

ALESSANDRA BUCOSSÌ – LUIGI D’AMELIA (eds), *Nicetae Thessalonicensis dialogi sex de processione spiritus sancti* (Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca 92). Turnhout: Brepols 2021. cx + 282 pp. – ISBN 978-2-503-58640-3

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Niketas of Thessalonica, known since the time of Allatius as ‘Niketas of Maroneia’, is simultaneously one of the least appreciated and one of the most important figures of the prolonged medieval debates over the Filioque. A twelfth-century writer, Niketas flourished during a critical period of the Filioque controversy, at a time of renewed and intense theological activity under the Komnenoi. As a participant in the middle Byzantine debates over the procession of the Holy Spirit, Niketas stands between two significant figures of East-West dialogue in the period: Eustratios of Nicaea and Andronikos Kamateros. In the wider context of East-West debates, his theological position also stands between the monumental contributions of Photios in the ninth century and Nikephoros Blemmydes in the thirteenth. Niketas’s *Dialogues*, the only work left behind by this enigmatic author, are edited in the present volume for the first time in their totality, as number 92 of the *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*. This is the first edition to gather all six *Dialogues* and account for the entire manuscript tradition and its history. The value of such a work is difficult to overestimate, and the debt owed to the editors by students and scholars of the Filioque controversy is just as difficult to express.

The *Dialogues* themselves are divided into six *logoi* and constitute a series of closely-connected expositions of the Filioque framed as an exchange between a Graïkός and a Latínos. Celebrated for their open-minded approach, the *Dialogues* are not polemical in the strict sense, but serve, rather, to present the best possible articulation of the Latin position in the face of traditional Orthodox objections to the Filioque. The *Dialogues* are thus presented as an examination (ἐξέτασις) or inquiry and exploration into the fundamental disagreement between East and West, explicitly eschewing all contentiousness and triumphalism. *Dial.* 1–3 show the Latin interlocutor responding to a series of theological incongruities (ἄτοπα) that the Greek

suggests would result from the Filioque. In almost every case the Greek requires little convincing, and it is clear, again, that the literary framework is designed to showcase the (pro-)Latin apologetic. In *Dial.* 4 the interlocutors transition to an in-depth and historically significant discussion of Trinitarian analogies and images, some traditional, some more recent and increasingly complex. This gives way in *Dial.* 5 to an exploration of the logical proofs and demonstrative arguments for the Filioque. Both the use of analogies and syllogistic reasoning are eventually abandoned, however, for the more trustworthy method of consulting – and litigating – patristic *testimonia* on the procession of the Holy Spirit, which makes up *Dial.* 6. The *Dialogues* are preceded by a Prooemium, which sets out the plan and structure of the work, and an Epilogue, which summarizes the conciliatory approach of the author and his sincere desire for a resolution that is not only irenic but also rigorous and intellectually honest.

The text of this edition, along with its introductory material in Italian, has been prepared by ALESSANDRA BUCOSSI (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) and LUIGI D'AMELIA (Università di Roma 'Sapienza'), two scholars at the forefront of research on the medieval debates between Byzantine East and Latin West. BUCOSSI, whose work and expertise in this area are well known, also edited the monumental *Sacrum Armamentarium* of Andronikos Kamateros (CCSG 75, Turnhout 2014), another twelfth-century text on the Filioque and one closely connected to the immediate reception of the *Dialogues*. BUCOSSI is also editor, alongside MARIE-HÉLÈNE BLANCHET, of the *Repertorium Auctorum Polemicorum*, a database of the relevant manuscripts that form the textual record and history of the theological debates between Byzantines and Latins. D'AMELIA, who was himself a part of the *RAP* project from 2020 to 2022, worked with BUCOSSI from 2015 as part of a research team that produced the volume *Contra Latinos et Adversus Graecos: The Separation between Rome and Constantinople from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century* (Leuven 2020). Today, he continues his work on polemical treatises in a project on 'A Linguistic Dossier of Byzantine Interreligious and Interconfessional Prejudice and Hatred'.

Both BUCOSSI and D'AMELIA must be thanked for their continuing contributions to our knowledge of the polemical corpus and the history of the Filioque in particular. The *Dialogues* of Niketas of Thessalonica have hitherto been available only in partial editions, those of NICOLA FESTA (1912–1914), CORRADO GIORGETTI (1965), and ALEXEY BARMIN (2016), all of which supplemented the lacunose text of JOSEPH HERGENRÖTHER found in *PG* 139, 169–221. The book under review surpasses all of these

versions not only by presenting the text in its entirety, but also by presenting its first fully critical edition.

The full text of the *Dialogues* come down to us in six manuscripts, the most famous of which has long been *Vaticanus gr. 1115* [Diktyon 67746], a recension connected to Demetrios Kydones and the wider Latinophrone or Unionist movement. Two of the six integral manuscripts of the *Dialogues* are apographs of *Vat. gr. 1115*, and it has stood, together with *Laur. Plut. 31.37* [Diktyon 16263], behind all previous editions of the text. The *Vaticanus*, however, represents only one of three branches of the manuscript tradition as reconstructed by BUCOSSI and D'AMELIA, and its decentralization in the present edition has resulted in the elimination of substantial errors that have historically marred the text of Niketas and, by extension, our understanding of the reception of certain disputed passages from the Church Fathers.

The supersession of *Vat. gr. 1115* helps explain, in part, the omission in this edition of the celebrated, if simple, diagram of an equilateral triangle set within a circle, a complicated visualization of the Trinitarian relations described at *Dial. 2.21.76–93*. The diagram is also present in the Florentine manuscript (*Laur. Plut. 31.37*) and would have made a charming addition to the text; but its inclusion here was perhaps not justified by its absence from other witnesses.

If there are errors to be found in this edition, typographical or otherwise, I have not noticed them.¹ Perhaps I might be permitted to disagree on one small point: I do not believe that the passage in *Dial. 2.19.111–113*² was ever intended as a direct quotation from Chrysostom (=Severian of Gabala), though it was mistaken for one in later writers like John Bekkos, Constantine Meliteniotes, and Gregory Palamas. It is, I think, rather a testament to the reception of Niketas in later periods that this brief conclusion drawn by the Latin interlocutor from the text of the homily *In illud: Pone manum tuam* (PG 55, 555)³ was later repeated as a patristic *testimonium*. In this way, a signature phrase and concept of the *Dialogues* (ἡ διακριτικὴ τάξις)

1. The infamous passage from Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* 3, which appears at *Dial. 2.17.175–182*, is mistakenly cited on p. xxv as appearing at *Dial. 2.17.145–174* (which actually produces a passage from *Adversus Eunomium* 1). This, however, is a trivial transposition of no real consequence, since the passage appears on the facing page and is also easily found in the *index fontium*, where the correct reference is given.

2. Οὐκοῦν ἢ μὲν τῶν θεῶν ὑποστάσεων διακριτικὴ τάξις τοῖς ἁγίοις καθέστηκε γνῶμιος· ἢ δὲ φύσεων διακριτικὴ ἐπὶ τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος ἀπόβλητος...

3. The citation itself, in two parts, is at *Dial. 2.19.98–110*.

is imputed to the Fathers, though it was not necessarily presented as such by Niketas.

The text of this edition is accompanied by more than one apparatus. The first is an apparatus fontium et parallelorum. The encyclopedic overview that this apparatus offers would be difficult to surpass. It provides insight not only into Niketas's breadth of learning but also his pivotal, if quiet, role in the history of the Filioque controversy. One passing addition, however, could be made at *Dial.* 4.35.23⁴ (itself an extract from Eustratios of Nicaea), where the reference to light as the form (εἶδος) of the sun is a direct allusion to an influential passage in Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration* 44.4 (*PG* 36, 611–612). This is an important link in the chain connecting the otherwise Aristotelian paradigm of form and matter (cf. p. li) with the medieval – both Byzantine and Scholastic – metaphysics of light.⁵

There are no doubt other references and allusions that one could add (cf. p. xl). But it is hard to imagine how one could come close to accounting for the multitude of references and loci similes identified by BUCOSSI and D'AMELIA. The parallels with the Greek polemical tradition (from Photios in the ninth-century to Joseph Bryennios in the fifteenth) and contemporary Latin theology (including the works of Hugo Eterianus, Anselm of Havelburg, and Peter Grossolano) are themselves a remarkable overview of the whole Filioque controversy. When combined with the citations and cross-references from patristic and philosophical texts, we are provided with nothing less than a panorama of the Byzantine intellectual tradition as epitomized in the highly-learned figure of the former Chartophylax, Nike-tas of Thessalonica.

After the traditional apparatus criticus, an apparatus collationum fontium is especially helpful for seeing where the patristic texts cited in the *Dialogues* differ from what is found in the printed edition (not to say the authentic version) of a given text. In *Dial.* 2.5.53 and 6.9.18, for example, the Latin interlocutor attributes to St Athanasios of Alexandria the statement that the Son, as giver of the Spirit, is both 'greater than and equal to' the Spirit. This reading, which would reverberate in the polemics surrounding the second Council of Lyons (1274), is highly significant. Yet we are alerted in the apparatus that the crucial and theologically sensitive word,

4. Cf. *Dial.* 4.36.46–50 (p. 135).

5. See TIKHON A. PINO, Hylomorphism East and West: Thomas Aquinas and Mark of Ephesos on the Body-Soul Relationship. In: DENIS SEARBY (ed.), *Never the Twain Shall Meet? Latins and Greeks Learning from Each Other in Byzantium*. Berlin 2017, pp. 298–299.

μείζονα (with its Christological as well as Pneumatological implications for middle Byzantine theology), is actually absent from the critical edition of Athanasius's *Contra Arianos*.⁶ This is a case, however, where the editors have added the further specification that Niketas's reading does appear as a variant in the apparatus criticus of the Athanasian edition, indicated by the label *e traditione*, a recent and useful practice previously advocated for by BUCOSSI.⁷

The sixth *Dialogue* is accompanied by an additional apparatus, the apparatus collationum excerptorum. This apparatus accounts for the variant readings found in a unique component of the manuscript tradition that carried only *Dial.* 6, which circulated anonymously as a kind of independent treatise on the Filioque. This epitome of the *Dialogues* was in some ways more popular than the complete text, and its meticulous incorporation within this edition contributes to the high caliber and value of the publication.

The edition of the *Dialogi Sex* is preceded by a substantial and illuminating Introduction in two parts: (1) on the life and work of Niketas of Thessalonica and (2) on the manuscript tradition and principles of the present edition. The former functions as a magisterial initiation into the life and theological contributions of Niketas, and it will need to be read by everyone who wishes to make a serious study of twelfth-century intellectual history and the development of the debates surrounding the procession of the Holy Spirit. BUCOSSI and D'AMELIA correct a number of misunderstandings about the *Dialogues* and give a wonderful sense of their place in the complicated history of the Filioque controversy, not only as it relates to the development of Byzantine polemics, but especially as it relates to the mutual fertilization of Greek and Latin theology in the Komnenian era.

As the editors signal in the Introduction, it is precisely the features that make the *Dialogues* a fascinating piece of middle Byzantine theology that also recommend it for continued study. The treatise is characterized by its distinction between mediated (ἐμμέσως) and direct (ὀμέσως) procession. But this distinction is also used to explain the singularity and unity

6. Another useful instance is *Dial.* 2.17.191, where Niketas cites Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* 3 as speaking of a πρόοδος through the Son to the Father (p. 66). It is helpful to see in the *apparatus collationum fontium* that Basil actually uses πρόσοδος here, and not the technical term that figured so heavily in later Byzantine discussions of the Filioque.

7. ALESSANDRA BUCOSSI, The Use of an Apparatus Collationum Fontium in the Critical Edition of a Patristic Anthology. In: ELISABET GÖRANSSON – GUNILLA IVERSEN – BARBARA CROSTINI (eds), *The Arts of Editing Medieval Greek and Latin: A Casebook*. Toronto 2016, pp. 34–52.

of the Spirit's procession within the (pro-)Latin model. This makes the *Dialogues* an important precursor to the formula of the Council of Lyons, where the double procession of the Spirit is explained to be *tamquam ab uno principio*. The *Dialogues* also offer a highly original and pervasive treatment of the category of ἰδιότης in Trinitarian theology, which functions as the controlling category for all discourse about causality, relation, order, and subordination in the Trinity. As the editors note, the implications and resonances of this approach are worthy of significant scholarly attention. BUCOSSI and D'AMELIA also point to potentially fruitful lines of inquiry connecting the work of Niketas with the Palamite controversy. And indeed, the insistence throughout the *Dialogues* on precisely those terms and distinctions that will later dominate Palamite theology (the distinction between nature and natural idioms; essence and essential idioms; essence, power, and operation; grace and personhood; manifestation and procession) serve to make Niketas of Thessalonica a highly relevant figure for the whole history of late Byzantine theology. It can only be hoped that this edition will soon replace the partial edition of NICOLA FESTA on the *TLG* database so that scholars and students will be encouraged to study the *Dialogues* as they deserve to be studied.

The publication of this learned and much-needed edition is an achievement to which every scholar aspires. Students of Orthodox and ecumenical theology, in particular, but also Byzantinists, medievalists, and every intellectual historian will profit immensely from its availability. The editors are to be congratulated, and thanked, for their labors and accomplishment in bringing it to light.

Keywords

Byzantine theology; Greek polemical literature; Filioque; Niketas of Thessalonike