’, one who is ‘above all a consistent defender and interpreter of the concepts and terminology of Chalcedon’ (p. 75). One of the chief merits of this volume is that the texts themselves are now before a much broader audience that can judge for themselves.

Since about 1887, Leontius of Byzantium has been the subject of a singularly convoluted body of secondary and tertiary studies. First came the historical task of distinguishing between a couple of sixth-century figures with the same name. Lionel Wickham has somewhere lamented having to come to terms with the ‘wretched and incomprehensible Leontii’. But in more recent decades, systematic theologians have invoked him in complex ways. One particular formula, ‘anhypostatic–enhypostatic Christology’, has loomed especially large and has been linked to him. It captures the confession that the human nature of Christ is not in itself personal, but is personalized in (note the locative force) the person of the Son. Bruce McCormack rightly identified the significance of this christological schema for Barth’s early dogmatic development. Barth picked up the formula from manuals of Protestant Scholastic theology, which were in turn drawing on John of Damascus’ synthesis of earlier patristic thought. Now that Leontius’ *Complete Works* are widely available, it should be easier to see that while Leontius may have coined and marshaled the terms (no small feat), he did not assemble them into a constructive argument about an anhypostatic–enhypostatic Christology that has since proven itself lapidary. While recognizing Leontius’ actual contribution as a kind of proto-scholastic of intentional and thorough Chalcedonianism, it should be possible now to see just how much creative, systematic synthesis was required at each later step: John of Damascus, the Protestant Scholastics and Karl Barth were each rising to the christological task in turn. Leontius of Byzantium, for his part, was a powerful systematic thinker. Not only did his commitment to Chalcedon generate the conceptual tools that were so strikingly useful for later Christology, but his own mastery of the theological task will continue to invite strong interpretations from his readers, who should now be more plentiful.

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