LEONTIUS OF BYZANTIUM: A CYRILLIAN CHRISTOLOGY

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SOMEONE MAY ask: Who was Leontius of Byzantium? A tentative reply to this question, on which scholars have unfortunately not reached total consensus, will occupy most of the first third of this article. That being the case, it is important first to spell out briefly the answer to another question: What is a Cyrillian Christology? Put otherwise: What is the position which the major part of the present study will attempt to vindicate for Leontius of Byzantium?

The answer to *this* question, for many who have studied Cyril of Alexandria, is likewise not clear down to the last detail. Theologians generally, and rightly, accept him as the man who almost singlehandedly traced out the boundaries of orthodox Christology.[1] To be sure, the Monophysites claimed him as their guiding star, and at least one eminent scholar of our time has pinned the Monophysite label on his teaching.[2] There is enough evidence, however, in extant writings by Cyril to justify our lining up with the majority and declaring that, for all his beginning with, and ceaselessly returning to, the unity in Christ, Cyril also—however haltingly and even ambiguously—recognized the two natures. Let the following, then, stand as the definition of Cyrillian Christology for the purposes of our inquiry: the teaching that Jesus the Christ is the Word of God united to a complete human nature—body and rational soul—through a taking of this human nature in such a way that it is entirely accurate to affirm that Mary is Mother of God and that the Word of God suffered and died while remaining eternal and immutable in His divine nature.[3]

So much, then, for the theological position we shall claim to be that of Leontius. The complementary question must be faced as well: Whose heterodox doctrine on the Incarnation has been foisted on Leontius? Readers of David Beecher Evans' dissertation *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology*[4] will at once know the answer. Dr. Evans is the

[1] This emerges in such phenomena as the enactment by the Council of Ephesus of one of Cyril's letters (*Ep* 4) as its own expression of Church teaching, the place given him in the definition of Chalcedon, and the fact that he is the only individual named as a guide for the orthodox in the anathemas (nos. 8 and 13) of Constantinople II.

[2] Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Greek Church* (New York, 1959) p 148

[3] Cf. *Ep* 4 and *Ep* 17, esp Anathemas 1, 4, 12; *Quod unus sit Christus* 759 (Aubert number)

[4] Published as a Dumbarton Oaks Study (Washington, D.C., 1970)

first student of Leontius to say that Leontius, with respect to Christology—the burning theological issue of his day or, more precisely, the occasion of the burning issue of the ecclesiastical politics of his day—was totally unorthodox: in the tradition of Origen and the Origenist Evagrius of Pontus, Leontius allegedly replaced the Word made flesh with a *nous* which, after all the other *noes* fell away from their ordained state of contemplation of the Word of God and turned into souls, alone remained in union with the Word but consented to join the rest of them by becoming a soul and entering a body in order to enlighten them on the true purpose of creation.

Part of Evans' case rests on his identification of the Leontius who wrote three works in *Patrologia Graeca* 86 with a Leontius (more than one Leontius?) appearing in three contemporary sources.[5] These—the *Vita Sabae* of Cyril of Scythopolis, who was an anti-Origenist Palestinian monk, a letter by Innocentius of Maronia, who was an "orthodox" bishop participating in a colloquy (532) between orthodox and Monophysite theologians, and the acts of an anti-Monophysite synod held at Constantinople in 536—mention respectively a Leontius of Byzantium of Origenist background,[6] a monk named Leontius who was *apocrisiarius* of the "fathers of the holy city" (Jerusalem) and functioned as an observer in the dialogue on the "orthodox" side,[7] and a monk Leontius with an assortment of titles who was present at the synod as an observer and signed three anti-Monophysite petitions.[8] There is at least one other Leontius figuring in the over-all theological debate, half a generation earlier, virtually all now deny he is the same as the one, or ones, just named.[9]

IDENTITY OF LEONTIUS

The man with whom we shall be concerned is author of three works: *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, Solutio argumentorum a Severo*

[5] The task of students of Leontius has not been made easier by the fact that, for no easily determined reason, "Leontius" is a name which, while not unknown in other centuries, became immensely popular among Greek-speaking theologians of the sixth century See, e.g , *Homélies paschales* (ed. Michel Aubineau, *Sources chrétiennes* 187 [Paris, 1972] 341-42 nn)

[6] Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae*, in Eduard Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, in *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 49/2 (Leipzig, 1939) 176.

[7] *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* 4/2 (ed E. Schwartz; Berlin, 1914) 170.

[8] *Ibid.* 3 (1940) 37, 50, 130, 145, 158, 165, 174.

[9] He was one of a group of Scythian monks who joined in an early effort to win the Monophysites by having the Chalcedonian party ratify the statement (based on Anathema 12 of Cyril of Alexandria) that "one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh," and attempted—unsuccessfully—to secure approval of this formula by Pope Hormisdas See R. V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon* (London, 1953) pp. 305-6 and n., 308 n.

objectorum, and *Capita triginta contra Severum*. No one now believes that the author of these also wrote a *De sectis*, which is grouped with them in *PG* 86 but dates from the end of the sixth century.[10] Most do not identify the author of the three treatises named with the man who wrote two others in *PG* 86, *Adversus Nestorianos* and *Contra Monophysitas* (which are generally attributed to "Leontius of Jerusalem"). Marcel Richard has taken the lead in this by establishing a sufficiently wide gulf between the positions of these two sets of works to make it improbable that the same man could have written them.[11] A statistical analysis by Watt, based on three stylistic phenomena,[12] and Rees's dissent, based on a consideration of only one of Richard's arguments,[13] seem inadequate to counter the majority view.[14] The greater uncertainty which obtains in the case of the *Adversus fraudes Apollinistarum* is academic for our purpose, since it is an exercise in source criticism rather than a theological essay.[15] We shall, then, consider the teaching contained in the three works first named, and we shall be following the current consensus in attributing them to "Leontius of Byzantium."[16]

Is Leontius of Byzantium, author of our three works, the man mentioned in Cyril's *Vita Sabae*? Is he the monk at the theological colloquy? Is he the monk at the synod of 536? Is he all, two, or none of these? Strictly speaking, all we can say about him definitely is what he says himself in *CNE*, that in his early days in Constantinople he was misled by the Nestorians but that God had led him on a long journey, like Israel in the desert, and placed him in the hands of "godly men" who converted him to the truth.[17] This journey may well have been to a Palestinian mon-

[10] J H I Watt, "The Authenticity of the Writings Attributed to Leontius of Byzantium," *Studia patristica* 7 (ed F L Cross, Berlin, 1966) 334, Berthold Altaner, *Patrology* (New York, 1961) p 616 The three works will be cited hereafter, as in Evans, as *CNE*, *Sol-ArgSev*, and *CapTrig*. We shall ignore the fact that *PG* 86 is split into separate tomes, since the numbering of the columns in the second simply takes up, at 1769, where the first leaves off All references to Leontius will be to *PG* 86, column numbers alone will appear

[11] "Léonce de Jérusalem et Léonce de Byzance," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 1 (1944) 35–88

[12] The distribution of *kai* and of *de*, when it is second or third word in a sentence, and patterns of sentence length, cf *art cit*, pp 323–24

[13] Silas Rees, "The Literary Activity of Leontius of Byzantium," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n s 19 (1968) 236

[14] Evans, *op cit*, pp 1–2 and n, Altaner, *op cit*, p 616

[15] Altaner, *op cit*, p 615, Evans, *op cit*, pp 1–3, Rees, *art cit*, pp 240–41

[16] Cf also Charles Moeller, "Le chalcédonisme et le néo-chalcédonisme en Orient de 451 à la fin du VIe siècle," in Aloys Grillmeier, S.J, and Heinrich Bacht S J *Das Konzil von Chalkedon Geschichte und Gegenwart* 1 (Wurzburg, 1951) 662–63 Antonio Casamassa, "I tre libri di Leonzio Bizantino contro i nestoriani e i monofisiti," *Bessarione* 25 (1921) 33, Venance Grumel, "Léonce de Byzance," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 9 (Paris, 1926) 401–2

[17] 1357-60, 1377

astery, although there is a chance that he is speaking more devotionally than geographically. The first book of *CNE*, he says, is based on public disputations (probably in the capital).[18] Sellers judges that *CNE* 1 and 2, *SolArgSev*, and *CapTrig* date from the period of these disputations, and Rees essentially concurs.[19] Both are also of the belief that *CNE* 3, with its attack on Theodore of Mopsuestia, belongs to a later period of Leontius' activity, the time when Origen was condemned by Justinian and the counterattack by the Origenists was beginning, with Theodore as most prominent of the convenient targets.[20] Richard tends to believe that *CNE*, *SolArgSev*, and *CapTrig* were all written near the time of the imperial edicts issued in 543 and 544 respectively, against Origen and the writings of Theodore and two others accused of Nestorianism (collectively termed the "Three Chapters").[21] Evans holds a similar view. Starting with his own belief that the Leontius of these three works is the Leontius of the *Vita Sabae*, he argues that the public lectures on which *CNE* 1 is based occurred during the first sojourn of the author at Constantinople (531–37), and that *CNE* 3 was written during the second sojourn (540–43, this latter being the probable year of his death) with the motivation offered by Sellers and Rees. *SolArgSev*, according to Leontius himself (1916), is a reply to someone's critique of a writing which sounds like *CNE* 1. All of this leads Evans to locate publication of the three works between 540 and 543.[22]

Is Leontius of Byzantium in fact the same man as the Leontius of the *Vita Sabae*? Did he attend either the orthodox-Monophysite colloquy or the synod of 536? We are dealing now with probabilities. But most authors have accepted the identification of our Leontius with the monk of the *Vita Sabae*.[23] Most authors have likewise accepted the identification of our man with the monk of the colloquy and the synod—with the notable exception of Richard and, following him, Moeller, who are inclined to think that this was Leontius of Jerusalem.[24] The general agreement that the author of *CNE* and the other two works is the Origenist of the *Vita Sabae* is, however, productive of some confusion. This is most evident when we see those who agree on their identity

[18] 1268

[19] Sellers, *op. cit.*, p. 311, Silas Rees, "The Life and Personality of Leontius of Byzantium," *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1940) 279

[20] Sellers, *op. cit.*, p 315, Rees, *loc. cit*

[21] "Léonce de Byzance était-il origéniste?" *Revue des études byzantines* 5 (1947) 51–53, 61–62, and 62 n

[22] *Op. cit.*, pp. 2-3

[23] See, e.g., Evans, *loc. cit.* and 147-83, Rees, "The Literary Activity," p. 231, Grumel, *art cit*, col 401.

[24] Richard, *art. cit*, (n 11 above) pp 81-88, Moeller, *art cit.*, p 686.

labeling Leontius an Origenist in Christology (as Evans), a vaguer type of Origenist (as Richard), a strict Diphysite (as Moeller), and a faithful follower of Cyril and harmonizer of Cyril's thought with the doctrine of Chalcedon (as Sellers, Tixeront, and Rees).[25]

In stressing Leontius' contribution toward this harmonization, the latter scholars give special prominence to the use Leontius makes of the adjective "enhypostatos." Taking a passage of *CNE* 1 (1277–80), in which Leontius explains the difference separating the concept of hypostasis from enhypostatos, they applaud this as a most effective way out of the dilemma of how two natures, concretely existing at the same time, can nonetheless be legitimately described as having but one hypostasis between them. As Leontius defines it (not a new word but a new use), enhypostatos "denotes that which is not an accident and yet does not have its being in itself but is perceived in another."

This, the authors say, is Leontius' portrayal of the manhood of Christ: a nature which exists, is therefore not without hypostasis (for no nature can be without hypostasis), yet is not itself a hypostasis but exists in the hypostasis of the Logos.[26] It is worth noting that in this passage of *CNE* 1 Leontius does not make an explicit statement that the hypostasis is that of the Logos and the human nature is enhypostatos—despite the fact that most authors leave the impression that he does. The strongest confirmation that it *is* the hypostasis of the Logos occurs elsewhere, in *SolArgSev*.[27]

CHRISTOLOGY OF LEONTIUS

We come, then, to the principal concern of this article: Was Leontius a Cyrillian in Christology, i.e., orthodox, or was he, as Evans believes, a proponent of Origen's heretical presentation of Christ as a pre-existent *nous*? Evans readily agrees that a casual reader of Leontius would most probably be unable to locate this heresy.[28] He claims to find the Christology of the *nous*—whose alleged immediate source is Evagrius Ponticus—lurking in the Byzantine's analysis of being, which appears to a large extent in *CNE* 1.[29]

[25] Evans, *op. cit*., *passim*; Richard, *art cit*. (n 21 above) pp. 34-35, Moeller, *art. cit*., p 664, Sellers, *op cit*., pp 315–16, J. H Tixeront, *A History of Dogma* 3 (St Louis, 1916) 148–51, Silas Rees. "Leontius of Byzantium and His Defense of the Council of Chalcedon," *Harvard Theological Review* 24 (1937) 119.

[26] Sellers, *op cit*., pp 316–19, Tixeront, *op cit*., pp. 148–49; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (3rd ed., Cambridge, 1970) pp 414–15, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (London, 1968) pp 338–40

[27] 1944.

[28] See, e.g., p 99, also p. 42 "It is reasonably clear that Leontius has so constructed his argument . . to conceal from his Orthodox readers his true conviction· that Jesus Christ is . Word and flesh each united to *nous*."

[29] 1297-1305.

This analysis of being revolves chiefly around Evans' understanding of what Leontius means by *hypostasis* and *ousia*. Evans himself underscores the importance of this by claiming to have proved two theses, one that Leontius was Origenist in Christology, the other that "for Leontius ousia and hypostasis are not links in the chain of being, much less beings themselves, but rather are simultaneous determinations of the essential relations of beings " The "essential relations of beings" are those which "*define* the beings so related."[30] Leontius himself mentions the essential relations of "union" and "distinction." The next question is: "*in what* is X united to and distinguished from other beings?" To quote Evans' rendition of the words of Leontius in answer to this question: "Some things are united by species but distinguished by hypostases, while others are distinguished by species but united by hypostases." Evans calls these beings class I and class II respectively. He continues by defining "the hypostasis and ousia of any being as the determinations of the essential relations of a being, that is, its likeness and unlikeness," and recalls earlier definitions by Leontius "of hypostasis as the expression of *to idion* and *ousia* as the expression of *to koinon*."[31] Class I and class II are not distinct classes, so that one being is in class I and the other is in class II; rather the classes are established for the benefit of the analyst: a class I being is a being in itself; a class II being may well be the same being, but in its unions and combinations.[32]

Leontius subdivides class I beings, with Evans lettering the subdivisions (A), those which possess their union and distinction as simple, and (B), those which possess them as composite. Evans gathers that Leontius means that a subclass A being is one "in which its essence or ousia is *indistinguishable* from its existence or hypostasis," whereas a subclass B being, one "having its twofold relation as composition, is a being in which its essence or ousia is *distinguishable* from its existence or hypostasis." Referring to an earlier section of *CNE* 1, Evans identifies "the three hypostases of the Trinity" as examples from Leontius of subclass A beings.[33] The question is raised: Is a class II being—one united or combined with another being—necessarily and inevitably a subclass B being, one whose essence is not the same as its existence? Not at all, responds Evans; for in Jesus Christ, the Word and the flesh are class II beings, and the Word is unquestionably a subclass A being. Accordingly, an A being is one which unites with another (thus entering class II) by its own free will, while a B being is one which enters a union necessarily or by natural inclination.[34]

[30] Pp 143, 29. "We note in passing," says Evans, "that it is not commonplace to define a being by its relations with other beings, rather than by an analysis of being itself."

[31] *CNE* 1, 1301-4

[32] Pp 32-33

[33] Pp 33-36, cf. 1288.

[34] Pp 36-37

Evans now writes: "Nonetheless one may speculate still further."[35] He asks whether an A being *only* unites with other A beings and a B being likewise. An imaginary critic is pictured denying this, since the Word (A) is united to flesh (B) and thus enters class II by reason of union with the flesh. "Now this assumption," declares Evans peremptorily, "is false, and I add: the reason that it is false will reveal the skeleton in Leontius' closet!" He goes on to point out that the Word may be in class II not by reason of union with the flesh but "by reason of his union with a *third being*, which united Word and flesh by appropriating each." What kind of third being? It "must somehow both be and not be one in essence and existence: *be*, in order that it may unite with the Word, and *not* be, in order to unite to the flesh." Is there such a being?

> There is indeed! He is Jesus Christ, the one unfallen *nous* of the Christology of the Origenist Evagrius of Pontus ... Enough for now to note that, for Evagrius, it is the property of *nous* as such that it may either persist in the vision of God or fall away from it; that is either hold to the original unity of its existence with its essence or abandon it. *Nous both is and is not* one in essence and existence in that it may either be the one or the other. Now, as a being simultaneously united to Word and flesh, and simultaneously, as it were, *both one and not one in essence and existence*, Evagrius' *nous* conforms to the requirements of our speculation astonishingly well.

Evans points out that this identification of the Jesus of Leontius with the *nous* of Evagrius clears up a "puzzling ambiguity in Leontius' argument," which permits one to "hypothesize two kinds of subjects in which beings of different natures can unite." They may do so "either in one another or in a third being, so that the three terms comprised in the definition of the resulting subject may represent either *two* beings in their mode of union or *three* beings." Evans asserts:

> Leontius' statement of the problem takes no account of this distinction between subjects. Nor does his argument, as it stands, require such a distinction. After all, it pretends to be no more than a description of the union of two beings of different natures Whether those beings unite in one another or in a third being seems irrelevant. Nevertheless, the distinction is not without interest, I think, for if Leontius' Jesus is Evagrius' *nous* Jesus, if the subject Jesus represents three beings, not two, then it is reasonably clear that Leontius has so constructed his argument as to dispense with the distinction—that is, so as to conceal from his Orthodox readers his true conviction: that Jesus Christ is not Word become flesh but Word and flesh each united to *nous*.[36]

[35] The word "speculate" at this point is important When, in his summary of the chapter (p 67), Evans returns to this topic, he repeats it "here we are frankly speculating "

[36] Pp 37–42

Evans next takes up, in his third chapter, another section of *CNE* 1.[37] Despite its occurrence in an earlier part of the book, Evans believes that it follows logically on that which he has just finished considering, since it applies the analysis of being by Leontius to "the three terms comprising his Christ: Word, flesh, and Jesus Christ himself." First, how are Word and flesh united? The answer, verbally at least, is that of Cyril of Alexandria[38] in *Ep.* 4: *kath' hypostasin*. But Leontius also points out how Christ is united to the *homoousioi* of the Word and the flesh: *kat' ousian*. Thus the two determinations of the essential relations are covered. And Evans proceeds to offer his demonstration of why the Christ of Leontius is the *nous* of Evagrius.

He indicates an anonymous citation by Leontius of a sentence from Evagrius—identified by a scholiast—saying that the one good and eternal desire is that for the true gnosis; Leontius terms Evagrius "divinely wise."[39] Earlier, Leontius also cites and compliments (likewise anonymously, with the scholiast making the identification) the Origenist monk Nonnus.[40] Evans links these brief statements by Leontius to the *Vita Sabae* with its presentation of "Leontius of Byzantium" as an Origenist fellow traveler.[41] There follows an account of the Christology of Evagrius, the full scope of whose thought has only been unveiled since 1958 with Antoine Guillaumont's publication of the Syriac translation of his *Kephalaia gnostica*.[42]

To demonstrate that Leontius' Christology is that of Evagrius, we must, says Evans, find indirect evidence, since he offers nothing we could call direct. It comes down, he tells us, to seeing whether the soul of Leontius' anthropology is the *nous* of the earlier theologian's cosmology. If this is proved, "then is it not at least highly probable that one of the souls of Leontius' anthropology is Jesus Christ ?"[43] It is to a weakness[44] in Leontius' anthropology that Evans turns: the soul has no natural affinity for the body but is united to the body by divine decree. Evans then compares the divisions of the soul according to each writer, beginning with a statement that some of the expressions shared by them

[37] 1285–89; Evans, pp. 69–83

[38] This chapter does not mention Cyril—an indication that the phrase, as Evans interprets it, has a meaning in *CNE* different from Cyril's.

[39] 1285, Evans, pp. 84–85

[40] On the evidence given by Cyril of Scythopolis, Evans terms him "the spiritual leader of the Origenist monks in Palestine" and an "advocate of the doctrine of Evagrius"; pp 85–86. For Leontius' encomium see 1273–76

[41] Pp. 85-86, 150-51

[42] Cf the over-all outline at the beginning of this paper, Evans, pp 88–98.

[43] P 100

[44] A "weakness," it may be noted, which seems to have at least part of its origin in Plato, cf *Phaedo* 115c-e

were "nearly commonplace in late antiquity," but going on to detect considerable resemblances, and ending in an affirmation that "the soul of Leontius' anthropology is none other than the fallen *nous* of the cosmology of Evagrius." Hence "we may suppose it at least highly probable that one of the souls described by Leontius' anthropology is Jesus Christ."[45]

For confirmation from the Byzantine's own writings, Evans turns to three passages in *CNE* 1 which are said to discuss "rational ousiai." The first (1296) says that the rational ousia is one of the two parts of the soul. For Evans, this rational ousia belongs to the highest of Leontius' three faculties of the soul, *to hēgemonikon*, and to it alone. This latter faculty "is the exact equivalent of Evagrius' *nous:* e.g., its peculiar and proper function is identical with that of *nous*, that is, the vision of God. The rational ousia of Leontius' soul is therefore a part of that '*nous* nu' which existed long before the body of its soul and indeed long before the soul itself, for soul, as we have seen, is simply fallen *nous*."

A second passage (1284) describes "rational ousiai" as subject to change; God alone is not. A third finds Leontius asking (1301) this question: "Since the entire rational and blessed creation, including both angels and men, is replete with the grace of the Spirit which deifies and adopts, how is it that only he who was born of the Virgin is called God and Son of God in Scripture, and according to Scripture is adored by all of rational nature?"

Taking the first passage (second in order in *CNE* 1) as Leontius' definition of "rational ousia," Evans assumes that wherever the word "rational" appears in the other two passages, the beings in question are "beings distinguished by the possession of rational ousia and therefore called rational." The third passage, we are told, identifies these beings as Jesus Christ, angels, and men. Put otherwise, they are all *incarnate noes*. The *nous* Jesus Christ is called god and son of God and worshiped by the rest of the *noes* because he persisted in the vision of God. Evans calls the "probability" that the Jesus Christ of Leontius is the Jesus Christ of Evagrius confirmed.[46]

Evans winds up his argumentation by answering two questions. Can one find a place for the *nous* Jesus in the analysis of being with which we started? The reply is affirmative: the *noes* of Evagrius are beings of subclass B, always in union with either God or one of the visible creation. Can one translate the story of the incarnation of the *nous* Jesus into the terms of the same analysis of being? Again the reply is affirmative. The Word remains joined to the Father and the Spirit as ousia and distinguished from them as hypostasis; the same relationship exists

[45] Pp 100–19. [46] Pp 121-23.

between the body of Jesus and other bodies. But this does not make Jesus two hypostases; when we consider the union of Word to flesh in this arrangement, we are considering them as class II beings; that is, each is a being united to something else. This being so, the order of the essential relations will be the reverse of their order in class I: hence the body is united to the Word as hypostasis and distinguished as ousia; the same applies to the union of the Word and the body. As class II beings, "Word and flesh are not united as two *hypostases* in one hypostasis, but as two *ousiai* in one hypostasis." How does the *nous* fit into all this? Following the same rules, "since in him Word and flesh are united as hypostases and distinguished as ousiai, he himself is united to their *homoousioi* as ousia and distinguished from them as hypostasis." That is: the *nous* is united to the Father and the Spirit and other bodies as ousia and distinguished from them as hypostasis. Evans rests his case.[47]

DIFFICULTIES WITH EVANS' CASE

The first question to which we must address ourselves in dealing with the charge by Evans that Leontius believed that Jesus Christ is the unfallen *nous* is whether the identification of Leontius, or anyone, as an Origenist *ipso facto* commits him to the Christology of Origen. On Evagrius himself Grillmeier makes an important comment: "A further danger to the Church's picture of Christ—still controlled in Origen, but rampant in Evagrius—is the false conception of the subject of the Incarnation."[48] Evagrius made his acquaintance with Origen in his association with Basil and, more particularly, Gregory of Nazianzus; neither of these espoused the Origenist Christology, in either a "controlled" or a "rampant" form.[49] Cyril of Alexandria is authoritatively judged to have relied on Didymus in writing the *Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate.* Didymus, along with Evagrius, later came under a cloud for his Origenism; Cyril remains free of any such suspicion.[50] This will suffice to illustrate what actually should be manifest: association with Origenists or acquaintance with Origen's ideas need not mean that one has bought every one of Origen's beliefs. In this connection we can place in perspective Leontius' only explicit reference to Origen, that the latter holds the error opposite that of Apollinaris One can agree to the plausibility of Richard's evaluation of it—that, at the time when Justinian was publishing the edict against Origen, Leontius was being politic by writing that his hero had erred on certain matters—and still allow for the possibility that Leontius

[47] Pp 124–31

[48] *Christ in Christian Tradition* (New York, 1964) p 294 Does this not make Evagrius, in his Christology, more Origenist than Origen?

[49] *Ibid* , p 290, Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* 3 (Westminster, Md , 1963) 169

[50] Quasten, *op. cit.*, pp 86, 125

in private actually believed as he wrote.[51] This, in turn, raises the question of Leontius' veracity in writing the works we have. If we assume with Evans that he is (1) lending himself to the attack by the Origenists on the Three Chapters and (2) diligently concealing his own belief in the Christology of the *nous*, how can Evans say that the Byzantine is an "honest man" who "meant what he said"?[52] Are these two pictures—Leontius the honest man and Leontius the talented concealer with a skeleton in his closet—compatible? And is it not preferable to start out by assuming that what we have from the pen of Leontius is a sincere expression of his beliefs and then, the second time around, to look for a *possible* hidden Origenism about which the *Vita Sabae* and (to a lesser degree) the scholiasts alert us? Can it be that Evans has done the reverse and put Leontius on a theological Procrustean bed?

That this is a possibility arises early in an examination of Evans' thesis. Take the following, on a "puzzling ambiguity" in Leontius:

> We have argued above that Leontius' argument permits us to hypothesize two kinds of subjects in which beings of different natures can unite. Now we notice that Leontius' statement of the problem takes no account of this distinction between subjects. Nor does his argument, as it stands, require such a distinction. After all, it pretends to be no more than a description of the union of two beings of different natures [53]

There follows the statement that if the subject Jesus represents three beings, then Leontius has engaged in concealment of his belief in the *nous* by constructing his argument to dispense with any calling of our attention to more than one kind of subject. One may ask whether Leontius may have constructed his argument without even thinking of more than one kind of subject. And how can Evans find an "ambiguity" in an argument which Evans says does *not* require the distinction of which Leontius takes no account?

Equally hard to follow is Evans' admitted speculation that an A being unites only with other A beings and a B being only with other B beings. Before he gives us any evidence from Leontius, Evans turns this

[51] 1377, "Léonce . était-il origéniste?" pp. 52-53 Cyril of Scythopolis (as cited in Evans, p 151) expressly says that the Leontius of the *Vita Sabae* was a public supporter of Chalcedon and a private Origenist. The juxtaposition of these two statements lends support to the position of Evans, since Chalcedon's was a Christological definition It will emerge in this study that we are left with either of two positions. either Cyril extrapolated, falsely, a Christological Origenism from Leontius' Origenist associations and presumed Origenist inclination, or the consensus errs and the Leontius of *CNE et al.* is not the Leontius of the *Vita Sabae*

[52] P 144, by contrast with pp 42 and 99

[53] P 41

speculation into actuality and it becomes the basis in (his interpretation of) Leontius' analysis of being for the introduction of a third (A *and* B) being in which the (A) Word can unite with the (B) flesh. This in turn creates the further mystery of how a *nous* (or anything for that matter) can possibly[54] "both be and not be one in essence and existence," A and B, at the same time. This mystery is compounded when, some ninety-six pages later, Evans asks: "Can we not now locate Evagrius' *noes* among Leontius' beings of class B? For, as we have just said, the *noes* must be in union either with God or with one of the visible creation. "[55] Is a *nous* A *and* B or just B?

A most vexing feature of Evans' interpretation of Leontius is a stretching of the meanings of hypostasis and ousia to virtual indefinability. We saw how he claims that one of his two major discoveries is that "for Leontius ousia and hypostasis are not links in the chain of being, much less beings themselves, but rather are simultaneous determinations of the essential relations of beings." As Evans explains, ousia and hypostasis are the qualities which make a man or a tree or a *nous* like and unlike other beings.[56] But here, as elsewhere, Evans' own explanation does not square with other assertions he makes. How, e.g., accept the *nous* Jesus' hazy relation to other beings as hypostasis and ousia? Specifically, what makes the *nous* like other bodies but unlike the body of Christ? What makes the *nous* like the Father and the Spirit but unlike the Word?[57] The definitions become even more nebulous when we find Evans himself treating "hypostasis" as a word for *a being*, as when he explains why Jesus is not in, or composed from, two hypostases, and few lines later says that in the *nous* "Word and flesh are united as hypostases and distinguished as ousiai" (note the plurals), or as when he tells us that Leontius himself offers an example of A beings, "the three hypostases of the Trinity."[58] Evans' original definition of hypostasis according to Leontius is compromised further when he quotes a definition by Leontius which makes hypostasis equal to "number" (*arithmos*):[59] "unlikeness" and "numerical difference" are simply not the same. In point of fact, an examination of Leontius' own use of the two words—and he employs them with great frequency—discloses no hint

[54] Leontius did know the principle of contradiction, as we see from his declaration (*CapTrig* 1905–8) that the statement "Paul is an apostle" is opposed to "Paul is not an apostle "

[55] Pp 40, 126–27

[56] Pp. 30-31

[57] P 131, especially in view of the fact that, as Evans himself impresses on us (p. 35), Leontius teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit possess the identical nature, which nature is also one with its existence or hypostasis.

[58] Pp 130-31, 34-35

[59] P 72, from Leontius, 1288

that he is applying them in a way at variance with that of his predecessors. Current scholars may rightly censure the too facile interchanging of the terms between statements on the Trinity and statements on the Incarnation,[60] but this criticism is not limited to Leontius nor does it confirm Evans' assertion—contradicted by some of his own usages—that neither word is used by Leontius of a "being." Thus, Leontius writes as follows in *CNE* 1 (1280): "A hypostasis is a nature (physis) but a nature is not yet a hypostasis. Nature answers to the definition of being, while hypostasis additionally implies the idea of separate being; the former has the connotation of the universal, whereas the latter reveals the particular." There is no special attention to hypostasis as an indicator of the unlikeness of a given person or thing from another, in Leontius the word applies to a separately existent something, a being.

We look next at the effort of Evans to "translate" the Christology of Leontius into that of Evagrius. "In its original state, Evagrius' *nous* was united to God; and, after its fall, God's providence united it to a body." A few lines later: "Just as a *nous* must always be in union with another being of a different nature, so must it also possess a *mode of contemplation* of other beings." It sounds here as if Evans is saying that the *noes* all started off (1) united to God in some undefined way which dovetails with Leontius' analysis of being,[61] and, additionally, (2) contemplating God. Yet earlier in the book he writes: "for Evagrius, it is the property of *nous* as such that it may either persist in the vision of God or fall away from it; that is, as I propose to translate, either hold to the original unity of its existence with its essence or abandon it."[62] Put otherwise, the *noes* had only one kind of "union with God": their vision of Him.[63] Since a union with anything by contemplation is of a different order from the types of union which Leontius envisioned in his analysis of being (the Father, Son, and Spirit in the Trinity, soul and body, Word and flesh), the "translation" does not succeed.

We have already noted that, at the outset of his lengthy comparison of the anthropologies of Leontius and Evagrius, Evans makes an initial concession that some of the terms employed by the two men were "nearly commonplace in late antiquity."[64] As the comparison proceeds, we have such statements as "Leontius never calls *nous* νοῦς,"[65] a further com-

[60] G L Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, 1959) pp 265-81, Moeller, *art. cit*, pp 700–701 and nn

[61] Pp. 124, 126. [62] P 40

[63] Dare we say that Evagrius himself confirms this in a quotation supplied us by Evans (p. 93)? Guillaumont's French rendition of the Syriac reads. "Dieu, quand il créa les *logikoi* n'était en rien mais quand il crée la nature corporelle et les mondes . il est dans son Christ" (*Kephalaia gnostica* 4, 62)

[64] P 111. [65] P 111, n 9?.

ment that "Leontius does not hold closely to Evagrius' own terminology"[66] and, in a footnote to the passage which is supposed to demonstrate that the *nous* is identical with Leontius' "highest faculty of the soul," the admission that the content of the relevant passages in Evagrius,"though by no means incompatible with Leontius' words, is different enough to establish that Leontius is following Evagrius only at a distance."[67] Despite these concessions from Evans, let us grant for the sake of argument that Leontius had the writings of Evagrius open on his desk, looked into them for his discussion of the soul, and used them as a reference work for what was "commonplace in late antiquity." The fact remains that nowhere in Leontius is there a hint of pre-existence of any soul, least of all of the pre-existence of Jesus as a *nous* united uninterruptedly to the Word.[68] As we shall see shortly, there is an explicit statement by Leontius consonant with Cyril's doctrine that the Word *took* a soul along with a body at the Incarnation.

CYRILLIAN STATEMENTS IN LEONTIUS

As for the passage[69] in which the grouping of him "who was born of the Virgin" with angels and men to form the "rational creation" is supposed to demonstrate that Jesus is one of the *noes*, it is enough to say that the appearance of the word "rational" is simply not adequate to support the claim of Evans. Even if we dismiss the explicit assertion in this passage that only the Virgin's son "is called God and Son of God," we have a variety of other statements by Leontius to show that his position is not that of Evagrius. Leaving, then, the inconsistencies in Evans' arguments, we proceed to these statements, beginning with one that balances very neatly the one we are here discussing. In *CNE* 3 (1373), Leontius addresses Theodore of Mopsuestia rhetorically, attacking him for considering Christ a mere man. Leontius says that he knows not who or whence the man is who receives from Theodore so great a task (the redemption), a task "surpassing not only human nature but also all created (*genetēn*) nature." It is congruent with Cyrillian Christology to say that Christ is both part of rational creation—through the body and rational soul he took—and has performed a work far superior to a human nature and all created nature.

[66] P 116, n. 118

[67] P 112, n 103

[68] It is worth noting that, in the face of an almost universal identification of the author of *CNE* with the Leontius of the *Vita Sabae*, no other scholar has found the *nous* in the former, despite the fact that the theology of the *nous*—if not yet widely available through Guillaumont's edition of Evagrius—was plain to see in none other than Justinian's condemnation of Origen, the very document which Richard and Evans claim to have evoked *CNE* 3, see *PG* 86, 989

[69] Cf Evans, p 122.

Elsewhere (1352–53) Leontius discusses the manner of the Incarnation. He uses the image of the temple, which, while employed by Cyril, had occasioned much criticism in the past because of association with the Nestorians. Leontius leaves no doubt about his own opinion. What was accomplished by "the Word's union which makes him of like nature to us (*hē tou Logou symphyēs henōsis*)"? Leontius responds that this union caused "release from sin as well as total sanctification, and a complete union and joining with the totality of the one taking as well as the reality and the title of one Son (*to hena te einai kai chrēmatizein Huion*) and the appearance of most clear signs of the Son's entire specific identity (*holes tēs huiikēs idiotētos*)." Recalling that the Holy Spirit effected the formation of the body of Jesus, Leontius adds that we know "a union grounded not in the mere activity of the Word but in a natural joining on the part of the Word Himself (*autou tou Logou ousiōdous anakraseōs*)." In *CNE* 3 (1329) the orthodox interlocutor, representing Leontius, in an effort to win his adversary, reminds him that he has (rightly, it is implied) confessed that "the Creator of the times did not refuse to dwell and be formed in the Virgin Mother." In *CNE* 3 (1377-80) Leontius handles those who point to phrases from *orthodox* Fathers with a "Nestorian" flavor (one of several mentioned is Cyril's use of the world "temple" for Christ's humanity) by tartly observing that they overlook expressions from the same orthodox writers like "blood of God and his cross and suffering and death and the second birth of the Word according to the flesh for all. " Thus we find that the Logos and "Creator of the times" was the subject of the Incarnation, not an elusive *nous*.

Back in *CNE* 2 (1319-20) Leontius mentions many souls shipwrecked through ignorantly taking scandal at "the lowly words and deeds of Christ our God resulting from his descent on our behalf." He proceeds to deny that any persecutor would have inflicted penalties on Christians "if before the judgment seat they were confessing that only a man was born of the Virgin, crucified, buried, and raised." The discussion on the alleged incorruptibility and impassibility of Christ's nature continues, and in the same paragraph Leontius asks rhetorically: "For how shall we bear a likeness to God if we do not suffer with him who suffered? And how did he suffer if he did not suffer like us?" Later in the book (1344) the orthodox interlocutor refers to the saying of Jesus "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" and says: "We are taught, I say, by the saving Word himself, speaking openly."

In *SolArgSev* (1941) Leontius describes the union of natures in Christ: "These are common realities (*koina*) and it [the union] causes them to be [the possession] of one [individual] solely by means of the natural union.... For there would be no mutual *communicatio idiomatum*

if there did not remain, in each [nature] as well as in the union, the unchanging identity (*idiotēs akinētos*)." Thus the "common realities" belong to "one" and the *communicatio idiomatum* is possible because of the "unchanging identity." In *CNE* 1 (1289) Leontius expresses the same idea by declaring that we follow Scripture and patristic tradition when "often we label the whole from a part and the parts by the name of the whole, as when we speak of the Son of man as the Word and confess that the Lord of glory was crucified."

One of the most significant passages which show Leontius to be at odds with the interpretation by Evans occurs in *CNE* 2 (1324-25). The orthodox interlocutor is suggesting to the proponent of the incorruptibility of Christ's body that our salvation would be in jeopardy "if the Lord had united only flesh to Himself." The adversary agrees and the orthodox speaker continues: "For it is my opinion that the soul was most in need of cleansing and for this reason it was taken. " And he adds the familiar doctrine that a whole man had to be taken to save the whole man. Note well: "taken." For an Origenist, the soul, or *nous*, of Christ was united uninterruptedly to the Word from the moment of its origin before the creation of the material world; for a Cyrillian, the soul of Christ was taken simultaneously with the body at the moment of the Incarnation.[70] Leontius is clearly in the camp of Cyril. There is no hint of a *nous* or unfallen soul remaining united to the Word and taking a body. And when Leontius faces the question of whether his employment of the body-and-soul analogy to explain the Incarnation means he believes there are three natures in Christ, he insists (1297) that there are not, there are divinity and humanity (*theotēs kai anthrōpotēs*). What, then, is the relationship of soul and body (the former, in Evans' view, being the key element, the "third being" in which Word and flesh are joined)? "Soul and body are not parts of Christ but parts of a part."

Richard finds a weakness in *SolArgSev* (1944) which he rightly labels "playing with fire."[71] The question is on the existence of the humanity, body and soul, prior to its assumption by the Word, a "Nestorian" idea. Leontius replies that we must distinguish between the *posse* and the *esse*. Yes, this could have been, but it did not happen in fact: "it is not because it is impossible but because it was not fitting for the Lord's humanity ever to be simple and without divinity that we reject a previous formation." In claiming the possibility of this, Richard suggests,

[70] The verb and noun found respectively in this passage from Leontius and in *Ep* 4 of Cyril (the one declared *de fide* by Ephesus) to express the "taking" (*proslambanō*, *proslēpsis*) are cognate and have the connotation of "addition" or "taking besides " For Cyril's specific rejection of the pre-existence of souls and attribution of this error to Origen, see his *Ep*. 81

[71] "Léonce était-il origéniste?" p 60.

Leontius is giving aid and comfort to Nestorians. (We cannot add "and Origenists," because he is not thinking about pre-existence of the part of humanity which is the soul but of the entire humanity.) The key statement occurs a few lines before this: "That the Lord's humanity had no separate existence beforehand and that it was not previously formed, we will also grant (*tēn tou Kyriou anthrōpotēta mē proüphestanai, mēde prodiapeplasthai kai hēmeis dōsomen*)." So it is that, despite the concession of *possibility* of pre-existence of the *entire* humanity, Leontius agrees that this in reality was not the case.

Away from the Procrustean bed of Dr. Evans, Leontius rapidly loses his appearance as an Origenist in Christology. We can agree with Evans and Richard that he was an admirer of Origenists and even picture him, with the help of the *Vita Sabae*, as a member of the Origenist party. However, we know of other admirers of Origen who did not subscribe to everything Origen taught, and, *pace* Evans, what we have from the pen of Leontius shows—whatever weakness Richard claims for his anthropology—that he believed with Cyril and Ephesus that the Word *took* a *humanity*, and with Chalcedon that Christ has two natures, not one and not three. In modern terminology, Christ, for Leontius, is one person. And Leontius, in Christology, is a Cyrillian.