

## HUMAN SOULS AS CONSUBSTANTIAL SONS OF GOD: THE HETERODOX ANTHROPOLOGY OF LEONTIUS OF JERUSALEM

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Abstract: In his treatise *Contra Nestorianos* Leontius of Jerusalem refers to the human soul as “divine inbreathing”, which he understands as a consubstantial emanation from God. This paper argues that Leontius was confronted with the Nestorian claim that a composition between an uncreated and a created entity is impossible and that he refuted this claim by arguing that the soul is divine and that the composition of a human soul with a human body is therefore a strict parallel for the incarnation. One of Leontius’ starting points was the traditional view that Adam’s soul was endowed with the Holy Spirit and not merely with a derivative grace. This model had the advantage that it located “God” in the human being but the disadvantage that this presence remained extrinsic to the human compound. To make it function as a precedent for the Incarnation Leontius substituted the Son for the Spirit and reduced the human nature to the body thereby indicating that the soul must be equated with the divine Son. In order to distinguish the case of Christ from that of Adam and other human beings he employed the Biblical motif of the “pledge”, which was traditionally used to contrast the partial spiritual endowment of the believers in this world with their complete spiritual endowment in the world to come but which he now applied to Adam and Christ. This permitted him to claim that in Adam the Son was only partially present while in Christ he was present completely. Thus he conceptualised the Incarnation not as the composition of the divine Word with a human nature consisting of body and soul but as a composition of the divine Word as soul and a human body. Consequently the divine component of traditional Christology could no longer be given a satisfactory role in the salvation of humankind. One reason for this shift, it is argued in this paper, was a too great dependence on the conceptual framework of his Nestorian opponent whose focus had been on the endowment of the human being Jesus with the Holy Spirit, who thus assumed a crucial role in the incarnation. Leontius accepted this framework as well as the Nestorian custom to see the difference between the Spirit in Jesus and the Spirit in other human beings in quantitative terms, and merely modified it by identifying the Holy Spirit with the Son on the one hand and with the soul on the other. However, it is suggested in this paper, Leontius may have believed in the divinity and timelessness of the soul independently of his Nestorian opponent. His interpretation of Philippians 2:6-7 suggests that he was a latter-day Origenist who could express his ideas more freely than his forebears because the political circumstances of the early seventh century made enforcement of orthodoxy impossible in the Eastern provinces.

The Chalcedonian theologian Leontius of Jerusalem is today best known for his contributions in the field of Christology, and Christological issues are indeed the *raison d'être* of his surviving works: the two treatises that bear his name defend the Creed of Chalcedon and Constantinople II against Nestorian and Monophysite attacks.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is not surprising that modern scholars have focused on Leontius' definitions of the concepts "nature", "hypostasis" and "composition" and attempted to establish whether these definitions help to clarify the doctrine formulated at the two councils.<sup>2</sup> However, exclusive focus on such a narrow range of topics runs the danger of obscuring the richness of Leontius' theological speculation. Close reading of *Contra Nestorianos*, the longest of his extant treatises, reveals that his search for effective arguments leads him to other aspects of the Christian belief system and that his views on such aspects are highly original and often irreconcilable with the Patristic consensus that had been established in the fourth and fifth centuries.

In a recent article I have argued that Leontius used the Christological model that he had developed as a blueprint for a radical reorganisation of the Trinity, with the result that the Trinity is no longer regarded as a timeless framework within which the event of the incarnation takes place, but is rather seen as the result of a previous act of divine self-constitution.<sup>3</sup> In this article I shift the focus to Leontius' anthropology, which plays an important role in his attempts to prove that the incarnation must be conceived of as a composition of the divine nature and the human nature in the hypostasis of the divine Word and to rebut the claims of his Nestorian adversary that such an understanding of the incarnation was neither necessary nor indeed possible.

Leontius repeatedly points out that the human being is also a composite made up of two elements, body and soul, which are substantially different from each other. Such use of the so-called anthropological paradigm had a long and distinguished history.<sup>4</sup> However, it was not without problems since it glossed over the fact that in the case of Christ an uncreated and a created entity enter into a composition whereas in the case of the human being both components are created. If Leontius had merely followed established tradition we would need to conclude that his arguments fail to address the central Nestorian objection that the defenders of Chalcedon and Constantinople II cannot offer valid analogies for their understanding of the incarnation. However, in-depth analysis of *Contra Nestorianos* suggests that this is not the case and that Leontius sets out a radically different model according to which the soul is divine in the strict sense of the word and has a genetic relationship with the divinity as its progenitor in very much the same way as the divine Son does.

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<sup>1</sup> Leontius of Jerusalem, *Capita triginta contra Monophysitas*, PG 86, 1769-1901 (CPG 6917); *Contra Nestorianos*, PG 86, 1399-1768i (CPG 6918), in the following abbreviated to *CN*.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. 2, pt. 2: *Die Kirche von Konstantinopel im 6. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien, 1989), pp. 291-328, with a survey of earlier secondary literature. See also C. dell'Orso, *Cristo e Logos. Il calcedonesimo del VI secolo in oriente* (Rome 2010), pp. 348-73.

<sup>3</sup> See my article "Divine self-invention: Leontius of Jerusalem's reinterpretation of the Patristic model of the Christian God," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 57 (2006), pp. 526-45.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. F. Gahbauer, *Das anthropologische Modell. Ein Beitrag zur Christologie der frühen Kirche bis Chalcedon* (Würzburg, 1984).

It is evident that this interpretation of the anthropological paradigm permits a much more effective proof than the conventional version. Yet this advantage comes at a high cost because Leontius' position is completely at odds with established doctrine. In the last part of my article I will make the case that Leontius started from the Origenist notion of the soul of Christ, which is consubstantial with all other souls, but that he then identified this soul with the divinity of the Son as one part of the composite Christ, with the consequence that all other souls were also elevated to the status of divine beings; and I will further discuss why he could voice such startlingly heterodox ideas only a few decades after Origenism had been declared a heresy.

Unlike Leontius' speculation about the Trinity, which is set out concisely and unequivocally in a single chapter of *Contra Nestorianos*, his views on the human soul must be gleaned from a number of passages most of which make use of terminology that is open to interpretation. Therefore I shall look at all available evidence and assess in each case whether statements that characterise the soul as divine should be taken seriously or whether they should not rather be dismissed as rhetorical flourishes. And I shall further ask what implications either of these possible interpretations would have for the Christological argument, which the anthropological paradigm is intended to support.

The first passage I would like to consider is chapter seven of the first book of *Contra Nestorianos*. As is his wont Leontius first quotes a passage from a lost Nestorian treatise, which challenges the Chalcedonian concept of a hypostatic union of God and man in the incarnated Christ, and then proceeds to its refutation. In this case the Nestorian bases his argument on the axiomatic statement that "the difference between what is uncreated and what is created prevents naturally the union in a hypostasis" (ἡ διαφορὰ τοῦ ἀκτίστου καὶ τοῦ κτιστοῦ τὴν καθ' ὑπόστασιν φυσικῶς κωλύει ἔνωσιν).<sup>5</sup> Leontius' response reads as follows:

Διὰ τί δὲ ἄρα κωλύει τὴν καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἔνωσιν φυσικῶς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀκτίστου καὶ κτιστοῦ ἢ διαφορὰ; εἰ μὲν γὰρ τῇ θατέρου προὑπάρξει ὡς μὴ δυναμένου τινὸς συνάπτεσθαι τῇ μὴ συμπροσελθούσῃ αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ εἶναι φύσει, ἄρα γε οὐδὲ τῷ πλασθέντι πρῶτον σώματι Ἄδὰμ τὸ θεῖον ἐμφύσημα καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἠνώθη· εἰ δὲ αὐτὴ ὅλως ἢ κατὰ φύσεως λόγον παραλλαγὴ ποιεῖ τὸ ἀσύμβατον εἰς ἔνωσιν τούτοις, οὐδὲ ἄρα τι ζῶον ἔσται ἐξ ἀοράτου καὶ ὀρατῆς φύσεως, ἢ θνητῆς καὶ ἀθανάτου, φθαρτῆς καὶ ἀφθάρτου· οἷον ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος εἶς ὢν τὴν καθ' ὑπόστασιν.<sup>6</sup>

"Why then does the difference between what is uncreated and what is created prevent naturally the union in a hypostasis? If it (sc. prevented it) because of the pre-existence of one part as if something could not be connected with a nature that does not come into being together with it, then the divine inbreathing, too, would not have been united in a hypostasis with the body of Adam, which had been fashioned first; and if the very difference in the definition of nature by itself causes their inability to come together in a union, then there would also be no living being made up of an invisible and a visible nature, or of a mortal and an immortal one, or of a corruptible

<sup>5</sup> CN, I.27, PG, 86, 1493A9-10.

<sup>6</sup> CN, I.27, PG, 86, 1493B4-12.

and an incorruptible one, as for example the human being made up of soul and body, which is one as regards the hypostasis.”

In this passage Leontius identifies two reasons that might have prompted his adversary to formulate his axiom that an uncreated nature cannot be compounded with a created nature. The first is that the two parts did not come into existence simultaneously at the moment of their composition, the second that they differ in their natural make-up. Accordingly his counter-argument is an attempt to show that these facts are no obstacles to a hypostatic union. In order to achieve his aim he twice has recourse to the anthropological paradigm. In the first case he points out that Adam’s body had already been created before it was hypostatically united with the vivifying breath of God; and in the second case he argues that body and soul form a single hypostasis despite possessing diametrically opposite qualities.

It is immediately evident that this strategy is far from persuasive. The second argument seems to miss the crucial point: the Nestorian had not maintained that any difference in nature was an obstacle to a union, but had focused on the specific difference between created and uncreated being. However, according to official doctrine the human soul was a creature just like the human body. And the first argument appears to be even weaker: while Adam’s body may have been created before it became ensouled, it had obviously only existed for a short time and can therefore not serve as a genuine parallel for the eternal divine Word that assumed the flesh. Moreover, the human body belongs to the material sphere and is therefore even less like the divine Word than the immaterial human soul. It is evident that the parallel would have been much closer if Leontius had set out a scenario where the soul pre-exists the body. And this is in fact what he has done in the previous chapter: there he uses the union of the disembodied souls with their resurrected bodies as a parallel for the union of the pre-existing Word with the flesh.<sup>7</sup> Even this analogy, however, is not perfect because in this case the bodies are not created but re-created and had formerly been united with the souls.

As contemporary readers would undoubtedly have known there existed a further scenario that provided a much closer match for the incarnation: according to this scenario Adam’s soul had already existed before its initial union with the body. Yet the same readers would also have been aware that this alternative was no longer viable after the condemnation of Origen at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.

Since Leontius studiously avoids any reference to the pre-existence of the soul, one might conclude that he toed the official line. Indeed, the statement that “the divine inbreathing was united in a hypostasis with the body of Adam that had been fashioned first” (τῷ πλασθέντι πρώτον σώματι Ἀδὰμ τὸ θεῖον ἐμφύσημα καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἡνώθη) appears to be deliberately anti-Origenist. At the time when Leontius wrote his treatise it was staunch Nestorians such as Babai the Great who insisted on the pre-existence of the body whereas theologians with Origenist leanings such as Maximus the Confessor claimed that body and soul were created simultaneously.<sup>8</sup> However, Leontius’ statement is less clear-cut than it first seems. Unlike Babai

<sup>7</sup> CN I.26, PG, 86, 1492D10-14.

<sup>8</sup> See Babai the Great, *Liber de Unione*, c. 10, tr. A. A. Vaschalde (CSCO, 80, Scriptores Syri, 35; Leuven, 1953), p. 90, ll. 1-4: *Scriptura nobis exposuit illum primum in omnibus membris suis* Dirk Krausmüller, “Human Souls as Consubstantial Sons of God: The Heterodox Anthropology of Leontius of Jerusalem,” in: *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 4 (2010) 43-67; ISSN: 1754-517X; Website: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/clarc/jlarc>

the Great who states unequivocally in his *Liber de Unione* that Adam's soul was created in the pre-existing body he merely speaks of the endowment of Adam's body with the soul. Moreover, he expresses this notion in a rather idiosyncratic manner. Taking as his starting point Genesis 2:7: "and God formed man as dust from the earth and breathed into his face a breath of life and man was turned into a living soul" (καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζώσαν), he rephrases this verse in such a way that it now corresponds to traditional definitions of the human being as "the soul ... that has been united in a hypostasis with the body" (ἡ ψυχὴ ... καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἡνωμένη τῷ σώματι).<sup>9</sup> The obvious consequence of this reformulation is the replacement of "the soul" (ἡ ψυχὴ) with "the divine inbreathing" (τὸ θεῖον ἐμφύσημα), which sends a clear signal to the readers that these two terms refer to one and the same reality.

Leontius makes this substitution without further ado and thus gives the impression that what he says is completely above board. However, there can be no doubt that it would have been roundly rejected in the theological circles to which Leontius' Nestorian adversary belonged. Representatives of the Antiochene tradition such as Diodore of Tarsus, John Chrysostom and Theodoret of Cyrus had made a careful distinction between the "inbreathing" and the human soul, which they considered to be created out of nothing, and Babai the Great was still propounding this position at the beginning of the seventh century when he stated in his *Liber de Unione* that "the angels ... realised that God who breathed into Adam and created the soul ... had created for them, too, rational life out of nothing" (*angeli ... intellexerunt quod Deus, qui in Adam inspiravit et creavit animam ... etiam ipsis creavit vitam rationalem ex nihilo*).<sup>10</sup> These authors were clearly troubled by the fact that Genesis 2:7 does not clearly distinguish between God's act of breathing into Adam's face and the presence in Adam of a soul as its result and therefore took great pains to read this distinction into the text. In the fourth century Diodore of Tarsus averred that Moses "says that the divine inbreathing is the creative cause of it (sc. of the soul)" (ἐμφύσημα θεῖον δημιουργικὸν αὐτῆς [sc. τῆς ψυχῆς] εἶναί φησιν),<sup>11</sup> and a similar position is still expressed in a Pseudo-Athanasian text from the seventh or eighth century, the *Liber de Definitionibus*, which states that "the inbreathing created a soul in the human being" (τὸ δὲ ἐμφύσημα ἐκεῖνο ψυχὴν ἐδημιούργησεν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ).<sup>12</sup>

Leontius evidently takes the diametrically opposite approach when he identifies the two terms. What are the implications of such a move? The Antiochene authors whom I have just mentioned state that they responded to exegetes who concluded from the ambiguous wording of Genesis 2:7 "that the divine inbreathing had be-

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*formatum et incorporatum fuisse, et deinde exposuit creationem animae in eo*; and Maximus, *Ambigua*, PG, 91, 1321D-1325C.

<sup>9</sup> Anastasius the Sinaïte, *Capita vi adversus monotheletas*, 9.1, ed. K.-H. Uthemann, *Anastasii Sinaïtae sermones duo in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei necnon opuscula adversus monotheletas* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, 12; Turnhout, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Babai the Great, *Liber de Unione*, ch. 10, tr. A. Vaschalde, p. 90, ll. 17-21.

<sup>11</sup> *Catenae Graecae in Genesim et Exodum*, II, *Collectio Coisliniana in Genesim*, ed. F. Petit (Corpus Christianorum, Series graeca, 15, Turnhout, Leuven, 1986), \* 83 (Diodore), p. 86, ll. 9-12.

<sup>12</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Liber de definitionibus*, ch. 7, PG, 28, 545D7-10.

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come the immortal soul” (τὸ ἐμφύσημα τοῦ θεοῦ γεγενῆσθαι ψυχὴν ἀθάνατον);<sup>13</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria who preferred to interpret the “inbreathing” as an additional endowment of the already complete human being Adam with the Holy Spirit also makes reference to the alternative view “that the inbreathing that had come forth from the divine substance ... became a soul for the living being” (τὸ ἐκ τῆς θείας οὐσίας προελθὸν ἐμφύσημα, ψυχὴν ... γενέσθαι τῷ ζῶντι).<sup>14</sup>

The advantages of such a position for a theologian in Leontius’ situation are immediately obvious. If he had claimed that the soul was divine, he would have been able to counter his adversary’s argument even more effectively than if he had had recourse to a model according to which the soul pre-existed the body, but was nevertheless a created being. Since countless human souls are hypostatically united with created material bodies, there could then be no conceivable reason why a hypostatic union between an uncreated and a created being should be impossible in the specific case of the divine Word.

However, is this really the message that Leontius wishes to convey? At first sight this seems utterly out of the question. After all, belief in the soul’s full divinity, as expressed in Pseudo-Justin’s *De Resurrectione* where the soul is called “part ... and inbreathing of God” (μέρος ... τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐμφύσημα),<sup>15</sup> was roundly rejected by mainstream Christians, not only because it blurred the difference between creator and creation but also because it made God subject to division and change.

Therefore one might be tempted to conclude that Leontius applied the term “inbreathing” (ἐμφύσημα) to the soul in a much vaguer fashion that did not call into question its status as a creature, especially since there were respectable precedents for such use: Cyril of Alexandria, for example, characterises the soul as “image and inbreathing of God” (εἰκὼν θεοῦ καὶ ἐμφύσημα) and then adds that one must for this reason take care of one’s soul and raise it up “to its creative cause” (πρὸς τὴν αἰτίαν αὐτῆς τὴν δημιουργικὴν).<sup>16</sup> Accordingly it could be argued that Leontius held the same view as Cyril and the absence of a similar corrective in his text could be explained through a lack of awareness of the problems arising from a straightforward equation of the divine inbreathing and the human soul. If this were the case we would need to return to our original assessment of the passage and would be forced to conclude that the arguments put forward by Leontius fail to address the issues raised by his Nestorian adversary.

There is only one way to establish which of the two proposed interpretations is correct: we need to analyse further passages in *Contra Nestorianos* where Leontius sets out his views about the origin of the human soul. The first passage which I will consider is found in the first chapter of book one, where Leontius is confronted with the Nestorians’ claim that the soul as part of the human composite is by necessity itself made up of parts. In order to refute this claim Leontius points out that if this were true for “that which is intelligible and spiritual and like to angels and furthermore also in the image of God and an inbreathing of the glory of the almighty”

<sup>13</sup> *Catenae Graecae in Genesim et Exodum*, II, ed. Petit, \* 83 (Diodore), p. 86, ll. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In D. Joannis Evangelium*, ed. E. Pusey, 3 vols (Oxford, 1872), II, p. 485, ll. 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Justin, *De resurrectione*, PG, 6, 1588A3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Die Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, ed. J. Reuss (TU, 61; Berlin, 1957), pp. 153-269, fragment, 81, l. 7.

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(τὸ νοερὸν καὶ πνευματικὸν καὶ ἰσάγγελον ἔτι μὴν καὶ τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ ἐμφύσημα τῆς δόξης τοῦ παντοκράτορος), it would also be true for the divine archetype, which then permits him to accuse his opponent of blasphemy.<sup>17</sup>

At first sight the characterisation of the human soul as “in the image of God” (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ) and as “inbreathing” (ἐμφύσημα), based on Genesis 1:26 “let us make man according to our image” (ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν), and on Genesis 2:7 “God ... breathed into his face the breath of life” (ὁ θεός ... ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς), seems unexceptional: after all, we have just come across the almost identical phrase “image and inbreathing of God” (εἰκὼν θεοῦ καὶ ἐμφύσημα) in Cyril of Alexandria. However, a closer look reveals that the two verses from Genesis are not the only Biblical passages to which Leontius makes reference because the qualification of the inbreathing as “of the glory of the almighty” (τῆς δόξης τοῦ παντοκράτορος) is clearly based on the second part of the formula “outflow of the glory of the almighty” (ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης) in Wisdom 7:25, a connection that is further emphasised by the adjectives “intellectual and spiritual” (νοερὸν καὶ πνευματικόν), which closely resemble the phrase “intellectual spirit” (πνεῦμα νοερόν) in Wisdom 7:22. The result of this conflation is evident: the replacement of ἀπόρροια with ἐμφύσημα insinuates equivalence between the two terms, which can only mean that Leontius expects his readers not only to equate the soul with God's “inbreathing”, but also to conceive of this inbreathing as an emanation of the divinity.

Does this additional evidence permit us to affirm that Leontius thought human souls to be fully divine? Unfortunately, the answer must still be no. Use of the term ἀπόρροια in protological contexts is not uncommon in Christian literature of earlier centuries. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, had referred to the mind as “the outflow from the divine inbreathing” (ἡ ἐκ τοῦ θείου ἐμφυσήματος ἀπόρροια).<sup>18</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus had claimed that the human souls “were a part ... of God and had flowed from above” (μοῖραν ... ὄντας θεοῦ καὶ ἄνωθεν ρεύσαντας).<sup>19</sup> In the early seventh century such phrases were, of course, considered unacceptable because of their Origenist overtones but this does not necessarily mean that they were intrinsically heretical: after all, neither of the two Cappadocian authors had ever believed that human souls were an effluence of the divine substance.

At this point one might therefore conclude that Leontius may well have held heterodox views about the origin of the soul but that the ambiguities inherent in the terms and concepts used by him make it impossible to arrive at any certainty. However, there are other passages in *Contra Nestorianos* where Leontius is less guarded and where he does indeed confirm that the souls are consubstantial with their “father” God. I will start the discussion with chapter nineteen of book four, which addresses the Nestorian claim that Mary cannot be called “God-bearer” because the Son of God is engendered by his consubstantial Father and can therefore not experience a second birth from a human mother in the incarnation. Leontius points out that the Son has two “partial” (ἐκ μέρους) progenitors, one “according to being” (κατὰ τὸ εἶναι) and one “according to qualified being” (κατὰ τὸ τοιῶσδε

<sup>17</sup> *CN*, I.1, *PG*, 86, 1405D-1408A.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarem*, ed. F. Müller, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, III.1: *Opera dogmatica minora*, (Leiden, 1958), p. 146, l. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *De pauperum amore*, *PG*, 35, 865B12.

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εἶναι) when he becomes incarnated, and then proceeds to support his argument with the anthropological paradigm:

Ὡσπερ ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπου ὀρώμεν, τοῦ μὲν σώματος τὴν γέννησιν εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἐκ τῶν γονέων ἔχοντος, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς οὐκ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀπλῶς – τοῦτο γὰρ ἔχει ἐκ Θεοῦ ὡς καὶ ὁ πρωτόπλαστος Ἀδάμ –, ἀλλ’ εἰς τὸ σὺν τῷ διαπλασθέντι αὐτῇ εἶναι σώματι, οὗ καὶ χωρὶς δύναται εἶναι· λαμβάνει γὰρ τοῦτο παρὰ τῶν ὡς εἶπεῖν τοῦ μὲν σώματος αἰτίων, αὐτῆς δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς νυμφοστόλων μόνον· καὶ ὁμῶς τῶν φύσεων ὡς ἐνός ἀνθρώπου κυρίως τε καὶ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν οἱ αὐτοὶ λέγονται τοκέες. Τί οὖν ὑμᾶς τὰ ἐξ ἀπιστίας φημι βρομβήματα, Θεὸν μὴ λέγειν ὀρθῶς τὸν τεχθέντα σεσαρκωμένον Λόγον; ἠνίκα καὶ ψυχὴν τὴν σαρκωθεῖσαν ἀνευδοιάστως ὁμολογεῖτε γεγεννηθῆσαι ἐκ τῶν τοῦ εἶναι τῆς σαρκὸς αἰτίων καὶ σὺν τῷ σώματι τοὺς αὐτοὺς καὶ αὐτῆς τοκέας ὀνομάζετε;<sup>20</sup>

“As we see with the human being who has from the parents the birth of the body into being whereas (sc. he has from them the birth) of the soul not simply into being – for it has this (sc. the being) from God, just as also the first-formed Adam –, but into being with the body that has been shaped for it, which (sc. the soul) can also be without, for he takes this from those who are so-to-speak the causes of the body, but only the escorts of the soul itself, and these same ones are nevertheless called properly and truly parents of the natures as of one human being. Why then do the buzzings arising from disbelief gag you so as not to say correctly that the born incarnated Word is God, when you admit without hesitation that the incarnated soul is born from the causes of the being of the flesh and you call the same together with the body also parents of it (sc. the soul)?”

Despite the convoluted phrasing the thrust of the argument is clear. Ordinary human beings are called mothers and fathers although strictly speaking they are only the causes for the “being” (εἶναι) of the bodies of their offspring whereas the souls owe their “being” (εἶναι) to God and the human “parents” are only the causes of the “qualified being” (τοιῶσδε εἶναι) of souls insofar as they bring about their embodied state. Therefore Mary can justly be called “mother of God” despite the fact that she is only the cause for the “being” (εἶναι) of the Word’s human body because she effects the “incarnate being” (σεσαρκωμένως εἶναι) of his divinity, which in its previous non-incarnated state had received its “being” (εἶναι) from the divine Father. It is evident that Leontius strives to create a close parallel between the two cases and that he achieves his aim by assimilating the human compound to the incarnated Word. This strategy results in an anthropology with a strongly heterodox flavour. For example, the distinction that he makes between the “soul as such” (ἀπλῶς ψυχὴ) and the “incarnated soul” (σαρκωθεῖσα ψυχὴ) implies that like the Word the disembodied soul existed before its composition with a body. Even more suggestive, however, is Leontius’ claim that God is the cause of “being” (εἶναι) of both the Word and the human souls because it raises the possibility that the two relationships are equivalent.

In order to establish whether this is indeed the case we need to turn to other arguments based on the anthropological paradigm. In chapter four of book three

<sup>20</sup> CN, IV.19, PG, 86, 1685A12-B12.

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Leontius applies the framework that we have just reconstructed to the specific case of Adam but with the added twist that the relationship between God and Adam's soul is now described in genetic terms:

Διορατέον οὖν σαφῶς ὡς καὶ ταύτην τὴν μερικὴν αἰτίαν καὶ μερικὴν ὁμοιότητα μόνον θεωρήσας Λουκᾶς ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς ἐνοῦσαν καὶ τῷ Ἀδὰμ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα τῶν πνευμάτων - κατὰ γὰρ ψυχὴν μόνον προσεχῆς αἴτιος αὐτῷ ἦν ὁ θεὸς ἐμφυσῶν αὐτῷ πνεῦμα ζωῆς εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν ἄπερ† καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀπὸ γῆς προδιέπλασε - καὶ κατὰ ταύτην σωζόμενον μόνον τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ ὁμοίωσιν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ εἰδῶς ἐκ μερικῆς αἰτίας καὶ ὁμοιώσεως υἱὸν σαφῶς τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν πνευμάτων θεοῦ καὶ τὸν Ἀδὰμ ἐγενεαλόγησεν οὕτως ἀνατάξας καὶ εἶπεν εἶναι τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡσπερ ἔφη· τοῦ Σῆθ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ ἦγουν τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ· καὶ γὰρ εἶπε· τοῦ Ἰσαὰκ <τοῦ Ἀβραάμ> ὅπερ ὁ Ματθαῖος ἔλεγεν· Ἀβραάμ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰσαὰκ οὕτως ἔφη· τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>21</sup>

“One must, then, clearly see that Luke, too, only considered that partial cause and partial similarity with the father of the spirits to be inherent in Adam, too, – for only as regards the soul was God his direct cause by breathing into him spirit of life so as to be a living soul just as he also shaped beforehand the body from earth – and that he knew that only as regards this (sc. the soul) the divine image and likeness is preserved for the human being, when in a genealogy he clearly called Adam, too, the son of God ‘the father of spirits’, having thus arranged it, and when he said that he is ‘Adam of God’, just as he said ‘Seth of Adam’, that is to say: ‘the one out of Adam’, for he also said ‘Isaac <of Abraham>’, what Matthew expressed as ‘Abraham begat Isaac’. In this way he said ‘Adam of God’.”

In this passage Leontius repeats his claim that God is the “direct cause” (προσεχῆς αἴτιος) only of Adam's soul but not of his body, which is fashioned from earth.<sup>22</sup> However, this basic configuration is now elaborated through recourse to the formula “father of the spirits” (πατὴρ τῶν πνευμάτων) from Hebrews 12:9 where “spirits” was traditionally understood to refer to human souls.<sup>23</sup> Examination of the context shows that Leontius takes great pains to read this relationship into the Biblical text. Taking as his starting point Genesis 2:7: “he breathed into his face a breath of life and man became a living soul” (ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν), he replaces πνοὴν ζωῆς with πνεῦμα ζωῆς and omits the intervening καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος in order to signal that the inbreathing is at the same time a spirit and Adam's soul. Above all, however, he consistently emphasises the genetic character of the relationship between God and human souls. This is already evident in his decision to complement the Biblical term “father” (πατήρ) with “son” (υἱός) and becomes even more obvious when we analyse his interpretation of the phrase “of Adam of God” (τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεοῦ), which he borrows from Christ's genealogy in Luke 3:38. Leontius starts by pointing out that in Luke's text there is strict equivalence between the relationship between Adam and God on the one hand and the relationships between

<sup>21</sup> CN III, 4, 1612D-1613A.

<sup>22</sup> Since he states elsewhere in *Contra Nestorianos* that God created Adam's body directly and did not use nature as a mediator, we can rule out that this refers to the efficient cause.

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary in Isaiam prophetam*, PG, 70, 1276AB.

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Christ's human ancestors on the other: in each case a simple genitive is used. In a second step he then expands Luke's statement that Seth is "of Adam" (τοῦ Ἀδάμ) to "out of Adam" (ἐκ τοῦ Ἀδάμ). This, however, must not be understood as the introduction of a distinction between human fathers and God as "father of spirits" (πατήρ τῶν πνευμάτων) but rather as encouragement to the reader to make the same modification in the parallel statement and to expand it to "Adam out of God" (Ἀδάμ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ). A similar strategy is employed in the immediately following statement which creates a parallel between the genealogy in the Gospel of Luke and its counterpart in the Gospel of Matthew where the relationship between Christ's forefathers, the first of whom is in this case Abraham, is expressed through the verb "begat" (ἐγέννησε). Leontius points out that the statement "Isaac <of Abraham>" (Ἰσαὰκ <τοῦ Ἀβραάμ>) in Luke 3:34 corresponds to "Abraham begat Isaac" (Ἀβραάμ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰσαάκ) in Matthew 1:2, and then adds "in this way he said: 'of Adam of God'" (οὕτως ἔφη· τοῦ Ἀδάμ τοῦ θεοῦ). This gives a clear signal to the readers that they should rephrase Luke's expression "Adam of God" (Ἀδάμ τοῦ θεοῦ), which does not have a counterpart in Matthew, as "God begat Adam" (ὁ θεὸς ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀδάμ).

It goes without saying that this argument is problematic because according to Leontius the relationship between Adam and God is not identical with the relationships between Christ's human ancestors: as we have seen in the latter case the genetic link is limited to their bodies. However, this does not mean that we can simply dismiss it for it provides clear evidence for Leontius' belief that terms like "father" (πατήρ), "son" (υἱός) and "begetting" (γεννᾶν) must be taken literally when they refer to God and Adam's soul. I would therefore argue that the phrase "out of God" (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) has the meaning "out of the substance of God" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ) and that the divine substance is the counterpart of the sperm of the father and the blood of the mother as the material causes of the bodies of their children.

In chapter four of book three Leontius does not use the term "consubstantiality" (ὁμοουσιότης), but only speaks more vaguely about the "similarity" (ὁμοιότης) between God and the soul. However, analysis of the first chapter of the second book shows that he is not always so circumspect. There he is confronted with the axiom that "consubstantial beings do not wish to be consubstantial in part" (τὰ ὁμοούσια οὐκ ἐκ μέρους θέλει ὁμοούσια εἶναι),<sup>24</sup> which permits his Nestorian adversary to reject the doctrine of a composite Christ who is consubstantial with the divine Father in his divinity and consubstantial with Mary in his humanity. In his refutation Leontius has again recourse to the anthropological paradigm:

Καὶ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος εἷς ἐκ μέρους τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ὑποστάσεως τῆς μητρὸς ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἔτι μὴν καὶ Ἀβραάμ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν στοιχούντων τοῖς ἴχνεσι τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ γεννῶντος τὸ πνεῦμα υἱός ἐστι· καὶ ἐκ μέρους τῆς μιᾶς ὑποστάσεως, ἣ ἐστὶ πάντα τάδε, ὁμοούσιός ἐστι τούτοις πᾶσιν.<sup>25</sup>

"For one human being is in part of his own hypostasis of his mother and his father, and also of Abraham, the father of those who follow the footsteps of faith, and of

<sup>24</sup> CN, II.1, PG, 86, 1528A10-11.

<sup>25</sup> CN, II.1, PG, 86, 1536C1-7.

the spirit that begets the spirit, and he is in each part of the one hypostasis, which is all these, consubstantial with all those.”

Here Leontius distinguishes between three different “progenitors” of a human being – the natural parents, Abraham as the father of the faithful, and “the spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα) –, which are each consubstantial with a “part” (μέρος) of the human hypostasis. The phrase “son of the spirit that begets the spirit” (τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ γεννῶντος τὸ πνεῦμα υἱός), which expresses the last-named relationship, is based on John 3:6 where Christ avers that “what is born out of the spirit is spirit” (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστιν). Thus we have a close counterpart to chapter four of book three where Leontius has recourse to the similar verse Hebrews 12:9 and where he also adds the term “son” (υἱός) to emphasise the genetic relation. Moreover, the human “spirit” (πνεῦμα) is again part of the human compound and therefore cannot refer to an additional endowment with the Holy Spirit but must be equated with the soul. This allows us to conclude that Leontius wishes his readers to decode the phrase “son of the spirit that begets the spirit” (τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ γεννῶντος τὸ πνεῦμα υἱός) as “son of God who begets the soul” (τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ γεννῶντος τὴν ψυχὴν υἱός) and then to realise that use of the same appellation establishes consubstantiality between the divine progenitor and its offspring.

Accordingly, the human parents should then again only be causes of the body. In the first chapter of the second book this point is not made explicit but it can be inferred from the Biblical reference text and from other related passages. In John 3:6 the statement about the spirit is complemented with a statement about the flesh, “what is born out of the flesh is flesh” (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σὰρξ ἐστιν). The term “flesh” is ambiguous since it can refer to the complete human being, but in the passage under discussion there can be no doubt that it only denotes the body. This can be seen from chapter seven of book four where we find another list of three progenitors of a human being, in this case the Biblical personage Timothy: Paul who converted him to Christianity, “his father according to the flesh” (ὁ ...κατὰ σὰρκα αὐτοῦ πατήρ), and God as “the cause of all substance” (πάσης οὐσίας αἴτιος) and “father of all” (πάντων ... πατήρ). This is evidently the same configuration as we have found in the first chapter of book two. However, in this case Leontius adds the clarification: “The first begot him as a similar one according to faith, the second according to his body, and the third according to his image” (ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν τῇ πίστει, ὁ δὲ τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν ὅμοιον, ὁ δὲ τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ).<sup>26</sup>

The substitution of “flesh” (σὰρξ) with the unequivocal “body” (σῶμα) shows clearly that the former term, too, refers solely to the physical aspect of a human being.<sup>27</sup> Thus we can conclude that Leontius had developed a consistent framework, which he then repeatedly reproduced in his treatise *Contra Nestorianos*.

So far we have focused on two genetic relationships, one between God and the human souls, and one between the bodies of human parents and the bodies of their children, both of which establish consubstantiality. This juxtaposition is evidently at the centre of Leontius’ argument, because it permits him to point to the human

<sup>26</sup> CN, IV.7, PG, 86, 1664D1-3.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the same point can be made as regards the phrase “the father of the spirits” (ὁ πατήρ τῶν πνευμάτων) because in Hebrews 12:9 it is juxtaposed with “our fathers of the flesh” (οἱ τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν πατέρες).

compound as a parallel for the composite Christ. However, in the first chapter of the second book and in chapter seven of book four this straightforward picture is complicated by an additional reference to Abraham and Paul where the relationship is clearly not genetic. In order to understand why Leontius mentions these two figures we need to consider the position of his adversary: the Nestorian had referred to Abraham and Paul in order to support his claim that when the Bible speaks of more than one “father” of a human being, the additional “fathers” are not further progenitors, because the term is merely used as a metaphor. I would therefore suggest that Leontius intends to subvert this distinction by focusing on the fact that Abraham and Paul are human beings and therefore consubstantial with all other human beings, even if they are not their direct progenitors. By doing so he could remove one of the mainstays of the Nestorian’s argument, namely that when Scripture describes the relationship between the human being Jesus and the divine Father in genetic terms, this must also be discounted as metaphorical speech.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the assertion that souls are consubstantial with God can also be understood as a response to a Nestorian argument. In chapter thirty-two of book four the Nestorian concludes from John 3:6 that an ordinary Christian is an adoptive son of God through baptism and instruction and “is not begotten out of the substance of the begetter” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας οὐ γεννᾶται τοῦ γεννῶντος), and that in the special case of the incarnation the man Jesus can therefore only be endowed with the Spirit but not be compounded with the Word. In order to counter this argument Leontius clearly felt the need to identify the “spirit” with the soul, which is hypostatically united with the body and can thus provide an analogy for the composition of the divine nature and the human nature in the incarnation.<sup>29</sup>

With his insistence on a genetic relationship between God and the human souls, which establishes their consubstantiality, Leontius deviates radically from the Christian mainstream. Earlier exegetes of Hebrews 12:9 had stressed that in this case fatherhood cannot be understood in the strict sense of the word: in his *Commentary on Isaiah* Cyril states that the formula “father of the spirits” (πατήρ τῶν πνευμάτων) does not mean that God “has given birth out of his own nature” (ὡς ἐξ ἰδίας φύσεως τετοκῶς), as he did when he brought forth the Son and the Holy Spirit, but merely informs us that the souls come into existence from him “by way of creation” (δημιουργικῶς).<sup>30</sup> This raises the question: how does Leontius conceive of the relationship between the soul and the divine Word? In order to find an answer I will now turn to chapter eighteen of book one. There Leontius is confronted with the Nestorian claim that the salvation of mankind is achieved through the “good pleasure” (εὐδοκία) of the divine Word and the “mediation” (μεσιτεία) of the man Jesus and that it is therefore unnecessary to posit a composition of the substance of the Word with the substance of a human being. In order to refute this position Leontius draws a parallel with creation. He starts by pointing out that God did not hesitate to create Adam’s body “through immediate action” (διὰ τῆς αὐτουργίας) and that there is therefore no reason why he should not have personally recreated the fallen human being.<sup>31</sup> This is a traditional theme, which is found in writings of

<sup>28</sup> CN, IV.32, PG, 86, 1697A6-7.

<sup>29</sup> CN, IV.32, PG, 86, 1697D9-10.

<sup>30</sup> See Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary in Isaiah prophetam*, PG, 70, 1276AB.

<sup>31</sup> CN, I.18, PG, 86, 1468D1-1469A4.

both Alexandrian and Antiochene writers who emphasise that human beings are privileged over all other creatures because they owe their existence to a direct act of God.<sup>32</sup> However, it does little for Leontius' argument that the relationship between God and Adam provides a parallel for the composition of the divine Word with a human nature. If we take God's creation of Adam as a paradigm we only arrive at a scenario where the Word creates a human body for himself whereas the nature of the relationship between the Word and this body is left undefined. It is evident that in order to have an effective parallel for the incarnation Leontius would need to show that the soul in the composite "Adam" corresponds to the divine Word in the composite "Christ"; and this is indeed what he does in the following passage:

Ἔτι δὲ μηδὲ κατ' εἰκόνα ἰδίαν καὶ ὁμοίωσιν τοῦτον προαγαγεῖν καὶ τὸν ἴδιον χαρακτῆρα ἐν τῷ χοϊκῷ καταβιβάζειν φυράματι ἔτι δὲ μάλιστα μηδὲ ψυχὴν ζῶσαν καὶ πνοὴν ζωῆς τῷ ἰδίῳ ἐμφυσήματι ἐνιέναι αὐτῷ (sc. τῷ χοϊκῷ φυράματι) καὶ ἐνοικίζειν ἑαυτὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῷ πηλῷ καὶ ὡσπερ ἀρραβῶνα τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν (sc. τὸν θεόν) συνθέσεως καταβάλλεσθαι ἐκ τῆς οἰκειᾶς φύσεως πρὸς τὴν ἀπὸ γῆς σάρκα.<sup>33</sup>

"Moreover, he would not have produced him according to his own image and likeness nor would he have caused his own imprint to descend into the earthly lump. And, above all, he would not have injected into him a living soul and breath of life through his own inbreathing and housed himself in the clay from the beginning and paid down as some earnest of the combination with it (sc. the clay) out of the own nature with the flesh from earth."

In this passage Leontius has again recourse to the two Biblical accounts of the coming to be of Adam, Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image and likeness" (ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν), and Genesis 2:7: "And God formed man as dust from the earth and breathed into his face a breath of life and man became a living soul" (καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν). In his discussion of this latter verse Leontius makes an explicit link between the coming to be of Adam and the incarnation of the Word and he conceptualises the former in terms that go beyond a simple act of creation: as is evident from the statement "lodging himself" (ἐνοικίζειν ἑαυτόν) and from the prepositional phrase "out of his own nature" (ἐκ τῆς οἰκειᾶς φύσεως) it is the divinity itself that is infused into Adam, which creates an obvious link with John 1:14: "And the Word ... took his abode in us" (καὶ ὁ λόγος ... ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). This is clearly a scenario that would be reconcilable with the view that the human soul is of divine origin, which we have encountered in the previously discussed passages. In particular, the claim that God lodges "himself" (ἑαυτόν) in the "clay" (πηλός) and the juxtaposition of the two prepositional phrases "out of the own nature" (ἐκ τῆς οἰκειᾶς φύσεως) and "from earth" (ἀπὸ γῆς) resemble closely the statements we found in Leontius's discussion of the two-fold consubstantiality of human beings.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra in Genesis*, I, PG, 69, 20B; and Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Fragmenta in Genesis*, PG, 66, 637A.

<sup>33</sup> CN, I.18, PG, 86, 1469A4-12.

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As in the passages that we have discussed so far this impression could be substantiated through detailed analysis of the argument. However, in this case I will not immediately turn to Leontius' text but rather start by identifying the exegetical tradition, which provided the starting point for his reasoning, and then proceed to establish how he deviated from this tradition and why he did so. The previous discussion has only considered Patristic authors who took the statement "he breathed into his face a breath of life" (ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς) to be a reference to the infusion of the soul into Adam's body because this is also how Leontius understands the term in all the passages that we have discussed so far. However, this was not the only possible interpretation of the first part of Genesis 2:7. Alexandrian theologians made a sharp distinction between this statement and that which immediately followed: "and man became a living soul" (καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν). They argued that the inbreathing endowed Adam with the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was then lost or at least obscured through the fall and finally returned to human kind by Christ. This view was inspired by the striking similarity between Genesis 2:7 and John 20:22 where we are told that the resurrected Christ appeared in the midst of the Apostles, "breathed on them and said to them: 'Take the Holy Spirit!'" (ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς: λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον). The relation between the two verses is made explicit by many authors. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, states in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* that "Christ again puts his own spirit into his own disciples" (κατοικίζει πάλιν τὸ ἴδιον πνεῦμα Χριστὸς τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς);<sup>34</sup> and avers in his *Glaphyra in Genesin* that the "inbreathing" of Genesis 2:7 is an act by which God "immediately imprinted an incorruptible life-giving spirit" (ἄφθαρτον ζωοποιὸν εὐθὺς ἐνεχάρατε πνεῦμα).<sup>35</sup>

These authors not only express themselves in strikingly similar terms but also appear to have the same concerns as Leontius. They tend to emphasise that it is the very divinity and not some derivative entity that lodges itself in human beings. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, states that studious prayer 'gives great gifts and houses the spirit itself in the souls' (μεγάλα χαρίζεται καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐνοικίζει).<sup>36</sup> And Cyril of Alexandria is even more insistent on this point when he concludes in his treatise *De sancta Trinitate* that the Spirit transforms the believers "not as if through a servile grace" (οὐχ ὡς διὰ χάριτος ὑπουργικῆς) and denies that "the grace through it was somehow cordoned off from the substance of the Spirit" (τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πνεύματος διεσχοινισμένη τις ἦν ἡ δι' αὐτοῦ χάρις). The similarity with Leontius' agenda is obvious: as we have already seen he stresses that God installed "himself" (ἑαυτόν) in Adam and uses the phrase "out of his own nature" (ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως).

However, a closer look at chapter eighteen of book one reveals some obvious discrepancies between the positions of Leontius and of Cyril of Alexandria. First of all, Leontius identifies the "inbreathing" (ἐμφύσημα) not with the Spirit but with the Son. This is evident from the context: before he refers to God's "own inbreathing" (ἴδιον ἐμφύσημα) he has already used the two phrases "own image"

<sup>34</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Iohannem*, ed. Pusey, vol. 3, 135; see also *Commentary on John*, John 12:1, vol. 4, 1097E.

<sup>35</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra in Genesin*, I, PG, 69, 20B.

<sup>36</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto Christiano*, ed. W. Jaeger, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, VIII.1: *Opera Ascetica* (Leiden, 1952), p. 80, ll. 9-11.

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(εἰκὼν ἰδία) and “own imprint” (χαρακτήρ ἴδιος), which had traditionally been taken to refer to the Son. Since Origen Christian authors had rephrased the Biblical formula “in our image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν) and the following “in the image of God” (κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ) as “according to his own image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα ἰδίαν), thereby identifying the divine model for the human soul with the Son of God who in II Corinthians 4:4 is called the “image of God” (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>37</sup> And writers such as Athanasius of Alexandria had referred to the Son as the “own imprint” (ἴδιος χαρακτήρ) of the Father when they paraphrased the statement in Hebrews 1:3 that the Son is the “imprint of his (sc. God’s) hypostasis” (χαρακτήρ τῆς αὐτοῦ [sc. τοῦ θεοῦ] ὑποστάσεως).<sup>38</sup> This suggests that Leontius deliberately created the series of the three statements in order to insinuate to his readers that he wished the last term not to be identified with the Spirit as was traditional but with the Son. The reason for this manipulation is evident: by substituting the Son for the Spirit Leontius was able to create a much closer parallel with the incarnation where the Son and not the Spirit became man.

A similar reworking of traditional themes can be detected from the way Leontius conceives of the entity with which the divine Son compounded himself. Here it is instructive to compare Leontius’ phrase “to inject a living soul and a breath of life into it (sc. the earthy mixture) through his own inbreathing and to house himself at the beginning in the mud” (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν καὶ πνοὴν ζωῆς τῷ ἰδίῳ ἐμφυσήματι ἐνιέναι αὐτῷ [sc. τῷ χοϊκῷ φυράματι] καὶ ἐνοικίζειν ἑαυτὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῷ πηλῷ) with a similar formula in Cyril’s *De sancta trinitate*, “housing and injecting the spirit into the souls of the faithful and refashioning them through it and in it to the form that they had at the beginning” (ταῖς τῶν πιστευόντων ψυχαῖς ἐγκατοικίζοντός τε καὶ ἐνιέντος τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ μεταπλάττοντος εἰς εἶδος τὸ ἐν ἀρχαῖς).<sup>39</sup> The difference is obvious: in Cyril’s case the divine element is infused into an already existing soul whereas Leontius mentions “living soul” (ψυχὴ ζῶσα) as an added feature. At this point one might argue that Leontius uses with “breath of life” (πνοὴ ζωῆς) a second term that might denote the Spirit as a further entity that was also infused into Adam’s body. However, against such an interpretation it must be pointed out that he makes no effort to distinguish between the two terms: he simply correlates them, although in the Biblical text they are part of two subsequent and quite distinct statements – “he breathed into his face a breath of life” (ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς) and “man became a living soul” (καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν) – and despite the fact that earlier theologians such as Cyril had insisted that the two statements needed to be kept apart. Indeed we have already seen that Leontius can replace the Biblical πνοή with πνεῦμα in the sense of “soul” when he rephrases Genesis 2:7 as “breathing into it a spirit of life so as to be a living soul” (ἐμφυσῶν αὐτῷ πνεῦμα ζωῆς εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν). Nevertheless there is no doubt that the term πνεῦμα here does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the soul, which is mentioned immediately

<sup>37</sup> Athanasius, *Orationes tres contra Arianos*, PG, 26, 320C; see also Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra in Pentateuchum*, PG, 69, 465BC.

<sup>38</sup> Athanasius, *Orationes tres contra Arianos*, PG, 26, 461A; see also Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium*, PG, 29, 753C.

<sup>39</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De sancta trinitate dialogi VII*, PG, 75, 1088C.

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afterwards.<sup>40</sup> This suggests that here, too, “living soul” and “breath of life” are synonymous and that they both denote the soul and also the divinity, since they are taken up again by “himself” (ἑαυτόν). And in the same way we will then need to interpret the phrase “through his own inbreathing” (τῷ ἰδίῳ ἐμφυσήματι): Since it is equated with the divine Son it is also identical with the following reflexive pronoun and can therefore not be materially different from “breath of life” and “living soul”. Such interpretation would entail that for Leontius the recipient of the “inbreathing” is not the whole Adam, but merely Adam’s body. We have seen that he expresses this view in other parts of *Contra Nestorianos* and close examination of the passage under discussion reveals that this is also true in this particular case. He first speaks of “earthen lump” (χοϊκὸν φύραμα) and “clay” (πηλός), which can refer to the whole human being or to the body alone.

However, such a reading is not possible for the statement that Christ created a precedent for his own composition by joining himself “to the flesh from earth” (πρὸς τὴν ἀπὸ γῆς σάρκα). This statement is evidently based on the first half of Genesis 2:7: “and God formed man as dust from the earth” (καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς). By qualifying “flesh” as being “from earth” (ἀπὸ γῆς) Leontius insinuates that “flesh” is to be identified with “dust” (χοῦς), which means that it must refer exclusively to the body.<sup>41</sup> Therefore we can conclude that the “inbreathing”, now identified with the divine Son, enters a material body and becomes the soul of the human being Adam.

It is not difficult to see why Leontius strayed from the traditional “Alexandrian” position and substituted the soul for the Holy Spirit. While endowment with the Holy Spirit results in a scenario where the divine substance is present in human beings this presence is nevertheless not a part of human nature: it remains extrinsic to it and can even be lost. Therefore it cannot serve as a parallel for the divine Son if the incarnation is to be conceptualised as a composition and must be replaced by the soul as one part of the human composite.

The comparison of Leontius’ argument with traditional Alexandrian exegesis has given us a first insight into the origins of his conceptual framework. However, he was not only influenced by theologians with whom he felt a natural affinity; he was also indebted to the theology of his Antiochene or Nestorian enemies. This can be seen when we focus on the manner in which Leontius seeks to distinguish the coming to be of ordinary human beings from the incarnation of the Word. So far we have only considered similarities between the two events: we have seen that God lodges “himself” (ἑαυτόν) in Adam and that what he lodges there is “out of his own nature” (ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως), just as it will be the case in the later incarnation. However, Leontius also informs us how he wishes us to conceive of the relationship between the two events: he calls the ensouling of Adam a “pledge for the composition with him (sc. God)” (ἄρραβῶνα τῆς πρὸς αὐτόν [sc. τὸν θεόν] συνθέσεως). In its literal sense ἄρραβῶν refers to a partial payment that a purchaser offers as a security for the delivery of the whole sum that is owed by him,<sup>42</sup> and

<sup>40</sup> See *CN*, III.4, *PG*, 86, 1612D4-7.

<sup>41</sup> This is corroborated through comparison with the statement quoted in the previous footnote where the ambiguous term σάρξ is replaced with the unequivocal σῶμα.

<sup>42</sup> H.G. Liddell, R. Scott and H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968), s. v. ἄρραβῶν, *earnest-money*, *caution-money*, deposited by the purchaser and forfeited if the purchase is not completed, 2. generally, a pledge, earnest.

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this meaning is preserved when the term is used in a metaphorical sense: Christian authors consistently interpret it as denoting a “part” (μέρος), which is “incomplete” (ἀτελής), and juxtapose it with the “whole” (ὅλον, πᾶν), which is “complete” (τέλειον).<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, we can rephrase “pledge out of his own nature” (ἄρραβῶνα ... ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως) as “part out of his own nature” (μέρος ... ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως) and we can infer that in Christ’s humanity resides the “whole” (ὅλον) of the divinity.

How did Leontius arrive at this conceptual framework? His starting-point was evidently the Biblical formula “pledge of the Spirit” (ἄρραβῶν τοῦ πνεύματος).<sup>44</sup> Other Christian authors such as Gennadius of Constantinople had interpreted this formula as “the partial grace of the Spirit” (τὸ μερικὸν τοῦ πνεύματος χάρισμα) bestowed in the wake of the incarnation and had juxtaposed it with the “universal grace” (καθόλου χάρις) that will be given after the resurrection.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, however, the same conceptual framework is employed by Antiochene theologians when they attempt to distinguish between Christ and other virtuous human beings. As I have already mentioned, the Nestorian author put a strong emphasis on the endowment of the man Jesus with the Holy Spirit, which then permitted him to claim that it was not necessary to conceive of the incarnation as a composition in order to safeguard the salvific effects of the incarnation. This endowment of Jesus with the Spirit, however, was conceived in quantitative terms: It was argued that Jesus received the whole Spirit whereas saintly human beings of earlier times only received a part of this Spirit. This notion is set out most concisely by Theodoret of Cyrus in his *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium* where it is claimed that God distributed to the prophets the gifts of the Spirit, whereas in the incarnation he gave the “assumed nature” (προσληφεῖσα φύσις) not merely a “partial grace” (μερικὴ χάρις), but the whole “fullness of divinity” (πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος).<sup>46</sup> The affinity of this view with Leontius’ position is evident throughout *Contra Nestorianos*: in chapter twenty-eight of book four Leontius attempts to distinguish Christ’s status from that of Jeremiah and John the Baptist by claiming that Mary gave birth to “the spirit itself” (αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα), which in this context clearly refers to Christ, whereas the latter two figures were anointed in the womb “through participation of the sanctifying spirit” (μετοχῇ τοῦ ἁγιαστικοῦ πνεύματος),<sup>47</sup> and in chapter six of book five he distinguishes Jesus Christ from other “Jesuses” mentioned in the Bible by claiming that these other “Jesuses” were given that name “because of partial partaking of the spirit” (ἀπὸ μέρους πνευματικῆς μεταλήψεως).<sup>48</sup> This shows that Leontius conceived of the difference between participation in the spirit

<sup>43</sup> See P. Bruns, *Den Menschen mit dem Himmel verbinden. Eine Studie zu den katechetischen Homilien des Theodor von Mopsuestia* (CSCO, 549, ‘Subsidia, 89; Leuven, 1995), 332: “Der Teilaspekt gehört wesentlich zur Natur des Unterpandes,” and note 214 with a list of examples from Theodore and other authors of the fourth and fifth centuries. For a later parallel, see Anastasius of Antioch, *Oratio*, IV, 14, ed. S. N. Sakkos, *Anastasii I Antiocheni opera omnia genuine quae supersunt* (Salonica, 1976), 75.25-25: Προκαταβέβληται γὰρ ὡς φαμεν ὁ ἄρραβῶν μηνύων τὸ πᾶν τῆς δόσεως: ὁ γὰρ ἄρραβῶν οὐκ ἐστὶ τὸ ὅλον ἀλλὰ τὸ μέρος.

<sup>44</sup> See II Corinthians 1:21-22, and II Corinthians 5:5.

<sup>45</sup> Gennadius of Constantinople, *Fragmenta in Epistolam ad Romanos*, PG, 85, 1700A.

<sup>46</sup> Theodoret, *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium*, V, 23, PG, 88, 532AB.

<sup>47</sup> CN, IV.48, PG, 86, 1720D2-11.

<sup>48</sup> CN, V.6, PG, 86, 1732A7-8.

and reception of “the spirit itself” in terms of part and whole, i. e. in very much the same ways as Antiochene and Nestorian authors did.

Therefore one can argue that Leontius was influenced by the conceptual framework of his opponent, which he then modified to serve his own purposes. The first step that he took was to transpose this model to a protological context. This is not without precedent: Basil of Caesarea, for example, states in his *Homiliae super psalmos* that by breathing on Adam’s face God “deposited a part of his own grace in the human being in order that the like recognise the like” (μοῖράν τινα τῆς ἰδίας χάριτος ἐναπέθετο τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἵνα τῷ ὁμοίῳ ἐπιγινώσκη τὸ ὅμοιον).<sup>49</sup> However, then he parted company with tradition altogether when he replaced the Holy Spirit, which is given to the soul, with the soul itself. The radical nature of this step becomes clear when we consider that not even the position of Cyril and Gregory of Nyssa that the souls were endowed with the substance of the Holy Spirit was universally accepted. Cyril of Jerusalem, for example, when interpreting the Pauline formula “divisions of the Holy Spirit” (μερισμοὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου), feels the need to add the comment that “it is not the Spirit that is divided but the grace through it” (πνεῦμα οὐ μεμέρισται ἀλλ’ ἡ δι’ αὐτοῦ χάρις).<sup>50</sup>

At this point we can recapitulate. Through the reworking of traditional themes Leontius creates a framework where the divine Son is present in the human being not as an additional endowment but rather as the soul and where the human souls become parts of the divine nature of the Son, which have been partitioned off from him. As I have stated, Leontius developed this model because it allowed him to counter the Nestorian contention that a composition of an uncreated entity and a created entity is impossible for he could then claim that there existed a precedent in Adam’s coming to be. This creates the impression that Leontius developed a heretical anthropology in order to defend an orthodox Christology. However, a closer look at his understanding of the incarnation shows that this is not the case. His reinterpretation of the coming to be of Adam as the composition of a part of the Son with a material body provides a parallel not so much for the traditional understanding of the incarnation as a composition between the Son and a humanity consisting of soul and body, but for a scenario where the Son takes the place of the soul within the human compound: as we have seen, the only difference between the coming to be of Adam and the incarnation lies in the fact that Adam’s soul is a “part” of the Son, whereas Christ’s soul is the “whole” Son. This is evident from the phrase “to deposit so-to-speak a pledge for the composition with him out of his own nature into the flesh from earth” (ὡσπερ ἀρραβῶνα τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν συνθέσεως καταβάλλεσθαι ἐκ τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως πρὸς τὴν ἀπὸ γῆς σάρκα). As I have already pointed out, the expression τὴν ἀπὸ γῆς σάρκα is clearly based on the phrase “dust from the earth” (χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς) in Genesis 2:7 and thus limits the meaning of “flesh” to the material body into which the divine “inbreathing” is then infused. In its context this phrase refers to the coming to be of Adam, but the choice of the word σὰρξ alludes to John 1:14: “and the Word became flesh and took his abode in us” (καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο), and thus leaves no doubt that it also applies to Christ’s incarnation for which Adam’s coming to be provided a precedent. This

<sup>49</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Homiliae super psalmos*, PG, 29, 449CD.

<sup>50</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 17, ch. 12, ed. W.C. Reisch and J. Rupp, *Cyriilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi quae supersunt opera omnia*, 2 vols (Munich, 1848-1860), II. 21-22.

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permits us to conclude that for Leontius the human element in the incarnate Son is a mere body, whereas the soul is to be equated the Son himself.

If one wished to play the heresiological game one could say that Leontius here develops an “Apollinarian” Christology. However, the similarity is only superficial, since unlike Apollinaris Leontius extends this model to all other human beings as well. Moreover, there is no sign that he ever drew the conclusion that the traditional Chalcedonian interpretation of the incarnation could be dispensed with. Indeed, he gives the impression that in the incarnate Word the divine is present twice, once as the soul and once as the divinity proper. Chapter nineteen of book one illustrates the problems that this view caused for Leontius’ theological position. There he is again confronted with the Nestorian claim that the sinlessness of Jesus cannot be attributed to the union with the Son of God but is the result of Jesus’ will and the support of the Holy Spirit since otherwise it would not be a genuine achievement.<sup>51</sup> He starts his refutation by claiming that in Jesus Christ the spirit plays the same role as does the free will in us since we are justified through the moral choices we make whereas Paul states in I Timothy 3:16 that Christ “was justified in the Spirit” (ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι), and then proceeds to state:

Εἰ δὲ ὅπερ τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως ἐστὶ αὐτεξούσιον καὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης αἴτιον, τοῦτο τῆς Χριστοῦ φύσεως ἴσμεν εἶναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τοῦτο δὲ ἀληθῶς θεὸς ἀληθινός, πῶς οὐχὶ σαφέστατα ἡμῖν καὶ ἄκοντες τὴν θείαν φύσιν διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν Χριστῷ εἶναι δεδώκατε.<sup>52</sup>

“But if as we know the free will and the cause of the righteousness of our nature correspond to the Holy Spirit of Christ’s nature, and this (sc. the Holy Spirit) is truly true God, how then have you not conceded to us even if against your will that the divine nature is in Christ through the spirit.”

In this passage Leontius juxtaposes “our nature” (ἡ ἡμετέρα φύσις) with “the nature of Christ” (ἡ Χριστοῦ φύσις), which can only refer to Christ’s humanity, because otherwise the statement would take on a Monophysite character. That Leontius distinguishes the two “natures” from one another in this way is highly suggestive since according to official doctrine there is no difference between the humanity of Christ and the humanity of other human beings. And indeed the strict parallelism suggests that the Spirit belongs to Christ’s nature in the same way as the willing soul belongs to the nature of other human beings and that it is therefore part of the human compound. It is not difficult to see why Leontius would have taken this step: if he had not established complete equivalence between the Holy Spirit in Christ and the soul in ordinary human beings he would merely have restated the position of his Nestorian adversary that the human being Jesus acts freely but has the support of the Holy Spirit. However, even such a scenario does not really answer the Nestorian question why a composition between the Word and a human nature should be necessary. After all, so far we have only dealt with the “human” sphere where the Holy Spirit takes the place of the soul. That Leontius was aware of this quandary becomes evident in the immediately following passage:

<sup>51</sup> *CN*, I.19, *PG*, 86, 1472D3-1473A2.

<sup>52</sup> *CN*, I.19, *PG*, 86, 1484D2-1485A1-6.

“Ὁ γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν ὁ ἡγεμονικὸς λόγος κατορθοῖ μερικῶς, τοῦτο παντελῶς ὁ θεῖος λόγος πρὸς τῷ ἡμετέρῳ καὶ τοῦδε καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἡγεμονευόντων ἐν Χριστῷ κατώρθωσεν.<sup>53</sup>

“For what the guiding word achieves in us partially, this has the divine word achieved in Christ completely, in addition to our (sc. word) both of him and of the others who are guiding.”

Here finally Christ’s achievements are attributed to the divine Word that accedes to the human “guiding word” (ἡγεμονικὸς λόγος) that is found both in Christ and in us, a term that can only refer to the human soul. However, the introduction of the divine component at this point creates severe problems: it is not clear who is responsible for the complete achievement of Christ, which distinguishes him from all other human beings who only manage partial achievements. Since Christ’s sinlessness has just been attributed to the Holy Spirit in his human nature the divine Word who enters into a composition with this nature appears to be curiously inert. However, is this really what Leontius wishes to say here? When we look more closely at the sentence we can see that it is construed in a rather curious way. A part of the main clause, namely τοῦτο παντελῶς ὁ θεῖος λόγος ... ἐν Χριστῷ κατώρθωσεν, has an exact counterpart in the preceding relative clause ὁ γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν ὁ ἡγεμονικὸς λόγος κατορθοῖ μερικῶς. Indeed, the parallelism is even further emphasised by the use of the term “word” (λόγος) in both cases. This makes the oddly phrased prepositional expression πρὸς τῷ ἡμετέρῳ καὶ τοῦδε καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἡγεμονευόντων look like little more than an afterthought. If we leave this prepositional phrase aside and focus exclusively on the parallel elements a different scenario emerges; for then the “divine Word” (θεῖος λόγος) in Christ is correlated with the “guiding word” (ἡγεμονικὸς λόγος) in ordinary human beings. In such a scenario, however, the “divine Word” would no longer be the divine person that enters into a composition with a human nature but rather the Holy Spirit of the previous passage that was there presented as the entity responsible for the moral achievements of this human nature. That Leontius does indeed oscillate between these two models can be seen from the following passage, which concludes the chapter:

Εἴτε οὖν ὡς συνυπάρχων τῷ ἀγίῳ πνεύματι εἴτε ὡς πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως λεγόμενος οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ τῆς δικαιοσύνης οὐχ ἕτερος αἴτιος.<sup>54</sup>

“Whether co-existing with the Holy Spirit or being called “holy spirit” because of the nature and not because of the hypostasis, he himself and not another is cause of his own righteousness.”

Here Leontius sketches two alternative scenarios that are meant to explain how the justification of Christ was effected. The first scenario, that the divine Word co-exists with the Holy Spirit, corresponds to our first reading of the previous passage

<sup>53</sup> CN, I.19, PG, 86, 1484D2-1485A3-6.

<sup>54</sup> CN, I.19, PG, 86, 1484D2-1485A6-8.

because the divine Word can only refer to the entity that enters into a composition with the human nature and the Holy Spirit must refer to the entity that is found within the “human” nature. By contrast, the second scenario, that the divine Word is identical with the “holy spirit”, identifies the divine Word with the divine entity that is within the human nature, and thus corresponds to our second reading of the previous passage, with the consequence that the hypostasis of the Word as the properly divine component has fallen out of the equation.

From the evidence presented so far it would appear that Leontius developed his heterodox views about the embodied soul and the incarnate Word because of the constraints of the Christological debate and an overdependence on the conceptual framework of his opponent. However, I would argue that these factors can only provide a partial answer to the question why Leontius deviated so radically from the theological mainstream of his time. It seems likely that he developed his conceptual framework because he already held the belief that the human soul is not a created entity that comes into existence simultaneously with or even after the body but instead shows a closer affinity to the divine and shares in its timelessness. This raises the question: what was the intellectual milieu in which Leontius pursued his theological speculations? The most likely answer to this is that he belonged to the Origenist circles of Palestine and that his worldview was influenced by Platonic concepts.

The affinity between Leontius’ speculations and the views of representatives of a Platonising interpretation of the Christian faith is striking. As I have already pointed out in the previous discussion, Gregory of Nyssa asserts that the human intellect is in the likeness of God because it is “the outflow out of the divine in-breathing” (ἡ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐμφυσήματος ἀπόρροια), and Gregory of Nazianzus claims that the human souls were “a part of God that had flowed from above” (μοῖρα θεοῦ ἄνωθεν ῥεύσασα). Although these authors took great care not to attribute to the soul a divine status in the strict sense of the word, they tended to eschew clear references to a creation of the soul out of nothing. Therefore one can formulate the hypothesis that Leontius merely emphasised latent tendencies within the Origenist tradition and that he did so because his Christological argument required him to find an exact parallel for the incarnation where one component, the Son, was divine in the strict sense of the word.

This hypothesis can be substantiated when we turn to chapter twelve of book one. There the Nestorian author argues that whatever enters into a composition does so in order to draw profit from it. Leontius rejects this position and claims instead that God composed himself with man out of consideration for inferior beings. As so much of Leontius’ polemic, this argument is based on a wilful misunderstanding of his opponent’s position, who would have readily agreed that God did not profit from the incarnation and only questioned the specific point that the incarnation must be conceived of as a composition. Significantly Leontius does not address this point at all in his argument but instead offers several examples for altruistic behaviour beginning with the Son of God himself:

Φησὶ γὰρ ἑαυτὸν ἡ τὰ λόγια, οὐχ ἀρπαγμὸν ἡγησάμενος τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν. τί οὖν χρήσιμον ἐκ τούτου γένοιτο τέλος κατὰ τὸν σκοπὸν ἐκβεβηκὸς τοῦ κενωθέντος; οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν τοῦ ἡμᾶς ἐκ δουλείας

ῥυσθῆναι οὐκ προσελάβετο, καὶ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχῆθεν αὐτοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ εἶναι κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ ὁμοίωσιν εἶναι.<sup>55</sup>

“For Scripture says †about him† that he did not regard being like God as something to be snatched but voided himself, having taken the form of a servant. What profitable end, then, could possibly accrue from this, after it had come to pass according to the plan of him who had been voided? None other but that we whom he took to himself be rescued from servanthood and that we be like God according to his original good pleasure concerning us that we be according to the image and likeness of God.”

In this passage Leontius makes the point that the incarnation was a selfless act of the Son of God with the purpose of liberating human beings from their fallen condition and of restoring them to their original state. The passage is a patchwork of Biblical references: for the incarnation Leontius quotes from Philippians 2:6-7: “who being in the form of God did not regard to be like God as something to be snatched but voided himself, having taken the form of a servant, having come to be in the likeness of human beings” (ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων, οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγησάμενος τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, μορφὴν δούλου λαβών, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος), and for the description of the original state he refers to Genesis 1:26: “Let us make a human being in our image and likeness” (ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν). However, rather than using these quotations side by side he merges them to create one overarching conceptual framework. The context shows clearly that Leontius makes a straightforward equation of “being like God” (εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ) with “being in the likeness of God” (εἶναι καθ' ὁμοίωσιν θεοῦ), and consequently also between “being in the form of God” (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχειν) and “being in the image of God” (εἶναι κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ), which suggests to the reader a fundamental equivalence between the two sets of statements, in particular since the characterisation of God’s salvific work as a rescue “from servitude” (ἐκ δουλείας) implies that human beings should also be seen as having “the form of a servant” (μορφὴ δούλου). The result is a quite extraordinary deviation from traditional orthodox exegesis of Philippians 2:6-11. Despite many disagreements on the finer points of interpretation most authors took it for granted that the subject shifts in the course of the statement: the original state and the following descent were seen as referring to Christ’s natural divinity and only the ensuing exaltation was interpreted as referring to his assumed humanity. By contrast, Leontius creates a circular framework within which human beings originally enjoyed the same status as “Christ” and made the same descent as him only to be exalted again together with him.

When we look for authors who could have inspired this exegesis of Philippians 2:6-7, we find the closest counterpart in Origen. According to an excerpt from a letter by Theophilus of Alexandria, which is preserved in Theodoret’s *Eranistes*, Origen had distinguished the Son from Christ’s soul, arguing that “his soul was like God and in his form” (ἡ ψυχὴ τούτου ἴσα θεῷ καὶ ἐν μορφῇ αὐτοῦ), and stating that it was the soul “that had emptied itself and had taken the form of the servant” (τὴν κενώσασαν ἑαυτὴν καὶ μορφὴν δούλου λαβοῦσαν).<sup>56</sup> This suggests that

<sup>55</sup> CNI.12, *PG*, 86, 1449A13-B6.

<sup>56</sup> Theophilus of Alexandria, *Second Paschal Letter*, in Theodoret, *Eranistes*, II, *PG*, 83, 197C. Dirk Krausmüller, “Human Souls as Consubstantial Sons of God: The Heterodox Anthropology of Leontius of Jerusalem,” in: *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 4 (2010) 43-67; ISSN: 1754-517X; Website: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/clarc/jlarc>

Leontius was influenced by the Origenist belief that human souls had originally been pure intellects in close communion with God and had then fallen and become embodied, with the exception of the intellect associated with the Son of God, which voluntarily descended to the world of matter in order to save the fallen. Such interpretation can be further substantiated when we consider the phrase “according to his good pleasure concerning us from the beginning” (κατὰ τὴν ἀρχῆθεν αὐτοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν εὐδοκίαν), which bears a marked resemblance with Ephesians 1:6 where Paul states that “according to the good pleasure of his will” (κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ) God elected us “before the foundation of the world” (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) and thus can be seen as a further allusion to the pre-existence of the souls. However, at the same time it is clear that this model has undergone fundamental modifications. As we have seen Leontius develops this theme in order to prove the Chalcedonian point of view that the incarnation must be understood as a composition of the Word with a human nature. Accordingly the agent of Philippians 2:6-11 can no longer be the soul of Christ but must be the Son of God. It is evident that this shift has implications for the status of the souls of the human beings whose salvation the incarnation was to effect: the symmetry of the argument requires that they would then also need to be fully divine. The only element that does not seem to accord with this interpretation is Leontius’ assertion that human beings had their primeval likeness with God “according to his good pleasure concerning us from the beginning” (κατὰ τὴν ἀρχῆθεν αὐτοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν εὐδοκίαν), which gives the impression that the divine image is the result of a divine act of will. However, this comment is not as unequivocal as it first seems because it could refer to the decision of God to separate from his own substance the elements that were then to become the souls. Chapter twelve of book one thus suggests that Leontius started out as an Origenist and was then carried away by the constraints of the Christological debate, which forced him to formulate a much more extreme position.

Leontius was without doubt fully aware of the fact that he deviated radically from the consensus that had been established in previous centuries; otherwise he would not have exploited terminological and conceptual ambiguities and made terminological substitutions in order to create arguments that at first sight appear entirely orthodox. However, it is noticeable that such caution does not extend to every part of his work. In the previous discussion we have come across several passages where he makes quite explicit statements that his contemporaries would surely have immediately identified as utterly heretical. This raises the question: how could Leontius hope to escape condemnation and persecution? After all, it is a well-known fact that Origenists whose views were considerably less *outré* than Leontius’ had been denounced as heretics at the Second Council of Constantinople and had then seen their writings destroyed by the authorities, with the result that they are now lost in the Greek original and are only known from Syriac translations.

An explanation may present itself when we consider the historical context in which Leontius wrote. In a previous article I have dated *Contra Nestorianos* to the seventh century and have argued that it most likely postdates the Persian sack of Jerusalem.<sup>57</sup> This means that Leontius may well have been active during the Persian

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<sup>57</sup> See my article “Leontius of Jerusalem, a theologian of the 7th century,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 52 (2001), pp. 637-657.

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occupation of Palestine or even after the Muslim conquest of the East. It is obvious that during these two periods the official church could not rely on the state to enforce its own theological positions as it had done in the previous centuries. Therefore one might argue that Leontius availed himself of the newly found freedom in order to voice his radical ideas, in particular since similar views are expressed in writings of other authors of the time.<sup>58</sup> Anastasius of Sinai, for example, who lived in the second half of the seventh century, wrote a *Speech on the Divine Image*, which contains the following passage about the origin of the soul:

Οὐ δι' ἕτερόν τι κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ ὁμοίωσιν λέγεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰ μὴ διὰ τὸ ἔχειν αὐτὸν ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς θείας ὑποστάσεως ἐκείνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἐμφυσηματος ὡς περ ἀπόρροιάν τινα θεοῦ ἢ ἀποσκίασμα τὴν λογικὴν πνοὴν τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῶ μεταδοθεῖσαν τῆς ψυχῆς, ὅπερ ἐμφύσημα καὶ θεόδοτον καὶ θεόστομον γέννημα οὔτε ἄγγελος οὔτε Χερουβὶμ ... ἠξιώθη δέξασθαι.<sup>59</sup>

“For no other reason is the human being called according to the image and likeness of God than because of his having it from the divine hypostasis itself of that divine inbreathing, like an outflow of God or a shading-off, having given the rational breath of life to the soul, which inbreathing and god-given and god-mouthed offspring neither angel nor Cherubim ... was deigned worthy to receive.”

Here is not the place to embark on an in-depth interpretation of this passage. However, even a cursory reading reveals a marked similarity with Leontius' position: the soul is described as an outflow of God and as being out of the divine inbreathing, which is characterised as a hypostasis and as an offspring of God. This shows that other authors in the seventh century could make exalted statements about the soul and suggests that Leontius may have been a less isolated figure than he now seems to be.

At this point we can summarise the results of our discussion. At the beginning of this article I showed that in his treatise *Contra Nestorianos* Leontius identifies the soul in the compound Adam with the “divine inbreathing” and that he characterises the “inbreathing” itself with as an emanation from God. I argued that he took this step because he wished to counter the Nestorian claim that a composition between an uncreated and a created entity is impossible: by interpreting the coming to be of Adam as just such a composition he could claim that the incarnation was only one instance of a widespread phenomenon. In a second step I then demonstrated that Leontius defended the twofold consubstantiality of the incarnated Christ by drawing a parallel with the human compound where the human parents are only the causes of the bodies while the souls have God as their father. Through close reading of several passages I attempted to show that Leontius considered God and

<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the same may have been true for the Nestorian author whose treatise Leontius attempted to refute. The Nestorian treatise, which most likely dates to the early seventh century, is the only known Greek exposé of a strict Nestorian position that can be dated after Chalcedon; see my article “Conflicting anthropologies in the Christological discourse at the end of Late Antiquity: the case of Leontius of Jerusalem’s Nestorian adversary,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 56 (2005), pp. 413-47.

<sup>59</sup> See Anastasius of Sinai, *Sermo II*, c. 4, ed. Uthemann, *Anastasii Sinaitae Sermones duo*, p. 48, ll. 45-52.

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the souls to be consubstantial and that he understood their relationship as a genetic one in the strict sense of the word. Having set out the conceptual framework within which Leontius made his case for a Chalcedonian Christology I then proceeded to show that one of his starting points was the traditional view that Adam's soul was endowed with the Holy Spirit itself and not just with a derivative grace. This model had the advantage that it located "God" in the human being but the disadvantage that this presence remained extrinsic to the human compound. To make it function as a precedent for the incarnation of the Word Leontius therefore introduced two modifications: he substituted the Son for the Spirit and he reduced the human nature to the body, thereby indicating that the soul must be divine. In order to distinguish the case of Christ from that of Adam and other human beings he employed the Biblical motif of the "pledge", which was traditionally used to contrast the partial spiritual endowment of the believers in this world with their complete spiritual endowment in the world to come but which he now applied to Adam and Christ. This permitted him to claim that in Adam the Son was only present partially whereas in Christ he was present completely. These modifications led to a further deviation from the theological mainstream: not only was the soul no longer a creature but instead a part of the divine; the incarnation was also no longer conceptualised as the composition of the divine Word with a human nature consisting of body and soul but rather as a composition of the divine Word as soul and a human body, with the consequence that the properly divine component of traditional Christology could no longer be given a satisfactory role in the salvation of mankind. One reason for this shift was obviously a too great dependence on the conceptual framework of his Nestorian opponent whose focus had been on the endowment of the human being Jesus with the Holy Spirit, who thus assumed a crucial role in the incarnation. Leontius accepted this framework, as well as the Nestorian custom to see the difference between the Spirit in Jesus and the Spirit in other human beings in quantitative terms, and merely modified it by identifying the Holy Spirit with the Son on the one hand and with the soul on the other. However, the constraints of the Christological debate and overdependence on the conceptual framework of his opponent can only provide a partial answer to the question why Leontius deviated radically from the theological mainstream. It is evident that he would only have developed his views if he had already held the belief that the human soul is not a created entity that comes into existence simultaneously with or even after the body but instead shows a closer affinity to the divine and shares in its timelessness. His interpretation of Philippians 2:6-7 suggests that Leontius was a latter-day Origenist who could express his ideas more freely than his forebears because the political circumstances of the early seventh century made enforcement of orthodoxy impossible in the Eastern provinces.