

on the other'? And how is one who in full seriousness puts forward the *Christus Victor* theory of the atonement himself to be taken seriously?

A teasing finale suggests that the main problem of Christology did not come to expression or resolution until Leontius of Byzantium enunciated the notion of *enhypostasia* (shades of H. M. Relton!). Krannich purposely eschews church-political aspects but claims that ignorance of the issues, the biased critique by Cassian, and the subservience of Celestine contributed overwhelmingly to the condemnation of Nestorius. There is something in that, but it is, I believe, a combination of truths and half-truths too often reiterated. He is certainly right, though, that there is no equivalent in Latin theology of the period to the phrase *μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσαρκωμένη*. And that lack made for misunderstanding and casts doubt, I would suggest, on the significance of any specifically Western contribution to Christology in this period—if, that is, the search for it fulfilled a useful purpose.

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*The Life and Miracles of Thekla: A Literary Study.*

By SCOTT FITZGERALD JOHNSON. Pp. xxiv + 288.  
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THIS fluent, scholarly study of the anonymous fifth-century document *The Life and Miracles of Thecla* (hereafter *LM*) embodies the author's Oxford D.Phil. thesis. It reveals his breadth of knowledge, extending well beyond his specialist field of Late Antiquity. But it is devoted almost entirely to literary analysis and literary history, and never considers whether or not Thecla was a historical figure.

Introductory material includes a very brief outline of *LM* using the chapter numbering of G. Dagron's critical text (1978); a map showing the position of Seleuceia (spelt 'Seleukeia'), adopted home of Thecla ('Thekla') in south-east Asia Minor; and, in Latin and English, the extract from the journal of the

pilgrim Egeria relating her visit to Seleuceia in 384. In his introduction Johnson briefly comments on this extract and then draws together other references to Thecla and her shrine from 300 to the late fifth century. *The Life and Miracles of Thecla*, he tells us, is some ten times the length of the late second-century *Acts of Thecla*; it is written in literary Attic Greek, and was completed by c.470. Its attribution by a medieval copyist to Bishop Basil of Seleuceia is clearly wrong since *Mir.* 12 is critical of him. While other scholars have focused their attention on Thecla's healing miracles, drawing parallels with the accounts of healings by Asclepius, Johnson's concern is rather with the whole document. The comparatively neglected *Life*, he points out, is a 'literary paraphrase' of the earlier *Acts of Thecla* (*ATH.*).

In chapter 1 Johnson analyses the *Life*, helpfully employing subtitles for its various sections. He notes the author's claim to be imparting historical information, following in the footsteps of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Luke, though he is clearly writing a Christian romance. The author admits to making changes in the 'composition and style' of an earlier work (*ATH.*). Comparing the two documents it is evident he has invented various speeches and has attempted to iron out perceived difficulties in *ATH.*, such as its pronounced encratite bias. He uses Paul to endorse Thecla's apostolic status, and readily puts into the mouths of both Paul and Thecla technical theological terminology from the fourth century (*Life* 7.38-50, 26.8-12). A particularly important change occurs at the end of the *Life* (28.5-14) when, instead of telling of Thecla's death, he portrays her as sinking down alive into the earth, from where she carries on her miraculous works.

Chapter 2 looks at literary paraphrase as an art form. In his quest for parallels Johnson moves effortlessly from Erasmus' paraphrases of Scripture, to a modern anthropological study of West African myths, and then to antiquity to consider a range of sources including the Old and New Testaments and, finally, the fifth-century writings of the Empress Eudocia and church historians Socrates and Sozomen. In one statement he is unguarded: 'It is standard scholarly fare that the earliest Christians, or at least representative writers, considered apocryphal stories concerning Jesus, his family, and the apostles just as factual and authoritative as the canonical New Testament' (p. 106). He cites only Origen. There are of course other examples, but if indeed the Fathers considered apocryphal stories as reliable as Scripture, why did they bother to establish a

canon of the New Testament? He seems to have forgotten Eusebius' categorization of the apocryphal books as 'spurious' and 'heretical' in contrast to the 'acknowledged' and 'disputed' books which constitute the New Testament (*HE* 3.25.1-7). This apart, his argumentation is good; undoubtedly later writers did paraphrase earlier works to make them relevant to their own age.

In chapter 3 Johnson takes us through the second part of *LM*, the *Miracles* of Thecla. He notes his author's introductory quotation from Herodotus and thinks that his admiration for this historian may account for his 'paratectic' style whereby 'stories are strung together endlessly without any overarching narrative or chronological development' (p. 11; a rare case of his defining his technical terms). Like Herodotus too his author brings in autobiographical stories (*Mirs.* 12, 31, 41). Instead of going through all the stories one by one Johnson then groups together for discussion those of like theme. *Mirs.* 1-4 relate how Thecla established her territory in and around Seleuceia, dismissing in turn the *daimones* Sarpedon, Athena, Aphrodite, and Zeus, and appropriating their temples for Christian use. Next he considers 'punishment' miracles in which Thecla sees that marauding brigands and other miscreants get their just deserts. Then he considers 'humanitarian' miracles, in which the saint rewards loyal devotees in various ways, followed by a rich array of bizarre 'healing' miracles in which Thecla's effortless success is contrasted with the failure of doctors and demons. Some stories are reminiscent of Asclepian healings, particularly when there is incubation at Thecla's shrine (*Mir.* 17). Healings do sometimes lead to conversion (*Mirs.* 14, 17), though certain *litterati* are healed but not converted (*Mirs.* 39, 40). Johnson handles the material well and deduces from the fact that many leading citizens feature in the stories (together with the work's literary style), they were written for educated people. But, though he asserts that his author was genuinely the collector of the stories and not their creator, apart from saying there are 'enough narrative anomalies' and 'a healthy variety of narrative patterns' to suggest this (p. 171), he does not substantiate it. How much more would readers have benefited from his study if he had seen fit to provide an English translation of *LM* in an appendix or perhaps as a separate volume!

In chapter 4 Johnson discusses ancient paradoxography and related matters. He points out that collections of *thaumata* ('discrete instances of strange and notable natural phenomena') are extant from the third century BC onwards. They resemble

libraries, bringing together what occurred at different locations. They are easily digestible, entertaining, open-ended, and have no unifying narrative. In short they are, like the stories of Thecla, 'paratectic'. Moreover, the author of *Miracles* in fact calls Thecla's miraculous achievements *thaumata* and paradoxes but not *iamata* ('healings'). From the perspective of literary style then, Johnson declares, the *Miracles* is much more akin to a work of paradoxography than to the mundane Greek inscriptions of the Asclepian shrines at Epidaurus and elsewhere which tell only of *iamata*. This stylistic resemblance, however, is surely outweighed by the fact that, whilst paradoxographers' collections relate totally independent wonders, the stories of the *Miracles* all relate wonders performed by Thecla, whose life story accompanies them. Furthermore, as Johnson readily admits, whilst paradoxographers never include healings among their wonders nearly half the stories of the *Miracles* recount them. The true kinship then is surely between *LM* and the Apocryphal Acts of earlier centuries. In each an apostolic hero performs wonders which cause great amazement, Gregory of Tours's sixth-century *Epitome* actually stringing together in paratactic style stories of bizarre healings attributed to the apostle Andrew.

As Johnson has already drawn his conclusions in earlier chapters he devotes his actual conclusion to other matters. He points out that his author made no effort to compare the virgin Thecla with the Virgin Mary because the latter's cult had not by then assumed much importance in the Greek East. He then explains why he has ignored the question of the historicity of Thecla. There is, he says, virtually no evidence to work from, and anyway he is more interested in the literary question. He ends by noting sadly that his author's reworking of *ATH* was ultimately a failure, passing unnoticed by the three main Byzantine witnesses to the legends of Thecla, who know only *ATH*. So, was Johnson's study worth all his effort? Some may wonder, though his style is pleasant and he teaches us much about literary paraphrasing and paradoxography in antiquity.

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