

late-antique invention, but not until the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries did monastic history begin to be written. Nevertheless, all those monastic historians are interested in promoting their own definitions of proper monasticism over alternative typologies. The desert Fathers and their supposed theology as a whole are later categories and not undisputed at all.

University of Turin

ROBERTO ALCIATI

Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church. By Volker L. Menze. [Oxford Early Christian Studies.] (New York: Oxford University Press. 2008. Pp. x, 316. \$110.00. ISBN 978-0-199-53487-6.)

This book considers the evolution of the non-Chalcedonian church in Syria and Mesopotamia in the first half of the sixth century. In it, Menze offers a highly nuanced *bistoire evenementielle* of this important step in the evolution of a new religious community, today's Syrian Orthodox church, and sets this in the context of the activities of emperor, papacy, and the eastern bishops. He approaches his sources through the novel emphasis on the role of remembrance for different Christian communities: on the role of the diptychs, history, and hagiography in constructing successive images of the past to structure the present. Throughout his work, there is a sense that the Church as an institution and group of people was constantly affecting and being affected by the Church as an ideal, formed by the changing perception of its own history.

After setting out the fifth-century background, Menze analyzes the events of 519–22 as the critical moment for the separation of the non-Chalcedonians, focusing on the papal *libellus* that rejected earlier attempts at compromise such as Zeno's *Henotikon* and demanding signed acceptance of Chalcedon (pp. 32–33). Menze describes this process as a remodeling of the past, in which the *libellus* was justified by a religion "kept immaculate in the Holy See" (p. 68), which denied the importance of the local histories of eastern sees, whose priests and bishops had sought to compromise or ignore the divisive theology of Chalcedon. Even Severus and Cyril had recognized these local memories and demanded only "partially confessional diptychs" (pp. 79–85). These issues of the good memory of beloved bishops continued to prove a barrier to negotiations: when the emperor Justinian orchestrated a temporary suspension of the *libellus* in 532 to negotiate with those who had refused to sign, the barrier between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians continued to be "the names on the diptychs" (p. 64).

Menze goes on to map out the social effects of the *libellus* on the ground in Mesopotamia and Syria, as monasteries who refused to subscribe were shut from 525 and monks driven to safe havens in Egypt and Persia. This provided the raw material for the later commemoration of the 520s and 530s as critical for the formation of non-Chalcedonians' history of themselves. Here Menze

focuses on the missionary bishop John of Tella and his regulation of a clergy in exile, picking through the hagiographies of the bishop written after his death (pp. 176–86). Menze also performs a similar task with Justinian’s wife, Theodora, questioning the image of her as Justinian’s “loyal opposition” (p. 211) in religious policy and emphasizing that her patronage of the non-Chalcedonians occurred only after the death of Severus (pp. 211–25).

In giving us this objective and realistic image of the 530s, and of the divisions of the non-Chalcedonians in exile, Menze can also emphasize how effectively the histories of these figures were rewritten in the generations that followed. It was this crystallization of non-Chalcedonian history that doomed Justinian’s later attempts to reach a compromise, addressing too late the focus of the debate on the personalities of individual theologians in the condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia in 553. Menze suggests that it was only the personal commitment of the emperor that held together centrifugal groups. He may be unduly pessimistic here. There were still moves toward compromise under the emperor Justin II, and the emperor Tiberius would organize a synod to reconcile parties within the non-Chalcedonians (the later sixth century would also present fertile ground for an investigation such as this). But Menze’s monograph, bringing together new Syriac sources with an attention to a resurgent papacy and ambitious emperor, easily surpasses William H. C. Frend’s *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge, UK, 1972), despite one significant error: the author of *Christliche Kultbauten* is Gernot Wiessner (p. 146n7).

Corpus Christi College, Oxford

PHILIP WOOD

Léon le Grand. By Philippe Henne. [Petits Cerf Histoire.] (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf. 2008. Pp. 206. €18,00 paperback. ISBN 978-2-204-08530-4.)

Much like Trevor Jalland, who published his biography of Pope Leo I in 1941, Philippe Henne sees Leo as a singular as much as a saintly figure. In a Western context, Leo was “un phare étincelant au milieu de la sombre nuit de l’apathie culturelle ambiante” (pp. 18–19); in the thick of Eastern church conflicts, “seul Léon aura le souci du bien commun” (p. 114). Henne here and there suggests that intellectual and spiritual isolation caused Leo to draw forth a simpler faith—couched in a famously simpler prose—than his Latin predecessors and Greek contemporaries. This is offered not as a thesis but as one of several themes in a biography aimed at orientating the general reader within the many, complex, and momentous events in which Leo was engaged. Only a few years ago, it would have made a greater contribution to a field that then was small relative to its subject’s proverbial magnitude. While it remains a handy narrative of Leo’s eventful life and introduction to his writings, other books—some more probing, others yet more accessible or useful—also have appeared. Henne has written two anthologies with introductions, for Origen and for Hilarius of Poitiers; such a format might

Copyright of Catholic Historical Review is the property of Catholic University of America Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.