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CONFLICTING ANTHROPOLOGIES IN THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISCOURSE AT THE END OF LATE ANTIQUITY: THE CASE OF LEONTIUS OF JERUSALEM'S NESTORIAN ADVERSARY

Abstract

In his treatise *Contra Nestorianos* Leontius of Jerusalem reproduces excerpts from a Nestorian treatise which contend that the Chalcedonian understanding of the incarnation as a composition subjects Christ's divinity to universal 'laws of compound beings'. These 'laws' are illustrated with the human being as a compound of the interdependent parts body and soul. In chapter 51 the author contrasts the belief in a 'sleep of the soul' that concurs with this monistic anthropology with the concept of a sentient afterlife which is based on a dualistic anthropology. The former position is presented as scriptural and rational while the alternative is denounced as a Manichaean myth. To support this claim the author creates a nexus between sentient afterlife and outlawed pre-existence whose proponents, the Origenists, had also been deemed non-Christian and irrational. Thus he can build on an existing anti-Origenist consensus and insinuate that he merely continues the cleansing of Christianity. Comparison with Philoponus' *Arbiter* reveals the function of this polemic within the Christological debate: the Nestorian exploits similarities between the use of the anthropological paradigm by Nestorians and by 'neo'-Chalcedonians and an anthropological controversy that pitted mainstream Christians against Origenists in order to denigrate his opponents as crypto-pagans.

The sixth and seventh centuries saw the transformation of the Roman Empire into a stridently Christian state, which no longer tolerated diversity of opinion.[1] In this new world the impetus to establish correct belief was not confined to the traditional topics of Trinitarian theology and Christology but extended to all aspects of the Christian world-view. Many cosmological and anthropological concepts of 'Greek' origin that had once been deemed acceptable were now considered to be beyond the pale. This led to a process of purification that found its most virulent expression in the official condemnation

[1] See e.g. M. Simonetti, 'La politica religiosa di Giustiniano', in G. G. Archi (ed.), *Il mondo del diritto nell'epoca giustinianea* (Ravenna, 1985), pp. 91–111, esp. p. 108.

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of the Origenists and in the suppression of their writings,[2] but had much more wide-ranging consequences for the reception of the past, which are reflected in Maximus' reinterpretation of 'ambiguous' passages in Gregory of Nazianzus and in Patriarch Germanus' elimination of supposedly Origenist interpolations from the writings of Gregory of Nyssa.[3]

The discussions about these issues ran parallel with the christological debates and, while they were conducted in the same circles, the fault-lines between the different positions by no means always overlapped. The discrepancy is particularly evident in the case of 'Nestorian' authors who despite the increasingly precarious position of their sect continued to engage successfully in discussions about cosmology and anthropology. This was possible because the Antiochene tradition owed comparatively little to Greek philosophy and could therefore be presented as an expression of unadulterated Christianity. A case in point is 'Cosmas Indikopleustes' and his polemic against John Philoponus.[4] In the field of Christology the odds were clearly stacked against Cosmas: as a Nestorian in Alexandria he belonged to a marginalized group whereas the Monophysite Philoponus shared his beliefs with the majority of citizens.[5] However, when Cosmas pitted the cosmology of Theodore of Mopsuestia against the 'Greek' theories championed by Philoponus he confidently presented his own position as *Christian* while discrediting his adversary as a crypto-pagan.[6] Such confidence was not unfounded: the fact that Cosmas' *Topographia* is extant in the Greek original is ample proof that he had a readership beyond the members of his own sect.

[2] See A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Patristica Sorbonensia, 5; Paris, 1962), pp. 124–70, esp. pp. 160–2.

[3] Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua*, *PG* 91, 1061–1417, esp. 1089C6–D3 (*CPG* 7705), Patriarch Germanus, *Antapodotikos-Anotheutos*; cf. the summary in Patriarch Photius' *Bibliotheca*, Codex 233, p. 291b40–292b42, ed. R. Henry, in Photius, *Bibliothèque*, 9 vols. (Collection Byzantine, Association Guillaume Budé; Paris, 1959–91), vol. 5, pp. 80–3 (*CPG* 8022).

[4] W. Wolska, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustès: Théologie et science au VI^e siècle* (Bibliothèque Byzantine, Études, 3; Paris, 1962). Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. W. Wolska-Conus, 3 vols. (SC 141, 159, 197; Paris, 1968–73) (*CPG* 7468).

[5] Wolska, *La Topographie chrétienne*, p. 151.

[6] See ibid., pp. 147–50, and *Topographie chrétienne*, i.3–4, ed. Wolska-Conus, vol. 1, pp. 275, 277.

Cosmas contented himself with oblique references to his theological allegiances.[7] Other more outspokenly Nestorian texts of the time have long since disappeared. The only exception is a treatise in eight books against the Christology of Chalcedon, which has been partially preserved as quotations in Leontius of Jerusalem's *Contra Nestorianos*.[8] The original text is commonly thought to have been written in the first half of the sixth century but I have recently redated it to the early seventh century.[9] In this article I aim to show that its anonymous author took full advantage of the possibilities afforded him by the existence of multiple controversies with diverging fault-lines between the parties involved. My interpretation is based on a cluster of Nestorian excerpts from the first book of Leontius' *Contra Nestorianos*, which denounce as blasphemous and irrational the Chalcedonian understanding of the incarnation as a composition of divinity and humanity. In order to make his case the Nestorian author repeatedly refers to the human compound, always maintaining that because of the interdependence of body and soul it is unsuitable as a paradigm for the incarnation. These references establish an anthropological agenda, which culminates in the last excerpt of book 1. There the Nestorian juxtaposes his own anthropology with an alternative dualistic model, which supports the Christology of his adversaries but which he attributes to pagans and Manichaeans. In the second part of this article I analyse the argumentative structure of this excerpt and I identify parallels for its constituent parts in anti-Manichaean and anti-Origenist writings and in John Philoponus' christological treatise *Arbiter*. This analysis reveals that the Nestorian author superimposes two discrete discourses, the debate about the anthropological paradigm and a controversy about the pre-existence of the soul in which mainstream Christians accused Origenists of pagan and Manichaean leanings. In order to make the two discourses match he extends this polemic to the belief in the self-sufficient

[7] See. Wolska, *La Topographie chretiénne*, pp. 63–85.

[8] Leontius of Jerusalem, *Contra Nestorianos*, *PG* 86, 1399–1768i (*CPG* 6918), hereafter abbreviated to *CN*. For a list of these excerpts see L. Abramowski, 'Ein nestorianischer Traktat bei Leontius von Jerusalem', in R. Lavenant (ed.), *III. Symposium Syriacum, 1980. Les Contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures* (OCA 221; Rome, 1983), pp. 43–55, esp. pp. 51–5.

[9] D. Krausmüller, 'Leontius of Jerusalem, a Theologian of the Seventh Century', *JTS*, NS 52 (2001), pp. 637–57, esp. pp. 650–54. The case for the earlier date is made by M. Richard, 'Léonce de Jérusalem et Léonce de Byzance', *Mélanges de science religieuse* 1 (1944), pp. 35–88, esp. p. 44.

existence of the soul after its separation from the body, which at the time was the most widely used paradigm for the existence of the divine Word prior to its composition with humanity. He insinuates that sentient afterlife is necessarily linked to pre-existence and that it thus deserves the same condemnation, while at the same time asserting the correctness of his own belief in a 'sleep of the soul', which could not be used as a parallel for the non-incarnated Word. These manipulations result in a scenario that closely resembles Cosmas' set-up: the Chalcedonians are excluded from the community of believers and the Nestorian point of view becomes the Christian position *tout court*.

The treatise against Chalcedonian Christology, which prompted Leontius of Jerusalem's lengthy refutation, is the latest known Nestorian writing in the Greek language.[10] Its author was a resourceful polemicist whose confidence and assertiveness contrast oddly with the rapid decline of the sect to which he belonged.[11] These qualities are particularly obvious in the first book of the treatise, which attacks the Chalcedonian understanding of the incarnation of the divine Word as the composition of its nature as one part with the nature of the flesh as another part.[12] The author's decision to give this topic pride of place reflects the development of the christological discourse after Chalcedon. During that time the concept of composition, which appeared to safeguard both unity and duality in Christ, became increasingly popular not only among Monophysites but also among Chalcedonians, who in 553 elevated the formula of the 'one composite hypostasis' to the rank of a dogma.[13] This

[10] The other surviving Greek Nestorian text of the period is a florilegium dated to 549–66; see *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. Wolska-Conus, vol. 3, pp. 282–313.

[11] See P. Gray, 'Through the Tunnel with Leontius of Jerusalem: The Sixth-Century Transformation of Theology', in P. Allen and E. M. Jeffreys (eds.), *The Sixth Century—End or Beginning?* (Byzantina Australiensia, 10; Brisbane, 1996), pp. 186–96, esp. 194, on the Nestorian's 'brash and confidently rationalistic understanding of the theological discourse'. One may wonder whether the author did not write during the Persian occupation of the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.

[12] Cf. Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, proem, *PG* 86, 1401A14-16: *ἐγκαλοῦσι δ' οὖν ἡμῖν . . . πρωτίστως περὶ τῆς ὁμολογίας τῆς τῶν φύσεων συνθέσεως ἐπὶ τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμῶν* Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ *τοῦ θεοῦ*.

[13] Cf. P. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 20; Leiden, 1979), pp. 104–78, esp. p. 164. Cf. also A. Grillmeier and Th. Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2: *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, pt. 2: *The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century*, trans. J. Cawte and P. Allen (London, 1995), pp. 443–63, esp. pp. 447–48.

formula was explicitly directed against traditional Antiochene interpretations of the incarnation, which were anathematized.[14] As a consequence its refutation became a vital concern for Nestorian theologians such as Babai the Great (d. after 628) and Leontius' anonymous adversary.[15]

The Nestorian excerpts in the first book of *Contra Nestorianos* form a long series of terse syllogisms.[16] The case against composition is made in a cluster of proofs, which share a distinctive pattern: they start from 'universal predications' (*καθολικαὶ καταφάσεις*) about parts within compounds, which are then applied to the divine Word with absurd or blasphemous consequences.[17] Thus, for example, in chapter 10 the axiom that 'every part is in some respect lesser than the respective whole' is pitted against the understanding of God as surpassing all created beings.[18] This leads to the conclusion that the Word cannot be a

[14] Cf. especially the fourth anathema of the Council of 553; *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum sub Iustiniano habitum*, ed. J. Straub (ACO, IV.1; Berlin, 1971), 240.17–241.15 (*CPG* 9362).

[15] Babai the Great wrote a treatise against Justinian in eight books, in which he refuted the emperor's condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The treatise itself is lost but its content is known from a summary in Babai's *Liber de Unione*; see *Babai magni liber de unione*, trans. A. Vaschalde (CSCO. Scriptores Syri II.61; Rome, 1915), iii.9, 66.8–80.9. See also L. Abramowski and A. E. Goodman (eds.), *Cambridge University Library Manuscript Oriental 1319: A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts*, 2 vols. (London, 1972), vol. 2, p. xix. Leontius' use of *ὁμολογία* and *ὀρθῶς . . . δοξάζειν* in his references to the subject matter of the first book of the Nestorian treatise suggests that it was directed against the official creed of the Council of 553; cf. above, n. 12 and *CN*, proem, *PG* 86, 1400A13–14: *φασὶ πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθῶς σύνθεσιν τῆς θείας καὶ ἀνθρωπείας φύσεως δοξάζομεν*.

[16] See Abramowski, 'Ein nestorianischer Traktat', pp. 46–7, with a description of the Nestorian's use of 'sehr kleingliedrig(e)' syllogisms.

[17] See Leontius of Jerusalem's characterization of this approach in *CN*, i.10, *PG* 86, 1437D7–1440C5. The first book also includes numerous Nestorian syllogisms that are not specifically directed against the concept of composition; see Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.24–48, *PG* 86, 1492A–1512A. These excerpts take divine qualities as their starting point and then examine how these qualities are affected by the incarnation, or they juxtapose divine and human qualities; see e.g. *CN*, i.25, *PG* 86, 1492C2–3. Here the author focuses on change and alteration instead of 'natural composition'; see e.g. *CN*, i.28, *PG* 86, 1493C11. Moreover, the result of the incarnation is consistently termed 'union in the framework of a hypostasis' rather than 'composition'; see e.g. *CN*, i.27, *PG* 86, 1493A10–11.

[18] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.10, *PG* 86, 1437C11–12: *πᾶν δὲ μέρος ἔλαττον κατά τι καθέστηκε τοῦ ἰδίου ὅλου*, followed by the characterization of God as *ἀσύγκριτος καί . . . ἀπαράβλητος* in 1437C13–D3.

part of a compound or that if compounded it loses its exalted status.[19]

Proofs of this type have close parallels in Babai's *Liber de Unione*, which suggests that the Nestorian follows an established tradition.[20] They rest on several premisses.[21] The Nestorian first contends that for the terminology of composition to be used in a meaningful way, it must be derived from existing compounds, which can only be found in Scripture or in 'rationally organized nature' (*φυσικὸς λόγος*).[22] He further asserts that all these cases are fundamentally alike so that one can abstract from them a universal 'law of compound beings' (*τῶν συνθέτων ὁ νόμος*).[23] As a consequence, he can then argue that if the incarnation is understood as a composition, the Word must be affected in the same way as all other beings that are parts of compounds. The thrust of this reasoning is evident. Since the law of compound beings is irreconcilable with universally accepted notions about the divine nature, the Nestorian can set up himself as the defender of divine transcendence and at the same time

[19] Cf. Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.10, *PG* 86, 1437D3–7.

[20] Cf. Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.1, *PG* 86, 1401B2–8: *πᾶν ὁτιοῦν συντιθέμενον ἑτέρῳ ἢ ὅλον ὅλῳ συτίθεται ἢ μέρος μέρει ἢ μέρος ὅλῳ· ἄλλως γὰρ σύνθεσιν λέγειν ἀδύνατον· ὅλον δὲ καὶ μέρος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀπεριγράφου οὐ λέγεται· οὐκ ἄρα συνετέθη ὁ θεὸς λόγος τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπερίγραφος ὑπάρχων· οὐκ ἄρα συνετέθη ὁ θεὸς λόγος τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπερίγραφος ὑπάρχων· εἰ δὲ συνετέθη καὶ ἐμμερὴς καὶ περιγραπτός ἐστιν* and Babai, *Liber de unione*, iii.9, tr. Vaschalde, 76.10–12: *In omni composito, aut totum cum toto componitur, aut pars cum parte, aut pars cum toto* (cf. the English translation that Dr Sebastian Brock kindly provided for me: 'Everything that is composed, is composed either as a whole with a whole or as a part with a part or a part with a whole'), and 76.21–5: *Si res ita se habet, tunc sanctae hypostases Trinitatis a se invicem separatae sunt quia haec una hypostasis amisit hypostasim incompositam cum Deo patre, et facta est hypostasis partim cum alia ad complendam aliam hypostasim, et facta est ex infinita finita* (cf. esp. *ἐμμερής* and *partim*, according to Dr Brock's translation: 'in-part'). Furthermore, in both texts these syllogisms are found at the beginning of a refutation of the Chalcedonian formula of a 'composition of natures'. This suggests a common source, which remains to be identified. I have not been able to find parallels in Nestorius' *Liber Heraclidis*. See esp. Nestorius, *Le Livre d'Héraclide de Damas*, trans. F. Nau (Paris, 1910), i.2, 83; iii.1, 268–9 (*CPG* 5751).

[21] In the surviving excerpts these premisses are never set out in a systematic fashion and therefore need to be pieced together from stray references. See Gray, 'Through the Tunnel', 194.

[22] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.14, *PG* 86, 1452A8–B1.

[23] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.10, *PG* 86 1437C9–11: *εἰ σύνθετος ὁ δεσπότης Χριστὸς καθά φασι, μέρος ὁ θεὸς λόγος καθὰ βούλεται τῶν συνθέτων ὁ νόμος*. Cf. Babai, *Liber de Unione*, iii.9, trans. Vaschalde, 76.31–6: *Is enim est ordo* (*τάξις*) *eorum qui in unum composita sunt*.

he can present his view of creation as a closed world guided by unvarying laws of nature.[24] This allows him to project an image of himself as a rationalist battling against the absurdities of his opponents.[25]

In chapter 10 the argument proceeds from the universal predication directly to the christological application. However, frequently the general statements are illustrated with examples. Although there are occasional references to inanimate objects,[26] by far the most common example is the human being as the compound of the parts soul and body: in the first book of the Nestorian treatise it appears no fewer than eleven times.[27] The eleventh chapter provides a typical case of an extract where the anthropological paradigm is part of the argument. It starts with a general rule: 'Every one nature or also hypostasis compounded of parts of different substance has some operations, which neither of the two, of which it consists, can ever perform by itself and without the operation of the other.'[28] This rule is then explained: 'as for example, soul and body need each other to make a ship, to build a house, to weave a frock, and other things of the kind; which as I have said is impossible for one of them to perform without the cooperation of the other in whatever way'.[29] The next step is the application to the

[24] This is a traditional Antiochene agenda; see e.g. B. E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 111: 'Theodore (sc. of Mopsuestia) is concerned in all of his theological writing to underline the transcendence of God and to preserve a clear, irreducible distinction between God and his creation.'

[25] Cf. Gray, 'Through the Tunnel', pp. 193–4.

[26] Other examples are used only four times, and even then they are always accompanied by the anthropological paradigm; see Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.12, *PG* 86, 1448B9–10: parts of a house; *CN*, i.13, *PG* 86, 1452A1–2: parts of animals; *CN*, i.16, *PG* 86, 1460D9: parts of a house; *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513C1–7: stones and a house, threads, and the veil of the temple.

[27] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.6, *PG* 86, 1420B8–12; *CN*, i.7, *PG* 86, 1428B1–5; *CN*, i.8, *PG* 86, 1429C8–14; *CN*, i.9, *PG* 86, 1437A2–3; *CN*, i.11, *PG* 86, 1445A5–9; *CN*, i.12, *PG* 86, 1448B9–10; *CN*, i.13, *PG* 86, 1452A2–3, *CN*, i.14, *PG* 86, 1452D10–1453A3; *CN*, i.16, *PG* 86, 1460D6–7; *CN*, i.19, *PG* 86, 1472B2–5; *CN*, i.22, *PG*, 86 1488C8–12; *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513C7–1516A11.

[28] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.11, *PG* 86, 1445A2–6: *πᾶσα μία φύσις ἢ καὶ ὑπόστασις συγκειμένη ἐκ μερῶν ἑτεροουσίων ἔχει τινὰς ἐνεργείας ἃς οὐδ' ὁπότερον ἐξ ὧν συνέστηκε δύναται καθ' ἑαυτὸ καὶ χωρὶς τῆς τοῦ ἑτέρου ἐνεργείας ἐκτελέσαι τινὶ τρόπῳ ποτέ.*

[29] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.11, *PG* 86, 1445A6–10: *οἷον ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα δέονται ἀλλήλων εἰς τὸ καταρτίσαι πλοῖον οἰκοδομῆσαι οἶκον ὑφᾶναι χιτῶνα καὶ εἴ τι τοιοῦτον· ὅπερ ὡς εἶπον ἀδύνατον ἑνὶ αὐτῶν χωρὶς τῆς θατέρου συνεργίας ἐκτελέσαι δι' οἱονδήποτε τρόπου.*

incarnation of the Word: 'If then, as they (sc. the Chalcedonians) say, one nature or one hypostasis has resulted from a composition of the divine Word with the man out of us, there are some operations of such a nature and hypostasis, . . . which the divine Word could not perform by itself and which it would therefore effect through the operation of the human.'[30] This leads to the following consequences: 'They show the divine Word weak; . . . and . . . even now the Father is without strength for the performance of such operations as he is not compounded with the man out of us, and in that respect the Son is greater than the Father, which is impious.'[31]

Chapter 11 focuses on the interdependence of the parts in order to perform their natural operations. The concept of composition, which informs this argument, is spelt out in chapter 23. There the Nestorian presents a model of the incarnation, according to which 'the (sc. divine) nature had once been imperfect and has now been brought from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality'.[32] The Nestorian calls this a composition 'according to the nature' (*κατὰ φύσιν*) of the divinity because the eventual joining with a human being would then always have been a part of the natural make-up of God.[33]

This understanding of composition is intimately linked to the Nestorian's anthropology, where soul and body on their own are seen as incomplete parts of the compound man, for which they are 'naturally' destined and in which they realize their potential, although in this case there is, of course, no pre-existence of one part. The aspect of interdependence is stressed whenever the human compound is referred to: chapter 6 focuses on the 'suffering' that soul and body inflict on one another;[34] chapter 7

[30] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.11, *PG* 86, 1445A10–B8: *εἰ τοίνυν μία φύσις ἢ μία ὑπόστασις ἀπετελέσθη ἐκ συνθέσεως ὥς φασι τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου πρὸς τὸν ἐξ ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπον, εἰσί τινες ἐνέργειαι τῆς τοιᾶσδε φύσεως καὶ ὑποστάσεως . . . ἃς οὐ δυνάμενος ὁ θεὸς λόγος πληρῶσαι καθ' αὑτὸν τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐνεργείᾳ ἐξετέλεσεν.*

[31] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.11, *PG* 86, 1445B8–11: *. . . ἀσθενῆ δείκνυσι τὸν θεὸν . . . καὶ . . . ἔτι καὶ νῦν ὁ πατὴρ ἀτονεῖ πρὸς τὴν ἀποπλήρωσιν τῶν τοιῶνδε ἐνεργειῶν μὴ συγκείμενος τῷ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο μείζων ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ πατρὸς ὅπερ ἀσεβές.* Cf. John 14:28: *ὁ πατὴρ μείζων μού ἐστιν.*

[32] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.23, *PG* 86, 1489C4–6: *ὡς ἀτελοῦς τότε οὔσης τῆς φύσεως καὶ ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει εἰς τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ νῦν προαχθείσης.*

[33] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.23, *PG* 86, 1489C1–2: *εἰ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν αὕτη ἐστίν, οὔτε χάριτι ἡ σάρκωσις.*

[34] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.6, *PG* 86, 1420B8–12: *μὴ θέλουσα ἡ ψυχὴ συμπάσχει τῷ σώματι.*

makes the complementary point about mutual benefits;[35] and in chapter 14 the sleep of the body is mentioned as a case where 'the soul ceases to act by necessity'.[36]

It is evident that the outcome of these proofs for the christological debate is rather limited. They all make the same point that the understanding of the divine Word as a component would result in an entity that is not self-sufficient and that therefore no longer meets the universally accepted criteria for a divine being.[37] This impression of sameness, however, changes once we turn to the anthropological statements. When in chapter after chapter the Nestorian uses man as a paradigm to buttress his refutation of a 'composite' Christ, he at the same time presents different facets of his anthropology, which allow the reader to understand it as a coherent whole.

This raises the question: could there be a hidden, anthropological, agenda apart from the obvious, christological, one? At a first glance, the structure of the proofs seems to rule this out: almost invariably the Nestorian first states a general rule that applies to all compounds and then adds the human compound as an example.[38] Thus, the anthropological paradigm appears not to be essential to the argument but simply to be added for illustration. However, one can also make the opposite case: that the very insistence on this structure serves to inculcate the notion that unlike its analogue, the divine Word, the soul falls under the general rule.

At this point it must be remembered that the Nestorian's arguments are only valid if all compounds in creation do indeed conform to the 'law of compound beings' that is spelt out in chapter 10. When the Nestorian sets out his framework and uses the human being as a paradigm, he gives the impression that these parts of his proofs were universally accepted and that the incarnation of the Word was the only contentious matter. However, this was not the case. At the time when he composed his treatise, a universal law, according to which 'the whole exceeds its parts, and the parts are less than the whole', and

[35] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.7, *PG* 86, 1428B1–5: *δέεται γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ σώματος . . . πρὸς μάθησιν τῶν θείων ἐντολῶν καὶ εὐαρέστησιν θείαν.*

[36] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.14, *PG* 86, 1453A1–2: *ἡ ψυχὴ παύεται τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τοῦ σώματος εἰς ὕπνον τρεπομένου.*

[37] See Abramowski, 'Nestorianischer Traktat', 47: 'große Partien der Texte (sc. sind) langweilig zu lesen'.

[38] Exceptions are *CN*, i.14, *PG* 86, 1453A1–2, and *CN*, i.19, *PG* 86, 1472B2–3.

the anthropology that corresponds to it, are only found in works of Nestorian authors such as Babai the Great, who denied that the concept of composition could be applied to the incarnation.[39] The Chalcedonians and the Monophysites thought otherwise: they not only maintained that the effects of a composition on its components varied according to the nature of the components,[40] but also claimed that the term 'composition' could be used in a less strict sense.[41] To support this claim they made reference to a different anthropological model that was better suited to their argument. Leontius of Byzantium, for example, insisted that the soul was a self-sufficient being and that it could only be considered incomplete in so far as it was not the whole man.[42] This distinction then allowed him to draw a parallel between the soul and the divine Word.

In the proofs that we have discussed so far the Nestorian deals with this problem by passing it over in silence. However, at the beginning of chapter 51 we find a passage where he deviates from this strategy and launches an all-out attack against the alternative anthropology. This passage is the last excerpt in book 1 of *Contra Nestorianos* and thus quite possibly the culmination of the Nestorian's argument. Introduced by

[39] The closest parallels are found in the Babai's summary of his treatise against Justinian; cf. Babai, *Liber de Unione*, iii.9, trans. Vaschalde 76.31–77.1 For the 'law of compound beings' see 76.31–6; and for the anthropological paradigm see 76.32–6: interdependence of parts for operations, 76.37–77.1: mutual suffering, 77.1: mutual benefits. For the rule that the whole is greater than the parts, see the 'controversial chapters' appended to the creed that the Nestorian bishops submitted to Chosroes in 612, probably also composed by Babai; cf. Abramowski and Goodman, *Nestorian Christological Texts*, vol. 2, no. VIIb, 94.11–18.

[40] See Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.10, *PG* 86, 1441B12–15, and esp. 1444D1–5: *φανερὸν οὖν ἐκ τῶν ἀποδεδειγμένων πάντων ὡς καὶ μέρος ὁ λόγος οὐ μετὰ μερικῆς ἀτελείας λέγεται· καὶ συντιθέμενος οὐ καθώς φατε τῷ νόμῳ τῶν συνθέτων οὐσιῶν τῶν παρ' αὐτὸν ὑποβάλλεται*. Cf. also Leontius of Byzantium, *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, *PG* 86, 1284B1–1285B1; *Leontius of Byzantium: A Critical Edition of his Work, with Prolegomena*, ed. B. E. Daley (Oxford, 1978), 12.7–13.22 (in the following abbreviated to *CNE*).

[41] See Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, iii.1, 1604C8–1605C3, and Leontius of Byzantium, *CNE*, *PG* 86, 1281B1–6 (*CPG* 6813), ed. Daley, 10.29–31.

[42] Leontius of Byzantium, *CNE*, *PG* 86, 1281B7–C8, ed. Daley, 11.1–2: *τί γὰρ λείποι τῇ ψυχῇ χωριστὴν ἐχούσῃ καὶ ἰδίαν ζωὴν πρὸς τὸ εἶναι οὐσίαν ἀσώματον αὐτοκίνητον*;

Leontius as a literal quotation, it reads as follows:[43]

They (sc. the Chalcedonians) are forced to say that their Christ (sc. the being compounded of God and man) is in some respect either greater or lesser than God by himself and man by himself, that is: than his own parts when they are considered apart and by themselves.

ἀνάγκη αὐτοὺς λέγειν τὸν Χριστὸν αὐτῶν τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ μόνας καὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ μόνας τουτέστι τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν ἀνὰ μέρος καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἐπινοουμένων ἢ κρείττονα εἶναι κατά τι ἢ ἥττονα·

For the parts of the resulting (sc. wholes) when they are considered by themselves and without the composition with one another are indeed found to be in some respect either greater or lesser than the result out of them.

τὰ γὰρ τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων μέρη καθ' ἑαυτὰ καὶ χωρὶς τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα συνθέσεως ἐπινοούμενα πάντως κατά τι ἢ κρείττονα ἢ ἥττονα εὑρίσκεται τοῦ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποτελέσματος.[44]

This claim is then illustrated with examples. Having first referred to inanimate objects,[45] the Nestorian continues:

Thus also about man. According to the Christians, man, this whole living being, is greater than both the soul and the body; because after the departure of the soul from the body the soul is also incapable of self-moved activity, persevering as if in a

οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· κατὰ μὲν τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς κρείττων ὁ ἄνθρωπος αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ ὅλον ζῶον τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος· ἐπεὶ μετὰ τὴν ἔξοδον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ πρὸς ἐνέργειαν αὐτοκίνητον ἀδυνάτως ἔχει ὡς ἐν ὕπνῳ βαθυτάτῳ καὶ μηδὲ ἑαυτὴν

[43] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.50, *PG* 86, 1513B6: *λέγουσι γὰρ λέξεως οὕτως*. I have compared Migne's edition of ch. 51 with the Codex Marcianus 69, kindly made available to me through photocopies by Prof. Patrick Gray. Passages in the manuscript that are omitted in *PG* are added in angle brackets.

[44] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513B8–15.

[45] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513B15–C6: *οἷον λίθοι καὶ ξύλα μέρη οἴκου ἢ <τῆς ἐκκλησίας μέρη ἢ> ναοῦ τοῦ ὑπὸ Σολομῶντος κτισθέντος καὶ πρόδηλον ὅτι ἑκάτερον καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἧττον τοῦ ὅλου οἴκου· πάλιν ὑάκινθος πορφύρα κόκκινον κεκλωσμένον βύσσος νενησμένη μέρη τοῦ καταπετάσματος τῆς σκηνῆς· καὶ καὶ τούτων ἕκαστον κατὰ μόνας ἔλαττον προδήλως τοῦ καταπετάσματος.*

very deep sleep and not even knowing itself, and waiting to be rewarded for the deeds (sc. that it performed) together with the body according to Divine Scripture [2 Cor. 5:10]: which it will not escape through the separation from the body, <neither progressing to the better> nor being changed for the worse lest the content of Scripture be given the lie.

ἐπισταμένη διάγουσα καὶ τῶν μετὰ τοῦ σώματος πράξεων κατὰ τὴν θείαν γραφὴν ἐκδεχομένη τὴν ἀμοιβήν· ἅστινας οὐκ ἐκφεύξεται τῷ χωρισμῷ τοῦ σώματος οὐδὲ <ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον προβαίνουσα οὐδὲ> ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τρεπομένη ἵνα μὴ τὰ τῆς γραφῆς διαψευσθῇ.[46]

And from these (sc. propositions), namely, that it is neither changed for the better nor for the worse, it follows either that this all-perfect and all-blessed (sc. state), which is expected in the resurrection, is already present in its nature, or that the rational part is completely at rest, because nothing that is moved through self-willed counsel is (sc. of a kind) that does not have sensation of anything at all.

τούτοις δὲ ἕπεται—τῷ μηδὲ ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον λέγω μηδὲ ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τρέπεσθαι—ἢ τὸ παντέλειον ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὸ παμμακάριον τὸ προσδοκώμενον ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἐνεῖναι τῇ φύσει ἤδη ἤ τὸ πάντη ἡσυχάζειν τὸ λογικὸν ἐπεὶ μηδὲν αὐτοπροαιρέτῳ βουλῇ κινούμενον μηδενὸς ἔχον ὅλως αἴσθησίν ἐστιν·

But the former has not come true because God has foreseen something better for us lest the previous ones be made perfect without us [Heb. 11:40]. Therefore the second is the case. According to us Christians, then, man is shown to be greater than his own parts when considered by themselves.

ἀλλὰ τὸ πρότερον οὐδ' εἰσκεκόμισται τοῦ θεοῦ κρεῖττόν τι προσβλεψαμένου περὶ ἡμῶν ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς οἱ πρότεροι τελειωθῶσι· τὸ δεύτερον ἄρα ἔστι καθ' ἡμᾶς οὖν τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς οὐ κρεῖττων ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰ θεωρουμένων δείκνυται.[47]

[46] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513C6–13. This passage is very convoluted and may be corrupt.

[47] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513D1–12.

According to the pagans and the Manichaeans, on the other hand, man is greater than the body but lesser than the soul for the following reason: they know that the soul pre-exists, not needing the body and the senses of the body and that it is not, as they say, ignorant of anything before its downfall into the body, but likewise (sc. the soul is all this) also after the departure from it. Therefore they also know man to be lesser than it, because they also say that it becomes worse than itself through the imprisonment in the body, as they say.

κατὰ δὲ τοὺς Ἕλληνας καὶ τοὺς Μανιχαίους τοῦ μὲν σώματος κρειττων ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἥττων τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ· τὴν μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴν καὶ προϋπάρειν οἴδασι τοῦ σώματος ἀνενδεῆ τε τῶν τοῦ σώματος αἰσθήσεων καὶ πρὸ τῆς εἰς τὸ σῶμα καταπτώσεως ὥς φασι μηδὲν ἀγνοοῦσαν ἀλλὰ καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐκ τούτου ἔξοδον ὡσαύτως· ὅθεν καὶ ἥττονα οἴδασιν αὐτῆς τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὴν ἑαυτῆς χείρονα λέγουσι γενέσθαι διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ σώματι φυλακῆς ὥς φασι.[48]

After a reference to the body as the other component, which is universally agreed to be lesser than the whole,[49] the argument continues:

Therefore it is established that the resulting (sc. whole) is in some respect either better or lesser than the parts that belong to it when seen by themselves.

συνέστηκεν ἄρα ὡς ὅτι τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰ θεωρουμένων ἢ κρεῖττόν ἐστι κατά τι ἢ ἧττον.[50]

Therefore they (sc. the Chalcedonians), too, are forced to admit that their Christ is in some respect either lesser or greater than his own parts seen by themselves if according to them

ὅθεν ἀνάγκη λέγειν καὶ τούτοις τὸν Χριστὸν αὐτῶν ἢ ἥττονα εἶναι ἢ κρείττονα κατά τι τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἐπινοουμένων· εἰ ὅλως ἓν ζῶόν ἐστι κατ' αὐτοὺς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου ἀποτελεσθέν.[51]

[48] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1513D12–1516A7.

[49] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1516A7–12: *τοῦ δὲ σώματος νεκροῦ θεωρουμένου μετὰ τὴν διάζευξιν τῆς ψυχῆς πρόδηλον ὅτι κρείττων ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα κρεῖττον ἑαυτοῦ θεωρεῖται πρὸ τοῦ χωρισμοῦ τοῦ ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς πρὸς τὸ μετὰ τὸ χωρισθῆναι τῆς ψυχῆς.*

[50] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1516A12–14.

[51] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1516A14–B3.

Christ is one living being at all that has resulted out of God and man.

But if they say 'greater', they have admitted what is impious, imagining that there is something more perfect than God, which they must also call far above both the Father and the Spirit, for when their living being out of God the Word and the flesh is in some respect greater than God the Word seen by itself, then this same being is obviously greater than the Father and the Spirit, which are not compounded with the flesh, because the Son is equal with the Father and the Spirit; and he who in some respect is greater than it, is obviously also (sc. greater) than the Father and the Holy Spirit.

ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν κρείττονα εἴποιεν δεδώκασι τὸ ἀσεβὲς τελειότερόν τι τοῦ θεοῦ φανταζόμενοι εἶναι ὅπερ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ἀνάγκη λέγειν αὐτοὺς ὑπέρτατον· εἰ γὰρ τὸ κατ' αὐτοὺς ἐκ θεοῦ λόγου καὶ σαρκὸς ζῶον κρεῖττον κατά τι τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου καθ' ἑαυτὸν νοουμένου τοῦτο αὐτὸ κρεῖττον δηλονότι καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος μὴ συγκειμένων τῇ σαρκί· ἐπείπερ ἴσος ὁ υἱὸς τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ὁ τούτου κρείττων κατά τι σαφὲς ὅτι καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου.[52]

But if they call this living being 'lesser' than God the Word seen on his own, they are also impious: for they show that God the Word has become lesser than himself according to the myth of the soul of the pagans and the Manichaeans. For you would not find that the living being out of God and flesh is lesser than God on his own if God the Word itself had not before become lesser than himself.

εἰ δὲ ἧττον εἴποιεν τουτὶ τὸ ζῶον τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου καθ' ἑαυτὸν θεωρουμένου καὶ οὕτως ἀσεβοῦσι· τὸν θεὸν γὰρ λόγον ἥττονα ἑαυτοῦ δεικνύουσι γεγενῆσθαι κατὰ τὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ Μανιχαίων περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς μῦθον οὐκ ἂν γὰρ τὸ ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ σαρκὸς ζῶον ἧττον ηὑρίσκετε τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ μόνας, εἰ μὴ πρότερον αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς λόγος ἥττων ἑαυτοῦ γέγονεν.[53]

[52] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1516B3–3.
[53] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1516B13–C5.

The Nestorian fragment at the beginning of chapter 51 has the same structure as the passages that we have discussed so far: a 'universal proposition' is illustrated with specific examples and then applied to the incarnation of the Word. However, in this case the proposition is twofold—either a part is worse than the whole or a part is better than the whole—and so are the subsequent stages of the argument as well. This reduplication allows the Nestorian to juxtapose not only two christological models but also two anthropological paradigms. In the following I determine the reasons that prompted the Nestorian to create such a structure. Because of the complexity of the argument my analysis proceeds in two steps: I first discuss the two anthropologies and then I turn to the remaining parts of the proof.

The concept of man that illustrates the first part of the proposition focuses on the state of the soul after its separation from the body. According to the Nestorian the soul is then 'as if in a very deep sleep' and without self-awareness because for its activities it requires the use of a body. As a fully functioning entity man can then be called better than the soul on its own. The Nestorian claims this to be the position of 'the Christians' and supports his claim with scriptural references such as Heb. 11:40 and 2 Cor. 5:10. However, it is obvious that the inactivity of the soul after death is merely another facet of his monistic anthropology, with its stress on the interdependence of body and soul.[54]

The second part of the proposition is illustrated with an anthropological model that regards the soul on its own as a perfect being, with self-awareness and innate powers of perception, and therefore as better than the human compound. The Nestorian attributes such a view to 'the pagans and the Manichaeans', and this attribution seems to be borne out by his focus on the existence of the soul before its 'imprisonment' in the body, which was indeed part of the belief systems of the Manichaeans and of some pagan groups.[55] However, the presentation is not limited to pre-existence: by adding the phrase 'but also after the departure from that one (sc. the body) likewise' the Nestorian indicates that the same conditions apply to the afterlife when the soul is again self-sufficient and

[54] Cf. Babai, *Liber de Unione*, iii.9, trans. Vaschalde, 77.3–6.

[55] Cf. e.g. Paul the Persian, *Disputatio cum Manichaeo*, i, *PG* 88, 533D7 (*CPG* 7010).

omniscient.[56] It is evident that this is the exact counterpart of the concept of a 'sleep of the soul' that he had outlined before.

The juxtaposition between a 'Christian' and a 'pagan and Manichaean' understanding of the afterlife that has thus emerged is clearly at odds with contemporary reality, as the 'sleep of the soul' was not an official dogma of the Church and the opposite belief was generally considered perfectly acceptable for Christians.[57] The roundabout way in which the Nestorian introduces this juxtaposition shows clearly that he did not expect his readers to agree with him for it reveals itself as an elaborate strategy designed to win them over to his point of view. This strategy relies on the fact that Christians shared their belief in a sentient afterlife with non-Christian groups but that these groups also accepted the pre-existence of the soul. In his exposé of the pagan and Manichaean view of man he therefore started with pre-existence, where he knew his readers would willingly accept his assertion that it was an exclusively non-Christian concept. Only then he turned to sentient afterlife, which he introduced as the mirror image of pre-existence, thus creating the impression that those who subscribed to one concept necessarily also accepted the other. At this point his readers would, of course, have realized that despite his claims to the contrary he was now describing a belief that was held by many Christians as well. However, if they had accepted the previous steps of the argument, that is, that pre-existence was a non-Christian concept and that the belief in a sentient afterlife entailed the belief in pre-existence, they had to conclude that these people were in reality not Christians at all but rather pagans and Manichaeans in disguise. Once they had arrived at this conclusion, they then had to admit that the Nestorian was justified in presenting sentient afterlife as a concept that was found only among unbelievers. And as this left those who held the alternative view as the only ones who could rightly call themselves Christians, they also had to accept his assertion that the 'sleep of the soul' was the Christian position *tout court*.

[56] The parallel is emphasized through the similarity of the phrases *μετὰ τὴν ἔξοδον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος* in the case of the 'Christians' and *μετὰ τὴν ἐκ τούτου* (sc. *τοῦ σώματος*) *ἔξοδον* in the case of the 'pagans and Manichaeans'.

[57] Even among Nestorians the 'sleep of the soul' was not universally accepted; see J. Martikainen, 'Die Lehre vom Seelenschlaf in der syrischen Theologie von Afrahat dem Persischen Weisen bis zu dem Patriarchen Timotheos I', in *Theologia et Cultura: Studia in honorem G. Nygren* (Åbo, 1986), pp. 121–9, esp. pp. 127–8.

The Nestorian, however, was not content with casting himself in the role of a defender of the faith. In keeping with his self-image as upholder of a rational and 'scientific' approach within the theological discourse he also strove to disqualify the rival anthropology as irrational and absurd or, in his own words, as a 'myth'. How did he achieve this aim? We have seen that the pagan and Manichaean concept of man serves as an illustration for the second part of the proposition, according to which a compound is worse than a component. However, when the Nestorian applies this rule to the soul, he adds the corollary that on entering the composition it becomes 'worse than itself' (*ἥττων ἑαυτῆς*). The significance of this addition can be gauged from chapter 23, where the same concept of composition is described but where it is disqualified as being 'against nature' (*παρὰ φύσιν*) and as resulting in the destruction of an already existing perfect entity.[58]

Christian polemicists had raised the same objection against the Manichaean concept of a pre-existent soul and there can be no doubt that the Nestorian built on this precedent when he constructed the argument of chapter 51.[59] Again, however, this traditional theme is given a new twist through its application to the afterlife. We saw that according to the Nestorian the soul recovers after death the faculties that it had possessed before it was compounded with the body. Since he maintains that with the loss of its self-sufficiency the soul became 'worse than itself' (*ἥττων ἑαυτῆς*), readers could then infer that in order to return to its original state the soul must become 'better than itself' (*κρείττων ἑαυτῆς*), that is: better than it is as a part of the human compound. Again the significance of this unstated consequence becomes obvious through comparison with the 'Christian' view of a sleep of the soul. In his presentation of this view the Nestorian integrates the scriptural and physiological data into a complex argument, which culminates in the conclusion that in death the soul 'is neither changed for the better nor for the worse' (*μηδὲ ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον . . . μηδὲ ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον τρέπεσθαι*).[60] Such denial of a change for the better, however, is

[58] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.23, *PG* 86, 1489B13–C1: *εἰ δὲ παρὰ φύσιν αὕτη ἐστί, χείρων τε αὐτῆς γέγονε καὶ τρεπτὴ δέδεικται καὶ πρὸς ὕφεσιν κατηνέχθη*. See above, n. 32.

[59] Cf. e.g. Paul the Persian, *Disputatio cum Manichaeo*, i, *PG* 88, 537B10–C2.

[60] The argument itself is extremely convoluted and cannot be analysed here in detail.

the exact counterpart to the position that results from the pagan and Manichaean anthropology. This permits the Nestorian to establish the 'natural' character of his own views and at the same time to denigrate the concept of a sentient afterlife as irreconcilable with a well-ordered universe.

At this point one might conclude that the Nestorian achieves his aim exclusively through association of his opponents with non-Christian groups. However, in order to gauge the full force of this strategy of exclusion we also need to consider its use in previous controversies among Christians. Despite the Nestorian's protestations, pre-existence was not an exclusively pagan concept since the followers of Origen and Evagrius Ponticus also regarded it as a part of their belief system.[61] However, in the sixth century these Christians had become the target of a witch-hunt, which resulted in their condemnation in 543 and 553.[62] During this witch-hunt mainstream Christians had routinely denounced their Origenist opponents as pagans and Manichaeans.[63] Moreover, they had also employed the argument that a self-sufficient being cannot enter into a composition without experiencing substantial change.[64] Thus the Nestorian could expect his readers to recognize that he was using well-worn and universally accepted arguments from the anti-Origenist discourse and he could hope that they would consider their application to the afterlife as the logical next step in the purification of Christianity from 'alien' intrusions.

The analysis that we have conducted so far has shown the Nestorian author to be a consummate manipulator of his readership. However, for a proper evaluation of his achievement it is also necessary to establish whether he himself presents a consistent position. For this purpose I resume the analysis of his anthropological argument. As we have seen, the Nestorian not only avers that after death the soul does not change for the better but he further adds that neither does it change for the worse. We are not told what this change for the worse might consist in but the context leaves no doubt: since the state of the soul after death is described as mere existence it can only be

[61] See above, n. 2.

[62] Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 385–410, esp. pp. 392–5 and 404–5 on the issue of pre-existence.

[63] Cf. e.g. Theodore of Scythopolis, *Libellus de erroribus Origenianis*, *PG* 86, 231–6 (*CPG* 6993), esp. 232B4–6.

[64] Cf. e.g. Maximus, *Ambigua*, *PG* 91, 1324A2–10: *τὸ γὰρ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἰδικῶς προϋφιστάμενον εἰς ἄλλου τινὸς εἴδους ὑπόστασιν οὐ πέφυκεν ἄγεσθαι.*

complete annihilation.[65] At first sight this addition appears to be of little significance for the argument. Unlike its counterpart, it does not directly correspond to the position of the pagans and Manichaeans but seems to be thrown in for good measure to reinforce the Nestorian's claim that his beliefs are based on reason. However, a more complex agenda is revealed when we look into the implications of the link between composition and change for the Nestorian's own position. We have seen that he rejected the concept of pre-existence and instead maintained that the soul came into being at the moment of its composition with the body. In patristic theology, however, the *creatio ex nihilo* as the transition from non-existence to existence was considered the greatest change of all.[66] In the Nestorian's framework the creation of the soul could thus be described as a substantial change for the better. Since he had based the polemic against his adversaries on the nexus between pre-existence and afterlife, it could therefore be concluded that when the composition is dissolved the soul must change back into non-existence.[67] Such a position, however, was universally considered heretical and thus laid the Nestorian open to criticism from his adversaries.[68] Accordingly, it can be argued that the exclusion of a change for the worse in death has an apologetic, rather than a polemical, function.

However, the problems faced by the Nestorian were of an even more fundamental nature: at this point the two mainstays of his argument, Scripture and reason, could no longer be reconciled. As we have seen, he made the exclusion of a change for the

[65] This conclusion is also evident from the Nestorian's reference to Scripture. Although he does not identify the exact passage there can be no doubt that it is Matt. 10:28, with its assurance that the soul cannot be killed. See B. Bruns, 'Aithallaha's Brief über den Glauben', *Oriens Christianus* 76 (1992), pp. 43–73, esp. pp. 67–8.

[66] Cf. e.g. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica*, ed. E. Mühlenberg (Gregorii Nysseni Opera, iii.4; Leiden, 1996), 24.1–6 (*CPG* 3150) and the Nestorian's near contemporary Job the Monk, *Oikonomike Pragmateia*, according to the summary in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, Codex 222, p. 206a8-20, ed. Henry, vol. 3, p. 221.

[67] Of course, this nexus in itself is questionable: once change is admitted into creation it is no longer possible to establish any rule or regularity, as Leontius of Jerusalem gleefully pointed out; cf. *CN*, i.10, *PG* 86, 1444A8-14.

[68] Cf. John of Damascus, *De haeresibus*, 90, in *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. B. Kotter, 5 vols. (PTS 7, 12, 17, 22, 29; Berlin and New York, 1969–88), vol. 4, 57.6–7: *θνητοψυχῖται* (*CPG* 8044). Leontius of Jerusalem points to this weakness of the Nestorian's argument in *CN*, i.48, *PG* 86, 1509C8–9: *εἴπερ αὐτοῖς ὄντως ἀθάνατος δοκεῖ* (sc. *ἡ ψυχή*).

worse part of his case for the 'natural' character of his anthropology. In a statement about the afterlife this was possible because here the rational argument coincided with scriptural data. The case of pre-existence, on the other hand, posed insurmountable difficulties. Consistency demands that the Nestorian's denial of change is universally valid and not limited to the transition between life and afterlife. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that the soul must already have existed before its composition with the body in an identical state of potentiality.[69] Such a conclusion, however, clashes with the belief in a *creatio ex nihilo*, which the Nestorian claims to uphold against his opponents.

So far the discussion of chapter 51 has been limited to the anthropological argument. We have established that the Nestorian devised a complex strategy, which allowed him to launch an attack against a widely accepted alternative to his understanding of the human being but which also caused serious problems for the validity of his own position. However, this argument is not an end in itself. As in the previous passages, it is integrated into a syllogism with which the Nestorian attempts to disprove that the incarnation of the Word can be understood as a composition of parts. Therefore we must now extend the discussion to the remaining elements of the proof.

As we have seen, the twofold proposition results in a compound Christ who is either 'more perfect' than the Word and the other divine persons,[70] or worse than the Word on its own. These models correspond to the two types of composition that the Nestorian defines in chapter 23: incarnation is either conceived of as a process of natural growth or it is seen as a preternatural event, in which the perfect Word suffers a change for the worse.[71] From chapter 51 we get the impression that both scenarios are equally absurd. However, a different picture emerges when we look at the two models from the perspective of the Nestorian's adversaries. It has already been pointed out that Chalcedonians and Monophysites would not have subscribed to a concept of composition, which results in a Christ

[69] A juxtaposition of the two possible scenarios for the embodiment of the pre-existent soul is found e.g. in Maximus, *Ambigua*, *PG* 91, 1100D2–1101A4: *εἰ γὰρ καθ' αὑτὸ εἶδος πρὸ τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ τὸ σῶμα, εἶδος δὲ ἄλλο . . . κατὰ τὴν ψυχῆς πρὸς τὸ σῶμα σύνθεσιν . . . ἀποτελεῖ, ἢ πάσχοντα πάντως τοῦτο ποιεῖ ἢ πεφυκότα.*

[70] This position is virtually identical with the conclusion of chapter 11; see above, n. 31. Cf. also Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, ii.18, *PG* 86, 1577A5–12.

[71] See above, nn. 32 and 58.

that is greater than the divine Word on its own.[72] In contrast, the second part of the proposition, according to which a part is better than the whole, can be reconciled with universally accepted notions of the divinity as being 'greater than everything', which the Nestorian himself had spelt out in chapter 10. Therefore it was a possible point of departure for theologians who attempted to define a concept of composition that could be applied to the incarnation. Moreover, if these theologians intended to support their position through reference to the anthropological paradigm, they had to have an understanding of man that concurred with this rule. Thus one can put forward the hypothesis that the Nestorian's reference to the pagans and Manichaeans and their 'irrational' anthropology was an attempt to discredit an existing argument in favour of 'neo'-Chalcedonian Christology.

In his refutation of the Nestorian, Leontius of Jerusalem refused to be drawn into a debate about the anthropological paradigm.[73] However, we are in the fortunate position to possess another contemporary text that corroborates our hypothesis and that at the same time permits us to identify the theological milieu against which the Nestorian's polemic is directed. This text is John Philoponus' christological treatise *Arbiter*, which was written shortly before the Ecumenical Council of 553 to further a rapprochement between Monophysites and Chalcedonians.[74]

[72] Cf. Leontius of Jerusalem's rejection of this conclusion in *CN*, i.50, *PG* 86, 1513A1–6. However, it should be pointed out that in his wish to emphasize the necessity of composition Leontius comes close to accepting it elsewhere; cf. *CN*, i.11, *PG* 86, 1448A3–B1 and particularly *CN*, i.14, *PG* 86, 1457D11–1460A1.

[73] For the sake of the argument Leontius concedes that man is better than the soul although he does not show himself convinced of his opponent's reasoning; *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1517C4–8. Leontius' position is that Christ is neither greater nor lesser than the Word but of the same rank; *CN*, i.50, *PG* 86, 1513B3–4, and *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1517C13–D1. An earlier example for this position is found in the second dialogue against the Nestorians of the Scythian monk Maxentius, *Maxentii aliorumque Scytharum monachorum necnon Ioannis Tomitanae urbis episcopi opuscula*, ed. Fr. Glorie (CC Series Latina, 75A; Turnhout, 1978), 81.193–5.

[74] Originally composed in Greek, the *Arbiter* has only survived in a Syriac translation, which was edited and translated into Latin by A. Sanda: *Opuscula monophysitica Ioannis Philoponi* (Beirut, 1930), 35–88 (*CPG* 7260). The text has recently been translated into English by U. M. Lang: *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century: A Study and Translation of the Arbiter* (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Études et documents, 47; Leuven, 2001), pp. 173–217. Since the two versions are very similar I reproduce only Lang's translation. I have changed 'intellectual' in Lang's translation to 'rational'; cf. Sanda, who consistently translates 'rationalis' instead.

Seeking to allay worries about the use of the concept of composition for the incarnation, Philoponus addressed an objection that closely resembles the position held by Nestorian authors:[75] 'If Christ is composed of divinity and humanity, then the divinity is a part of the composite, but if it is a part, it is not complete. Therefore it is less than the composite, since the part is less than the whole and the incomplete less than the complete.'[76] Like Leontius of Byzantium, John Philoponus starts his counter-argument by insisting that one must distinguish between two cases: when a being is seen on its own and when it is seen as a part of a whole.[77] This distinction is then illustrated with the anthropological paradigm: the soul is perfect as a being and imperfect only in so far as it is not a complete man.[78] However, Philoponus does not limit himself to this observation. Instead, he proceeds to state that on its own the soul is 'more valuable than the composite living being, since the rational and incorporeal life of the soul is much more valuable than the things of this world, which accompany the body and are relative to the body, because pure rationality and incorporeality are more valuable than a body'.[79] In other words, he presents man and the soul as a case where a whole is worse, and not better, than a part. As a consequence, he can point to a compound among created beings that does not concur with the axiom about the inferiority of parts. Armed with such empirical evidence, he can then deny the universal validity of this axiom, which provided the basis for his adversaries' argument, and he can support his assertion that composition can be reconciled with common notions about the divine.

It is evident that this reasoning constitutes an exact parallel for the second line of argument in chapter 51. As a Monophysite engaged in a debate with 'strict' Chalcedonians Philoponus

[75] See above, n. 45. For a discussion of the whole passage see Lang, *John Philoponus*, pp. 82–5.

[76] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, X.43, ed. Sanda, 42.6–9; translation by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 211. Cf. also the translation by Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 81.

[77] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, X.43, ed. Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 42; cf. the translations by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 211, and by Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 82.

[78] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, X.43, ed. Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 42; cf. the translations by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 212: 'For even our soul, in relation to the composite and the use of it, is a part and in this respect incomplete. When seen on its own, however, it is not a part of something, but complete . . .', and by Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 82.

[79] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, X.43, ed. Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 42; translation by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 212; cf. the translation by Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 82.

himself could not have been the target of the Nestorian author.[80] However, the comparison between chapter 51 and the *Arbiter* leaves no doubt that the Nestorian argued against 'neo'-Chalcedonian opponents who used the anthropological paradigm in the same way as Philoponus did. That this should be so is not surprising. Philoponus subscribes to a dualistic anthropology with strong Platonic overtones, which gives the soul an eccentric position within creation.[81] Such a world-view, however, was not tied to a specific christological position. Just as there was a close affinity between the 'strict' Chalcedonians whom Philoponus addresses and Leontius' Nestorian adversary, adherents of a dualistic anthropology could be found not only among Monophysites but also among the defenders of Chalcedon,[82] and such anthropology could support not only the concept of a 'composite nature' but also that of a 'composite hypostasis'.[83]

As a consequence, the *Arbiter* can help to reconstruct the context for the Nestorian's reasoning.[84] We have seen that Philoponus starts from the same premiss as chapter 51, namely that a part is either better or worse than the whole. However, there is a decisive difference between the two arguments. While Philoponus really is of the opinion that there are two possible types of composition, the Nestorian's other syllogisms are all based on the assumption that a compound is *always* better than its parts. This limitation is vital for his argument since otherwise

[80] I use the term 'strict Chalcedonian' for Philoponus' addressees because they evidently considered the concept of composition as such unsuitable for the incarnation and not just the specifically Monophysite formula of the 'composite nature'.

[81] Cf. e.g. L. P. Schrenk, 'John Philoponus on the Immortal Soul', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 64 (1990), pp. 151–60.

[82] John of Scythopolis is a well-known representative of this group; see B. R. Suchla, 'Verteidigung eines platonischen Denkmodells einer christlichen Welt', *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 1995, 1 (Göttingen, 1995), pp. 1–28.

[83] In his proofs the Nestorian refuses to recognize a difference between the two concepts; cf. CN, i.11, *PG* 86, 1445A2–3: *πᾶσα μία φύσις ἢ καὶ ὑπόστασις συγκειμένη*, and *passim*. Indeed, comparison shows that Leontius' arguments against composite nature in his *Contra Monophysitas* are identical with the Nestorian's arguments against composite hypostasis in *Contra Nestorianos*. Cf. e.g. *CN*, i.19, *PG* 86, 1472B2–1473A2, and *Contra Monophysitas*, 6, *PG* 86, 1772C2–D6.

[84] Owing to the loss of most Nestorian texts it cannot be excluded that Leontius' adversary lifted his argument from an earlier text; see above, nn. 22 and 29. Then, of course, the credit would go to his predecessor.

he would not be able to attack the christological model of his adversaries. Must we therefore conclude that in chapter 51 the Nestorian jeopardizes his own position? A closer look at the anthropological dimension shows that this is not the case. With his concept of man Philoponus reacts to the position of his Chalcedonian interlocutors, who had undoubtedly used a monistic anthropology to illustrate the axiom about the inferiority of parts.[85] Chapter 51 clearly represents the next step in the debate: it reproduces Philoponus' proof while at the same time reinstating the anthropology of Philoponus' addressees in its original position. This further modification, however, has serious consequences for the logic of the argument. As we have seen before, the Nestorian maintains that his propositions are derived from and illustrated by real cases within creation. Applied to chapter 51, this should result in the manifestly absurd scenario of two contradictory but equally valid anthropologies. However, this is not the case since the second part of the proposition is illustrated with an anthropology that is explicitly called a myth. As was already pointed out by Leontius of Jerusalem, it is therefore purely hypothetical.[86] This allows the conclusion that chapter 51 does not undermine the validity of the other proofs. However, it is also evident that the Nestorian has created a faulty argument: here, too, only the 'correct' first part of the proposition should have appeared. It is not difficult to see why he accepted this drawback. If he had constructed a 'sound' argument he would have had no choice but to revert to the position to which Philoponus had reacted.[87] The 'faulty' set-up, on the other hand, allowed a juxtaposition of the two models and thus the development of the anthropological agenda that I have discussed above. Thus we can conclude that this agenda is the true centre of the Nestorian's polemic against the 'neo'-Chalcedonians.

This interpretation can be corroborated through further analysis of the overall structure of chapter 51. If the Nestorian had built his strategy on the inherent logic of his chosen

[85] In the *Arbiter* Philoponus makes no reference to the 'sleep of the soul'. However, he mentions it in his commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*; cf. *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis de anima libros commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck (CAG 15; Berlin, 1897), 46.35–47.2.

[86] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.51, *PG* 86, 1517A10–15.

[87] Indeed, Babai the Great mentions the inactivity of the soul after death without considering an alternative; see Babai, *Liber de Unione*, iii.9, trans. Vaschalde, 77.3–6.

framework, he would have presented two parallel arguments in order to rule out both types of composition and in each argument he would have strengthened his case by creating close links between the proposition and the corresponding anthropological and christological models. However, he chose such an approach only for the second part of his proof where he describes the consequences of the incarnation of the Word with same phrase, 'becoming worse than itself', that he had used for the embodiment of the pre-existent soul and where he then adds for good measure that this understanding of the incarnation is 'in keeping with the pagan and Manichaean myth about the soul'. By comparison, no such links exist in the first part, where the specific theme of the 'sleep of the soul' is not taken up in the third step of the argument. However, this does not mean that this theme has no bearing on the christological level. Through its juxtaposition with the pagan and Manichaean view of the afterlife it is linked to the belief in the self-sufficient pre-existence of the soul and thus eventually also to the Christology that corresponds to it. We can conclude that by creating a connection between the two anthropologies the Nestorian has subverted the logical structure of chapter 51. Instead of two linear arguments we find an asymmetrical web of both vertical and horizontal relations.

What were the reasons for creating such a complex edifice? I start the discussion with the second part of the argument, where the Nestorian's agenda is most transparent. By linking the Chalcedonian Christology to the Manichaean and Origenist belief in the self-sufficient pre-existence of the soul he can insinuate that the position of his adversaries is equally non-Christian and irrational. Comparison with the *Arbiter* again provides the context. When Philoponus applied the concept of composition to the incarnation, he encountered the following objection from his Chalcedonian interlocutors:

> If the rational life of the soul is more valuable than life in the body and in relation to the body, ... does then not a certain inferiority affect the divinity of the Word, on entering into union with the human nature, since, when considered on its own unattached, it is superior to a composite which participates in the inferior, namely human nature?[88]

[88] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, X.44, ed. Sanda, *Opuscula*, 43.13–7; translation by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 212. Cf. also the translation by Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 83.

In short, Philoponus' adversaries argued that the change suffered by the soul during its embodiment would imply a similar change of the Word in the incarnation. It is evident that chapter 51 reproduces this counter-argument,[89] while at the same time integrating it into the original framework as laid out by Philoponus.[90] There is, however, one difference between the two texts: unlike the Nestorian Philoponus confined the discussion to abstract statements. The reference to an actual state of the soul may well have been a modification that the Nestorian introduced into the original argument since apart from the anthropological paradigms chapter 51 is also couched in abstract terms.[91] It is not difficult to see why the concept of pre-existence appealed to the Nestorian: it provides the closest parallel for the divine Word before the incarnation while at the same time being universally condemned.[92] Moreover, comparison shows that Nestorians and 'strict' Chalcedonians raised the same objection against the Monophysite and 'neo'-Chalcedonian Christology that Christians put forward against the concept of a pre-existence of the soul, namely, that preternatural composition leads to change. In chapter 51 the Nestorian skilfully exploits the polemical potential of this parallel through conflation of the two discourses: he replaces the anthropological model that was employed by his adversaries with that of the pagans and Manichaeans and thus alerts his audience to the affinity between the positions of the 'neo'-Chalcedonians and the pagans and Manichaeans on the one hand and of the Nestorians and the Christians on the other.

[89] Indeed, the phrase 'does then not a certain inferiority affect the divinity of the Word' has a close counterpart in ch. 23. Cf. Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.23, *PG* 86, 1489B13–C1: *πρὸς ὕφεσιν κατηνέχθη*.

[90] By giving an insight into the *genesis* of the debate the *Arbiter* can thus help us to understand why in ch. 51 the aspect of change is not yet mentioned in the second part of the proposition and is only added in the subsequent steps. As a result of this addition, the two cases in ch. 51 are no longer exactly complementary. Becoming better only leads to the actualization of innate 'natural' possibilities whereas becoming worse involves a change. The obvious equivalent for this last case would have been a 'change for the better', that is a composition in which a component as such is improved in its essential make-up and not merely 'completed'. Such juxtaposition is indeed found in another context; see Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.15, *PG* 86, 1460A10–14.

[91] Cf. the phrases *καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἐπινοουμένων*, *καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἐπινοούμενα*, *καθ' ἑαυτὰ θεωρουμένων*.

[92] Cf. the parallel that Leontius of Jerusalem draws between the Word and the soul in *CN*, iv.19, *PG* 86, 1685B8–10: *τὸν τεχθέντα σεσαρκωμένον λόγον . . . ψυχὴν τὴν σαρκωθεῖσαν . . . γεγεννῆσθαι*.

The Nestorian had good reasons for making his criticism in such a roundabout way. A direct attack on the level of the paradigm would have had little effect because his adversaries would undoubtedly have been prudent enough not to make their case through reference to the pre-existent soul.[93] However, this does not mean that his argument has no anthropological component. In the previous discussion we have seen that the real target of his polemic was the belief in a sentient afterlife. The christological dimension of this theme reveals itself when we consider that 'neo'-Chalcedonian theologians such Leontius of Byzantium and Leontius of Jerusalem used the state of the soul after death as a paradigm for the divine Word before its incarnation.[94] The reasons for their choice are obvious: sentient afterlife could serve the same purpose of showing that composition did not preclude self-sufficiency but, unlike pre-existence, it had the advantage of being widely accepted among Christians. As a consequence it threatened to undermine the universal validity of the axiom about the inferiority of parts. Since this axiom provided the basis for the Nestorian's argument, it became vitally important for him to discredit this belief as well. As we have seen, he achieved this aim by presenting sentient afterlife as the mirror image of the non-Christian and irrational concept of pre-existence.[95] This set-up had the further advantage that it allowed juxtaposition with the 'sleep of the soul', which emphasized the Christian character of his own anthropology.

As I have pointed out before, this juxtaposition is the only link between the monistic concept of man and the remainder of the proof since the particular concept of the 'sleep of the soul' is

[93] Personal convictions were another matter: Philoponus' attitude towards the question of pre-existence is at least ambiguous. This has led to diverging interpretations in modern secondary literature; see e.g. R. Sorabji, 'John Philoponus', in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (Leiden, 1987), pp. 1–40, and L. Judson, 'God or Nature? Philoponus on Generability and Perishability', ibid. pp. 179–96.

[94] Leontius of Jerusalem, *CN*, i.26, *PG* 86, 1492D11–15: *ὥσπερ οὖν προούσαις ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐνοῦσθαι τὰ ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει ἡμῖν ἀποδιδόμενα σώματα οὐ κεκώλυται οὕτως οὐδὲ τῷ ἐφοσονοῦν ἀκτίστως προϋπάρχοντι λόγῳ τὸ προσφάτως κτιζόμενον τῆς σαρκὸς διὰ τὴν προϋπαρξιν ἁπλῶς*. Cf. also Leontius of Byzantium, *Epilysis*, *PG* 86, 1944A1–3 (*CPG* 6815), ed. Daley, 94.28–32.

[95] Interestingly, the Origenists also attempted to turn the tables against their opponents by arguing that if the soul was self-sufficient after death there was no reason why it should not have existed before its composition with the body; cf. Maximus, *Ambigua*, *PG* 91, 1101A6–10.

not taken up in the christological application. In order to determine the reasons for this 'loose end' we need to remember that the Nestorian's anthropological argument is not without problems: its logic demands that the soul exists before its composition with the body in similar state of potentiality and thus contradicts the belief in a *creatio ex nihilo*. It is evident that in chapter 51 the Nestorian could only have created a link between his anthropology and the corresponding Christology if he had made this nexus explicit.[96] Thus there can be no doubt that he abstained from perfecting the symmetry of the argument because otherwise the inconsistencies of his position would have become all too apparent.

Having discussed the different strands of the argument in chapter 51 we can now turn to an analysis of the framework, which permits the Nestorian to make his case in this fashion. We have seen that for the period of co-existence of body and soul he does not recognize a difference between his own anthropology and that of the pagans and Manichaeans: in both cases the soul is dependent on the body for the performance of all its operations. This is essential for the validity of his proof because otherwise he could not maintain that composition leads to substantial change. Contemporary evidence suggests that this is a fair presentation of the Manichaean position.[97] However, the same cannot be said for the anthropology of the Christian theologians who were his real target. This is again obvious from Philoponus' *Arbiter*. When dealing with the criticism of his interlocutors that in the case of the soul composition with the body leads to change, Philoponus saw himself constrained to qualify the use of the paradigm by making a distinction between the impassible nature of the Word and the passible nature of the soul.[98] However, he then sought to limit the change that is experienced by the soul through a distinction

[96] Indeed, in ch. 11 the Nestorian himself had considered the case that the non-compounded Word is already 'potentially' incarnated; see above, nn. 32 and 33.

[97] Cf. the exposé of the Manichaean position by the Manichaean opponent of Paul the Persian; see Paul the Persian, *Disputatio cum Manichaeo*, i, *PG* 88, 537B3–C2: *ἡ ψυχὴ πάλαι λόγος ἦν καὶ ἀκοὴ ἦν . . . νῦν δὲ ἐν τῷ σώματι καταβληθεῖσα γέγονεν ἀκουστικὴ ἐξ ἀκοῆς . . . .*

[98] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, x.44, ed. Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 43; cf. the translations by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 213, and Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 83. This is a traditional argument, which constitutes the basic disagreement between Nestorians and the two other sects. See above, n. 42.

between its 'activities' and 'sufferings' in conjunction with the body, which are changeable, and its 'essence', which is immortal and unchanging.[99] Thus, he could claim that there was sufficient similarity to make the paradigm viable.

A closer look at the physiological parts of the Nestorian's argument shows that he was not only aware of such an alternative concept but that he formulated his own view of the soul's dependence on the body as a direct response to it. As we have seen he attributes to the soul 'rationality' (*λογικόν*) and 'free will' (*αὐτοπροαίρετος βουλή*) and then asserts that after death these faculties are inert because without the body and its senses the soul is incapable of 'self-moved operation' (*ἐνέργεια αὐτοκίνητος*). This statement would surely have struck a contemporary reader as odd since traditionally self-movement was regarded as an essential property of the soul, for which it did not need the body. Indeed, Plato had developed this concept as a proof for the continuing activity of the soul after death and theologians like Athanasius of Alexandria had adapted it for the Christian discourse in order to make the same point.[100] In the sixth century it could still be found in the writings of Leontius of Byzantium, who defined the rational soul as 'a self-moved substance' (*οὐσία αὐτοκίνητος*), separable from the body and self-sufficient, without need of the senses.[101] Thus there existed a fully developed and well-established anthropological model, which seemed to prove sentient afterlife and which could be pitted against the notion of a sleep of the soul.

When the Nestorian used the same language but attributed actualized self-movement to the human compound instead of the soul this must therefore be understood as a direct challenge to the alternative model: through his reinterpretation he claimed a term that had traditionally supported a dualistic anthropology for his own monistic concept of man. The implications for the christological argument are evident. While accepting

[99] John Philoponus, *Arbiter*, x.44, ed. Sanda, *Opuscula*, pp. 43–4; cf. the translation by Lang, *John Philoponus*, p. 213: 'Since even the rational soul, *qua* being capable of suffering, namely in its operation, suffers in some respects and is changed by its natural link with the body and by the affection [arising] through it, however, *qua* being incapable of suffering in the intelligible content of substance, it remains no less impassible and immortal, even if it is linked with the passible and changeable body.' Cf. also the translation by Sanda, *Opuscula*, p. 83.

[100] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra gentes*, 33, ed. and trans. P. Th. Camelot, *Athanase d'Alexandrie: Contre les païens* (SC, 18bis; 3rd edn., Paris, 1983), 158, 160 (*CPG* 2090), with reference to Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245 c–e.

[101] Leontius of Byzantium, *CNE*, *PG* 86, 1281B7–C8, ed. Daley, 11.1–2.

Philoponus' distinction between the substance of the soul and its activities and sufferings together with the body, the Nestorian could redraw the boundaries between the two spheres in a way that the substance of the soul denoted nothing more than its mere existence. This allowed him to deny even the partial resemblance with the Word that had made its use as a paradigm viable for Philoponus.

At the end of our analysis of the Nestorian excerpts in the first book of Leontius of Jerusalem's *Contra Nestorianos* we can conclude that the achievement of the Nestorian author does not lie in the invention of new arguments but in the ingenious assemblage and elaboration of existing themes. Comparison with the *Arbiter* has shown that the Nestorian's argument in chapter 51 reproduced every single step of the previous debate and that he took great care to address all counter-arguments that had been put forward by the opponents of his own position. The development of this debate can be summed up as follows: Nestorians and 'strict' Chalcedonians claimed that the concept of composition could not be reconciled with accepted notions about the divine because in a compound a part is always inferior to the whole. 'Neo'-Chalcedonians and Monophysites, on the other hand, denied the universal validity of this rule and therefore also rejected the conclusion that their adversaries drew from it. In their attempts to prove the correctness of their positions theologians of both parties referred to the constitution of man as the compound of soul and body. The Nestorians maintained that a soul was fully functioning only when it could make use of a body and that it was therefore worse than the compound man, which allowed them to subsume it under a general law of compound beings. To refute this position some 'neo'-Chalcedonian and Monophysite theologians appealed to an alternative anthropology, which regarded the soul as a self-sufficient being and therefore as superior to the whole man. This permitted them to complement the rule about the inferiority of parts with an alternative rule that was reconcilable with common notions about the divine. However, the Nestorians then objected that if this concept of man were correct, the soul would suffer a change when compounded with the body and that the same would then also apply to the divine Word.

It is at this point of the debate that the argument of chapter 51 sets in. The Nestorian author replaced the rival Christian anthropology with that of the pagans and Manichaeans and shifted the focus from abstract statements to the concrete case of the pre-existing soul, which was the 'obvious' anthropological

parallel for the non-incarnated Word. It is likely that this replacement suggested itself to the Nestorian because of the similarity of the arguments used in both discourses: in the debate between Christians and Manichaeans about the concept of the pre-existing soul Christian authors rejected their adversaries' belief in a pre-existing self-sufficient soul for the same reason that Nestorian theologians rejected the 'neo'-Chalcedonian Christology and the concomitant anthropology: they argued that the soul would then suffer change when it entered into a composition with the body. By alerting his audience to the affinity between the positions of the 'neo'-Chalcedonians and the pagans and Manichaeans on the one hand and of the Nestorians and the Christians on the other the Nestorian author could insinuate that his adversaries had stepped outside the bounds of the Christian community. For this strategy of exclusion he could build on a precedent: in their polemic against the Origenists who also accepted pre-existence mainstream Christians had not only raised the same objection but had moreover branded their fellow believers as pagans and Manichaeans.

However, at this point a first problem arose: after the condemnation of the Origenists Chalcedonian theologians did not refer to the pre-existent soul as a paradigm and therefore could not be directly accused of subscribing to this concept. Instead they had recourse to sentient afterlife, which was based on the same dualistic anthropology and thus provided them with an equally effective paradigm. If the Nestorian wanted to undermine the anthropological foundations of his adversaries' christological argument he therefore had to make a case against sentient afterlife as well. Here, however, he was confronted with a second problem: sentient afterlife was widely accepted among Christians whereas his own position of a sleep of the soul, which effectively ruled out the use of man as a paradigm, was only a partisan view. His solution was to deny this situation and to claim that his concept of the sleep of the soul was the Christian position *tout court*. In order to win his readers over to this view, he contrived an argument that linked sentient afterlife back to pre-existence and then presented this link in a way that his readers were first confronted with the universally rejected concept of pre-existence and then needed to work out for themselves the implications of a substantial change for sentient afterlife. At this point his pretence to present the pagan and Manichaean position had the further advantage that the Manichaean understanding of embodiment did indeed imply

change. By focusing on this position he could therefore gloss over the fact that the same criticism could not have been levelled against his Christian adversaries, who saw the soul as not substantially affected through its composition with the body and therefore would not have accepted the premisses of his argument. Since the objections against pre-existence that provided his starting point had already been made against the Origenists he could then present his attack against sentient afterlife as a continuation of the purge of Christianity from alien ideas that had started with the fight against pre-existence.

However, the Nestorian could achieve this aim only by sacrificing the consistency of his own position: the twofold strategy based on Scripture and reason, on which his attack was based, led to insurmountable problems for his own argument, because absolute denial of change was irreconcilable with the *creatio ex nihilo*. The choice to conceal these problems rather than to address them is characteristic of his approach, which despite the use of syllogisms is 'rhetorical' rather than logical. It has a close parallel in the juxtaposition between the two anthropologies, which is only possible at the expense of the logical foundations of his argument. The integration of the different themes into a single framework of horizontal and vertical relations creates an impression of coherence that is meant to dazzle the reader rather than invite him to a thorough analysis.

The indisputable sophistry of the argument may tempt modern readers to regard chapter 51 as no more than an ingenious but ultimately inane *bricolage* of terms and concepts. However, it would be fairer to judge the Nestorian's achievement by the standards of his own time: there can be no doubt that his peers would have appreciated his total command of the rules of the discourse and his impressive ability to harness them for his own ends. Moreover, one must not forget that he develops his argument against the background of a clash between two diametrically opposed world-views and that he attempts a radical reinterpretation of traditional and deeply entrenched views of the human constitution. His assertion that rationality and self-determination are in abeyance if the soul does not have something that it can move has profound consequences for the position of man in the Christian world-view. Theologians who were influenced by Platonic concepts saw rationality or self-movement and its corollary self-determination as the image of God in man, thereby emphasizing the soul's link

with the creator as opposed to creation.[102] By transferring the performance of these faculties from the soul to the human compound, the Nestorian denied the soul such an eccentric position and placed it firmly with all other created beings.[103] However, his understanding of the soul must not be mistaken as the expression of a pessimistic world-view: it goes hand in hand with an affirmation of the goodness of the material world and in particular of the human body, which his adversaries often regarded with undisguised loathing.[104]

One question remains to be asked: could the Nestorian author hope to sow discord among his Chalcedonians adversaries when he claimed that sentient afterlife was a non-Christian concept and that Christians who believed in it were no better than the condemned Origenists? As the case of Cosmas Indikopleustes shows, the Nestorian's time saw a growing hostility against theologians like Philoponus, whose teachings were heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy.[105] Thus one can argue that for his attack against a dualistic anthropology Leontius' adversary could count on a broader consensus. However, by focusing on sentient afterlife he took on a popular belief that was by no means limited to Platonizing circles. Moreover, the nexus between the states of the soul before and after its composition with the body, on which his argument is based, was far from universally accepted. Even a rabid anti-Origenist like Emperor Justinian did not doubt the belief in an active afterlife. Indeed, in his *Edict against Origen* Justinian based one of his arguments against pre-existence on a juxtaposition with sentient afterlife when he used the parable of Lazarus to point out that after death the soul remembers its deeds whereas it has

[102] Cf. e.g. John of Scythopolis, *Scholia in DN*, ix.6, *PG* 4, 377C8–11; for the equation of self-determination with self-movement, cf. *Scholia in DN*, vii.8, *PG* 4, 365A10–12.

[103] By identifying the whole man and not only the rational soul with the image of God, Leontius' adversary takes a traditional Antiochene and Nestorian position. See W. F. Macomber, 'The Theological Synthesis of Cyrus of Edessa, an East Syrian Theologian of the Mid Sixth Century', *OCP* 30 (1964), pp. 5–38, esp. p. 15, nn. 2 and 4.

[104] This is especially evident in chapter 7, where the Nestorian maintains that the soul needs the body in order for man to lead a Christian life; see above, n. 34. This goaded Leontius of Jerusalem into writing an especially incensed response; cf. *CN*, i.7, *PG* 86, 1428D1–1429C2.

[105] Cf. e.g. Patriarch Germanus' negative attitude towards the 'philosopher' Philoponus in *De haeresibus et synodis*, c. 33, *PG* 98, 69D–72A (*CPG* 8020).

no memory of its pre-existence.[106] Therefore it is tempting to conclude that despite his ingeniousness the Nestorian only preached to the converted.

However, the situation at the end of Late Antiquity was more complex than the comparison with Justinian implies. During the sixth and seventh centuries the concept of the sleep of the soul, which had its traditional home in Syria,[107] was gaining ground in other parts of the Byzantine world and it was by no means confined to those who subscribed to a Nestorian Christology.[108] Thus the Nestorian author could expect to find agreement well beyond his own sect, which may help to explain his self-confidence and assertiveness in the face of adversaries whose christological positions were much more widely accepted than his. As the analysis of the *Arbiter* has shown, there was a close affinity between his position and that of Philoponus' addressees and there can be no doubt that this affinity extended to their anthropology. After 553, when composition became a part of the official creed, 'strict' Chalcedonians could no longer admit to their christological views without impunity. By comparison, the anthropological debate had not been settled in a definitive way and a monistic position remained acceptable. Therefore it can be argued that the Nestorian attempted to woo 'strict' Chalcedonians by exploiting the tensions that must have arisen between their world-view and the Christology that was now foisted on them.

Moreover, Leontius of Jerusalem's response in chapter 51 suggests that the Nestorian's strategy was at least partially successful even among 'neo'-Chalcedonians. While not abandoning his Christology Leontius was nevertheless willing to concede to his adversary that man falls under the law of compound

[106] Justinian, *Edictum contra Origenem*, ed. Ameliotti and Migliardi Zingale, *Scritti teologici*, 82.10–17.

[107] For an overview see F. Gavin, 'The Sleep of the Soul in the Early Syriac Church', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 40 (1920), pp. 103–20.

[108] Among the Chalcedonians who accepted the concept of a 'sleep of the soul' were the addressees of Eustratius Presbyter's *Refutation of those who say that the souls of men are not active after the separation from the body* (*CPG* 7522). Like Leontius' Nestorian adversary, they supported their view with a reference to Heb. 10:39–40; cf. Cod. Vat. gr. 511, fo. 164. In the seventh century this position had gained such popularity among the monks of Palestine that Maximus the Confessor felt the need to refute it; cf. *Epistulae* 6–7, *PG* 91, 424C3–440C1. See D. Krausmüller, 'God or Angels as Impersonators of Saints: A Belief and its Contexts in the "Refutation" of Eustratius of Constantantinople and in the Writings of Anastasius of Sinai', *Gouden Hoorn* 6 (1998), pp. 5–16.

beings. Leontius' decision to make his case without recourse to the anthropological paradigm is in marked contrast to Philoponus' argument, in which this paradigm played a central role.[109] Thus one can wonder whether this discrepancy was not in part caused by the growing hostility against the dualistic anthropology that provided the closest parallel for the concept of a composite Christ.[110]

The Nestorian author presented his case for a Christian anthropology in the framework of the christological discourse. However, it is evident that its significance goes far beyond providing an argument against the Chalcedonian understanding of the incarnation. If the Nestorian had succeeded in turning the rejection of sentient afterlife into a shibboleth for true Christianity, the consequence would have been a radical break with the earlier Christian tradition and the suppression or reinterpretation not only of Origen, Evagrius, and the two Gregories but of a great number of patristic theologians, including Antiochene authors like John Chrysostom.[111] However, it would be wrong to regard the Nestorian's endeavour merely as a sign of the growing intolerance of the time: one should also acknowledge the positive aspects of his anthropology, which affirms the positive value of created being, and the virtuosity of his play with the rules of the theological discourse at the end of Late Antiquity.

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[109] Grillmeier and Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition*,vol. 2: *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604)*, pt. 4, *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451*, trans. O. C. Dean (London, 1996), p. 144. See also Lang, *John Philoponus*, pp. 101–57.

[110] Indeed, it has often been remarked that from the middle of the sixth century theologians became less and less inclined to use man as a model for the incarnated Word. See Grillmeier and Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 498–500, on the author of *De sectis*. Cf. also K.-H. Uthemann, 'Das anthropologische Modell der hypostatischen Union', *Kleronomia* 14 (1982), pp. 215–312, esp. pp. 299–301, on Maximus.

[111] Cf. F.-X. Druet, *Langage, images et visages de la mort chez Jean Chrysostome* (Namur, 1990), p. 20.