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LEONTIUS OF BYZANTIUM AND HIS DEFENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON

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THE contribution to christology made by Leontius of Byzantium (fl. 520–543 A.D.)[1] lies in his doctrine that the manhood of Christ is 'enhypostatic' (ἐνυπόστατος) — the doctrine of Enhypostasia or Inexistence. The Council of Chalcedon (451) defined the person or hypostasis of Christ as consisting in the union of two perfect natures, the nature of God and the nature of man, without division or confusion. On the principle laid down by Aristotle and accepted by all disputants, that there can be no such thing as a nature or substance without hypostasis (φύσις, οὐσία ἀνυπόστατος), the question arises of how it is possible to avoid the conclusion of two hypostases, corresponding to the two perfect natures, in Christ. Such was the problem set by the definition of Chalcedon and the logic of Aristotle.

Leontius accepted the Aristotelian distinction between 'nature' (φύσις, οὐσία) and 'hypostasis' (ὑπόστασις), and defended the Council of Chalcedon from the point of view of a disciple of the school of Alexandria with its religious interest in the One Christ. That attitude is well expressed in the confession of Athanasius: "God became man that man might become God." The initiative in the redemption of man was taken by the Eternal Logos, who, partaking of the one nature of Godhead, possessed an hypostasis of his own. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, he received into his own hypostasis a human nature that was perfect and entire. The result is that both the divine nature and the human nature are conceived to live together, without division or confusion, in the one pre-existent hypostasis of the Logos. In this hypostatic union the prin-

[1] The name of Leontius of Byzantium was brought to the serious consideration of English readers by H. M. Relton, A Study in Christology (1917). The works attributed to Leontius are found in Migne, Patrologia Graeca, volume 86.

ciple that nature cannot exist without hypostasis is not violated. For while the human nature does not possess a separate hypostasis of its own, it is nevertheless united with the divine nature in the hypostasis of the Logos. In other words, the human nature is 'enhypostatic' (ἐνυπόστατος). Leontius is at pains to show that the term 'enhypostatic' is not to be applied to an 'accident' or a 'quality,' but only to a complete 'nature'; it must therefore be distinguished also from the concept of 'hypostasis.' By this means, Leontius endeavors to ward off the heresy against which the Council of Chalcedon had uttered its anathema, of dividing the One Christ into two hypostases or persons.

In order to illustrate the doctrine of Enhypostasia, Leontius offers as an analogy the union of the soul and body in the person of man. Another analogy is that of the burning torch:

> The wick is one thing, the burning substance of fire another. But when combined with one another, and contained in one another, they together make a single torch.

In a third passage Leontius is more explicit, when he states in his treatise, "Against the Nestorians":

> Yet we do not hold that the human nature of Christ existed in some hypostasis peculiar to it alone . . . but in the hypostasis of the Logos, which existed before it. . . . For the hypostasis of the Logos has the divine nature and properties, but it does not stand in these alone. It abounds also in those characteristics which result from the assumption of the more recent [i. e. the human] nature. We have to notice this feature similarly in red-hot iron. The mass of iron, pre-existing in its own hypostasis, is subsequently placed in the furnace, when a nature of fire is begotten in it, in addition to its original nature. This fire had no existence, either at a previous time or in its own hypostasis. It exists only in the hypostasis of the iron (Migne, 86, 1552–1553).

Previous to the year 1908, when J. P. Junglas published his "Leontius von Byzanz," it was held that Leontius derived the concept of Enhypostasia from the categories of Aristotle. This was the contention of Friedrich Loofs ("Leontius von Byzanz," 1887), which was accepted by Harnack ("Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte") in the same year, and by Relton in 1917, although Relton seems to have been unacquainted with the researches published by Junglas in 1908. Junglas showed clearly that the doctrine of Inexistence is foreign to the logic as well as

the psychology of Aristotle. It is to the neo-platonic psychology that one must look for an analogy. Junglas readily admits that the word 'enhypostatic' is not to be found in the neo-platonic philosophy. He also shows that Leontius was not the first to introduce the term into Greek theology, or even into Greek christology. But it is important to observe that Leontius fixed the meaning of the term (after distinguishing it from 'accident,' 'quality,' and 'hypostasis') in its application to the person of Christ. By means of this conceptual distinction he was able to make the Tome of Leo and the formula of Chalcedon more acceptable to the religious feeling of the East.

Among the fathers who exercised the greatest influence upon Leontius must be included Athanasius, the three Cappadocians, Cyril of Alexandria, and Pseudo-Dionysius, whom our author revered as an Apostolic father. The knowledge of Aristotle was mediated to Leontius partly by the Cappadocian fathers, in particular Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, and partly by the 'experts' in the philosophy of his own day. In the eye of Leontius, Plato was mightier than Aristotle. Neo-platonism was the fashion in philosophy, and Pseudo-Dionysius had more influence in the church than Philoponus the Aristotelian. In the person of Dionysius, neo-platonic mysticism had crept into the Eastern church at the beginning of the sixth century. Like Augustine, Leontius described God as essential Goodness, and it is clear that they both derive this tenet from neo-platonism. In the case of Leontius, it is highly probable that he is directly indebted for this conception to Dionysius. Thus the Leontian idea of Enhypostasia is a product springing out of the soil of neo-platonism, and not from the logic of Aristotle.

There were many in the first half of the sixth century who belonged to the circle of Dionysius. For instance, there was Severus, the greatest opponent of the Council of Chalcedon. Like Leontius he is a follower of Cyril of Alexandria, and the christology of Cyril does not differ essentially from that of Severus and Leontius. That Severus is really orthodox in his teaching, and no monophysite heretic, is one of the most interesting results of recent investigation (Lebon, "Le Monophysisme

sévérien," 1909), and may be compared to the discovery that Nestorius is not 'nestorian.' The only difference between Severus and Leontius is that Severus, when confronted by the Council of Chalcedon, fell back upon Cyril and the formulae of the Henoticon of Zeno (482). On the other hand, Leontius continued the development of scientific terminology begun by the Cappadocian fathers, and applied to the definition of Chalcedon the concept of Enhypostasia. He was also aided in his reinterpretation of Chalcedon by the mystical piety which breathes in the pages of Dionysius. Thus he satisfied both a scientific and a religious interest, and enabled the school of Alexandria to triumph over the school of Antioch (Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius) in the christology of the Eastern church.

A study of the christology of the first half of the sixth century reveals some interesting facts. Although Apollinarius was condemned in the fourth century, his name and influence lived in the days of Leontius. This is illustrated in the literary frauds of the Apollinarians, those pious forgeries by which Cyril of Alexandria was one of the first to be deceived. The celebrated phrase, "One incarnate nature of the divine Logos," which, though Apollinarian in origin, was used by Cyril as a saying of Athanasius, frequently recurs in the course of the controversy between the orthodox and the anti-chalcedonians, and in the sixth century it became definitely connected with the name of Cyril, in whose writings it is often found. The question then became acute as to which side can fairly claim the authority of Cyril. The Chalcedonians, contending over the body of Cyril, insisted upon the fact that he was an exponent of the two-nature teaching, that his teaching was in agreement with the Tome of Leo, and that both Cyril and Leo were received by the Council of 451. Thus the Apollinarian phrase must be an anticipation of the two-nature teaching of Chalcedon. Severus and his followers, on the other hand, deny any agreement between Cyril and Leo, and regard the phrase as an expression of the unity of the person of Christ.

The first public pronouncement against the frauds of the Apollinarians was made in the religious conference of 531 be-

tween the orthodox and the Severians in Constantinople. At the same conference the writings of Dionysius were brought forward by the Severians in support of their doctrine, or rather in opposition to the Council of Chalcedon. Doubt was cast upon their genuineness by the orthodox Hypatius, bishop of Ephesus. But the voice of Hypatius could not stem the tide which was steadily flowing into the Eastern church — the tide of neoplatonic mysticism. In the sixth century, Chalcedonians like Leontius, Ephraim of Antioch, and Pamphilus cited the authority of Dionysius in favour of the current orthodoxy.

The chief opponents of Chalcedon were Severus of Antioch, Julian of Halicarnassus, Philoxenus of Hierapolis, and John Philoponus of Alexandria. Julian differs from Severus, who opposed him, in his adherence to a genuine monophysite doctrine. Philoponus, the commentator of Aristotle, was carried by his speculations into the error of tritheism.

Also among the defenders of Chalcedon different shades of opinion were represented. John Maxentius, the leader of the so-called Scythian monks, stands close to the point of view of Severus. His advocacy in 519 of the formula, "One of the holy Trinity suffered in the flesh," must be counted as an episode in the theopaschite controversy, begun about 470 A.D. by Peter the Fuller of Antioch, whose addition to the Trishagion was supported by Severus in 509–511 at Constantinople. Maxentius called the Papal legates 'Nestorians,' because they refused to accept the formula on the ground that it was an innovation upon the definition of Chalcedon. The emperor Justinian accepted it in 520; but not until the religious conference of 531 were the orthodox able to join with the followers of Severus in the confession of the Scythian monks. The formula of the monks, like the phrase, "One incarnate nature of the divine Logos," was a watchword claimed by Chalcedonians and antichalcedonians alike. It is an indication of the spirit (that of Cyril) in which the Council of 451 was being interpreted.

Quite distinct from Maxentius are Justinian, the emperor-theologian, Ephraim of Antioch, and Eustathius the monk.

Their opposition to Severus is very pronounced (Maxentius does not, I think, mention the name of Severus). In the religious conference of 531 Justinian had endeavored to mediate between the orthodox and the Severians. Later on, in 536, he acceded to the condemnation of Severus. Until the year 543 he had favored the cause of Leontius and the 'Origenist' party, but withdrew his support in the publication of the imperial edict against Origen of January, 543. Shortly afterward, however, the anti-origenist party was smitten by an edict against the Three Chapters. Ephraim of Antioch belongs to the straitest Chalcedonian sect, a die-hard, who opposed the cause of liberal orthodoxy as represented by Leontius and other 'Origenist' monks in Palestine. Ephraim, I venture to say, was more effective in his administrative acts than in his literary productions, while Eustathius tilts with more zeal than knowledge against Severus.

Like Eustathius, Leontius frequently misunderstands Severus, and it is remarkable that the misunderstanding rests largely upon the varying use of a single word (φύσις). Unlike Eustathius, Leontius is able to admire the ability of Severus, and devotes at least two treatises ("Epilysis," "Triginta Capita") to a solution of his arguments. He cannot understand why Severus is not an adherent of the Council of Chalcedon.

Among the defenders of Chalcedon, Pamphilus and Leontius are most nearly akin. They are both acquainted with the logic of Aristotle, and Pamphilus frequently cites Aristotle by name. Both of them quote Pseudo-Dionysius with reverent approval, and it is abundantly clear that they are deeply read in his works, and that his mystical piety had made a deep impression on them. If we may judge from the striking similarities between Leontius and Pamphilus, particularly in the discussion of Enhypostasia, it is at least probable that Pamphilus belonged to the same (Origenist or Alexandrian) circle, or school of thought, as Leontius, and is directly indebted to the latter for some of his material. It is further not improbable that Pamphilus, like Leontius, is to be connected with Jerusalem. If this last is so, it is an indication that Pamphilus is to be classed with Leontius,

Nonnus, and others as one of the leaders in the cause of liberal orthodoxy in Palestine in the sixth century.

Palestine is very important for the religious history of the first half of the sixth century. Early in the century (ca. 508) Nephalius, a Chalcedonian, acting in concert with Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem, drove out of the monasteries of Palestine those monks who were opposed to the Council of 451. On hearing of these disturbances, Severus hurried away from his laura (near Gaza) to Constantinople, and while there (509–511) endeavored to counteract the work of Nephalius. In 511–512 he returned to his laura, and continued to work for the abolition of the Henoticon compromise of 482. In the winter of 511–512 a synod was held at Sidon, in which the celebrated Philoxenus of Hierapolis (Xenaias of Mabug) led the attack upon the Council of Chalcedon. Owing to the influence of Flavian, patriarch of Antioch, this synod did not pass a vote of condemnation upon Chalcedon; but Flavian was deposed from his office, and in 512 Severus was appointed in his place. At the Synod of Tyre in 515, Severus and Philoxenus were the leading spirits. The Henoticon was there interpreted as implying the abrogation of the Council of Chalcedon.

From the year 515 onwards Palestine was filled with controversy. John the Grammarian of Caesarea, a Chalcedonian, contended against Severus in the period 515–519. So did John of Scythopolis (in Galilee), the pioneer in the investigation of the Apollinarian frauds. The noise of strife between Severus and Julian in Egypt reached the monasteries of Palestine in 520–525 and stirred Leontius to renewed effort on behalf of the orthodox faith. In 531 Leontius and other monks departed from Jerusalem and its vicinity for Constantinople to attend a religious conference of reunion between the orthodox and the Severians. Again in 536 Leontius was one of the representatives from Palestine who arrived in Constantinople to take part in a synod which condemned Severus, Anthimus, and others. In particular during the years 536–553 Palestine was the scene of the Origenistic controversy, in which the admirers of Origen

(Leontius, Nonnus, Theodore Ascidas, Domitian) were arrayed against the followers of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The details of this controversy may be found in the Life of St. Sabas,[1] written by Cyril of Scythopolis in Galilee.

The use of collected citations from the Fathers is one of the characteristics of the age of Leontius. In his day there were at least four main collections of citations, or catenae, which went under the names respectively of Theodoret, Pope Leo, the Council of Chalcedon, and Cyril. These were common property for theological writers, and were widely circulated. This stock of citations was accessible to Leontius, and there is no need to infer (as does Loofs) that our author is dependent upon John Maxentius because a certain number of authors are cited by both in common. Neither can it be concluded (with Junglas) on similar grounds that Leontius is indebted to Ephraim of Antioch.

To the collection of citations associated with the name of Cyril a particular interest attaches. It was drawn up in the first decade of the sixth century by the Chalcedonians in Constantinople, and consisted of 250 citations from Cyril. The object of its authors was to prove that Cyril is an exponent of the two-nature doctrine of Chalcedon. Severus criticised this collection in his work entitled "Cyril, or the Truthlover (Philalethes)," in which he interpreted the 250 citations differently. John the Grammarian of Caesarea attacked the Philalethes, and Severus in his rejoinder to John ("Defence of the Philalethes," written 510–512) reproaches him for misusing 230 of the citations.

One of the results of the controversy between Severus and John was a renewed interest in the study of the fathers, particularly Cyril of Alexandria. This was the atmosphere in which Leontius grew up as a youth. In the list of citations (florilegium) which Leontius attached to each of the three books of "Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos," as well as in a similar list in the main body of his "Contra Monophysitas," which is a defence of the Council of Chalcedon, numerous quotations from

[1] J. B. Cotelerius, Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta, III, 220–376.

Cyril occur. The object of Leontius is the same as that of John of Caesarea, namely to interpret Cyril in harmony with the Council of Chalcedon.

Among the defenders of Chalcedon in the first half of the sixth century, Leontius must take a prominent, perhaps the foremost, place. The judgment pronounced by that famous earlier student of Leontius, Cardinal Angelo Mai, is not far wrong, in spite of the fact that he supposed Leontius to have lived at the beginning of the seventh century: "in theologica scientia aevo suo facile princeps." At any rate the works of Leontius have survived after the lapse of fourteen centuries, while those of his contemporaries (with the notable exception of Justinian) have for the most part either perished or else reached us only in fragments. Of the opponents of Chalcedon the most commanding personality was probably Severus of Antioch.