

PSEUDO- DIONYSIUS

*A Commentary on the Texts
and an Introduction to
Their Influence*

PAUL ROREM

Pseudo-Dionysius

This page intentionally left blank

Pseudo-Dionysius

A Commentary on the Texts and an
Introduction to Their Influence

PAUL ROREM

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1993

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland Madrid
and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1993 by Paul Rorem

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
200 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Rorem, Paul.

Pseudo-Dionysius : a commentary on the texts and an introduction
to their influence / Paul Rorem.

p. cm. Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-19-507664-8

1. Pseudo-Dionysius, Aeropagite.

2. Theology—Early church, ca. 30-600. I. Title.
BR65.D66R67 1993 230'.14—dc20 92-15353

Excerpts reprinted from *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*,
translation by Colm Luibheid. © 1987 by Colm Luibheid.
Used by permission of Paulist Press.

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

*In memory of
my youngest brother, Jonathon Andrew Rorem,
and my mother-in-law, Nancy O'Brien Skrebutenas,
who both died in the middle of 1987,
long before their time.*

This page intentionally left blank

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a joy to acknowledge the help I have received in the preparation and writing of this book. Oliver K. Olson first introduced me, as well as other Lutheran seminarians, to the Pseudo-Dionysian writings, and has been a source of encouragement in this and various other endeavors ever since. Karlfried Froehlich guided my dissertation on the same topic with patience and high standards, challenging me, then and now, to pursue my own interpretations. John Farina invited me to collaborate on the Paulist Press English edition in the Classics of Western Spirituality series; Colm Luibheid liberated me from my own wooden translation of the corpus and graciously welcomed my collaboration. David B. Evans is a permanent partner in wide-ranging conversations about all things Dionysian. Charles G. Woods first encouraged me to apply the commentary format to the entire corpus.

The most specific debt is owed to my colleagues and students at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, where I was based from 1986 to 1992. David Ludwig and Faye Schott served as my research assistants and first editors; Faye—now Dr. Schott—also prepared the indexed bibliography. Various students found the Dionysian corpus and my commentary intriguing enough to warrant further investigation in independent studies and graduate seminars. President William E. Leshner and Dean Ralph Klein supported my work both while I was teaching and on sabbatical. My six years in that community of faith and learning coincide exactly with the years spent on this book, but my sense of gratitude and affection is much deeper than any mere acknowledgment can adequately reflect.

Several friends and colleagues who read specific portions of this book and offered helpful comments are individually thanked in the notes. John Lamoreaux is my current collaborator on the Dionysian *Scholia*, and evidence of his work is previewed here. I am grateful to Sister Lee Pendergast and the community at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in North Guilford, Connecticut, for their interest

and careful reading of most of the manuscript. Of course, the generosity of all these individuals does not entail any responsibility for any shortcomings in my efforts.

The final stage of writing was supported by the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey, where Director Daniel Hardy and his staff do all that is humanly possible to help a dozen authors achieve their highest goals. I am deeply grateful for the help of Cynthia Read and the staff at Oxford University Press for their thorough assistance in the preparation of the manuscript for publication. For her professional services and personal support, I am most indebted to Kate Skrebutenas, the reference librarian at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Princeton, N.J.
Pentecost 1992

P.R.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations *xi*

PART I *The Letters as Introduction* 3

Orientation 3

Reading Method for "An Obscure Style" 5

Letters 1 Through 6 as a Preview 7

Letter 7 to Polycarp, a Hierarch: The Questions of Authorship 12

Letter 8: Issues of Hierarchy and Authority 18

Letter 9: Biblical and Liturgical Symbolism 24

Letter 10: Summary 27

Influence in the Middle Ages 29

Notes 38

PART II *The Celestial Hierarchy* 47

Introduction: Chapters 1 Through 3 49

Presentation of the Heavenly Hierarchy: Chapters 4 Through 10 60

Specific Problems: Chapters 11 Through 14 68

The Biblical Descriptions of the Angels: Chapter 15 72

The Influence in the Middle Ages 73

Notes 83

PART III *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 91

Chapter 1 as Introduction 91

Chapter 2: Baptism, or "The Divine Birth" 96

Chapter 3: The Synaxis or Communion 99

Chapter 4: The Consecration of the Ointment (Myron) 104

Chapter 5: The Clergy and Their Ordinations	107
Chapter 6: The Lay Orders, Including Monastic Tonsure	111
Chapter 7: Funerals, and Conclusion	114
The Medieval Genre of Liturgical Commentaries	118
Notes	126

PART IV *The Divine Names* 133

Chapter 1 as Introduction	133
Chapter 2	137
Chapter 3	145
Chapter 4	148
Chapters 5, 6, and 7 on Being, Life, and Wisdom	153
Chapters 8 Through 12 on Various Names	158
Chapter 13 and Conclusion	162
The Medieval Influence of <i>The Divine Names</i>	167
Notes	175

PART V *The Mystical Theology* 183

Chapter 1	184
Chapter 2	193
Chapter 3	194
Chapter 4	205
Chapter 5	210
Influence in the Middle Ages	214
Notes	225

AFTERWORD *On the Question of Influence in the Middle Ages* 237

Notes	240
-------	-----

Appendix: Overview of the Dionysian Writings	241
--	-----

Bibliographies	245
----------------	-----

ABBREVIATIONS

- Bornert = Bornert, René. *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VII^e au XV^e siècle*. Paris: Institut Français d'Etudes Byzantines, 1966.
- Campbell = Campbell, Thomas L. *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.
- Cousins, Bonaventure = Bonaventure: *The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*. Translated by Ewert Cousins. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
- Dionysiaca = Philippe Chevalier. *Dionysiaca: Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traditions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopage*. 2 vols. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937–50.
- Dondaine = H. F. Dondaine, O.P. *Le Corpus Dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIII^e siècle*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1953.
- Essential Eckhart = Meister Eckhart: *Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*. Edited by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and Bernard McGinn. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Gersh, From Iamblichus = Stephen Gersh. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978.
- Hankey, God in Himself = Wayne J. Hankey. *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Hayes, Hidden Center = Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

- John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith* = John of Damascus. *The Orthodox Faith*. Translated by Frederic H. Chase, Jr. New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958.
- Lees, *Negative Language* = Rosemary Ann Lees. *The Negative Language of the Dionysian School of Mystical Theology: An Approach to the Cloud of Unknowing*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Ameristik, 1987.
- Louth, *Denys* = Andrew Louth. *Denys the Areopagite*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989; Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989.
- McGinn, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union" = Bernard McGinn. "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries." *Church History* 56 (1987): 7–24.
- McGinn, *One Yet Two* = "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Early Cistercians," *One Yet Two: Monastic Tradition, East and West*, edited by M. Basil Pennington, pp. 200–241. Cistercian Studies, no. 29. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1976.
- Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher* = *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*. Edited by Bernard McGinn. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.
- Miscellanea Mediaevalia 12/1* = *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, vol. 12, pt. 1. *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*. Edited by A. Zimmermann. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979.
- Parma = Thomas Aquinas. *Opera omnia*. 25 vols. Parma: Typis P. Fiaccadori, 1852–75.
- Periphyseon* = John Scotus Eriugena. *Periphyseon*. Translated by John J. O'Meara and I. P. Sheldon-Williams. Montreal: Bellarmin and Dumbarton Oaks, 1987. Latin text edited by H. J. Floss, *PL* 122.
- PG* = *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*. Series Graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne. Paris, 1857–91.
- PL* = *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*. Series Latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. Paris, 1844–80.
- Quaracchi = Bonaventure. *Opera Omnia*. 10 vols. Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902.
- Rorem, *Medieval Development* = Paul Rorem. *The Medieval Development of Liturgical Symbolism*. Grove Liturgical Study, 41. Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1986.
- Rorem, *Synthesis* = Paul Rorem. *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*. Studies and Texts, 71. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984.

Scholia = *Scholia*. Edited by B. Corderius. *PG* 4. [Comments on the Dionysian writings by John of Scythopolis, Maximus the Confessor, and others.]

Teacher and Preacher = Bernard McGinn. *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

Tugwell = *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*. Translated and edited by Simon Tugwell, O. P. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

Vanneste, *Le mystère* = Jan Vanneste. *Le mystère de Dieu*. Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959.

Walsh, *Cloud* = *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Translated by James Walsh, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

Walsh, *Pursuit* = *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Other Works by the Author of the Cloud of Unknowing*. Translated by James Walsh, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

The Dionysian writings themselves are cited in parentheses within the text of this book according to the column numbers and letters of the Greek text and the page numbers of an English translation. For example, (728A, 91–92) indicates first the Greek text at column 728A in the edition by B. Corderius, *PG* 3 (Paris: Migne, 1857), and adopted by the new critical edition: *Corpus Dionysiacum*, 2 vols., edited by Beate Suchla, Gunter Heil, and A. M. Ritter. *Patristische Texte und Studien*, vols. 33 and 36 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990–91). The page numbers are from *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

This page intentionally left blank

Pseudo-Dionysius

This page intentionally left blank

PART I

The *Letters* as Introduction

ORIENTATION

This book interprets the works that for centuries were falsely attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian who was converted to Christianity by St. Paul, according to Acts 17. They were actually written some five hundred years later, although we do not know precisely when or where. If the classics of mysticism are said to have “neither birthday nor native land”¹ in that they transcend such details, the phrase is literally descriptive of our ignorance about the Dionysian corpus. We do not know its birthday, its native land, or its author. The personal identity of the writer is still a mystery, and he is known only and awkwardly as Pseudo-Dionysius, or Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. The Greek name *Dionysios* and the Latin *Dionysius* can be translated into English as Dennis; the French also call him Denis or Denys, and the Italians say Dionigi. We could, therefore, name this unknown author “the false Dennis,” but an accepted, slightly negative convention names him Pseudo-Dionysius. This book will usually refer to him as Dionysius.

The contents of the Dionysian corpus are not as well known as are its titles: *The Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and the *Letters*. The major task of this commentary is to present the contents of the corpus, both in their details and as a whole. These writings are also known to have exerted an important influence on a wide range of topics, although here, too, the details need exposition. For example, this Dionysius *invented* the word *hierarchy*, proposing a hierarchy of angels and a hierarchy in the church. Other significant areas of influence in the middle ages include the following: a theological aesthetics, especially with regard to Gothic architecture at the abbey church of Saint-Denis near Paris; Scholastic philosophy and theology, specifically that of Thomas Aquinas; the interpretation of the liturgy as a dramatic allegory; medieval mysticism,

including the “cloud of unknowing,” another phrase coined by Pseudo-Dionysius; and the entire subject of negative, or apophatic, theology. Of course, all these topics have been influenced by other authors as well, often more decisively than by the Dionysian texts. Still, the Areopagite’s treatises have touched an exceptionally broad spectrum of topics crucial to the history of the Christian tradition.

Unfortunately, until 1987 there was no twentieth-century English translation available of the entire corpus. Replacing the late-nineteenth-century English rendition by John Parker—who still considered these texts a first-century witness—the new translation by Colm Luibheid and me permits a wider range of English-speaking readers to acquaint themselves with these writings.² Equally remarkable is the scarcity of foundational materials to introduce the overall Dionysian corpus. Except for a few encyclopedia articles, only Andrew Louth’s recent volume entitled *Denys the Areopagite* enables new readers to approach this corpus.³ Although elegant and solid, Louth’s book is extremely brief and does not cover certain parts of the corpus. My own effort here takes the specific and longer form of a full chapter-by-chapter commentary on all of these writings. Employing the new English translation, the present book serves as a guide through these treatises and the various topics they present. Several major themes are also traced through the Middle Ages in order to investigate the legacy of the Dionysian corpus and to examine relevant literature.

The interpretations advanced in this commentary are closely related to the renditions in the English edition, principally because of my collaboration with Colm Luibheid during the preparation of our translation. Anyone who can read the Greek original (or any other translation) will know immediately how many significant interpretive questions had to be answered during the very process of translation. The present commentary also has a clear relationship to the notes I appended to that edition. Of necessity those notes concentrate on small, self-contained items of information, such as biblical allusions, cross-references, brief comments, and bibliography. To repeat that data in this commentary would be both superfluous and distracting. Rather, the purpose of this book is to supply what was impossible in those notes, namely, a sweeping, interpretive summary of the course of the argument within a chapter or a treatise—indeed, within the entire corpus. The present running commentary is intended to complement a thorough reading of the full corpus itself, not to serve as a substitute.

Similarly, the reader should understand the relationship between this introductory commentary and my earlier book, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*.⁴ That project took the form of a monograph in the technical sense of a single, focused argument. It is too narrow and specialized to introduce the Dionysian corpus in general. It contains a fundamental argument and many bibliographical items that are not repeated in the

present, broader study. Finally, with an eye to future projects, I have raised questions of medieval influence in order to lay the groundwork for a more detailed investigation, a project already underway with a translation of the *Scholia* (marginal comments or footnotes) on these texts by the early readers and interpreters, notably John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor.⁵

Interpreting the Areopagite is a major challenge for any reader, and assessing the relative influence of the Dionysian texts in medieval Christianity would require several lifetimes. A major purpose of this book is to invite others to undertake the task of interpreting the Dionysian writings and evaluating their influence. This double task demands fresh perspectives and approaches to the original texts in order to challenge and supplement the current state of various questions, including the answers presumed in the Paulist Press edition and presented in this commentary. A translation of the complete works, a comprehensive commentary, and an introduction to some of the medieval questions may engage more collaborators by inciting critical response.

READING METHOD FOR "AN OBSCURE STYLE"

The great challenge of reading the Dionysian materials has little to do with quantity. The English translation of the complete works requires less than 250 pages. The challenge is rather in the complexity of the vocabulary, the syntax, and especially the concepts involved. Ever since the Greek texts attached to the name Dionysius first appeared around A.D. 525 and through the centuries of translations into Syriac, Latin, and many modern languages, everyone who has read them has been perplexed and frustrated at times. Let one of the most famous of these investigators, Thomas Aquinas, speak for countless others:

One must consider that the blessed Dionysius used an obscure style in all his books. He did this not from inexperience but rather from diligence so that the sacred and divine teachings might be hidden from the ridicule of the unbelievers. . . . [Of the many difficulties] first, he frequently used a style and manner of speaking which the Platonists used, which is unfamiliar to modern readers. . . . The second difficulty in his comments is that he frequently uses effective arguments to make his point but then often refers [back] to them with a few words or even just one word. The third difficulty is that he often multiplies words, which may seem superfluous, but nevertheless will be found to contain a great depth of meaning by those who consider them diligently.⁶

The picture of Thomas Aquinas straining to understand these writings is not intended to discourage the modern reader, but simply to advise patience and diligent consideration. Some puzzles will require repeated contemplation

of the same material, whether a paragraph or the entire corpus. Only rarely will the modern reader agree with Thomas that a passage contains a superfluous multiplication of words.

The complexity of the corpus suggests the pedagogical starting point for this commentary. There is no external indication of which treatise was actually written first, and therefore no historically reliable indication of a place to start reading. The author's apparent intention was that the treatises be encountered together and treated as a discovery from the first century. There are some internal suggestions by the author himself about the intended sequence of treatises and some external factors in the order of the works in the manuscript tradition, but these are not definitive and do not dictate the best plan of introduction for a modern reader.

Standing apart from and following the four major treatises, the *Letters* are presented first, for two reasons. First, the first six letters are so brief, averaging just half a page each, that the reader can adjust to the rhythm of absorbing brief doses of Dionysius with frequent rereading and ample time for reflection. Second, the ten *Letters* will serve to preview almost all the Dionysian themes to be investigated in the rest of this commentary.

Successful reading of the Dionysian writings must alternate between patient attention to minute detail and sweeping overview of the entire work in question. In fact, to put a passage in perspective, its place in the overall corpus must be kept in mind. Eventually, this will require a discussion of the relative positions of all the Dionysian treatises. For now, it means listing the headings of all the *Letters*, just as subsequent sections on the treatises themselves will begin with an overview of their chapter titles. Even the list of titles of the letters raises questions about the order of the recipients, which moves steadily up an ecclesiastical ladder from a monk to a deacon, to a priest, and to a hierarch (bishop) and even beyond, except for the highly significant disruption of the eighth letter.

Letter 1: To the monk Gaius

Letter 2: To the same monk Gaius

Letter 3: To the same Gaius

Letter 4: To the same monk Gaius

Letter 5: To Dorotheus, the deacon

Letter 6: To the priest Sosipater

Letter 7: To Polycarp, a hierarch

Letter 8: To the monk Demophilus. Concerning one's proper work, and kindness

Letter 9: To Titus the hierarch. Asking by letter, what is the house of wisdom, what is the mixing bowl, and what are its foods and drinks

Letter 10: To John the theologian, apostle and evangelist, an exile on the island of Patmos

LETTERS 1 THROUGH 6 AS A PREVIEW

Of course, the *Letters* never were actual correspondence sent to historical individuals, despite the impressions given by the titles and announced recipients. The choices of a monk to receive the four initial letters, and then a deacon, a priest, and a hierarch (bishop) to receive subsequent letters, becomes significant in conjunction with *Letter 8*. At that point the choice of a monk as the recipient disrupts the ascending hierarchical order, just as the letter itself addresses the subject of the disruption of good church order. The effort to present the author's work as a first-century, apostolic, and therefore authoritative witness is evident in the headings to several treatises and letters, including these initial letters addressed "To the monk Gaius." The biblical Third Letter of John is also addressed to a Gaius, and in fact it also mentions the central Dionysian theme of not "seeing" God (v. 11), albeit in a different context.

Although "Gaius" is not that significant an example, the reader should be alert to the proper names used throughout the corpus. Names interested Dionysius. The special names used for God occupied an entire treatise (*The Divine Names*) while the technical designations for the angels and for ecclesiastical offices and rites received his consistent attention in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. He delighted in etymologies, puns, and allusions. In particular, the proper personal names, such as Gaius, were all selected carefully as part of an inventive overall program and may occasionally provide overtones and oblique clues to the contents of the corpus. *Letter 10* explicitly invokes the apostolic age by addressing "John the theologian, apostle and evangelist, an exile on the island of Patmos" (1117A, 288).

Besides the examples in the *Letters* and other instances (to be noted in their place), we should not overlook the brilliant choice of the name or pseudonym Dionysius the Areopagite for the author himself. Just as Paul's starting point for his sermon in Athens was the "unknown god" (Acts 17), so also the writings attached to the name of his Athenian convert are especially concerned with God as known and unknown. In fact, the entire subject of affirmative and negative theology is now automatically associated with the name Dionysius, a pseudonym so cleverly selected by an author who is himself as yet unnamed and unknown. Considering all the pseudonymous works attached early on to New Testament names, the wonder is that it took so long, some five hundred years, before the name Dionysius was appropriated as a pseudonym and linked to a literary "discovery."

Letter 1: *To the monk Gaius*

Darkness [or shadow] disappears in the light, the more so as there is more light. Knowledge makes unknowing disappear, the more so as there is more knowledge. (1065A, 263)

In the first letter and throughout these writings, the theme of knowing and unknowing is cast in terms of light and darkness. The phrase in *The Mystical Theology*, “the darkness of unknowing” (1001A, 137), became well known as the title of a fourteenth-century English mystical treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The opening lines of the first letter trade on our natural inclination to think of light as superior to darkness and to think of knowledge as superior to ignorance, since in both cases the latter terms can mean the absence or the deprivation of the former. “However,” warns Dionysius, “think of this not in terms of deprivation but rather in terms of transcendence” (1065A, 263). In terms of deprivation, darkness is the absence of light, and thus inferior to it. In terms of transcendence, darkness is beyond light, and thus superior to it, as when a light is so bright that it actually prevents or blinds the sense of sight.

Similarly, unknowing may be not simply the deprivation or lack of knowledge but rather the recognition that someone or something is in fact transcendent and far beyond the limits of human knowing. Just as no one actually sees God in the perceptible sphere of physical light, so no one truly knows God in the conceptual realm of human knowledge, at least not in any affirmative sense of positive content. Human knowledge is possible only of those things that exist on the level of the knower. God, who transcends the level of human knowers, transcends that knowledge. “He is completely unknown and non-existent. He exists beyond being and he is known beyond the mind” (1065A, 263). This interplay between essence and knowledge, and thus between ontology and epistemology, is even more explicit in the first chapter of *The Divine Names*: “If all knowledge is of that which is and is limited to the realm of the existent, then whatever transcends being must also transcend knowledge” (593A, 53).

Letter 1 concludes by saying that “this quite positively complete unknowing is knowledge of him who is above everything that is known” (1065B, 263). On the one hand, this kind of verbal gymnastics, like oxymorons and multiple negatives, seems designed to stretch one’s language and thought, and sometimes to hinder and to still the natural conceptual process. On the other hand, the author does work with a coherent and comprehensive view of religious knowledge that can embrace and reconcile these apparent contradictions. A thorough introduction to this entire spiritual epistemology of knowing and unknowing is indeed our overall goal. For now, however, it suffices to note that the very center of the author’s agenda has been briefly previewed in this initial letter.

Letter 2: *To the same monk Gaius*

In *Letter 2* we are prevented from thinking that the divine transcendence is simply one step above our normal concepts, so that if God is not fully knowable as goodness, for example, God must then be fully knowable as the *source*

of goodness. While this may be true in itself, it does not go far enough and certainly does not capture the transcendent God in human knowledge. God “transcends every source” as well (1069A, 263). It is not sufficient to elevate one’s mind from one level of conceptuality to another, since all that the mind can conceive still ultimately falls short of the transcendence of God. This is thoroughly discussed at the beginning and the end of *The Divine Names* and throughout *The Mystical Theology*.

The second letter also introduces the author’s common designation of God as the thearchy, albeit in an unusual context. Here, the suffix *-archy* carries the meaning of source, since the point of the discussion is God as the source of divinity. Normally, the word *thearchy* is simply translated as divinity, deity, or God.

Letter 3: *To the same Gaius*

The utter transcendence acknowledged so forcefully in the first two letters is paired in *Letter 3* with revelation and incarnation: “The transcendent has put aside its own hiddenness and has revealed itself to us by becoming a human being” (1069B, 264). Although this expresses the standard Christian paradox of the incarnation, the Dionysian corpus has a peculiar and especially complex approach to Christology. “For this mystery of Jesus remains hidden and can be drawn out by no word or mind. What is to be said of it remains unsayable; what is to be understood of it remains unknowable” (1069B, 264). The fourth letter continues this discussion.

In this third letter, Dionysius has also used the word *theologia* in a particular way. This is not theology in the general modern sense, but in the special, literal sense of the word of God, meaning the scriptures. Dionysius used this word to introduce explicit biblical quotations, as in this letter (meaning Malachi 3:1) and elsewhere. The word *theology* could also invoke the biblical message implicitly, without a direct quotation. Similarly, for Dionysius the adjective *theological* often meant scriptural and the theologians were usually the biblical authors.⁷

Letter 4: *To the same monk Gaius*

The incarnation of this unknowable and transcendent One is addressed directly but briefly, and controversially, in the next epistle, *Letter 4*. When the Dionysian writings made their first known appearance, this letter attracted more attention than any other passage. These writings were “discovered” and first cited at the beginning of the sixth century, when Christian thought was preoccupied with disputes over the relationship of Christ’s divine nature to his human nature. The Council of Chalcedon had decreed in A.D. 451 that Christ was “one person, in

two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” The intention was to safeguard the integrity of both a fully human nature and a fully divine nature in Jesus Christ, and to condemn those who seemed to believe in only one nature in Christ, namely the divine. Many have since been condemned by the label *monophysite*, meaning adherent of one nature. Nevertheless, large portions of the Christian world, especially in Syria and Egypt, felt that the statement of Chalcedon and the thinking behind it went too far toward separating the divine and human natures. Any such separation had already been condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431) in association with the name Nestorius (bishop of Constantinople; d.c. 451). The debate raged for the rest of the fifth century and through most of the sixth.

In such a context, documents were written and examined with an eye to their precise statements about Jesus and especially about his divinity and humanity. Both sides, the Chalcedonians and their opponents, sought support in the authoritative writings of the scriptures and the revered fathers of the tradition. Around A.D. 532 opponents of the Council of Chalcedon cited several ancient authorities, including “Dionysius the Areopagite, all of whom assert that there is one nature of God the Logos after the union.”⁸ In response, Hypatius of Ephesus, a defender of Chalcedon, challenged the alleged authority of Dionysius, since none of his works had ever been cited before. The Dionysian text in question may well have been from *Letter 4*, which immediately became the center of a sharp controversy. The assertion that the transcendent became incarnate entails a discussion of the divine and the human in Christ, which *Letter 4* supplies with severe brevity. It concludes: “Furthermore, it was not by virtue of being God that he did divine things, not by virtue of being a man that he did what was human, but rather, by the fact of being God-made-man he accomplished something new in our midst—the activity of the God-man” (1072C, 265).

Those who labeled their opponents Monophysites detected a monophysite tendency in this wording, since the human and the divine did not here seem fully distinct, but were apparently merged into a single activity. They challenged the authenticity of this supposed discovery of first-century support for their rivals. And yet, the Dionysian corpus survived this initial taint of heresy and was eventually claimed by the Chalcedonian Orthodox as their own apostolic witness, instead of being condemned as heretical and fraudulent.

The *Scholia* are of interest here, since the earliest commentators on the corpus took a keen interest in this letter. John of Scythopolis, the first to comment on the Dionysian corpus (within a decade or two of its appearance), takes pains to assert an equal concern on the part of Dionysius for Christ’s divinity and humanity.⁹ Nevertheless, even though *Letter 4* does assert both the divinity and the humanity of Christ, it gives supportive examples only of a composite divine-human activity (the miracles) and not of a human nature as such (as

evidenced, for example, by eating or by suffering). This composite portrait and lack of emphasis on the human nature of Christ is consistent with the rest of the corpus and has often given pause even to its defenders.

Letter 5: *To Dorotheus, the deacon*

Let *Letter 5* summarize the discussion so far of light and darkness, of knowing and unknowing. In the paradoxical terms of transcendence instead of deprivation, “the divine darkness is that ‘unapproachable light’ where God is said to live” (1073A, 265, quoting 1 Timothy 6:16). But here one further component is previewed. The sense of sight associated with light is not simply a metaphor for knowing in general. Seeing also stands for all the senses, for sense perception in general, which is linked with knowledge but not identical to it. In fact, perceiving and conceiving (the aesthetic and the noetic) are paired together in a complicated way, often as successive stages in the spiritual journey. *The Mystical Theology* expresses this linkage in the very titles to its fourth and fifth chapters: “That the supreme Cause of every perceptible thing is not itself perceptible. . . . That the supreme Cause of every conceptual thing is not itself conceptual” (1040D, 1045D, 140–41). As a preview of this central Dionysian conviction, *Letter 5* says simply that God is “beyond everything perceived and conceived” (1073A, 265).

This letter also introduces a notable feature of the Dionysian method when it supports these sentiments with a burst of biblical quotations, in this case from Paul: “He says too that ‘inscrutable are his ways and unsearchable his judgments’ [Romans 11:33], that ‘his gifts are inexpressible’ [2 Corinthians 9:15], and that ‘his peace passes all understanding’ [Philippians 4:7].” The author occasionally provided clusters of brief biblical citations, as discussed below in the section on *Letter 9*. Further, and more importantly, the Areopagite exhibited a consistent concern for interpreting the biblical names for God in *The Divine Names* and the scriptural descriptions of the angels in *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

Letter 6: *To the priest Sosipater*

Letter 6 previews a crucial facet of the author’s conceptual method, namely, that refuting an error does not necessarily lead to embracing the truth. Dionysius advises one Sosipater that refuting or denying an error is no victory: “For it could happen that the one hidden truth could escape both you and others in the midst of falsehoods and appearances. What is not red does not have to be white” (1077A, 266). This simple bit of logic is crucial to understanding the contents and perhaps also the context of the Dionysian writings. He does say that negations about God are true, as opposed to affirmations that are always “unfitting” (*Celestial Hierarchy* 2, 141A, 150). Yet, despite appearances and despite his

reputation as the master of negative theology, the author never claimed that negations fully capture the truth and therefore represent the final goal. On the contrary, as he writes at the beginning of *The Mystical Theology*, "We should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all [that is, God] is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion" (1000B, 136). This sentiment is repeated in the very last words of *The Mystical Theology*, and is in a sense the last word of the corpus. The cause of all is "beyond every denial" (1048B, 141). The climax of the Dionysian method is not simply a negation of some concept about God, but the negation of the concept of negation itself. God is beyond all human words and concepts, including the utterance of denials and the idea of negation. Even the most sophisticated theological negations do not capture God. Beyond the last word is only silence.

Externally, this advice to the biblical Sosipater (Romans 16:21 and perhaps Acts 20:4) to avoid the polemics of denunciations and refutation may also fit the actual author's historical context and partial purpose. As mentioned above, the late fifth and early sixth centuries were wracked with bitter controversies over the natures of Christ. Emperors and theologians repeatedly tried to find words that would peacefully reunite the church and therefore the empire. Some of these efforts, like the Emperor Zeno's Henoticon (482), actually made things worse. It is entirely possible that someone would attempt to resolve these difficulties with an authoritative word from the apostolic age, to go back "behind" the controversial language by attempting to avoid all the polemical terms and by stating the issue affirmatively without any denunciations or refutations. While this speculative scenario for the origins of the corpus is certainly a possibility, it applies only to certain of the Dionysian comments on Christology, which constitute but a few lines among thousands on other topics. Such guesswork, common in Pseudo-Dionysian scholarship, has brought us to the question of authorship, most explicitly involved in the next letter, *Letter 7*.

LETTER 7 TO POLYCARP, A HIERARCH: THE QUESTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP

This epistle first repeats the theme of *Letter 6*, then takes up its own topic, and finally previews the concern of *Letter 8*. The interlocking of topics is quite typical of the author, and provides further evidence that these were not actual letters gathered together but more like chapters in a single work.

The futility of disputations and refutations is repeated here, but in a particular context: "As far as I am concerned I have never spoken out against

Greeks or any others. . . . It is therefore superfluous for someone expounding the truth to enter into dispute with this one or that one" (1077BC, 266).

Dionysius here pretends to write "to Polycarp, a hierarch." The proper name may have been chosen to invoke the apostolic age of Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69–c. 155), to whom the seventh letter of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–c. 107) is addressed. But this results in a shaky chronology, since Polycarp of Smyrna was martyred after the middle of the second century. The designation *hierarch* (bishop) will be explained in connection with *Letter 8*, where its place in the sequence of the letters is particularly crucial. The real dialogue here is not with Polycarp, but with "the sophist Apollophanes," who has charged Dionysius "with making unholy use of things Greek to attack the Greeks" (p. 267). Although Dionysius has just claimed that he "never wished to embark on controversies with Greeks or with any others," he pointedly reverses the charges and accuses the Greeks in general and Apollophanes in particular of making "unholy use of godly things to attack God." His point is that the very wisdom the Greeks use to argue against God is in fact one of God's gifts:

They try to banish divine reverence by means of the very wisdom which God has given them. . . . This knowledge of beings, which he [Apollophanes] rightly calls philosophy and which the divine Paul described as the "wisdom of God" [1 Corinthians 1:21–24, 2:7], should have led true philosophers to be uplifted to him who is the Cause not only of all beings but also of the very knowledge which one can have of these beings. (1080B, 267)

Not only does the author himself raise the subject of his presumed relationship to the Greeks and to philosophy, which modern readers rightly apply to the complex question of his actual relationship to Neoplatonism. He also makes a most explicit attempt to present himself as a first-century Christian. In other words, this single epistle concerns both his efforts at pseudonymity, which were remarkably successful for centuries, and the twentieth-century issue of his true relationship to the Greek philosophical tradition of Neoplatonism.

Dionysius bases his refutation of Apollophanes on proofs from the natural order, or rather, from the unnatural order of cosmic miracles. That the sun stood still and amazed the Babylonians should convince anyone that behind the sun and the stars stands their Cause and Creator, who can vary their movements at will. But this general argument suddenly becomes specific and personal. How could Apollophanes refute the evidence of "the solar eclipse which occurred when the Savior was put on the cross" (1081A, 268), which he and Dionysius witnessed together? Furthermore, claims the Areopagite, it was not a natural eclipse with the moon moving in a single direction past the sun, but a true miracle of the moon moving in front of the sun and then returning whence it came. How could Apollophanes now deny it? "I was with you as we looked at everything, scrutinized everything, were amazed by everything" (1081C,

269). Here the text presents the author as a contemporary of Jesus and of the first disciples, not in Jerusalem as a witness to the human events, but in "Heliopolis" as a witness to the heavenly sign. At that time, continues the fictional embellishment, Dionysius and Apollophanes did not know the reason for these events, but only that they "portend[ed] changes in the doings of God," as Apollophanes himself supposedly said to Dionysius. By means of this fabrication, and others (including the "eyewitness" account of the apostles gathered around the Virgin Mary when she died [*Divine Names* 3, 681D, 70]), the elusive author succeeded in presenting himself as the Dionysius of the first century.

As already mentioned, the first citation of writings by the Areopagite prompted some suspicion, since no such texts had ever been identified before. Eusebius, the fourth-century chronicler of the first Christian centuries, had already identified a Dionysius as the first bishop of Athens. This was a rather natural conclusion to draw from the biblical account of Paul's preaching there about the "unknown God" and his converting Dionysius from the Areopagus. But since no writings had ever been associated with this name before, the initial reaction to their appearance was mixed and reserved. And yet, the "Dionysian" books were soon embraced as apostolic and thus authoritative.

The embrace of "Dionysius" by orthodox Chalcedonians resulted most of all from the work of John of Scythopolis (d. c. 548) and then Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662), who both accepted the apostolic authorship of the Dionysian texts and used them in an orthodox way. The earliest explanation of the corpus, its authenticity and orthodoxy, was the sixth-century Prologue and *Scholia* by John of Scythopolis. In fact, it seems that the earliest manuscripts of the corpus itself already included John's introduction and explanations. John's Prologue directly defends the Dionysian teachings: "Some dare to abuse the divine Dionysius with charges of heresy, being themselves absolutely ignorant of matters of heresy." He then itemizes the teachings in question: the Trinity, Christ, and the resurrection. The Dionysian Christ, says John here and in the *Scholia* themselves, had a fully human nature including a rational soul, against Apollinaris, whose candidacy as the actual, and heretical, author of the Dionysian corpus is explicitly refuted elsewhere. John even explains Eusebius's silence about the Dionysian treatises, just as an expansion of the Prologue, probably by another author, explains that the fifth-century Neoplatonist Proclus used the first-century Christian Dionysius, "even his exact wordings." Most of the *Scholia*, however, do not directly defend Dionysius, at least not in explicit doctrinal or historical dialogue with Monophysite Christology or Neoplatonism. Rather, most of them simply assume his antiquity as worthy of numerous small explanations about his terminology or meaning on miscellaneous matters.¹⁰

Other commentators gradually added their marginal explanations, includ-

ing Maximus the Confessor, to whom the whole collection was then attributed, even though the comments known to be from his hand are very few. But Maximus clearly accepted Dionysius in his other works, such as the *Ambigua* and the *Mystagogy*. His labors and impeccable credentials in life and thought decisively claimed the Areopagite's corpus for orthodoxy and placed it at the beginnings of the Orthodox tradition. Through Maximus, Dionysius was even cited in Rome at the Lateran Council in 649. Jaroslav Pelikan has written, "As the principal exponent of an orthodox Christological spirituality in the seventh century, Maximus Confessor explained the language of Dionysius in such a manner that he achieved the Trinitarian and Christocentric reorientation of the Dionysian system and thus rehabilitated it."¹¹ Thus "Maximized" (Pelikan's clever pun is worthy of Dionysius himself), the Areopagite's works were received into the mainstream of the tradition and became quite influential.

While the specific points of influence will be introduced in this commentary's treatment of the various topics in the corpus itself, the history of the author's identification can be sketched here. After the initial endorsements, especially by John and Maximus, the writings were usually taken at face value, namely, as the first-century works of an apostolic Dionysius. Some doubts were occasionally raised, and refuted, as reported, for example, by the ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople, Photius (c. 810–c. 895).¹² But in general, the Dionysian author was securely identified with the apostolic Dionysius, and this mistaken identity was only compounded by the addition of yet another Dionysius, or Denis.

"The legend of Saint Denis is one of the most colorful and complex creations in medieval sacred literature." So begins the detailed and masterful study of *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, its legends, and especially its architecture, by Sumner McKnight Crosby.¹³ Dear to the legendary history of Paris is the story of Saint Denis, said to be an early missionary to Gaul, the first bishop of Paris, and a famous French martyr. Decapitated for his faith, he nonetheless picked up his head and walked a staggering distance to his chosen site of burial, where the faithful gradually built a tomb, a church, and then an abbey. The Abbey of Saint-Denis, named for him as the patron saint of all France, became the burial site of French kings, the archival repository for royal documents, and a prominent location in the royal, national, and architectural history of France. The confusion that in subsequent centuries identified our author with the Denis in France and with the biblical Dionysius of Athens as one and the same well-traveled person resulted principally from the creative historical work of Hilduin, the abbot of Saint-Denis in the ninth century, when the Franks were enjoying political and ecclesiastical prominence. Greek manuscripts of the Dionysian corpus had already been given by Pope Paul I (757–67) to Pepin, king of the Franks and father of Charlemagne. But Hilduin's

History of Saint Dionysius, written between 835 and 840 to introduce his translation of these works into Latin, sealed the case of mistaken identities.

Only in the twelfth century did one independent thinker, Peter Abelard (1079–1142), challenge this conflation of three Dionysii. Seeking refuge from his adversities, Abelard became a monk of this same Abbey of Saint-Denis. Ever the sharp-tongued critic, he had the temerity to point out not only the contemporary abbot's personal corruption but also the historic abbey's fictional foundations. Abelard noted that according to the ecclesiastical history of Venerable Bede (c. 673–735), the Denis who came to France was not the Dionysius converted by Paul in Athens, but rather the Dionysius who had been bishop of Corinth. Since Abelard did not challenge the authorship of the Dionysian writings, but left them associated with the convert of the Areopagus, the literary pseudonym was preserved, as it was throughout the Middle Ages. Abelard merely questioned the identification of this author, the Areopagite, with the missionary to France who survived his beheading and inspired the Abbey of Saint-Denis. Nevertheless, Abelard's ungrateful critique of his host and of the very self-identity of the abbey earned him more adversity, including the threat of excommunication. The abbot, who felt compelled to defend the abbey and himself and to refute Abelard, soon died, leaving the case to his illustrious successor.

Suger, abbot of Saint-Denis from 1122 to 1151, let Abelard go his independent way, and concentrated instead on bringing the abbey to its political and architectural heights. Suger supervised the construction of a new church that he and especially some modern scholars interpreted according to the Areopagite's comments about uplifting and luminous beauty. Since this church has been widely considered the first Gothic structure, the history of Dionysian architecture receives considerable attention in its own right. It will be dealt with more fully in the discussion of the aesthetics of visual symbols advanced in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, which was well known to Suger.

Meanwhile, the writings themselves continued to influence the medieval West in the form of Latin translations by Hilduin and John Scotus Eriugena (c. 810–c. 877) in the ninth century and by John Sarracenus (fl. c. 1167) and Robert Grosseteste (c. 1175–1253) in the High Middle Ages, and through commentaries by Eriugena, Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1142), Thomas Gallus, Albert the Great (c. 1200–80), and Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), among others. These translators and commentators, and many others, will be introduced in the due course of this commentary.¹⁴ On the question of authorship, there was apparently no significant doubt about the apostolicity and therefore the authority of the corpus until the sixteenth century, when Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536) circulated some brief, stray comments that Lorenzo Valla (c. 1406–57) had made in 1457. Valla had noticed that no Greek or Latin father before

Gregory the Great (pope 590–604) ever quoted these texts and that parts of the corpus seemed blatantly fictional. Whereas Valla's doubts seemed based on the contrasts between Dionysian and apostolic vocabulary and syntax, Erasmus added his own doubts that the elaborate Dionysian liturgical rituals could date from the first century. Several others, including Martin Luther, adopted Erasmus's phrase, "Dionysius the whoever-he-was," indicating a general scepticism but no alternate identification or dating.¹⁵ Not long after the Protestant Georg Calixt (1586–1656) coined the phrase Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagita in 1619, the Jesuit Balthasar Cordier supplemented his influential Greek edition of the Dionysian texts (1634) with thorough arguments for their apostolic authenticity. These arguments were visually duplicated in the frontispiece to Cordier's work by Peter Paul Rubens.¹⁶

The entire authorship question was resolved, negatively at least, only at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the scholarly world accepted the independent conclusions of Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr, published in 1895. They established that certain precise phrases were in fact taken from the writings of the fifth-century Neoplatonist Proclus. Turning the Prologue's anachronistic assertion right side up, they argued that it was actually Pseudo-Dionysius who borrowed some "exact wordings" from Proclus, especially in the discussion of evil in the fourth chapter of *The Divine Names*. Koch and Stiglmayr further argued that the author's overall terminology and conceptual framework were both dependent upon the Proclean school of Neoplatonism and must therefore date from the late fifth century at the earliest. Conclusively disproving a first-century Dionysian authorship, their work led almost all scholars, and not just a few skeptics, to use the expression "Pseudo-Dionysius."

But the name Pseudo-Dionysius is more than awkward, and more than distastefully pejorative to some lingering loyalists. It also reflects the frustration that still marks the search for the author's true identity and real name. While Koch and Stiglmayr made a breakthrough in disproving that a first-century Dionysius authored the corpus, they did not succeed in establishing a convincing case for anyone else as the actual author, despite Stiglmayr's years of efforts. In fact, almost a century of concerted efforts by numerous specialists with their various proposals has not yielded even a central candidate or two, much less a firm identification by a scholarly consensus. Hypotheses about authors have ranged from writers of the early second century to the early sixth, from the famous to the obscure, from Alexandrian and Cappadocian Christians to Proclean Neoplatonists.¹⁷ The hunt for the true author, once pressed in full force, has come to an almost complete halt. The few scholars who devote themselves to Pseudo-Dionysian studies concentrate on the texts themselves and their influence, rather than venturing into historical hypotheses. Perhaps the corpus will never be convincingly tied to anyone known from other extant

works, since attempts to do so have been thorough and fruitless. The failure of such attempts would mean that no other writings by the Dionysian author have survived, with or without the pseudonym. The most we can say with confidence is that the author reflects a mixture of late fifth-century Syrian Christianity and Athenian Neoplatonism. While this is only the identification of a type of author rather than of a specific individual, to say anything further would be more speculation than this general study could sustain.

To return to *Letter 7*, in which the claim of first-century authorship occasioned this historical sketch of the question of authorship, Dionysius hopes that Apollophanes, though wise, will also be humble or meek in learning the truth of the faith, "truth which far exceeds all wisdom" (1081C, 269). Here too, the epistles cleverly interlock, for this sentence not only sums up previous material, but also introduces the next letter.

LETTER 8: ISSUES OF HIERARCHY AND AUTHORITY

The subtitle of the eighth letter indicates its contents: "To the monk Demophilus. Concerning one's proper work, and kindness" (1084A, 269). The letter ostensibly responds to a monk's request for support for his drastic actions to preserve sacred things from profane priests. Since Demophilus violated proper lines of authority, which is the main subject of this letter, his portion from Dionysius was strong disapproval. The choice of a monk as the fictional recipient at this particular point in the sequence of letters reinforces the argument of the epistle itself. Until this point, the recipients of the letters were arranged in a precise, ascending ecclesiastical order, from a monk (Gaius), through a deacon (Dorotheus), a priest (Sosipater), up to a hierarch or bishop (Polycarp). But now, abruptly, comes a letter to a monk, disrupting this order, just as Demophilus himself disrupted proper ecclesiastical order.¹⁸ The offending monk is immediately lectured about the humility, or meekness, of Moses, as well as other Israelites. The angels and Jesus himself exemplify this virtue, preferring humility about oneself and generosity toward others over against proud audacity and a judgmental attitude.

After several pages of these biblical examples (1085A–1088A, 269–71), the letter comes to the specific case of Demophilus. He had sent a written request for the author's approval of his actions. In his community, a priest had taken pity on a penitent, but had thus erred, according to Demophilus. He, a monk, had intervened to rebuke and dismiss the priest, and had entered the inner sanctuary with others in order to rescue from defilement the sacred things

(presumably the communion elements). The author, having set up this vulnerable target himself, has no trouble responding:

Now hear what I have to say to you. It is not permitted that a priest should be corrected by the deacons, who are your superiors, nor by the monks, who are at the same level as yourself. . . . Even if disorder and confusion should undermine the most divine ordinances and regulations, that still gives no right, even on God's behalf, to overturn the order which God himself has established. (1088C, 272)

This quotation touches on two facets of Dionysian good order: first, the local arrangement of clerical offices and their relationships with one other, as well as with the monks and other laity; and second, the larger concept of hierarchy in general with regard to the transmission of authority, revelation, and existence itself. The Dionysian writings profoundly shaped the idea of hierarchy in the Christian tradition, whether a churchly hierarchy of clerical officers or a heavenly hierarchy of angelic beings. They also influenced the overall picture of reality, as it was transmitted down through a vertical structure, as "the order which God himself has established" (1088C, 272), a concept gladly embraced by Christian monarchs of all kinds. Not only did Dionysius influence the evolution of this concept, but he also created the word *hierarchy* itself, which, with its cognates (like *hierarchical*) simply did not exist until the anonymous author invented it to express and to crystallize such thoughts about order. Few writers have ever coined a new word with a broader history in Western thought than the Dionysian neologism *hierarchy*, although Eriugena's translation of another Dionysian invention as "supernatural" was also influential.

Demophilus, a monk, violated the author's sense of hierarchical order by rebuking and overruling a priest. The reference to the deacons implies yet another rank or level of the clerical system. For Dionysius, the clergy consisted of a trio of orders: the deacons, the priests, and the hierarch. Similarly, the laity consisted of a trio or triad of classifications: the monks, the rest of the communing congregation, and those under some kind of discipline ("those yet being purified"). This last group is itself occasionally presented as a triad of the catechumens, the penitents, and the possessed. For the moment, this arrangement can be summarized as follows:

Clergy	{	hierarch (bishop)
		priest
		deacon
Laity	{	monks
		communicants
		those being purified (catechumens, penitents, and possessed)

The entire pattern of triads, including the triple triad of the nine ranks of angels, is entirely characteristic of the author. It probably derives not from any trinitarian model but from the Neoplatonic fascination for the way an intermediary, or mean (or middle) term between extremes, creates a triad. For example, the Platonic ideals form a mean term between the One and the many, and thus attempt to provide some linkage between them. Dionysius borrowed this idea of middle terms to form triads and thus to create a continuum or a hierarchy.

The crucial point in this case is clerical authority. A monk disrupted proper hierarchical order by challenging a clergyman, and indeed not at the lowest clerical level, that of the deacons, but at the intermediate level of the priests. For Dionysius, authority and revelation flowed from God down through the angelic beings to the hierarchs. Through them it continued down to the priests and then to the deacons, and finally to the various groups of laity, still in proper hierarchical order. This pyramid was symbolized in the positions they occupied during the communion service, as Demophilus was immediately reminded:

Do not the sacred symbols shout this? Not every participant is simply removed from the Holy of Holies. No. First to approach it is the rank of sacred initiators [the hierarchs]. Then come the priests and then the deacons. The monks have their rightful place at the doors of the inner sanctuary. . . . The position of the [clergy] at the divine altar symbolizes the rank they hold. . . . To the obedient monks, to the sacred people, to the orders being purified, they make known, according to merit, those divine things which were safe from all contamination until the Holy of Holies was compelled to endure your arrogant invasion. (1088D–1089A, 272–73).

The liturgical locations visualized here reflect the overall relationships of God, the clergy, and the laity. Yet two more triads must be introduced before we have the full picture of three lay categories and the three clerical offices, including the bold monk Demophilus and the priest who was pushed aside. Dionysius speaks often of the three powers of purification, illumination (sometimes called contemplation), and perfection. His system also involves three sacraments: baptism, the synaxis (Communion), and the consecration of the myron-ointment. All of these interrelate, as he says elsewhere:

We must now sum up. The holy sacraments bring about purification, illumination and perfection. The deacons form the order which purifies. The priests constitute the order which gives illumination. And the hierarchs, living in conformity with God, make up the order which perfects. As for those who are being purified, they do not partake of the sacred vision or communion. The sacred people is the contemplative order. The order of those made perfect is that of the monks who live a single-minded life. (536D, 248)

Although this statement is complex, it can be represented in a diagram, which presents the Areopagite's human or ecclesiastical hierarchy:

Sacraments	{	myron consecration
	{	synaxis/communion
	{	baptism
Clergy	{	hierarch (perfecting)
	{	priest (illuminating)
	{	deacon (purifying)
Laity	{	monks (perfected)
	{	communicants (contemplative-illuminated)
	{	those being purified (catechumens, penitents, and possessed)

This outline, however, is only the beginning. The full picture is yet more complicated and resists depiction. It will not be fully introduced until part III, on *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

For the moment, the subject is hierarchical order, which Demophilus so dramatically violated. As mentioned above, Dionysius invented the word, which later epitomized ecclesiastical arrangements so naturally that we take the word *hierarchy* for granted. It takes considerable discipline to appreciate the novelty and creativity involved in each use of this word family in the Dionysian writings. The starting point of this terminological cluster is the word *hierarch*, which was used long before the Areopagite in non-Christian texts to refer to a leader of sacred ritual. The word consists of *hieros* (sacred) and *arche* (source). The latter term is often used to form compound words in the Dionysian vocabulary. The *thearchy*, to take the example introduced above with regard to *Letter 2*, is literally the “source of divinity.” The word *hier-arch* meant the source of the sacred, humanly speaking. While extremely rare in Christian writings, the word was at least known and could be applied to clergy. By creating the abstract noun *hierarchy* from the cultic title *hierarch*, Dionysius invented a word for a structure or system for “sourcing” or channeling the sacred, and linked it all inextricably to the single leader. Dionysius claimed that the hierarch is named after the hierarchy, but the opposite is in fact the case: *hierarchy* was derived from *hierarch*. He used the existing term for a cultic leader to create the new word *hierarchy* and to imply that this person (the hierarch) completely dominates the system or arrangement (the hierarchy). His comment in chapter 1 of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is actually the creation, not the reception, of a “venerable sacred tradition”:

We have a venerable sacred tradition which asserts that every hierarchy is the complete expression of the sacred elements comprised within it. It is the perfect total of all its sacred constituents. Our own hierarchy is therefore said to embrace every one of its sacred constituents. Thanks to this, the divine hierarch, following upon his consecration will attend to all his most sacred activities. Indeed, this is why he is called a “hierarch.” Indeed, if you

talk of “hierarchy” you are referring in effect to the arrangement of all the sacred realities. Talk of “hierarch” and one is referring to a holy and inspired man, someone who understands all sacred knowledge, someone in whom an entire hierarchy is completely perfected and known. (373C, 197)

The “arrangement of all the sacred realities” is above all a system of intermediaries that connects all levels of reality, a precise structure of officeholders with clear and exclusive channels of internal mediation. For Dionysius the hierarchy includes everyone from top to bottom, including the penitents and the possessed, not just the highest clergy, as implied in some modern uses of the word *hierarchy*. While the specifics of this system as applied to the angels and to the church will be presented in subsequent parts of this commentary, the concept of hierarchy is here captured in the authority of the hierarch, whose “sacred mediation in obtaining an encounter with God and with things divine” (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 2, 396A, 202) is indispensable. The hierarch is *the* mediator of divine things, and transmits some of his authority and knowledge to the order below him (the priests) and through them to the next order, and so on. Thus the three activities—purification, illumination, and perfection—are fully in his domain. Perfection is his alone, but the lower two activities or powers are also shared with the priests, and the lowest power of purification is also shared with the deacons. Again, to preview *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*:

I have now shown that the order of hierarchs has the task of consecration and of perfection, that the illuminative order of priests brings light and that the task of the deacons is to purify and to discern the imperfect. But it is obvious that the order of hierarchs is not solely preoccupied with perfection. It also brings illumination and purification. Similarly, the order of priests has the understanding both to illuminate and to purify. For although inferiors may not boldly and sacrilegiously trespass on the functions of their superiors, the more divine powers have, in addition to their own, the sacred understanding of the inferior ranks as part of their own perfection. (508C, 238)

It was exactly by boldly and sacrilegiously trespassing on the functions of a superior that the fictional Demophilus earned the stern rebuke of *Letter* 8. The sequence of an ascending hierarchical order in the recipients of the letters is resumed in the ninth letter to another hierarch with added status, the biblical Titus, and then the tenth letter to John the theologian, apostle, and evangelist. That the order of correspondents is disrupted by a monk and that the very contents of this letter also concern a monk’s dramatic disruption of the hierarchy, with the resulting Dionysian rebuke, is no coincidence. It is the result of the literary creativity of the author. Several seemingly incidental features of the corpus, whether the very name Dionysius, the headings of the letters, or the overall sequence of the major treatises, may subtly reinforce a major or minor point.

One more summary comment from the letter can also introduce other applications of the principle of hierarchical order, which proved so adaptable to later readers:

So then give the appropriate place to desire, to anger, and to reason. Accept the place assigned to you by the divine deacons. Let them accept what the priests have assigned to them. Let the priests accept what the hierarchs have assigned to them. Let the hierarchs bow to the apostles and to the successors of the apostles. And should one of these last [the hierarchs] fail in his duty then let him be set right by his peers. In this way no order will be disturbed and each person will remain in his own order and in his own ministry. (1093C, 276)

Almost in passing, the author refers to hierarchical subdivisions within each being: desire, anger, and reason (also at 1093A, 275, where reason is to be in charge). This subtheme is never emphasized but is glimpsed in one other passage: "each intelligent being, heavenly or human, has his own set of primary, middle, and lower orders and powers" (*Celestial Hierarchy* 10, 273C, 174). Similarly, Demophilus is lectured only briefly on the societal implications of hierarchical bonds between people: judges, governors, master and servant, old and young, father and son (1093AB, 275).

The author's dominant concern is not the hierarchical relationships within an individual or a society but those within the church. The above quotation concerns the relative positions of monks, deacons, priests, and hierarchs. Only at this point in the entire corpus is there any higher authority than a hierarch. On the one hand, the reference to the apostles and their successors could mean that each local hierarch is responsible to a specific apostolic successor in the sense of a patriarch, as the Scholiast (one of the commentators included in the *Scholia*) surmises; the first-century pseudonym prevented Dionysius from being that specific. On the other hand, the reference to being "set right by his peers" seems to imply a collegial relationship among hierarchs, presumably meeting together. Except for this text and the hierarch's ordination, Dionysius portrays only a single local community with its monarchical hierarch, whose authority is absolute and never qualified. The hierarch receives revelation and authority from God as mediated by angels but never from or through other humans. (The influence of Dionysian hierarchical theory on medieval Latin ecclesiology, discussed in a subsequent part, does not arise from this passage and its implied collegiality of bishops, presumably in council. That story concerns rather the specific coinage of the word *hierarchy*, and the overall principle of a pyramidal hierarchy with an individual at the pinnacle.)

To return to *Letter 8* and the case of the insubordinate Demophilus, Dionysius summarizes the formal principle nicely: "To put the matter simply. Through the mediation of the primary beings, those of secondary rank receive whatever

has been assigned to them by that Providence which is harmonious and thoroughly just" (1093A, 275). Yet this entire discussion of the formal principles of authority that Demophilus abrogated has not yet considered the actual contents of the case, the mistaken motives for the monk's rash actions. Dionysius rebukes Demophilus and commands that he should learn to have mercy on those who repent, as did the priest who was wrongly pushed aside. Several biblical examples and exhortations are all brought to bear on the self-righteous monk whose actions omitted humility and penance.

The final example of humble generosity is a curious tale of a Cretan named Carpos, which echoes both Socrates's account in *Gorgias* (523–24) and also an early Christian story. In Carpos's midnight vision, two apostates from his own community were below him on the brink of hell. As Carpos himself was cheering their demise and helping some serpents dispose of the wretches, Christ was compassionately coming down to help them and to chide Carpos for his uncharitable spirit. The example should leave Demophilus mindful of his duty to be generous and forgiving, as well as respectful of proper hierarchical order. It also leaves the modern reader wondering what such a bizarre vision could have to do with celebrating the sacraments, for Dionysius introduced the entire narrative about Carpos this way: "He never began the holy sacraments of the mysteries without having a propitious vision first appear to him in the preliminary sacred prayers" (1097C, 278). This bears examination, for we will encounter two more people, Hierotheus (*Divine Names* 2, 648B, 65, and *Divine Names* 3, 681D, 70) and Moses (*Mystical Theology*, 1000CD, 136–37), who exhibit a complicated linkage of extraordinary religious experiences, often described in language borrowed from Neoplatonism, to standard liturgical practices, usually described with recognizable if unconventional Christian vocabulary.

LETTER 9: BIBLICAL AND LITURGICAL SYMBOLISM

Letter 9 resumes the ascending hierarchical order of recipients by addressing "Titus, the hierarch." Titus, whose name invokes the apostolic era and the New Testament letter to Titus, had presumably asked about some difficult scriptural symbols, as the subheading summarizes: "Asking by letter, what is the house of wisdom, what is the mixing bowl, and what are its foods and drinks" (1104A, 280). Before giving an exegesis of these symbols (from Proverbs 9:1–5) and others, the author provides a complex and crucial discussion of his interpretive method regarding symbolism in general.

First, Dionysius extends the fabricated historical context of the letter even further by referring to Timothy as well as to an entire treatise ostensibly

devoted to this subject, *The Symbolic Theology*. The treatise may never have been written at all, but the epistle seems to summarize its purported contents nicely. Nevertheless, Dionysius says that in that book "I thought it necessary to explicate as well as I could to him [Timothy] and to others the great variety of sacred symbols used by scripture to reveal God, for if one looks at them from the outside they seem filled with an incredible and contrived fantasy" (1104C, 281). He then supplies numerous examples of the lowlier symbols for God, principally from the Old Testament: God's womb, heart, mouth, and bosom; trees, roots, water, and light; God's drinking, inebriation, sleep, and hangover; his anger, grief, curses, and tricks. Last but not least, "in the *Songs* there are those passionate longings fit only for prostitutes" (1105B, 282). All these symbols are used so that "multiple shapes and forms [may] be given to what has neither shape nor form . . . to enable the one capable of seeing the beauty hidden within these images to find that they are truly mysterious, appropriate to God, and filled with a great theological light" (1105C, 283). Thus the numerous biblical examples are introduced as externally filled with incredible and contrived fantasy, but then are summarized as containing hidden beauty. The external absurdity of such symbols protects from the profane and reveals to the initiated "the simple, marvelous, transcendent truth of the symbols" (1105C, 283), even though they are not interpreted here.

Dionysius mentions quickly his understanding of the double rationale for obscure and difficult symbols. On the one hand, such symbols prevent outsiders from usurping privileged knowledge. On the other hand, once the interpretive methods are known, the initiates will be able to understand these symbols, which then reveal divine truths. The motives for symbolism are secrecy and revelation, as accommodated to the abilities of the interpreters. God used symbols so that "the most sacred things are not easily handled by the profane but are revealed instead to the real lovers of holiness" (1105C, 283). This double rationale for symbols, whether biblical or liturgical, underlies the author's extended interpretations of these symbols in this letter and throughout his works.

The epistle presses on with an extremely condensed and important indication of the author's interpretive framework.

But there is a further point to understand. Theological tradition has a dual aspect, the ineffable and mysterious on the one hand, the open and more evident on the other. The one resorts to symbolism and involves initiation. The other is philosophic and employs the method of demonstration. (Further, the inexpressible is bound up with what can be articulated.) The one uses persuasion and imposes the truthfulness of what is asserted. The other acts and, by means of a mystery which cannot be taught, it puts souls firmly in the presence of God. This is why the sacred initiators of our tradition, together with those of the tradition of the Law, resorted freely to symbolism

appropriate to God, regarding the sacraments of the most holy mysteries. Indeed we see the blessed angels using riddles to introduce the divine mysteries. Jesus himself speaks of God by means of parables, and passes on to us the mystery of his divine activity by using the symbolism of a table. (1105D–1108A, 283)

This passage presents many of the author's key terms regarding biblical and liturgical symbols. The theological tradition is the scriptural data, as evident from the context of this letter and from the overall use of the word *theology* and its cognates to mean first of all the word of God.

On the one hand, some scriptural passages are straightforward, evident, and demonstrative. On the other hand, many passages are mysterious, symbolic, and involve initiation. Such a contrast led medieval theologians to cite this text, and others from other authors, when claiming that doctrinal argumentation could not rest solely on allegorical interpretations of biblical symbols, as discussed below. These symbolic passages, rightly understood, actually lead the initiate into a mystery (the activity called *mystagogy*), indeed into the presence of God. A symbol itself has two sides, as just discussed in this letter: the external absurdity and the internal meaning. This duality will often be expressed in spatial terms, namely, the lower perceptible level and the higher conceptual content. As a whole, this letter previews for us the Areopagite's consistent concern for symbols, as well as something of his hermeneutics or interpretive method.

But the text goes on to introduce another type of symbol besides the biblical ones, namely, "the sacraments of the most holy mysteries." Here too "the sacred initiators of our tradition" freely use symbols appropriate to God. The interpretation of these symbols is the agenda of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. By way of an authoritative conclusion, Jesus himself is invoked regarding the complementarity of these two types of symbols, biblical and liturgical. Jesus spoke in parables and conducted the Last Supper. The relationship between the Bible and the liturgy, and the author's single method for interpreting them both, can only be appreciated gradually, as his scriptural and liturgical hermeneutics unfold in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. For now, this letter must conclude its introductory, methodological comments and proceed to the specific texts at hand. "We have therefore to run counter to mass prejudice and we must make the holy journey to the heart of the sacred symbols. And we must certainly not disdain them, for they are the descendants and bear the mark of the divine stamps. They are the manifest images of unspeakable and marvelous sights" (1108C, 284).

Dionysius was asked, he tells us, to interpret some passages about Wisdom's house, bowl of wine, and food in Proverbs 9. Some of the references are not apparent in an English translation of the Bible from the Hebrew text, but only in the Greek Septuagint version that Dionysius read, here and throughout the Old

Testament. He offers a sample of his exegesis: "The bowl, being round and uncovered, has to be a symbol of the Providence which has neither a beginning nor an end, which is open to all and encompasses all. Proceeding outward to everything, it yet remains in itself and continues to be its unaltered self" (1109B, 285–86). The other symbols are interpreted in a similarly free style, such as God's drunkenness as a divine ecstasy, or standing outside oneself (in this case God as beyond or outside of all things), God's sleep as the divine transcendence beyond any of our direct communications, and God's wakefulness as ceaseless care for us.¹⁹ The letter contains many such interpretations, and refers the reader again to *The Symbolic Theology*, which purportedly covers even more symbols and is enclosed with this letter for Titus to read.

For the moment, by way of introducing motifs that become central in the rest of the corpus, we return to the interpretation of the bowl just given. It symbolizes Providence "proceeding outward to everything, yet remaining in itself." Providence, a way of indicating God's farsighted care for all things, proceeds outside of itself in order to care for all. Yet it "continues to be its unaltered self" by remaining in itself. This terminology and the entire conceptual framework are utterly foundational to the Dionysian corpus, and therefore to a right interpretation of it. Both explicitly and implicitly, Dionysius presents God in the Neoplatonic language of "remaining, procession, and return (or reversion)." God remains unchanged, yet proceeds downward to all and indeed returns them all upward to unity with the Divine. The spatial imagery of remaining, proceeding down, and returning up (or uplifting) recurs at crucial points throughout the corpus, as previewed once again here in *Letter 9*: Providence "proceeds step by step down to everything without ever ceasing to remain within itself" (1109D, 286). This motif and its enormous significance for the corpus will receive a more thorough discussion shortly, when *The Celestial Hierarchy* opens by introducing itself and God's relationship to the world precisely in terms of procession and return.

LETTER 10: SUMMARY

The tenth letter summarizes the author's pseudonymous claim to the apostolic age in its very title: "To John the theologian, apostle and evangelist, an exile on the island of Patmos" (1117A, 288). The author addresses John as a contemporary, and more: "Beloved and blessed soul—and this is something which I, more than many, can say—I salute you" (1117A, 288). As this greeting and the rest of the brief letter document, we are to consider Dionysius and John first as contemporaries, a chronology that requires Dionysius to have been a very young man when he saw the eclipse of the crucifixion under Tiberius (emperor,

A.D. 14–37) and a very old man (“around ninety,” says the scholiast, John of Scythopolis) when he wrote this letter to John, who was exiled under Domitian (emperor, A.D. 81–96). Furthermore, we are to consider them as dear and beloved colleagues, well acquainted with each other personally. Centuries of readers considered the Dionysian writings in precisely this historical context, namely, the first century. Consequently, the authority of their apostolic provenance was immense, even if we modern readers are scarcely able to grant them such a status. A full investigation of the Dionysian legacy is beyond the scope of this survey, but some lines of inquiry into that legacy and influence will be presented in hopes of stimulating further investigation.

As an expression of personal support to John the theologian, much of *Letter 10* serves to reinforce the author’s formal presentation of his corpus as apostolic. It is thus tangential to the major concerns of the other treatises. Yet two of its phrases can be noted in order to summarize the contents of the *Letters* and to introduce the rest of the corpus: “the visible is truly the plain image of the invisible” and “some [are] already united here and now with God” (1117B, 289).

The relationship of the visible and the invisible runs through the entire Dionysian system. The word *visible* is not here restricted to the sense of sight, even though the image of light is crucial in the corpus and is implied in the concept of illumination or enlightenment. Rather, the visible stands here for all sense perception, whatever is perceptible in the physical realm of the senses. All the symbols for the angels and for God, interpreted throughout these texts, begin with sense perception. They are thus part of the aesthetic, or perceptible, realm, which is the “image of the invisible.” The invisible itself consists primarily of the conceptual, that higher realm of concepts, meanings, and ideas which is approached through the proper, uplifting interpretation of perceptible symbols. But the negation involved in the word *in-visible* is characteristically Dionysian in that this realm is not exhausted by the conceptual. The realm of ideas is not the highest part of the invisible, for ideas too must be negated and abandoned in order to approach the transcendence of God, and indeed to be united with God.

To become “united here and now with God” (1117B, 289) is the highest goal of the Dionysian journey, and is the explicit subject of *The Mystical Theology*. Yet, how Dionysius understands that union and how he envisions attaining it can only be grasped through a patient investigation of the entire body of writings. Contrary to many thumbnail presentations of the corpus, *The Mystical Theology* can only be approached after appreciating *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and *The Divine Names*. There are no shortcuts. Even those treatises must be read with the same deliberation encouraged in this preliminary chapter on the *Letters*: slow and repeated reading and pondering of small sections, even individual sentences.

Although really an appendix within the corpus itself, the *Letters* have been the starting point in this part for two reasons: their brief form and their wide-ranging contents. First, if the reader is in fact investigating the Dionysian writings themselves beginning with the *Letters*, the density and brevity at least of the first six may induce the kind of deliberate and meditative reading here deemed essential. Second, the subjects treated and the perspectives glimpsed serve to preview most of the basic concerns of the enigmatic author. These concerns will now unfold as they are presented in the major works themselves.

The order of the Dionysian treatises is partly simple, partly complex. Dionysius clearly states that *The Celestial Hierarchy* precedes *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and that *The Divine Names* precedes *The Mystical Theology*. More complex is the relationship of the two hierarchical treatises to the other two, in terms of both their contents and their sequence. There are no historical reasons for ordering them according to supposed dates of composition, since they were meant to be encountered all at once as a single discovery. We have only the author's own statements and clues as to their internal order and sequence. The order of treatises in much of the manuscript tradition is followed by most commentators as indicating the proper order of treatises: *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *The Divine Names*, and *The Mystical Theology*. Although there are both formal and material reasons to question this order, as I shall discuss in part V, there is also a strong sequential rationale for using it to present the corpus.

INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

This book will introduce certain questions of Dionysian influence in the medieval Latin literature along with a glance at some Greek liturgical commentaries. Yet even when the field is restricted to the direct Western uses (and misuses) of Dionysius in the Middle Ages, the topics are so diverse that an introductory study can only sketch some rough outlines.²⁰ These outlines will appear within the format of the commentary on the entire corpus. The exposition of each treatise will conclude with a discussion of the medieval legacy of that work and its principal topic. For example, part II, a commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, is the natural place for a presentation of the Dionysian influence on medieval angelology, even though Dionysius mentions the angels in his other treatises as well.

The *Letters* themselves contain some passages and themes that were cited and adapted by later authors. Complex dynamics were at work when medieval theologians reached back through the centuries, across various translations and

commentaries, to cite the apostolic authority of Paul's own convert, the venerable Dionysius Areopagita. Since they located Dionysius at the very start of the formative tradition of the church fathers, they had a profound respect for his authority. But there are many complications in this story. We must first identify which edition, which Latin translation, and which prior interpreters conveyed the Dionysian material to the author in question. Further, the Dionysian writings may be cited only fleetingly or not at all where one might expect to find them, and then may suddenly become a central authority in an argument, indeed on both sides of an argument, where not anticipated. A text may be applied completely out of context, or extrapolated far beyond its original arena, but almost always for the sake of lending apostolic authority. The best way to frame the question is in terms of the medieval uses and abuses of these texts, as illustrated with material from the *Letters* regarding two topics, hierarchy and allegory.

Hierarchy in the Church

We start with the question of hierarchy and hierarchical order, urged so forcefully in *Letter 8*. As pointed out above, the word *hierarchy* is probably of Dionysian coinage. It quickly won general acceptance in the Greek language and in Latin translation, undoubtedly because it conveniently crystallized and conveyed a concept already in broad use. Our concern at this point is the human sphere only, since the angelic hierarchy will be discussed in part II, on *The Celestial Hierarchy*. The novel word *hierarchy* received very little comment in the *Scholia* of John and Maximus, who seemed to accept the new word as a matter of course.²¹ The ninth-century Western scholars who first translated the Dionysian writings, Hilduin and Eriugena, embraced the new word by simply transliterating it from Greek into Latin. Only when Hilduin presented the word for the first time did he pause to give it a true translation: *sacer principatus* (sacred source).²² Otherwise, the Latin translators simply accepted a new word, *hierarchia*, and passed it on to many other languages. Transliteration was simple, but the meaning of the word, and its applications, proved exceptionally fluid.

Hilduin's pupil and then fellow monk, Hincmar, became archbishop of Rheims in 845 and invoked the Areopagite's notion of local and angelic hierarchy, by way of the writings of Gregory the Great, to champion a strong view of order and authority within the church at large. In the same generation, Pope Nicholas I (858–67) suggested to the Byzantine Emperor Michael III (842–67) that *Letter 8* should remind him how the clergy, including the patriarch of Constantinople, is immune from judgment by its lay inferiors, even an emperor. Although Hincmar and Nicholas were virtually alone in invoking Dionysius in the ninth century regarding hierarchical authority (or in the tenth

and eleventh centuries, for that matter), they previewed several of the key issues which took center stage in the high Middle Ages.²³

The word *hierarchy* quickly developed a meaning far removed from the Dionysian usage. As seen already in Hincmar and Nicholas, it came to mean the upper echelons of clerical authority, even though the original author's churchly hierarchy had consisted of sacraments, local clergy only, and laity. Going still further, the eleventh-century Byzantine theologian Nicetas Stethatos (c. 1000–c. 1080) added to the Dionysian parish clergy the higher triad of patriarchs, metropolitans, and archbishops.²⁴ Various authors of the twelfth and especially the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in the Latin West were even more creative in applying the word and the concept of hierarchy. In the twelfth century, to take a pivotal example, Hugh of Saint-Victor employed the Dionysian term *hierarchy* and Hilduin's translation to identify three *sacros principatus* or hierarchies: the divine, the heavenly, and the human.²⁵ With Hugh and other Victorines like Richard (d. 1173) and especially Thomas Gallus, as well as Alan of Lille (d. 1203), the Dionysian writings emerged from Eriugena's unorthodox shadow and received a twelfth-century impetus that positioned them to become immensely influential thereafter, both in general and on hierarchy in particular.

The concept of a hierarchy—a mediated pyramid of revelation and authority—thus proved so flexible and adaptable that it can be traced into many quarters, both ecclesiastical and political. Arguments for papal power and primacy could find support in some of the general comments about hierarchical authority in Dionysius, but only if these comments were transferred from their original context of a single parish to the larger sphere of the whole church. The most thorough guide to the “kaleidoscopically varied use” of the Dionysian corpus in this regard is David E. Luscombe, who offers the following summary:

Denis' blueprint for ecclesiastical organisation was unable as it stood to provide complete guidance to the modern organisation of Christian society, but there were thinkers in the thirteenth century who thought it necessary to try to adapt Denis' notions of hierarchy to a situation in which the existence of a papacy, of kings and of orders of friars had to be accounted for as they had not had to be accounted for in Denis' own day.²⁶

Regarding such adaptations of Dionysian hierarchy, we introduce first the complex example of Bonaventure, and then three specific examples of disputes over papal authority, as suggested by Luscombe: the supervision of the mendicant orders, the papacy in relationship to a council of bishops, and the Christian duties of kings and emperors who vied with various popes over their respective authorities.

Bonaventure (c. 1217–74) provides a striking example of a medieval theologian who transposed the Dionysian dynamics of local hierarchy into several

broad and interlocking domains, indeed into a fully hierarchical universe. He "is perhaps the most interesting representative of hierarchical thinking in the Middle Ages."²⁷ He postulated three hierarchies—the divine, the angelic, and the churchly—as well as a hierarchy of the individual soul. To Bonaventure, with a debt to Alan of Lille and Alexander of Hales (c. 1186–1245), a hierarchy was "an ordered power of sacred and rational realities, which preserves for those who are subordinate their proper authority [over others]."²⁸ Like the Areopagite's ecclesiastical hierarchy, Bonaventure's was a triad of triads, but it was occupied by various categories, depending upon Bonaventure's perspective at the moment and always quite different from the Dionysian trio of sacraments, local clergy, and groups of laity. Bonaventure put all laity, including kings, in the lowest triad, which is Dionysian enough. When it came to the hierarchy of authority, he gave pride of place to the pope of Rome, which is also a natural extrapolation from Dionysian principles. But when he considered the active and contemplative lives according to degrees of perfection, he put in the middle group all active clergy who are not members of a religious order, including the pope. The triad that is highest, at least regarding the spiritual life of contemplation, consists of religious or monastic orders, such as various forms of Benedictines, corresponding to the Thrones, the mendicant orders of Dominicans and Franciscans, linked to the higher Cherubim, and the rare rapt and ecstatic individuals, like Francis of Assisi, who correspond to the highest Seraphim. The Seraphic Doctor, as Bonaventure himself was later called by Jean Gerson (1363–1429), took the Dionysian terminology and triadic structure of hierarchy and put it to use in his own way. He is thus typical of the medieval theologians who used Dionysius freely, although few of them were bold and inventive enough to advance such a universal framework, and one that even hinted at a superiority of monastic orders above the Roman pontiff in matters of purity of contemplation (although this perspective did gain great Franciscan support). Yet with regard to supervision and episcopal authority, Bonaventure and many other mendicant friars looked to the pope as their effective superior and supervisor instead of yielding to the intermediate layers of authority in the local clergy. In this, the mendicants cited Dionysius, despite the secular clerics (the local bishops) and their appeal to *Letter 8* (to Demophilus), in which Dionysius states that monks must obey their local parish clergy.

Regarding this issue, the first of the three case studies, the mid-thirteenth-century quarrel in Paris over the proper supervision of the mendicant friars involved the Dionysian texts most directly, as Yves Congar documented in the 1960s.²⁹ Beyond the two hierarchical treatises by Dionysius, the tale of Demophilus in *Letter 8* provided a dramatic focus. To the local bishops and their theologians, the Dionysian insistence that the monk Demophilus obey his parish clergy meant that the expansive mendicant friars and preachers should be directly accountable to their own local episcopal supervision, which mediated

authority on behalf of the pope. This was actually an older issue, beginning with the Benedictine house at Bobbio and known to all from the case of Cluny in the tenth century. But it reached new heights of polemics in the thirteenth century, and, more importantly for our purposes, invoked the Dionysian texts freely. The friars and their papal champions, finding some mutual benefit in bypassing the local bishops, could also use the Dionysian understanding of hierarchy, especially the principle that the higher cleric contains all the powers of the lower orders within himself. Thus the Roman pope carries the fullness of ecclesiastical powers in himself, and can choose to exempt certain communities from local supervision, and to override episcopal jurisdiction by claiming it for himself. The entire dispute, which occupied Bonaventure and Aquinas, can be seen, as Congar argues, as a debate over the proper reading of Dionysius.

Second, consider the arguments for papal primacy advanced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the controversy between the papalists, who championed the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop of Rome, and the conciliarists, who promoted the authority of general councils. Typical and formidable were the arguments in 1318 by Guillaume de Pierre Godin, "a champion of papal monarchy, . . . a papal extremist."³⁰ Scholarly and eloquent, he could mount the best possible arguments for the authority of the pope as the pinnacle of the hierarchical pyramid. Guillaume knew and used the Dionysian texts, yet he cited the Areopagite only fleetingly on the authority of the hierarch. Having read a misleading translation of "the divine order of hierarchs" as *divinus pontificum ordo*, Guillaume applied this passage to the papacy. But the link to Dionysius is tenuous at this point. As noted, the Areopagite's churchly hierarchy was a local one only, headed by the clerical office of hierarch, or bishop, who seems answerable only to God (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 7, 564B, 256), except in one passage. There is but a single comment (in *Letter 8*) about the relationship of these hierarchs to one another, and it supports not the pope but rather the conciliarists, if any of them had been combing the Areopagite's writings for support: "Let the hierarchs bow to the apostles and to the successors of the apostles. And should one of these last [hierarchs] fail in his duty then let him be set right by his peers" (1093C, 276). The reference to "successors of the apostles" may imply the authority of certain bishops or patriarchs, while the process of being "set right" by one's hierarchical or episcopal peers may imply some sort of ecclesiastical council, as sometimes argued in the Byzantine East.³¹

But the western medieval readers, papalists or conciliarists, paid little attention to this text. In fact, they did not treat the Areopagite's works as central to their debate at all, but rather as a minor support. Defenders of papal monarchy could only extrapolate some general principles from Dionysian hierarchical theory; conciliarists, for their part, shared a vision of the church also shaped by the overarching hierarchical mindset, even if they wished the authority of the pope to be tempered by the authority of a council. Jean Gerson

was a moderate conciliarist and at the same time was thoroughly convinced that the church is a “hierarchical order by which the lower are led back to God through the higher” and “the lowest are led to the highest through intermediates,” two variations on an immutable law of divinity that had long been attached to the name Dionysius, especially regarding civil authority (this will be discussed in the following paragraphs). This principle of hierarchical order Gerson accepted and presented as Dionysian, although it was also shaped by centuries of intervening interpreters.³² In summary, neither papalists nor conciliarists made very much of the Dionysian texts themselves, and when they did quote or allude to the Areopagite they were actually reflecting a diffused Dionysian tradition rather than a direct dependence upon the original texts.

The medieval question of papal authority relative to the secular authority of a king or emperor presents yet a third area for adapting the Dionysian principles of hierarchy. Amid the struggles around 1300 between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip IV (the Fair) of France, Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus; c.1245–1316) wrote an extensive defense of papal authority over any political figure. Giles knew the Dionysian texts well, but his 1301 treatise *On Ecclesiastical Power* did not treat them as central. He did invoke and adapt a principle, or divine law, which was by then a commonplace frequently associated with the name Dionysius, namely, that the lower are led to the higher through intermediates. A strong Dionysian principle of hierarchy was given divine sanction in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*: “It is the all-holy ordinance of the divinity that secondary things should be lifted up to the most divine ray through the mediation of the primary things” (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5, 504C, 236). Giles knew this law of divinity from prior authors like Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas as a general summary of Dionysian hierarchical principles. From Giles, however, it passed directly into an even more authoritative context, the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302), which claimed enormous power for the pope over against all other authorities, especially the political positions of king or emperor. From this point, later authors even refer to this general principle of mediation as the Dionysian rule of divinity, that the lower relate to the higher only through the intermediaries.³³

Nevertheless, Giles’s own most explicit use of the Dionysian authority is in fact a major alteration of the Areopagite’s understanding of hierarchy. As already noted, the Dionysian churchly hierarchy was a triple triad consisting of three sacraments, three orders of parish clergy, and three lay categories. The heavenly hierarchy, as we shall see, was also composed of a triple triad, meaning nine ranks of angels. Like Bonaventure, Giles used the nine-fold pattern of three groups of three, as explicitly modeled on the heavenly hierarchy in Dionysius, and he too applied it in a remarkably free and inventive way. Neither Bonaventure nor Giles simply put the pope on the top rung of a nine-step ladder. Giles put it this way: “For we would say that the Supreme Pontiff

stands as the Vicar of God, and that, around him, a kind of threefold hierarchy is provided or can be discerned.”³⁴ Giles puts the pope as the vicar of God *above* the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is composed of three tripartite groups of clerics all subordinate to ultimate papal authority. First, and closest to the supreme pontiff, are the cardinal bishops, cardinal priests, and cardinal deacons. Next are the primates or patriarchs, the archbishops, and the bishops. Then come the archdeacons, parish priests, and other clergy. Here, perhaps following William of Auvergne (c.1180–1249), the churchly hierarchy is seen to include all priests, but no monks or other laity. Is this a Dionysian influence? Yes and no, as already illustrated in the case of Bonaventure. Such a hierarchy is remotely Dionysian, in its general principles and triadic format, and yet it is decidedly different from the specifics of the local churchly hierarchy described in the Areopagite’s writings. Employing the Dionysian texts to serve their own purposes, Giles and Bonaventure illustrate the ambiguous uses of these texts, often as the deep background of a medieval argument’s documentation.

Giles went further still and suggested a tripartite hierarchy among the laity, in terms of imperial power. Around the emperor would be the first triad of kings, princes, and dukes. Giles refrains from further detail, especially because his overall point is that the secular rulers, here cast in terms of a lay hierarchy, are subordinate to the clerical hierarchy, headed by the pope. To this end, he marshaled the usual arguments about the material realm of imperial rule being subordinate to the spiritual realm of ecclesiastical authority, as allegorically expressed by the two lights of Genesis 1:16, and the two swords of Luke 22:38. But none of this is specifically Dionysian. Even for his overall hierarchical principles of subordination and superordination, Giles knew and cited a much larger tradition, including Aristotle and Augustine of Hippo (354–430). In fact, when he advanced the allegorical understanding of the two lights and the two swords, a commonplace dating back before Dionysius to Origen (c. 185–c.254), he found his opponents poised to cite the Areopagite back at him in rebuttal.

While Giles of Rome articulated papal supremacy on behalf of Pope Boniface VIII, their opponent, Philip IV, King of France, had an equally formidable spokesman in John of Paris (c.1255–1306). His book *On Royal and Papal Power* (1302) was not an explicit rebuttal of Giles, but the issues and arguments were well-worn by this time. John based his arguments on canon law and scripture, and had only a passing need to rebut a Dionysian argument about hierarchy, since neither Giles nor the other advocates of papal supremacy made very much of Dionysian authority on this point. But his rebuttal of their use of Dionysius regarding hierarchy is paired with his own invocation of Dionysian authority on the topic treated in the next section, biblical allegory in theological argumentation. As to the rebuttal, first, John agrees with the Dionysian view of hierarchy: lay rulers, even kings, are on the lowest level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. He

even grants, beyond the Dionysian texts, that above the clergy is the supreme monarch, the pope. But the pope, he argues, has only that authority over the laity which is exercised through the mediation of the churchly hierarchy, that is, through the lower clergy. This quite Dionysian principle means to John that such authority is purely spiritual, since no one could claim that every priest and lowly deacon has temporal authority over a layman like King Philip. Thus the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy is restricted to the spiritual realm, he concludes, leaving to the monarchs their rightful temporal powers and authorities in their own contexts.³⁵

In arguing for pontifical monarchy, Giles of Rome extended a hierarchical system far beyond the supposed warrant in Dionysius. Conversely, John of Paris, the opponent of papal authority in matters temporal, might seem bereft of any Dionysian argument, but nevertheless turns the Areopagite's comments on hierarchy to his advantage as well. Yet in their overall argumentation, neither author presents the Dionysian authority as central, although the use of Dionysius in *Unam Sanctam* was of strategic significance, both for the papal bull itself and also for the rising profile of the Dionysian authority on the question of hierarchy.³⁶

Biblical Allegory in Theological Argumentation

Furthermore, the royalist John of Paris could dramatically turn Dionysius against the papalists on another front. No solid theological argument, he says, can be based on allegory alone. The symbolic explanation of the sun and the moon or of the two swords as supporting the supremacy of ecclesiastical authority over the temporal is not by itself a proof of anything. Three times John reminds his readers of the principle in Dionysius (and Augustine) that an allegorical interpretation of scripture is not by itself a conclusive basis for a theological argument. Symbolic interpretations of biblical swords or of the moon as inferior and subordinate to the sun could be arbitrary and misleading. No convincing argument can be drawn, he says, from an allegorical meaning of a scriptural passage.

Here John is explicitly citing *Letter 9* of Dionysius, and a passage in Augustine, in accordance with an understanding of the senses of scripture which John and many others adopted from Thomas Aquinas. Before examining some of the intricacies of this line of influence, let us note how quickly and drastically the specific topic has shifted, both within the discussion of same issue over papal authority and in the same author. We have moved from an argument over order and hierarchy to the rules for any such argumentation, namely, the medieval rules of scriptural hermeneutics.

Here, too, the extent of the Dionysian influence on the medieval history of biblical interpretation is ambiguous and problematic. First, John typically

neglects to credit Aquinas for his argument, even though it is obvious from the wording used and sources claimed. First, according to Thomas:

Nor is a convincing argument drawn from figures of this kind, as Augustine says in a certain epistle against the Donatists. Dionysius also says in the Epistle to Titus that symbolical theology is not conclusive.

Then, according to John, regarding the allegory of two swords:

There is nothing here except a certain allegorical reading from which no convincing argument can be drawn. This is because, as has been said already, according to Denis, mystical theology is not conclusive and, according to Augustine in his *Letter to Vincentius* [the Donatist], allegory is insufficient to prove.³⁷

For Thomas Aquinas, Dionysius was one of the most important authorities of the early church, to be ranked with Augustine. He quoted the Dionysian writings some seventeen hundred times, wrote an extensive commentary on *The Divine Names*, and was undoubtedly influenced by the Areopagite in major ways, as discussed more generally in part IV. On this topic of allegory, Thomas used *Letter 9* on eight occasions, often in conjunction with the passage from Augustine, and always to make the same point, namely, that symbolic theology is not argumentative, or conclusive. Dionysius had said that the scriptural “tradition has a dual aspect, the ineffable and mysterious on the one hand, the open and more evident on the other. The one resorts to symbolism and involves initiation. The other is philosophic and employs the method of demonstration” (1105D, 283).

This passage, like the text from Augustine, does not really provide an exact source for Thomas’s influential dictum that a theological argument can be drawn only from the literal sense of a passage, and not from any allegorical sense. It treats a similar theme, but only in a general way. The increasing interest in the literal and historical sense of scripture among later medieval exegetes owed much to Thomas’ viewpoint, which he presented in strategic places, such as the beginning of the *Summa theologiae*. But were his sources only these two venerable but vague passages from the early authorities, Augustine and Dionysius? Like John of Paris, who neglected to acknowledge Thomas, Thomas himself sometimes failed to credit his real source on this point, namely, the author of the *Sentences*, Peter Lombard (c.1100–60). Lombard was well known both to Thomas and then to John, as to anyone who pursued theological study from the thirteenth century onward, since his *Sentences* was a standard textbook. In it he wrote that “the correct procession of an argument is not out of tropical [or allegorical] expressions.” On occasion, Thomas acknowledged his debt to Peter Lombard, but more often he preferred, as did John of Paris, to present this

hermeneutical principle cloaked only in the mantle of the ancient authorities, Augustine and Dionysius.³⁸

Thus, in this case, Dionysius appears at first to be a strategic authority, both for John and for Thomas before him. Nevertheless, the fuller and more accurate picture shows a complicated trail of unacknowledged intermediate influences between Dionysius and John, such as Peter Lombard and Aquinas himself. Many centuries, translations, and layers of theological reflection separate the original Dionysian texts from most of their appearances in the Middle Ages, where they often served as examples of apostolic authority. It was a natural temptation to attach the authority of the apostolic age, including Dionysius, to positions which were neither Dionysian nor apostolic. Not every claim to the Dionysian legacy can be substantiated, making the questions of influence even more complicated. More than one Dionysian text was bent to fit a later context, and often supplemented by the addition of helpful “clarifications.”

Amid the many tangential or superficial uses of the Dionysian texts, there are also several substantial trajectories of influence to trace. Part II, on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, concludes by considering the Areopagite’s influence on various medieval views of the angels first, and then of perceptible (aesthetic) symbols in art and architecture. Part III is a commentary on *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, and will also situate that Dionysian treatise within the history of the genre of liturgical commentaries. Part IV, on *The Divine Names*, ends with a sketch of that work’s influence on certain medieval theologians, especially Eriugena and Thomas Aquinas. Finally, part V, on *The Mystical Theology*, will conclude with an overview of its reception in the history of medieval mysticism.

These brief sketches do not attempt to present extensive claims for some decisive Dionysian impact on multiple aspects of medieval thought. They only ask some initial questions about whether the Dionysian writings make an appearance, where they appeared, where they exerted any specific influence, and where they may have been strained or seriously distorted. That the mendicants and the seculars, or a papalist like Giles of Rome and a royalist like John of Paris, could both quote Dionysius on opposing sides of the same argument illustrates the general comment of Alan of Lille: authority has a wax nose, it can be bent in diverse directions.³⁹ As a presumably ancient authority, Dionysius had his nose and his texts bent in several directions, on several topics, as we shall see.

NOTES

1. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 409. In these 1901–2 Gifford Lectures, which have received many printings, James is quoting Maurice Maeterlinck’s introduction

(with translation) to Jan van Ruysbroeck's fourteenth-century work *Spiritual Espousals: L'ornement des noces spirituelles* (Brussels: P. Lacomblez, 1891), p. xvii.

2. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, with a foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem, preface by René Roques, and introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich, *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

3. Louth, *Denys*. Otherwise the introductory material is scarce. Even the Paulist edition's excellent introductory articles (see n. 2) concentrate more on surveying the ways the corpus was viewed by medieval and later authors than on introducing the texts themselves: this was pointed out in an early review by William E. McCulloh, *Patristics* 17, no. 1 (July 1988): 9. Italian students now have a fine introduction to the thorough edition of the complete works begun by Piero Scazzoso, who contributed many other excellent studies, and completed by Enzo Bellini, also an accomplished interpreter of these texts. See Piero Scazzoso and Enzo Bellini, eds., *Dionigi Areopagita: Tutte le Opere* (Milan: Rusconi, 1981). See also Salvatore Lilla, "Dionysius the Areopagite, Pseudo-," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 238–40. Gunther Heil has introduced and translated the two hierarchical treatises: Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *Über die himmlische Hierarchie, Über die kirchliche Hierarchie*, *Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur*, vol. 22 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986), and Beate Regina Suchla has introduced and translated *Die Namen Gottes*, *Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur*, vol. 26 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988). The critical edition of the Greek texts has finally appeared as *Corpus Dionysiacum*, vol. 1: *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De divinis nominibus*, ed. Beate Suchla, *Patristische Texte und Studien*, vol. 33 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990). The second volume, comprising the other works, is edited by Gunter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter: *Corpus Dionysiacum*, vol. 2: *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia, De mystica theologia, Epistulae*, *Patristische Texte und Studien*, vol. 36 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991).

Years ago Gunther Heil collaborated with Maurice de Gandillac and René Roques on a fine edition of *La hiérarchie céleste*, complete with a general introduction in the series *Sources Chrésiennes*, vol. 58. French readers have probably had the least difficulty getting started in Dionysian studies: in addition to Gandillac's translation of the entire corpus (Paris: Aubier, 1943), Roques has contributed a magisterial study, both introductory and scholarly, entitled *L'univers dionysien* (Paris: Aubier, 1954), as well as numerous articles such as the major treatment in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3: 244–286.

4. Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984).

5. The Greek text of the *Scholia*, intermingling comments by John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor, among others, was edited by B. Corderius as a companion volume to the Dionysian text, *PG* 4 (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1857). The critical edition of the *Scholia* will be volume 4 of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* mentioned in n. 3 and is projected by Beate Regina Suchla to appear in 1993. For her crucial studies of the manuscript tradition of the *Scholia*, see the items in her critical edition of *The Divine Names* (n. 3) xix.

6. Thomas Aquinas, *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*, ed. C. Pera (Turin: Marietti, 1950), pp. 1–2. Among the others who labored with the Dionysian complexities of style was John Scotus Eriugena, who said of the Areopagite, “In his usual way he expresses himself in an involved and distorted language, and therefore many find him extremely obscure and difficult to understand.” *Periphyseon* 1. 509C (p. 106). Eriugena and Thomas are discussed in parts II and IV; on the *Periphyseon*, see part II, n. 21.

7. Other examples of the word *theology* introducing an explicit biblical quotation are at 180C (p. 157), 261C (p. 172), and 293B (p. 176). See the further examples, arguments and previous studies cited in Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 17–18, and the sharp critique by Thomas Michael Tomasic in *Speculum* 62 (1987): 180–81.

8. See the discussion and sources cited in Jaroslav Pelikan’s introduction to the Paulist Press edition, p. 13, and in Rorem, *Synthesis*, p. 4. Louth’s *Denys* summarizes the christological context skillfully (pp. 1–10). The fuller treatment is by A. Grillmeier; see especially his mention of this letter in *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Friburg: Herder, 1989), pp. 180–81.

9. The *Scholia* on this letter are particularly interesting, especially those known to be part of the earliest efforts by John of Scythopolis, according to the pertinent Syriac manuscript (British Museum 626 Add. 12152). John claims (533D) that the Dionysian mention of the Virgin Birth and the walking on water presuppose a distinct human nature, since birth itself and physical feet are not characteristic of the divine nature.

10. The quotation from John’s prologue is at *PG* 4 20A, the itemization at 20B, and the explicit refutation of Apollinarian authorship at 85C and 176C. The comment from the expansion of the prologue, associated with the name Philoponus, is at 21D. I will offer a fuller examination of the prologue and the *Scholia* in future studies, in collaboration with John Lamoreaux.

11. Jaroslav Pelikan, “Introduction,” *Maximus Confessor. Selected Writings*, translation and notes by George C. Berthold (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 7. Pelikan’s pun, “Maximized Dionysius,” was part of his unpublished address to the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 4 September 1979, “The Domestication of Dionysius,” and now appears

on p. 23 of the Paulist edition. That very few of the *Scholia* can be attributed with certainty to Maximus is apparent from a Latin translation in manuscript (Berlin phil 1668). But Maximus's equally important *Mystagogy* is discussed in the concluding section of part III.

12. Photius reported that Theodore the Presbyter (otherwise unknown) refuted four arguments against the authenticity of the corpus: that none of the fathers cite it, that Eusebius did not mention it, that its liturgical rites are later and well-developed, and that it cites Ignatius. Photius is rather reserved about Theodore's success in refuting these formidable arguments: "Theodore endeavours to solve these difficulties and does his best to prove the genuineness of the treatises." *The Library of Photius*, vol. 1, trans. J. H. Freese (London: SPCK, 1920), p. 17 (PG 103: 44–45).

13. Sumner McKnight Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from Its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475–1151* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 3. This splendid book, mostly on Suger's building campaigns (discussed below in part II) is also the best English source for the legend of Saint Denis, and the early history of the abbey. For more on the legend of Saint Denis himself (not the abbey), see Raymond J. Loenertz, "La légende parisienne de S. Denys l'Aréopagite: Sa genèse et son premier témoin," *Analecta Bollandiana* 69 (1951): 217–37, and the wide-ranging survey by Ingeborg Bähr, *Saint Denis und seine Vita im Spiegel der Bildüberlieferung der französischen Kunst des Mittelalters* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984). For a more detailed survey of medieval views on the Areopagite's identity, see David Luscombe, "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages from Hilduin to Lorenzo Valla," *Fälschungen im Mittelalter* (Hannover: Hahr, 1988). pt. 1, pp. 133–52.

14. These authors and their interpretations of the Dionysian texts are considered in subsequent sections, principally under the pertinent topics, such as angelology or mysticism. Their relationships to each other within the Dionysian tradition are not presented chronologically until the end of part V, in the essay on medieval mysticism. Even there, however, the translators Sarracenus (twelfth century) and Grosseteste (thirteenth) are not given direct attention. On John Sarracenus or Sarrazin, see Gabriel Théry, "Documents concernant Jean Sarrazin, reviseur de la traduction érigénienne du *Corpus Dionysiacum*," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 18 (1951): 45–87. On Grosseteste, see especially James McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982). McEvoy's 1967 Belfast thesis was on Grosseteste's work on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chaps. 10–15, and built upon the thesis by J. S. McQuade on chaps. 1–9, both under Theodore Crowley. See also R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste. The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

15. On these authors, see especially the brief but thorough presentation by

Karlfried Froehlich, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," in the introductory material to the Paulist edition, pp. 33–46.

16. "Adhering to this essentially medieval devotion, which ignores the cogent criticisms of Valla and Erasmus, Rubens has visually duplicated Cordier's polemic by sensitively but unambiguously selecting images that strongly assert the antiquity and authenticity of the Areopagite." Erick Wilberding, "A Defense of Dionysius the Areopagite by Rubens," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991): 19–34. The quotation is from the conclusion (p. 34). Rubens's drawing and the adaptation by the engraver Cornelius Galle are reproduced and discussed by J. Richard Judson and Carl van de Velde, *Book Illustrations and Title Pages*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, pt. 21, Vols. 1–2 (London: Harvey Miller–Heyden and Son, 1978), 1:271–77, 2:386, and pls. 216–21. Judson and van de Velde note that the engraver omitted Rubens's allusion to Athens in the owl and Minerva, and that he added an angelic head. The latter alteration is not as minor as they suggest. Rubens had drawn nine such celestial figures, surely no coincidence since the Areopagite's celestial hierarchy has nine types of angels, but the engraver preferred the symmetry of five on each side of the page.

17. There is a convenient tabulation of the hypotheses about authorship in Ronald F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1969), pp. 31–35. See also R. Riedinger, "Akoimeten," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 2 (1978): 148–53, and his comments in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 79 (1986): 62. The 1991 Oxford Patristics Conference announced a paper by Michel van Esbroeck entitled "The Areopagite and Peter the Iberian: Honigmann's Thesis Revisited," which I have not yet been able to consult. There is another current development in the authorship question: Is the disputed "Hymnus ad Deum" actually by Dionysius? Martin Sicherl concludes that it is; see "Ein neuplatonischer Hymnus unter den Gedichten Gregors von Nazianz," in *Gonimos, Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*, ed. John Duffy and John Peradotto, (Buffalo, New York: Arethusa, 1988), pp. 61–83. But Vassiliki Frangeskou argues for its continued attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus, "Observations on the Disputed *Hymnus ad Deum*," *Studia Patristica* 18, no. 2 (1989): 9–13.

18. This insight into the order of the letters is from Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, pp. 64–65. See also his comments (pp. 92–98) on the enigmatic character named Carpos at the end of *Letter* 8.

19. Dionysius explains God's sleep much the way Proclus explains the sleep of Zeus. On the Neoplatonic allegorical exegesis of Homer, see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), especially pp. 244–48.

20. The introductory articles in the Paulist edition contain many bibliographical references to the medieval influence of the Dionysian corpus. An essential bibliographical tool is Barbara Faes de Mottoni's *Il "Corpus Dionysianum" nel medioevo; Rassegna di studi: 1900–1972* (Rome: Il Mulino, 1977). Her format and indexes help the reader locate pertinent articles in many languages, although her own perceptive summaries and evaluations are in Italian. The basic resources in French are the articles in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire* 3:286–318 (East) and 318–429 (West) by André Rayez and several others. The immense primary literature and wide-ranging secondary studies will be sampled in discussions of specific topics.

21. In the *Scholia*, John of Scythopolis comments on the word *hierarchy* as part of the title, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in PG 4:29. See also the comments on *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, chap. 1, in PG 4:117 and 120. Regarding the history of the word *hierarchy*, Walter Dress has assembled some of the primary and secondary literature in "Hierarchie: Zur Bildung und ursprünglichen Bedeutung des Begriffs: Beobachtungen und Erwägungen," *Theologia Viatorum* 13 (1975–76): 47–68. On the earlier history of the concept of hierarchy in Greek philosophers, see Gunther Heil's introduction (pp. 1–25) to his German translation of the two treatises on hierarchies (n. 3), and Gerard J. P. O'Daly, "Hierarchie," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* no. 113 (1989): 41–73; O'Daly considers the first appearance of the word *hierarchy*, p. 43. See also Alexandre Faivre, *Naissance d'une hiérarchie: Les premières étapes du cursus clérical* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1977), especially the excursus "La hiérarchie chez le pseudo-Denys," pp. 172–80, and the collection of articles edited by Marion L. Kuntz and Paul G. Kuntz, *Jacob's Ladder and the Tree of Life: Concepts of Hierarchy and the Great Chain of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), especially the article by Paul Kuntz on Bonaventure (pp. 83–100).

22. The Latin translations by Hilduin and others after him are compiled in *Dionysiaca* 2:730.

23. On these adaptations of Dionysian hierarchy, and many others, see David E. Luscombe, "Conceptions of Hierarchy Before the Thirteenth Century," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 12/1, pp. 1–19, and his other studies mentioned below.

24. *Nicéas Stéthatos, Opuscules et lettres*, ed. J Darrouzès, Sources chrétiennes 81 (Paris, 1961); cf. Louth, *Denys*, p. 118.

25. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Commentariorum in Hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagitae*, PL 175: 929B, 931C; cf. 941B and 960D. See also M.-D. Chenu's essay on "The Platonisms of the Twelfth Century," in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), especially pp. 80–81.

26. David E. Luscombe, "Thomas Aquinas and Conceptions of Hierarchy in the Thirteenth Century," in *Thomas von Aquin: Werk und Wirkung im Licht*

neuerer Forschungen, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, vol. 19, ed. A. Zimmermann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 261–77, quoting from p. 262. The picturesque phrase “kaleidoscopically varied use” appears on the first page of Luscombe’s “The ‘Lex Divinitatis’ in the Bull ‘Unam Sanctam’ of Pope Boniface VIII,” *Church and Government in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. E. Luscombe et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 205–21. For yet more documentation, see his article “Some Examples of the Use Made of the Works of the Pseudo-Dionysius by University Teachers in the Later Middle Ages,” *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. J. Ijsewijn and J. Paquet (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1978), pp. 228–41.

27. Werner Dettloff, “Himmlische und kirchliche Hierarchie bei Bonaventura,” *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 12/1, pp. 41–55. See also the article by Paul Kuntz in the collection cited in note 21 above, and especially J.-G. Bougerol, “Saint Bonaventure et la hiérarchie dionysienne,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 36 (1969): 131–67, now reprinted in Bougerol, *Saint Bonaventure: Etudes sur les sources de sa pensée* (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989).

28. Bonaventure’s definition (*Sent.* 2.9; Quarrachi 2:238) is cited by Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 293. Cf. Bonaventure, *Sent.* D. 19, a 3, q. 1: “Hierarchia est rerum sacrarum et rationabilium ordinata potestas in subditis debitum retinens principatum,” in Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center, Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 158–59. Bonaventure’s most wide-ranging adaptation of the notion of hierarchy, summarized in the text above, is in his *Collatio XXII in Hexameron*, in *Opera omnia* (Quaracchi, 5:440–41); *The Works of Bonaventure*, vol. 5, trans. J. de Vinck (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970), pp. 341–63.

29. Yves Congar, “Aspects ecclésiologiques de la querelle entre mendiants et séculiers dans la seconde moitié du XIII^e siècle et le début du XIV^e siècle,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 28 (1961): 35–151; see especially the section entitled “Le Pseudo-Denys dans l’ecclésiologie du XIII^e siècle,” pp. 114–38. More recently, see the studies by Michel-Marie Dufeil, including “Ierarchia: Un concept dans la polémique universitaire parisienne du XIII^e siècle,” *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 12/1, pp. 56–83. For comments and additional bibliographic information on this theme, I am grateful to Christopher Ocker.

30. William D. McCready, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Fourteenth Century: The “Tractatus de causa immediata ecclesiastice potestatis” of Guillaume de Pierre Godin, OP* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), pp. 4–5. The pertinent text is on p. 216; see also pages 217–20 and 236. Guillaume was probably using Eriugena’s translation; cf. *Dionysiaca* 2: 1333. The Dionysian text is at *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5, 505B, 236–37.

31. Theodore the Studite used this text to argue in the ninth century that a patriarch can only be corrected by his peers and not by an emperor; see Patrick Gillespie Henry, "Emperor, Abbot, Patriarch, Pope: Determining Orthodoxy in the Aftermath of Iconoclasm," *Studia Patristica* 23 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989), pp. 43–48.

32. Jean Gerson, *De consolatione theologiae* (*Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9; Brussels: Desclée, 1973), p. 222. I owe this reference (and other insights) to the kindness of Mark Burrows regarding his 1988 dissertation, published as *Jean Gerson and "De consolatione theologiae" (1418): The Consolation of a Biblical and Reforming Theology for a Disordered Age* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1991). See also the two works on Gerson critiqued by Burrows: D. Catherine Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. pp. 36–48; and Louis B. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), esp. pp. 17–48.

33. On this subject, see Luscombe, "The 'Lex Divinitatis.'" "

34. *Giles of Rome on Ecclesiastical Power: The "De ecclesiastica potestate" of Aegidius Romanus*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Dover, N.H.: Boydell Press, 1986), Bk. 2. Ch. 13. Sec. 41, pp. 122–23. See also the translation by Arthur P. Monahan, *On Ecclesiastical Power by Giles of Rome* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen, 1990). The critical edition of Giles's complete works edited by Francesco del Punto and Gianfranco Fioravanti, is being published in Florence (Leo S. Olschki).

35. John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power*, trans. J. A. Watt (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971), chap. 18.29, pp. 193ff. See also the translation by Arthur P. Monahan (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1974).

36. On the subsequent reaction to the Dionysian hierarchy, see J. B. Trapp, "John Colet and the *Hierarchies* of the Ps. Dionysius," in *Religion and Humanism*, ed. Keith Robbins (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 127–48, and the essay by Froehlich in the Paulist edition of Dionysius. For more on Colet, see John B. Gleason, *John Colet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), esp. pp. 198–202.

37. Thomas Aquinas, *Retrahentes* 7/213 (Parma: Typis P. Fiaccadori, 1864), 15:110. John of Paris, *On Royal and Papal Power*, p. 196; cf. pp. 165 and 203. Regarding the history of the two swords, see Gerard Caspary, *Politics and Exegesis: Origen and the Two Swords* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

38. I have discussed this particular point in "An Influence of Peter Lombard on the Biblical Hermeneutics of Thomas Aquinas," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 16 (1980): 429–34. On allegory in general, besides the fine study by Robert Lamberton (*Homer the Theologian*; see n. 19), see the works of

Jean Pépin, including his recent collection *La tradition de l'allégorie de Philon d'Alexandrie à Dante* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1987), especially the tenth chapter (pp. 223–33) on the Areopagite's *Letter 9* and its Latin translation by John Scotus Eriugena. See also the article by Pierre Hadot, "Théologie, exégèse, révélation, écriture dans la philosophie grecque," in *Les règles de l'interprétation*, ed. Michel Tardieu (Paris: Cerf, 1987), pp. 13–34. Also recent and helpful is the extensive annotated bibliography by R. E. Kaske, in collaboration with Arthur Groos and Michael W. Twomey, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). The Dionysian understanding of symbolism in general is considered below, in part II, on *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

39. Alan of Lille, speaking of Plato, said "Sed quia auctoritas cereum habet nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est." *De fide catholica* 1:30 (PL 210:333A). See also N. Häring "Magister Alanus de Insulis, Regulae caelestis iuris," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 48 (1982): 97–226.

PART II

The Celestial Hierarchy

An introduction to the Dionysian treatises should start with *The Celestial Hierarchy*, for several reasons. Much of the manuscript tradition presents it as the first of the treatises: *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *The Divine Names*, and *The Mystical Theology*. A case can and will be made for placing the two hierarchical treatises after *The Mystical Theology*, as in the Paulist Press edition, but this is a structural argument that assumes a familiarity with the corpus, not a pedagogical order for introducing it.

Furthermore, *The Celestial Hierarchy* comes first because in it we immediately encounter crucial facets of the author's theological method that recur throughout the writings.¹ Part I touched upon the concern of *Letter 9* for the proper method of interpreting symbols. The author's interpretive method, essential to the entire enterprise, is pursued in detail in this treatise and in its companion, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In the latter work, on the rites and offices of the church, the author explicitly refers to *The Celestial Hierarchy* as a book already written (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1, 372C, 196), thus indicating the sequential relationship of these two treatises. The first three chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, as we shall see, introduce both the remainder of that treatise on the angelic beings and also the subsequent one (*The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*) on Christian worship. *The Celestial Hierarchy* also fits well at this point because it continues another topic begun in the *Letters*. *Letter 9* interpreted the biblical mixing bowl (1109B, 285–86) as a symbol for the procession and return of God, a conceptual framework that provides a foundation throughout these writings. This concept of procession and return is encountered explicitly in the first few lines of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. The gradual explication of these essential Dionysian themes should start, therefore, with this treatise, quite apart from its main subject matter of angels.

Consideration of each treatise will begin with an overview of its contents by means of the chapter titles. Just as the *Letters* were interrelated as chapters

in a single work, and just as their sequence revealed some clues to their interpretation, so each Dionysian work has a revealing overall structure. Although the chapter titles are editorial additions and not original with the author (as discussed later), a list is here provided, along with an outline of this part in brackets.

[Introduction]

Chapter 1: Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder: Even though in various ways every divine enlightenment proceeds, out of its goodness, toward those provided for, it not only remains simple in itself but also unifies those it enlightens.

Chapter 2: That divine and heavenly things are appropriately revealed even through dissimilar symbols.

Chapter 3: What a hierarchy is and what its benefit is.

[Presentation of the heavenly hierarchy]

Chapter 4: What the designation "angel" signifies.

Chapter 5: Why the heavenly beings are all called "angel" in common.

Chapter 6: What is the first rank of the heavenly beings, what is the middle, and what is the last?

Chapter 7: Concerning the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones, and theirs, the first hierarchy.

Chapter 8: Concerning the dominions, powers, and authorities, and theirs, the middle hierarchy.

Chapter 9: Concerning the principalities, archangels, and angels, and theirs, the final hierarchy.

Chapter 10: Repetition and conclusion regarding the angels' coordination.

[Specific Problems]

Chapter 11: Why all heavenly beings are called "heavenly powers" in common.

Chapter 12: Why human hierarchs are called "angels."

Chapter 13: Why the prophet Isaiah is said to have been purified by the Seraphim.

Chapter 14: What the traditional number of angels signifies.

[The Biblical Descriptions of the Angels]

Chapter 15: What are the formed images of the angelic powers, the fiery property, the human likeness, the eyes, the nostrils, the ears, mouth, sense of touch, eyelids, eyebrows, fingers, teeth, shoulders, elbows and hands, heart, chest, back, feet, wings, nakedness, garments, the bright clothing, the clerical clothing, the belts, the scepters, the spears, axes, plumb lines, winds, clouds, brass, electron, choirs, clapping, colors of different stones,

the likeness of the lion, of the ox, of the eagle, the horses, the differences in the horses' colors, the rivers, chariots, wheels, the previously mentioned joy of the angels.

As a treatise, *The Celestial Hierarchy* has influenced the history of Christian thought in two major ways, along with numerous lesser legacies. First, and quite specifically, it proposes an overall framework for understanding the angelic beings and for arranging them into three groups of three. This stimulated a medieval development of angelology, especially in the West, starting with Pope Gregory the Great. Second, and more generally, it presents a complex method for interpreting religious symbols: the biblical symbols and names for the angels and for God, and the symbolic actions of the liturgy. This treatise and its methodological comments helped to shape medieval Western and Byzantine theories about symbols in general, both biblical and liturgical. As part of a Dionysian tradition that passed through John Scotus Eriugena and probably Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1142), it specifically influenced the twelfth-century Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis with regard to the anagogical, or uplifting, power of stones, stained glass, and visual beauty in general. This part, therefore, will also introduce the complex question of Dionysian influence upon a medieval theology of beauty or aesthetics, and upon the birth of Gothic architecture, closely associated with Abbot Suger and the abbey of Saint-Denis.

INTRODUCTION: CHAPTERS 1 THROUGH 3

The first three chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy* serve to introduce both the heavenly and the human hierarchies, as well as both hierarchical treatises.

Chapter 1

Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder: Even though in various ways every divine enlightenment proceeds, out of its goodness, toward those provided for, it not only remains simple in itself but also unifies those it enlightens. (120A, 145)

The opening phrase "Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder" illustrates three distinct items in the overall corpus. First, the title of a treatise is often supplemented by the title of its first chapter, which thus serves as a subtitle to the whole work. According to the old standard Greek edition, which we have followed here and in *The Divine Names* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the first chapter title begins with the words "Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder." This statement of author and recipient is not really part of the

title to chapter 1, but part of the title of the overall treatise. Parallel to this but on a smaller scale, in the accepted Greek edition of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, most of the chapters do not have separate titles but use the initial heading of their first section to indicate the contents of the whole chapter.

Second, by means of the same phrase, these writings are presented as communications from "Dionysius" to "Timothy," the junior colleague, like the purported author, of Paul. As the biblical letters to Timothy seemed to give the young man advice in churchly matters, so these pseudonymous words pass on the wisdom of an elder to a younger churchman, even though Timothy preceded the real Dionysius in the faith.

Third, the technical term *elder* (*presbyter*) does not otherwise appear in the entire corpus, at least not to indicate a churchly office. The term for priest in the text itself, as opposed to in a title, is never *presbyter* but rather *hiereus*. Similarly, the term *fellow-elder* or *co-presbyter* never appears in the body of the corpus at all, except for these three titles. Furthermore, other passages clearly imply that Dionysius and Timothy are not considered priests or elders but hierarchs or bishops. Thus, the terminology of the titles is not consistent with the text itself, suggesting that perhaps an early editor put some inconsistent touches on the writings as they were passed on. Some of these touches, such as the repetition of the names Dionysius and Timothy, reinforce the impact of apostolic authority. The internal evidence for an editor's hand will grow as we consider *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. That title, in fact, is never the way the author refers to the human hierarchy in the text itself, where it is usually called "our hierarchy." Thus, the third general feature of the corpus to be noted in this heading is that the terminology of such titles and subtitles is not original and can be misleading. Certain modern editions and translations into other languages omit the chapter titles altogether.² But for purposes of this study, the titles and subtitles will all be used and should be considered as accurate indicators of the contents unless explicitly challenged here or in the footnotes of the Paulist Press edition.

After the reference to "Timothy the Fellow-Elder," the initial chapter title of *The Celestial Hierarchy* provides a capsule summary of several terms and concepts that are most crucial to the corpus. Here we encounter more directly the philosophical framework of procession and return. The chapter heading given above may not be original with this author, but the same theme is pursued in the opening paragraph of the text itself: "Each procession of the Light spreads itself generously toward us, and, in its power to unify, it stirs us by lifting us up. It returns us back to the oneness and deifying simplicity of the Father who gathers us in" (120B, 145).

This sentence is preceded and followed by two biblical quotations that support the idea of procession and return: "Every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17) and "from him [procession]

and to him [return] are all things" (Romans 11:36). In the full Neoplatonic context adapted by Dionysius, procession and return are actually the second and third terms in a tripartite pattern. The overall motif, therefore, is remaining, procession, and return: the divine remains immanent in itself, yet it also proceeds outward or downward, and then reverts or returns back to itself. The motif of procession and return was essential to the philosophical structure of late Neoplatonism that clearly influenced Pseudo-Dionysius. Through him, among others, it profoundly shaped Christian theology and its systematic organization, especially as *exitus* and *reditus*. A sketch of the lines of this influence in such people as Eriugena and Thomas Aquinas will accompany the commentary on *The Divine Names* in part IV.

For now, we should note at least briefly the background of procession and return in late Neoplatonism, before the Dionysian version. Proclus (A.D. 410–485), the eventual successor of Plato in Athens, received and refined this idea from his Neoplatonic predecessors, especially Iamblichus (c. A.D. 250–c. 325) and Syrianus (died c. A.D. 450), who claimed both continuity and some distance from their predecessors Plotinus (A.D. 205–70) and Porphyry (A.D. 232–c. 305). The best direct access to late Neoplatonic procession and return is Proclus's handbook, *Elements of Theology*. Proclus could express the concept quite succinctly at times, as in "Every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and returns to it."³ For the Platonists, there were multiple levels of reality and causation, from the One as supreme cause of all on down to the many in this perceptible world. Each generation of Platonists seemed to add a new intermediary layer serving as a third term between two other levels. Plato himself posited the Ideas or conceptual Forms as mediating between the supreme One and the perceptible many, and also discussed the mediation of a World-Soul and other mediators in his *Timaeus*. Aristotle emphasized the *Nous* or Mind to bridge the same gap. Philo, the Jewish Hellenist (c. 13 B.C.–A.D. 45 or 50), pulled some of this together, saying that the perceptible world presents to us multiple instances of the Ideas which subsist in the *Nous*, or Mind, of God. Each layer of this chain of being, which grew with Plotinus and others to encompass more and more intermediaries, had its own level of causation. It related to the realm below it as cause, and to that above it as caused. Yet everything was linked together, as Proclus says, since "every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it and returns to it."

Borrowed whole from the realm of logic, the language of cause and effect helps us to avoid the evident fallacy of conceiving this theme spatially, even though most authors—ancient and modern—employ the imagery of a procession downward and a return upward. Further, the logical language of cause and effect also lessens the more subtle danger of conceiving procession and return sequentially, as a simple movement in time, even though this temporal compo-

ment is built into the very fabric of human thinking and especially writing, which must proceed in some sequence. But procession is not simply followed by return. These are rather two complementary ways of conceiving the single relationship of an effect to its cause, as simultaneously proceeding from it and yet reverting to it.

Major studies of Proclus, the immediate source of Neoplatonic influence on Dionysius, generally conclude that this conceptual framework provided the overall structure for his philosophy. E. R. Dodds has described it as "the three moments of the Neoplatonic world-process, immanence in the cause, procession from the cause, and reversion to the cause—or identity, difference, and the overcoming of difference by identity. This triad is one of the governing principles of Proclus' dialectic."⁴

Dionysius used the theme of God's procession from unity to plurality to express several points of doctrine. He once described the unity of God as a remaining, and the trinitarian distinctions as processions. He did not use this motif to establish any sense of hierarchy within the Godhead, which would have involved Arian subordinationism. Nor did he engage in any specification of remaining, procession, and return as pertaining respectively to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. For Dionysius it is the entire triune Godhead that remains, proceeds, and returns. He also applied this theme to the subject of creation. The existence of all things resulted from the same procession or outpouring of God's creative goodness. Naturally, the doctrine of the incarnation could also be presented in terms of God's procession downward. The reversion or return could also be appropriated into the Areopagite's theological categories, since the Deity returns the world's divided plurality to a whole oneness and toward a oneness with its divine Self. Dionysius and others after him connected this return very closely with salvation itself.

But such uses of the Neoplatonic construct of procession and return were not the Areopagite's primary appropriations of this theme. Those examples are all in the realm of objective reality (the being of God, creation, incarnation, salvation), which should be distinguished from the subjective or cognitive processes of revelation and spiritual knowledge. The latter arena was the primary context for Dionysian procession and return. Preferring subjective or cognitive epistemology to objective or metaphysical ontology, as one might summarize a modern study, the author adapted this entire motif to the way God's revelation reaches us and uplifts us.⁵ Of course, such uplifting is ultimately related to salvation, but the starting point for all this is the Dionysian doctrine of revelation.

In chapter 1 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius clarifies his opening reference to procession and return by discussing God's outpouring of light, to which our eyes are uplifted and returned (120B, 145). The very next paragraph explicitly employs the concept and the spatial imagery of remaining, proces-

sion, and return to express the Dionysian view of God's self-revelation and its effect on those so enlightened by the divine ray.

Of course this ray never abandons its own proper nature, or its own interior unity. Even though it works itself outward to multiplicity and proceeds outside of itself as befits its generosity, doing so to lift upward and to unify those beings for which it has a providential responsibility, nevertheless it remains inherently stable and it is forever one with its own unchanging identity. And it grants to creatures the power to rise up, so far as they may, toward itself and it unifies them by way of its own simplified unity. However, this divine ray can enlighten us only by being upliftingly concealed in a variety of sacred veils which the Providence of the Father adapts to our nature as human beings. (121B, 146)

Dionysius is here discussing God's self-revelation in terms of a divine descent down to our level, in order to return or uplift us.

But what are these "sacred veils" so providentially adapted to our nature as human beings in the created realm of time and space? And what can it mean that the divine ray is "upliftingly concealed" in these veils? The veils, or "material means capable of guiding us" (121D, 146), are immediately identified as, among other things, the beautiful sights, odors, lights, examples, and Communion itself in the Eucharist (124A, 146). Besides this, God has revealed the angelic hierarchy to us "through the sacred pictures of the scriptures so that he might lift us in spirit up through the perceptible to conceptual, from the sacred shapes and symbols to the simple peaks of the hierarchies of heaven" (124A, 147). The primary tasks of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* are to identify this "variety of sacred veils" in the scriptures and the liturgy, and to elaborate on their anagogical, or uplifting, interpretation. With this introduction to both hierarchies and to both interpretive treatises, the first chapter gives way to a sustained discussion of hermeneutical method.

Chapter 2

That divine and heavenly things are appropriately revealed even through dissimilar symbols

The second chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy* is a sustained methodological argument for the use of symbols in depicting the angels and God.⁶ It is especially concerned to justify those symbols that may seem most incongruous and insulting to the heavenly beings. Like a patient master introducing a complex topic, Dionysius first ponders with the reader the responses one might have to such incongruous depictions. Of course we cannot actually think, he says, that the angels really do look like oxen or lions or eagles, or that they have multiple

faces or carry spears or ride horses (137A, 147–48). Rather, this imagery has an anagogical purpose in that “it uses scriptural passages in an uplifting fashion as a way, provided for us from the first, to uplift our mind in a manner suitable to our nature” (137B, 148).

Thus we should not be critical of the scripture writers for using such incongruous imagery, as though they should have used nobler language. All things have a providential purpose, especially the Bible’s dissimilar similarities (137D, 148). This odd expression, an oxymoron, is at the heart of Dionysian hermeneutics, and will be explained in this chapter.

Now there are two reasons for creating types for the typeless, for giving shape to what is actually without shape. First, we lack the ability to be directly raised up to conceptual contemplations. We need our own upliftings that come naturally to us and which can raise before us the permitted forms of the marvelous and unformed sights. Second, it is most fitting to the mysterious passages of scripture that the sacred and hidden truth about the celestial intelligences be concealed through the inexpressible and the sacred and be inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*. (140A, 149).

The symbols have a double rationale: to reveal and to conceal, to accommodate revelation to the capacities of the receivers and to keep it secret from the outsiders. In using perceptible symbols, revelation is accommodated to the cognitive abilities of the faithful, who are restricted to the perceptible dimensions of space and time as the starting points for spiritual knowledge. To the initiated, the symbols serve as the very guide and way in, or up, to their interpretation. But to the uninitiated, the absurd exterior of the symbolic (as previewed in *Letter 9*) blocks their entrance to the inner meanings. They may find the absurd symbols laughable, which means that the perceptible exterior has accomplished its task of concealment. Thus the need for “scriptural imagery” and “humble forms to represent the divine and holy ranks” (140B, 149) is not only for accommodation to the faithful but also for concealment from the profane.

Here Dionysius provides a compact discussion of revelation’s double way of describing divine things. The Bible has some designations or names for God which seem straightforwardly accurate: word, mind, being, light, and life. Yet these affirmations, while conveying some accurate information about God, cannot be simply accepted as fully capturing the transcendent Deity, for it is “far beyond every manifestation of being and of life, . . . light, . . . reason or intelligence” (140C, 149). Thus, the other side of the coin is “the scriptural device of praising the deity by presenting it in utterly dissimilar revelations. He is described as invisible, infinite, ungraspable, and other things which show not what he is but what in fact he is not” (140D, 149f.).

The entire subject of negations and apophatic theology (theology that proceeds by denial) has been introduced here, not as an abstract theological method

but in the context of biblical exegesis. Dionysius goes on to present what he considers to be the scriptural doctrine of God: "God is in no way like the things that have being and we have no knowledge at all of his incomprehensible and ineffable transcendence and invisibility" (141A, 150). It is the use of negations, demanded by the transcendence of God beyond all our concepts, which explains the scriptural *dissimilarities*. This combination of negation and dissimilarity is complex and thus requires careful explication:

Since the way of negation appears to be more suitable to the realm of the divine and since positive affirmations are always unfitting to the hiddenness of the inexpressible, a manifestation through dissimilar shapes is more correctly to be applied to the invisible. So it is that scriptural writings, far from demeaning the ranks of heaven, actually pay them honor by describing them with dissimilar shapes so completely at variance with what they really are that we come to discover how those ranks, so far removed from us, transcend all materiality. (141A, 150).

In other words, similarities or affirmations about divine beings could deceive us into taking them at face value, for example, that the angels really are "golden or gleaming men, etc." But these verses are not understood rightly if the anthropomorphic symbolism is taken literally: "It was to avoid this kind of misunderstanding among those incapable of rising above visible beauty that the pious theologians so wisely and upliftingly stooped to incongruous dissimilarities" (141B, 150). The scriptures stoop to lowly images in order to uplift us: "Incongruities are more suitable for lifting our minds up into the domain of the spiritual than similarities are" (141B, 150). The extremely gross or crass descriptions of the angels or God could hardly be mistaken for literal truth, even by an inexperienced interpreter: "Indeed the sheer crassness of the signs is a goad so that even the materially inclined cannot accept that it could be permitted or true that the celestial and divine sights could be conveyed by such shameful things" (141B, 150).

One must learn how to interpret the dissimilar similarities (141C, 151), how to transfer attributes such as anger or desire from the lower realm of the senses up to the higher heavenly realm. Without such a hermeneutical transfer, attributes such as ignorance would be completely inappropriate to the celestial domain and would remain as an incomprehensible dissimilarity until they prodded the reader into interpretation. Once the exegetical adjustment between the two realms is made, then the attribute of ignorance, for example, can be properly understood and reveal something about the angels after all:

What we call lack of intelligence and lack of perception in animals and in objects is in fact the deficiency of reason and of perception. But when we are talking of immaterial and intelligent beings we say this, as befits holy beings. They, as transcendent beings, far surpass our discursive and bodily

reason, just as material perception is something far beneath those entities which are intelligent and disembodied. (144B, 151)

With this sort of adjustment in mind, the scriptures can use all manner of lowly, material, bestial, and quite shocking symbols for heavenly beings. Properly understood, even physical matter itself is related to the divine and can help lift us up. Dionysius sums up his methodological advice: "Of course one must be careful to use the similarities as dissimilarities, as discussed, to avoid one-to-one correspondences, to make the appropriate adjustment as one remembers the great divide between the intelligible and the perceptible" (144C, 152).

At this point some very important examples are introduced, confirming the impression that this method is to be applied not only to scriptural statements about the angels but also to all our knowledge about God. When it comes to describing God, the scriptures sometimes use lofty language like "son of righteousness," sometimes intermediate imagery like fire, and even material forms like a stone, animals, or—"lowliest of all"—a worm. The examples are not interpreted here. They simply illustrate the continuum of biblical symbolism for God, from sublime heights to degrading depths. Yet the continuum is a single one, not a division into the dissimilar versus the similar. Because they consist of exterior form and interior meaning, all symbols balance incongruity and insight. Even the loftiest of them falls short of literal truth and even the lowliest contains some measure of accuracy, once properly interpreted. Even the worm, points out a Scholiast, resembles Christ in an apparently spontaneous generation "without seed" from the virgin earth (*Scholia*, 48A). Despite first impressions, all images are both similar and dissimilar. They all invite that careful combination of affirmation and negation that itself constitutes the uplifting process of interpretation. The simultaneity of similarity and dissimilarity, of affirmation and negation, is clearly stated in *The Divine Names*:

For the very same things are both similar and dissimilar to God. They are similar to him to the extent that they share what cannot be shared. They are dissimilar to him in that as effects they fall so very far short of their Cause and are infinitely and incomparably subordinate to him. (916A, 118)

This entire chapter sets out the Areopagite's method for interpreting the scriptural language for the angels, and for God as well. It is a methodological prologue to the rest of the treatise and to all Dionysian exegesis and reflection on theological language. He has explained his procedure carefully, with examples and occasional repetition. In conclusion, the teacher gives his own testimony:

And I myself might not have been stirred from this difficulty to my current inquiry, to an uplifting through a precise explanation of these sacred truths, had I not been troubled by the deformed imagery used by scripture in regard

to the angels. My mind was not permitted to dwell on imagery so inadequate, but was provoked to get behind the material show, to get accustomed to the idea of going beyond appearances to those upliftings which are not of this world. (145B, 153)

Perhaps this comment is genuinely autobiographical information about the real author of the Dionysian writings. It serves no pseudonymous purpose and is consistent with his overall concern to interpret symbols aright. In any case, the author's stated goal is to help the reader get used to the idea of going beyond appearances so that whenever symbols are encountered they may be recognized as such and rightly understood. The pedagogical preference for dissimilar symbols over the more flattering or plausible depictions is clear: the absurdities resist acceptance and demand interpretation, even by the novice. Once the beginners "get accustomed to the idea," they can move on to the less startling images and even to the more becoming ones and yet not succumb to their exterior charms by taking them literally. The interpreter then needs no more reminders about dissimilarities and negations, but simply incorporates this awareness into the exegesis of scriptural symbols. The chapter concludes with a final reminder of the double rationale for such unlikely imagery, namely, to conceal divine truths from the uninformed and to reveal them to the initiated. After a general discussion of hierarchy and the ranks of angels, these principles will be applied to the numerous biblical symbols for the angels.

Chapter 3

What a hierarchy is and what its benefit is

The third chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy* begins with a capsule description of hierarchy in general, whether angelic or human: "a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as close as possible to the divine" (164D, 153). This threefold definition of hierarchy as order, understanding, and activity could and does serve as the organizing principle for a comprehensive treatment of the hierarchical structure of the Dionysian universe. In his landmark study, *L'univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon pseudo-Denys*, René Roques invoked this passage and definition (his page 30) to present the Dionysian hierarchies. He systematically treated the proper *order* that regulates the various hierarchical ranks, the *understanding* that they convey from their superiors to their subordinates, and their *activity* of purifying, illuminating, and perfecting. Although this format works very well in an encyclopedic treatment like Roques's, it is not a structure that Dionysius himself uses in such a systematic way.

It is the ending of the description ("approximating as close as possible to the divine") that leads to the Areopagite's fuller presentation of what a hierarchy is and does. It is "uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it" (164D, 153). As seen in the heavenly and the human hierarchies, God grants enlightenment that is passed on down these ranks, precisely in order to uplift them all to the imitation of God, and indeed to union with God: "The goal of a hierarchy, then, is to enable beings to be as like as possible to God and to be at one with him" (165A, 154). The entire purpose of the arrangement called hierarchy is to enable the imitation of God and conformity to God. "Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God" (165A, 154). For every rank and member of the hierarchy, "perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God as far as possible" (165B, 154). This definition of a hierarchy as enabling the imitation of God presupposes a doctrine of God, or at least some stated attributes or activities of God, that are imitated by the hierarchy and its members. Dionysius presents it in terms of three powers or activities: "Therefore when the hierarchic order lays it on some to be purified and on others to do the purifying, on some to receive illumination and on others to cause illumination, on some to be perfected and on others to bring about perfection, each will actually imitate God in the way suitable to whatever role it has" (165BC, 154).

Here the author introduces a fundamental triad of divine actions—purification, illumination, and perfection—and yet he characteristically insists that God transcends this description as well. The beatitude of God "is purifying, illuminating, and perfecting; or rather it is itself purification, illumination, and perfection. It is beyond purification; it is beyond light; it is the very source of perfection which is more than perfect. It is also the cause of every hierarchy and yet it surpasses by far every sacred thing" (165C, 155).

The three activities of purifying, illuminating, and perfecting are primarily God's activities. The Divinity first purifies, then illuminates, then perfects, as the author repeats much later (508D. 239). God does these things by means of the hierarchies, and they, correspondingly, perform their purification, illumination, and perfection in imitation of the divine, indeed as an extension of the divine activity. Nevertheless, since the divine transcendence is ever beyond our categories, God is "beyond purification, beyond light, the very source of perfection which is more than perfect." In complete harmony with the method laid out in the previous chapter, a hierarchy is both similar and dissimilar to God, similar in that it shares this trio of powers, dissimilar to God in that as an effect it falls incomparably short of its cause.

From the immediate context and from later passages, it is obvious that the discussion in this chapter applies to both the heavenly and the human hierarchies. The human hierarchy of sacraments, clergy, and laity receives its systematic presentation in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* in the same terms of purification,

illumination, and perfection. Both realms, the celestial and the ecclesiastical, reflect the divine activity along these lines. The application of these three ways or powers to both hierarchies now becomes a major theme for Dionysius. Ever true to his pseudonymous identity as the predecessor of the fathers, he must show no debts to them in using this triplex concept. Indeed, he must feign originality. Nevertheless, the pattern of purification, illumination, and perfection was already well established in the works of Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 394). Its earlier history may involve Origen's adaptation of some Stoic or Middle Platonic language.⁷

Nevertheless, there is something original about Dionysius's systematic application of this triad to define so much of heaven and earth, and in his particular understanding of it. The subsequent, medieval history of the three ways of purification (or purgation), illumination (or contemplation), and perfection (or union) claimed a continuity with the Dionysian presentation, but actually differed from it at a crucial point. Unlike the medieval framework, the Dionysian trio is *not* a moral purification as distinguished from an intellectual illumination and a final mystical perfection. For the Areopagite, as this chapter begins to explain, all three powers concern spiritual knowledge or understanding. Purification can apply to the angels in that they are purified not from any moral flaw but from relative ignorance, as discussed more thoroughly later (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 6, 537AB, 248). Illumination is a matter of an uplifting, contemplative understanding. Similarly, perfection is a continuation of this cognitive theme as it results in "a perfected understanding, . . . an understanding of the sacred things so reverently beheld" (168A, 155). As introduced here early in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, this trio of powers becomes central to subsequent discussions, especially of the angelic beings in chapter 7 of the same treatise and of the human hierarchy in chapter 5 of the following treatise, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

Thus *The Celestial Hierarchy*'s first three chapters serve as a preface to both the rest of the treatise and to *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. These chapters introduce material that forms the foundation of the heavenly and the human hierarchies: procession and return, a method for interpreting material symbols, and a functional definition of hierarchy as imitating God's own activity of purification, illumination, and perfection. The introductory material on both hierarchies concludes,

And so it comes about that every order in the hierarchical rank is uplifted as best it can toward cooperation with God. By grace and a God-given power, it does things which belong naturally and supernaturally to God, things performed by him transcendentally and revealed in the hierarchy for the permitted imitation of God-loving minds. (168A, 155)

The author can now turn to the more specific discussion of the angelic beings, their names, ranks, and biblical descriptions.

PRESENTATION OF THE HEAVENLY HIERARCHY: CHAPTERS 4 THROUGH 10

Chapter 4

What the designation "angel" signifies

In this chapter, Dionysius begins his specific discussions of the angelic hierarchy. He first presents the basic material, then considers some specific problems, and then ends the treatise with his interpretation of their depictions in the scriptures, "so that we may be uplifted by way of these mysterious representations to their divine simplicity" (177C, 156).

His basic statement is that all things relate to God as their creator. Everything that exists has this link to the very source of existence. Further, that which does not merely exist but also possesses the higher property of life also relates to God as the source of life. Still further, some of those living things have the yet higher properties of reason and intelligence, and thus relate to God as the source of their reason and intelligence as well: "And, clearly, these latter beings are nearer to God, since their participation in him takes so many forms" (177D, 156). In other words, just as human beings surpass other living things and all inanimate objects as closer to God in that they partake of more divine attributes (not only being, but also life and reason), so also the angelic heavenly beings are superior to the human in that they have a fuller participation in the divine enlightenment, "because, ordered by such enlightenment, theirs is a life of total intelligence" (180A, 157). They have the nearest and fullest participation in the divine, and they in turn pass it down as messengers.

The designation messenger or announcer is, of course, the very word under discussion in this chapter, namely, *angel*. Dionysius investigated not only the divine names in the treatise known by that title, but also the name angel and each of the specific names for heavenly beings, such as seraphim, to be treated in turn. First, he explains the generic title of angel: "That is why they have a preeminent right to the title of angel or messenger, since it is they who first are granted the divine enlightenment and it is they who pass on to us these revelations which are so far beyond us. Indeed the Word of God teaches us that the Law was given to us by the angels" (180B, 157). The English phrase "word of God" here translates the Greek term *theologia*, illustrating again the author's consistent use of the word *theology* to mean not simply words about God, but rather God's Word, in the scriptures. In this case, the texts that document that the law was given by angels are the New Testament traces of rabbinic tradition in Acts 7:38 and 53, Galatians 3:19, and Hebrews 2:2.

The point here is that revelation about God and divine things is mediated or announced through the heavenly beings, which is why they are called angels. God gave certain visions of the divine presence and the divine law to Moses, not directly but through the mediation of angels: "Yet theology quite clearly

teaches that these ordinances were mediated to us by angels so that God's order might show us how it is that secondary beings are uplifted through the primary beings" (181A, 157–58). This hierarchical order of the primary beings who grant revelation to the secondary ones and thereby uplift them applies to the relationship of the angels to humanity in general. The chapter gives examples of Gabriel and other angels revealing things to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. It also applies to the angels' relationship to Jesus in his humanity (a passage appreciated by the Chalcedonian scholiasts [57BC]), for they assisted and strengthened him, according to Matthew 4:11 and Luke 22:43. But the principle of primary and secondary beings also applies *within* the angelic hierarchy, which is crucial for understanding the discussions to follow.

Not all celestial beings are equally close to God. There is an angelic, or announcing, function within their hierarchy, as the primary ones pass on revelation to the intermediaries and they to the lowest strata of angels, who in turn announce it to humans: "Those closer to God should be the initiators of those less close by guiding them to the divine access, enlightenment, and communion" (181A, 158). By means of this principle (that is, that even celestial beings need a mediated revelation of God), Dionysius is poised to explain in subsequent chapters the relationships of the various heavenly orders to each other. But first, the angelic function of announcing serves not only to distinguish them one from another but also to define what they all have in common.

Chapter 5

Why the heavenly beings are all called "angel" in common

Continuing its preliminary comments on the heavenly hierarchy, the treatise next explains how the word *angel* can apply both to a specific rank of heavenly beings and also to all of them in general. To explain this, Dionysius invokes not simply the grammatical convention of a term's generic and specific meanings, but also the hierarchical principle that higher beings always have in themselves all of the powers and attributes of the lower beings: "Now in every sacred rank the higher orders have all the illuminations and powers of those below them and the subordinate have none of those possessed by their superiors" (196C, 159). Since angel is the specific term for the lowest rank of heavenly beings, all of those above this rank could also be called angels, since they too possess the common function of announcing along with their own specific and higher powers: "Theologians give the name *angel* also to the highest and holiest orders of the heavenly beings by virtue of the fact that they too make known the enlightenment proceeding from the Deity" (196C, 159). Yet the reverse cannot be true. The lower angels cannot be called seraphim or thrones, since they do not have the powers of their superiors.

The principle that the higher orders possess the powers of the lower, but

not vice versa, is a simple hierarchical rule requiring little argument. This use of the name *angel* is not one of the exceptions or difficulties needing special explanation (which come later), but rather a straightforward application of a standard feature in the hierarchical universe. The same rule will be smoothly applied to the human hierarchy, where the hierarch's powers include those of the subordinate priests and deacons, and where the sacramental power of perfection embraces the lesser powers of illumination and purification, but not vice versa. This principle is necessary to preserve ecclesiastical and celestial order so that this hierarchical structure can perform its uplifting function: "Just as this order [the angels] lifts our own inspired hierarchs up toward whatever light of God is known to it, so the sacred power of the highest beings lifts up the subordinate members of the angelic hierarchy toward the divine" (196C, 159—60). Although further explanation of this uplifting is postponed, the author immediately introduces how the various ranks of celestial beings are defined and named. He had previously mentioned principalities and thrones and seraphim in passing, but now begins his systematic treatment.

Chapter 6

What is the first rank of the heavenly beings, what is the middle, and what is the last?

According to the author's own hierarchical principles of mediated revelation, all that we in the lower human hierarchy are able to know of the higher angelic realms is what has been revealed to us through them, in the scriptures: "We can know only what the Deity has mysteriously granted to us through them" (200C, 160). "Having nothing of my own to say about all this," Dionysius begins with the "nine explanatory designations" for the angels in the scriptures (200D, 160).

While it is true that there are nine names for celestial figures found in the scriptures, as enumerated below, the biblical presentation is not at all systematic and does little or nothing to explain the relationships of these beings to each other. Nor does the scriptural revelation explicitly specify the number of angelic ranks as nine, much less as three triads. This structure for arranging them was original with Dionysius and then definitive for the later tradition of medieval angelology. But, to compound matters, Dionysius credited the structure not to Paul's "third heaven,"⁸ but to another source: "my own sacred-initiator has divided these into three threefold groups" (200D, 160).

Before enumerating the three threefold groups of angels, we must pause to identify the author's "own sacred-initiator" as one Hierotheus. Several times in his writings Dionysius acknowledges a teacher and "illustrious leader" named Hierotheus, who is usually credited with transmitting some special portion of the unwritten tradition, such as this triple triad of angels. Hierotheus is a cen-

tral figure in portions of *The Divine Names* (648C, 65; 681AB, 69; and 713AB, 83), which present him more fully. In the Pseudo-Areopagite's fiction, Hierotheus stands between Paul and Dionysius, but in reality he may be a thinly veiled allusion to someone who did actually influence the real author. This influence may be related to Neoplatonism, since Dionysius says (648A, 65; 681A, 69) that Hierotheus wrote a work called the *Elements of Theology*, which is the name of a standard work by Proclus. Furthermore, the items of the tradition that Dionysius credits to Hierotheus are often expressed in language borrowed from Neoplatonism, including this triadic arrangement of three threefold groups. Neoplatonists like Proclus or Iamblichus promoted numerous mean terms between extremes, creating triads to link together various levels of reality, as already introduced. Dionysius embraced this triadic framework as a principle throughout his hierarchical structure. When squared, so to speak, as a *triple* triad, it was a convenient and consistent way to present the nine scriptural categories of angelic beings.

The first triad of celestial beings is immediately around God "in a proximity enjoyed by no other" (201A, 161). This, according to Hierotheus and Dionysius, is the trio of "thrones, cherubim, and seraphim." "No other is more like the divine or receives more directly the first enlightenment from the Deity" (201A, 161). This triad is the first around God, and the first now to be presented more thoroughly, in chapter 7: "The second group, [Hierotheus] says, is made of 'authorities,' 'dominions,' and 'powers.' And the third, at the end of the heavenly hierarchies, is the group of 'angels,' 'archangels,' and 'principalities'" (201A, 161). These two triads will be the respective subjects of chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 7

Concerning the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones, and theirs, the first hierarchy

As already implied by the phrase "nine explanatory designations" (200D, 160), the names used for these ranks of angels are themselves revealing. The author's assumption that names are worthy of exegetical effort now becomes explicit: "The designations given to these heavenly intelligences signify the mode in which they take on the imprint of God" (205B, 161). The author who carefully chose the name Dionysius begins his every presentation of a celestial rank by discussing the meaning of its name. In this case, "those with a knowledge of Hebrew are aware of the fact that the holy name 'seraphim' means 'fire-makers,' that is to say, 'carriers of warmth.' The name 'cherubim' means 'fullness of knowledge' or 'outpouring of wisdom'" (205B, 161). Here and elsewhere, the seraphim are presented in terms of fire: warm and bright, uplifting and purifying, banishing every shadow (205C, 162). They are discussed more fully

at the end of the treatise, and in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, where the twelve-fold covering symbolizes the two six-winged seraphim (408BC, 229–30).

The cherubim are known in terms of an overflowing or outpouring of knowledge or wisdom, “the power . . . to be filled with the gifts that bring wisdom and to share these generously with subordinates as part of a beneficent outpouring of wisdom” (205C, 162). The interpretations of the names of the seraphim and the cherubim rely on second-hand etymology, since Dionysius presents himself as ignorant of Hebrew, and indeed shows no awareness that “seraphim” is a plural form. (See the blatant examples of “a seraphim” in chapter 13 and the commentary at that point.) But the name thrones conveys a clear meaning in his own language. Like a literal throne or royal seat, an angelic being with the name throne (Colossians 1:16) is elevated above this world, aimed further upward, and in intimate proximity to the seat of the Most High—no disrespect intended. The thrones are “utterly available to receive the divine visitation, they bear God and are ever open, like servants, to welcome God” (205D, 162).

With this inventive explanation of their names, Dionysius goes on to discuss the thrones in terms of purification, illumination (contemplation), and perfection: “The task of every hierarchy is to receive and to pass on undiluted purification, the divine light, and the understanding which brings perfection” (208A, 162). In presenting these heavenly beings as pure, contemplative, and perfect, Dionysius must distinguish between the way such categories apply to angels and the way they apply to humans. First, angels are pure not because they are free of any earthly tarnish, which is obviously out of the question, but because they transcend any weakness. They are purified, it turns out, “of ignorance” (209C, 165; 537B, 248–49). Second, the highest of angelic beings are contemplative, not because they contemplate perceptible symbols as we do, but because they are filled with a superior light, a transcendent and luminous contemplation and communion with Jesus, who makes a sudden appearance in the discussion. Third, they are perfect, not because of an enlightened understanding in the human sense, but “rather because of a primary and supreme deification, a transcendent and angelic understanding of God’s work” (208C, 164). Note how the contrast with humanity provides a preview of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* with regard to human purification, contemplation, and perfection.

This triad of heavenly beings is nearest to God, not in terms of physical proximity, but in terms of the capacity to receive more of God’s presence and to pass it on (as *Letter 8* put it; 1092B, 274). Yet even they can grow in their enlightenment concerning God, as Dionysius attempts to document with some dubious but traditional exegesis of Isaiah 63:1–2 (209B, 164). The entire pattern of purification, illumination, and perfection is here consistently presented in terms of spiritual knowledge:

In summary, we can reasonably say that purification, illumination, and perfection are all three the reception of an understanding of the Godhead, namely, being completely purified of ignorance by the proportionately granted knowl-

edge of the more perfect initiations, being illuminated by this same divine knowledge (through which it also purifies whatever was not previously beheld but is now revealed through the more lofty enlightenment), and being also perfected by this light in the understanding of the most lustrous initiations. (209CD, 165)

The three ways, or three powers, as successive states of spiritual insight will also apply, with some adjustments, to the human hierarchy.

As those in immediate proximity to God and thus possessing supreme knowledge of God, this first group of celestial leaders has transmitted some of this knowledge down through hierarchical channels even to us. Some of this transmitted knowledge is available in the sacred hymns ascribed to them by the scriptures. The Areopagite says that he has already explicated such songs as “Holy, Holy, Holy” in his book *Divine Hymns*, which is either lost or entirely fictitious. To close the present chapter, he summarizes the function and content of such hymns. Their function is entirely consistent with the overall procedure for hierarchical revelation: “When the first rank has directly and properly received its due understanding of God’s Word from the divine goodness itself, then it passes this on, as befits a benevolent hierarchy, to those next in line” (212B, 166). Their content reveals God as a monad, as “one in three persons,” and as providentially concerned for everything from the loftiest angel to the lowliest creature (212C, 166). Dionysius may present this as a summary of a lost book, but it functions for us as a glimpse ahead into the doctrine of God presented in *The Divine Names*. For now, however, the second triad of celestial figures occupies his attention.

Chapter 8

Concerning the dominions, powers, and authorities, and theirs, the middle hierarchy

The exposition of the middle triad of dominions, powers, and authorities also begins with their names, since these designations indicate how they imitate and conform to God. The name dominion reveals to Dionysius an uplifting freedom, yet without any harsh domination that would create slaves. “As for the holy ‘powers,’ the title refers to a kind of masculine and unshakable courage in all their godlike activities” (237D, 167). This powerful courage allows a power to look without flinching toward the source of all power, “and at the same time, it transmits to its own inferiors its dynamic and divinizing power” (240A, 167). The holy authorities are not tyrants, for they benevolently help those below them.

In explaining and distinguishing most of the heavenly ranks, especially these three, the author has little or no scriptural content to work with, but only the biblical names and his own inventiveness in etymological wordplays. Witness one example among many—his final sentence on the authorities: “They are

likened, insofar as they can be, to that authority which is the source of all authority and creates all authority; and they make that authority evident, to the extent that angels can, in their harmonious orders of authoritative power" (240B, 167). Except for specific passages about seraphim and angels, the Bible provided Dionysius with very little beyond some scattered names for celestial beings. His own creativity made the most of these names, however, and also created a tightly organized system out of unconnected references to them.

The middle triad of heavenly minds illustrates quite graphically the mediating function of every order, since it mediates between the highest and the lowest ranks of angels. It receives what it has from the first triad and passes it on to the lower, even though each step brings diminution because of the growing distance from the source. Yet the lower is thereby uplifted to the higher. Hence, "the first intelligences perfect, illuminate, and purify those of inferior status in such a fashion that the latter, having been lifted up through them to the universal and transcendent source, thereby acquire their due share of the purification, illumination, and perfection of the One who is the source of all perfection" (240CD, 168).

To illustrate his point about mediation within the heavenly hierarchy, even before the divine revelation ever reaches the human realm, the Areopagite presents several biblical examples. The vision in Zechariah 1 was a message from God, but one that was mediated through an angel of the first rank, who in turn conveyed it to an angel of an inferior rank, who then talked with Zechariah (241A, 168). Similarly, Dionysius read Ezekiel 9 to mean that the angel in the cloak was lower than the cherubim, and passed on the divine message to those lower still, who executed the orders among Jerusalem's residents (241B, 169).

Other equally ambiguous examples are given to document "the divine and harmonious arrangement befitting the heavenly hierarchy" that our own hierarchy tries to imitate in order to be uplifted to the source of all order and hierarchy (241C, 169).

Chapter 9

Concerning the principalities, archangels, and angels, and theirs, the final hierarchy

Like the previous two chapters, this treatment of the lowest triad of celestial orders begins with their names. Since angel and therefore its cognate, archangel, have already been treated, this discussion is confined to principalities. The Dionysian delight in puns and wordplays here reaches a high point, at least in sheer density. The stem *princ-* leads the punster into a crowded courtyard of princes, principles, and the Principle of principles (257B, 170).

The holy archangels stand between the principalities and the angels, "as a mean between extremes" (257C, 170). Although this bit of Neoplatonic method is presupposed throughout, and although Dionysius here claims that each hier-

archy has its first, middle, and last powers, the function of mediation within a triad was not applied to the first two triads of angelic beings discussed above. That is, within the first triad (seraphim, cherubim, and thrones), Dionysius did not propose an internal order regarding first, middle, and last. Similarly, the dominions, powers, and authorities were simply grouped together without any explicit ranking or discussion of their order or interrelationship. In both cases, these triads were presented in a particular order, that given here, but the order has not been justified or even discussed so far, although it is clear later that the powers are above the authorities (284C, 174).

But when we encounter the last triad, we find it arranged internally according to an order explicitly discussed. The three threefold groups that constitute the heavenly hierarchy and thus mediate between the Deity and humanity may be summarized as follows:

First	{ seraphim cherubim thrones }	(chapter 7)
Second	{ dominions powers authorities }	(chapter 8)
Third	{ principalities archangels angels }	(chapter 9)

The archangels generously announce to the angels the enlightenment they have received from the first powers, and then through the angels they announce it to us (257D, 170). The angels (using that name now in the narrow sense of only the lowest rank) are the point of contact with humanity when it comes to the mediated revelation. This is “so that the uplifting and return toward God, and communion and union, might occur according to proper order” (260B, 171). It is the angels who relate directly to humanity, as Michael, for example, relates to Israel, and other angels to other nations, according to the Dionysian interpretation of Daniel 10 and other texts. The author understands Deuteronomy 32:8 (“the Most High has established the boundaries of the nations by the number of his angels”) to mean a one-to-one linkage of nations and angels.

But why, one might ask, were only the Hebrews under Michael lifted up to the divine light if all nations had their own angelic connection? The answer is that the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the others used their free will to reject the angelic transmission of divine light: “The single Providence of the Most High for all commanded angels to bring all peoples to salvation, but it was Israel alone which returned to the Light and proclaimed the true Lord” (261C, 172).

Although he has reached the human end of the celestial hierarchy, Dionysius postpones his full discussion of this point of contact with humanity and the

angels' role in "the uplifting and the return toward God, and the communion and the union," until the human hierarchy itself is considered. There is yet more to be said of the heavenly ranks beyond this sketch of their three threefold groups.

Chapter 10

Repetition and Conclusion regarding the angels' coordination

The Areopagite summarizes chapters 4 to 9 by first repeating his description of the highest rank and its unmediated proximity to the divine source. He goes on: "Then by this rank the second one, and by the second the third, and by the third our hierarchy is hierarchically uplifted, in due proportion and divine concord and according to this regulation of the harmonious source of order, toward that source beyond every source and consummation of all harmony" (273A, 173). Thus we come to the purpose of these interlocking layers of the celestial gallery. They each serve to uplift the one below, in order to reach down and uplift the human hierarchy, which has its own layers and good order, "For the transcendent harmony of all the world has providentially looked after every being endowed with reason and intelligence and has ensured that they are rightly ordered and sacredly uplifted" (273A, 173). This entire discussion leads repeatedly to the impact of the heavenly hierarchy upon the human, but it stops short of presenting it in this treatise. The celestial arrangement is a strict system of mediation that enables and models an orderly mediation in the human sphere, as will be presented in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. The concluding description applies equally to the heavenly and the human domains: "It is in accordance with this arrangement that each intelligent entity—as far as he properly can and to the extent that he may—participates in that purification beyond purity, that superabundant light, that perfection preceding all perfection" (273C, 174).

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS: CHAPTERS 11 THROUGH 14

Chapter 11

Why all heavenly beings are called "heavenly powers" in common

Following his schematic presentation of the three threefold groups, the author tackles some apparent discrepancies or difficulties in reconciling this system with the biblical record. First is the practice of giving the name heavenly powers (or hosts, as in Psalm 24:10 or 46:11) to all the angelic beings, even

though it is also a specific name for one particular order, as discussed in chapter 8. This practice is completely different from calling all the heavenly beings angels since it is in the nature of a hierarchy that the superiors all contain in themselves the powers of the inferior ranks, and thus could all be called by the lowest name. But the powers were identified as an intermediary rank. How, then, could the lower orders of angels, archangels, and principalities ever be called powers without confusing the attributes peculiar to each rank? Never at a loss, at least for the questions he poses to himself, Dionysius has a ready answer:

There is within all divine minds the threefold distinction between being, power, and activity. Now suppose that we loosely describe some or all of them as "heavenly beings" or "heavenly powers," it must be recognized that in talking of beings and powers we are engaging in circumlocution, because of the being or power that is in each one. (284D–285A, 175).

Here a Neoplatonic distinction within each mind enables a different, generic use of the name power to be applied to each heavenly intelligence, just as they are all called beings because they each have existence or being. This distinction means that the word *power* is used in two ways, to designate a particular rank, and to indicate a component of each mind. Calling all the angels powers in the latter sense does not violate the fundamental principle of hierarchical order, namely, that inferior ranks participate only partially in what superior ranks enjoy in full, lest confusion reign.

Chapter 12

Why human hierarchs are called "angels"

This chapter poses a second exegetical difficulty, one related to the first and to the overall question of proper order within a hierarchy, that is, "If the last ones do not partake in what is available to the higher, why is it that our human hierarch is designated in scripture as "angel of the all-powerful Lord?" (292C, 175) The naming of a human leader as an angel "does not actually contradict what has been said already" (292C, 175) because the lower orders do have a lesser share of the powers enjoyed in full by their seniors. For example, the cherubim have full wisdom and knowledge, while their subordinates have partial wisdom and knowledge. Thus, certain humans could be called angels in that they have a smaller share in the angelic attribute of announcing something to a yet lower order. A hierarch, at the pinnacle of the human order, could qualify in this respect, "for it is characteristic of him that like the angels he is, to the extent of which he is capable, a messenger and that he is raised up to imitate, so far as a man may, the angelic power to bring revelation" (293A, 176). This principle can also apply to the practice of calling gods not only the

superior angels but even certain exceptional humans, in that they are returned upward to imitation and union with God, who of course remains utterly transcendent.

Chapter 13

Why the prophet Isaiah is said to have been purified by the seraphim

The first two difficulties were simple ones, and indicate the author's concern to clarify any potential ambiguities regarding proper order within the hierarchy. Calling lower angels powers or humans angels might appear to blur the highly structured layers or levels in his system, unless these practices are understood rightly. Chapter 13 continues this concern for hierarchical order, but with a more complicated case, that of Isaiah: "Why is it said that one of the theologians was visited by a seraphim? Someone could well be puzzled by the fact that it was not one of the subordinate angels but someone from among the most senior beings who came to purify the interpreter" (300B, 176). Here the terms *theologian* and *interpreter* both apply to the prophet Isaiah, who was purified by a seraphim in apparent violation of good hierarchical order.

There is an important point here since the author shows no awareness that a single member of the rank of seraphim should be called a seraph, as mentioned above. This might challenge the usual identification of his background as Syrian. Such guesswork about his geographical origin may still be true, in that West Syria was dominated by the Greek language, but no one who knew Syriac itself would mistake the common Semitic form for a plural ending on the Hebrew word *seraphim*. Elsewhere the author refers to others and not himself as "those who know Hebrew" (205B, 161; *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 4, 481C, 230, and 485B, 232).

The real issue here is that a superior celestial being seems to have bypassed all the intermediate ranks in order to visit and purify a human, according to Isaiah 6. This exegetical puzzle receives an extensive discussion, which serves to review what has been said so far in the treatise and to preview some material yet to come. The answer, amid all the review, is that it was not really a seraphim who met Isaiah, but a lower angel in the strict sense. This modest angel becomes invisible in the biblical text because he correctly attributed his power of purification to his superior, the seraphim. The biblical narration condensed the scene so much that it presupposed and therefore left out the rest of the angelic mediation. According to this strained Dionysian interpretation, proper hierarchical order is not here violated, since "the angel who sacredly worked out the purification of the theologian attributed his own purifying understanding and power first to God, as the Cause, and then to the seraphim, as the initial hierarch" (305D, 180).

On his laborious way to this conclusion, Dionysius summarizes quite fully the hierarchical principle that he is here anxious to defend, that of sacred mediation. The light of the sun and the heat of fire both illustrate the transmission of a property from its source through intermediaries that gradually diminish or obscure the original impulse. Nevertheless, whatever light or heat is present in these intermediaries must still be attributed to their original sources and, after them, to the first mediating agents: "Since the secondary beings share in these holy properties through the mediation of the primary beings, they attribute such properties to those primary beings, the ones who, after God, are like hierarchs to them" (304B, 179).

Hierarchs on the human level provide another illustration, which anticipates the presentation of the human hierarchy in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. When the lower orders of deacons or priests engage in their activities of purification or illumination, one can also say that it is the hierarch who is doing this purification or illumination, since he is the source, humanly speaking, for his subordinates. Thus, even as they exercise these powers, the lower clergy should attribute them to the hierarch, just as the angel who purified Isaiah humbly and rightly attributed that power to the seraphim. Indeed this nameless angel was so self-effacing that he disappeared entirely from the biblical record, leaving the misleading impression that a seraphim had bypassed proper order.

While engineering this reconciliation of the scriptural account of Isaiah's vision with his own view of orderly hierarchical mediation, Dionysius previews not only the good order of the human hierarchy, but also some specific descriptions of the seraphim. Their six wings, feet, and faces are given a spiritual interpretation, first here but then more systematically in the book's finale, chapter 15.

Chapter 14

What the traditional number of angels signifies

The final chapter in this section on specific exegetical problems is unlike the first three, in that it does not reconcile a specific biblical passage to the Areopagite's view of orderly mediation. The issue here is simply the received way of numbering the angels as "a thousand times a thousand and ten thousand times ten thousand" (321B, 181). This biblical convention is not an actual figure, explains the author, but rather a poetic and forceful way of saying that their number surpasses our finite abilities: "These numbers, enormous to us, square and multiply themselves and thereby indicate clearly that the ranks of the heavenly beings are innumerable" (312B, 181). Only their own level of understanding, far transcending our physical numbers, can grasp and define them.

THE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ANGELS

Chapter 15

What are the formed images of the angelic powers? the fiery property, the human likeness, the eyes, etcetera

With this, the last chapter, the author finally honors his earlier promise to explain the various picturesque descriptions of the angels found in the scriptures. Early on, chapter 2 presented the hermeneutical methodology for interpreting the kind of dissimilar similarities encountered here at the end of the treatise. Chapter 15 is primarily a long list of brief explanations for the incongruous biblical symbols, as partially named in the editorial title: "eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth, . . . garments, . . . spears, axes, . . . lion, ox, eagle, horse, . . . chariots, wheels, etc." (325D, 182).

The opening paragraph reviews the method which is here put into practice, and presupposes the framework of "procession and return": "We must come down to the plains of distinction and multiplicity, to the many variegated forms and shapes adopted by the angels. Then, once more, we will take off from these images, and will, by retracing, rise up again to the simplicity of the heavenly minds" (328A, 182). The movement down to the dissimilar shapes and then up to their meanings is here presented as the exegete's journey, even though in the larger picture it is God whose accommodating revelation stoops to use these perceptible forms and then returns to the higher conceptual realm, uplifting the interpreter along the way.

The chapter also begins with a complex reminder that the ranks of angels interrelate both as active (regarding their subordinates) and as receptive (from their superiors) and therefore share in the very same attributes, all in due proportion. The first such attribute to be treated is that of fire. The biblical "imagery of fire best expresses the way in which the intelligent beings of heaven are like the Deity" (329A, 183). The transcendent God is portrayed as fiery because fire symbolizes God's ubiquity, transcendence, hiddenness, illumination, power, warmth, penetration, elevation, independence, and greatness: "It is dynamic, powerful, invisibly present in everything" (329B, 184). As imitators of the divine, therefore, the angels can also be depicted in terms of fire and its attributes, as "images drawn from perceived things" (329C, 184).

The realm of the perceptible provides many other images that the scriptures ascribe to the angels, such as the human form itself. Humanity's intelligence, upright stature, and freedom all symbolize celestial attributes. This section considers the physical senses, such as sight or smell, and some physical features, such as teeth and hands. For example, "touch is understanding how to distinguish the profitable from the harmful. Eyelids and eyebrows signify the guarding of what the mind has observed of God" (332B, 185). Many of the numer-

ous human features explained here are explicitly used by the scriptures to depict the heavenly hosts. Some seem to be extrapolated by the author from the general scriptural references to human forms. This section includes the angelic wings, under the human category of feet, to indicate their uplifting swiftness and freedom (332D, 186). The angels' clothing and instruments receive similar interpretations: a belt or cincture symbolizes control and a scepter represents sovereignty. "To sum up, a discerning mind would not be hard put to find a correlation between visible signs and invisible reality" (333C, 187).

The discerning mind further interprets winds, clouds, and stones, insofar as it remembers and applies the earlier interpretive principle about transferring attributes from the realm of sense perception to the higher realm of concepts, from the symbols up to their meanings: "Indeed you will find that each form carries an uplifting explanation of the representational images" (336C, 188). Even animal shapes prove no barrier to experienced interpretation: the lion is powerful and secretive, the ox strong and invincible, the eagle fast and lofty, the horse obedient and docile. All these images yield insights about the powers of heaven, when rightly applied "in terms of dissimilar similarities" (337B, 189). The chapter has here used the same oxymoron which was explained in chapter 2. Now that this anagogical method for handling dissimilar similarities has been illustrated, the reader is left to adopt it and apply it: "Not only do these things suffice to the wise but the explanation of one incongruous image suffices for the like-mannered interpretation of comparable ones" (337C, 189).

The treatise closes with some modesty, admitting that some biblical texts were omitted for lack of interpretive insight, and with a final restatement of the value of such interpretation, namely, that it keeps us "from the wretchedness of being stuck in the fictional appearances" (340B, 190).

In summary, *The Celestial Hierarchy* presents a general method for interpreting symbols, a heavenly arrangement of three threefold groups of angels, and the author's specific exegesis of awkward passages and of the lowly biblical images for the celestial ranks. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* continues in great detail the theme of a downward transmission of revelation through the heavenly mediators into the human sphere and applies much of the same uplifting method for interpreting perceptible liturgical symbols, although with major differences.

INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The theological literature of the Latin Middle Ages was influenced by *The Celestial Hierarchy* in two major areas: its teachings about the angels and its general theory or method for the interpretation of symbols. The contents of the

treatise regarding the three threefold groups of heavenly beings had a decisive impact on medieval angelology, from Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) through Dante's *Paradiso*. The method for interpreting symbols was adapted by medieval authors like Eriugena as part of a long and broad tradition of theological aesthetics. It was eventually incorporated into Abbot Suger's rationale for the uplifting beauty of the new church at the Abbey of Saint-Denis in the twelfth century, long regarded the first Gothic building. Since *The Celestial Hierarchy* received the most medieval commentary of any Dionysian treatise, there were other influential passages as well, but the main topics treated here are the angels and aesthetics.

Angelology

Although several authors of the early Christian centuries made occasional exegetical observations about angelic beings, the medieval writers looked back to *The Celestial Hierarchy* for the definitive way to organize the various ranks and types of angels. Take, for example, the great poet and theologian of the High Middle Ages, Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Near the end of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante identified the celestial residents of Paradise. He named nine ranks of angelic beings, arranged them in three triadic groups, and described them in terms of brilliant light. Their names and triadic arrangement, not to mention the imagery of light, correspond precisely to the Dionysian scheme in *The Celestial Hierarchy*. This debt Dante is glad to acknowledge. In crediting Dionysius, *The Divine Comedy* gently and wittily subordinated the other principal contributor to medieval angelology, Gregory the Great:

Dionysius gave himself to contemplation
of these same orders with such holy zeal
that he named and ranked them just as I have done.
Gregory, later, differed with his conclusions.
But hardly had he wakened in this heaven
than he was moved to laugh at his own delusions.⁹

When it came to ordering heaven, even the great Pope Gregory took second place to Dionysius for most of the medieval authors, although it took Dante's creative talents to depict Gregory smiling at his mistake upon arrival in heaven.

The question of Dionysian influence on Christian angelology in the Middle Ages admits of a rather straightforward answer, at least compared to the ambiguities encountered earlier regarding the churchly hierarchy and biblical allegory. Despite the wide range of comments from other church fathers, *The Celestial Hierarchy* was an extremely influential and openly acknowledged authority on the angels in the Middle Ages. On this point, there is no controversy. Nor should

there be much surprise, since the medieval authors considered Dionysius to be the authoritative source and starting point for the patristic tradition. Nevertheless, once we consider the author's true historical context, his actual influence is harder to assess. Given the work of those who preceded him, at what points did the Areopagite's writings contribute anything new and distinctive to Christian angelology? Furthermore, Gregory the Great's arrangement of the angels is so remarkably similar to the Areopagite's, at least in one passage, that we must also ask whether Gregory arrived at his angelology independently or was influenced by Dionysius. On this point, whether the Latin pope used this Greek treatise, or any Greek text at all, there is considerable discussion.

The Areopagite's influence on Christian angelology is not so much in his overall teachings about the angels, since their attributes and functions had been thoroughly discussed by earlier authors such as Origen and many others. The specific influence is rather in his framework of organizing nine types of angels in three triads. Even discounting the elaborate arrangements of the Jewish apocryphal books or the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts, the canonical Old and New Testament books themselves mentioned numerous heavenly categories, such as archangels or seraphim. Dionysius, as we have seen, was careful to use only this biblical nomenclature, adding no new names. Others before him, such as the Latin authors Ambrose (339–97) and Jerome (c. 347–420) and the Greek writers Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 394) and John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) had already noticed these various scriptural designations and had tried to pull them together into lists of various lengths. Some of them, such as Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315–86), had listed the very same nine ranks or types that appear in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, starting with angels and archangels and ending with cherubim and seraphim. What distinguished the Dionysian teaching, and thus constituted its specific influence, was not the common fund of biblical names, or even the identification of nine ranks, but rather the precise way that the nine were grouped. Unlike previous lists, those by Dionysius generally began at the top, with the seraphim, and proceeded down to the last group, the angels. This subtle, perhaps trivial, difference may stem from his overall hierarchical theory of descending revelation and authority. More importantly, it was Dionysius who first organized the nine into three groups of three each, and he credited this triadic framework to Hierotheus (200D, 160–61). Whenever medieval angelology presented the angelic ranks as a triple triad, the Dionysian imprint is unmistakable.

But what of Gregory the Great, dismissed so wryly by Dante? Regarding a specific aspect of his own teaching on the angels, Gregory cited Dionysius by name and called him an “ancient and venerable Father.”¹⁰ Yet, specific uses of the Dionysian text are hard to identify in Gregory, who elsewhere said that he did not read Greek. Although Gregory spent six years in Constantinople and refers to Dionysius regarding the angels, his presentation of them does not show much explicit Dionysian influence. He lists the same nine ranks, but does so in

an order that in one passage (*Moralia*) was quite different from the Dionysian order, and in another (his *Homily* on Luke 15) was only slightly different. Furthermore, Gregory's lists proceed in an ascending sequence typical of the pre-Dionysian examples, not in the descending order typical of the Areopagite's hierarchical universe.

Beyond these differences, Gregory's explanation for the total number of the angelic ranks as nine refers not to Dionysius or to Hierotheus or to any triadic pattern at all, but to some unexpected biblical passages. His comments on nine angelic ranks are part of a creative exegesis of the parable of the lost coin (Luke 15). In Gregory's typological interpretation, the one coin (or sheep) that was lost symbolized humanity, as found by Christ. This conventional typology leads to an apparently novel interpretation for the nine coins that were not lost, having never fallen. To Gregory, it is the rejoicing angels who are represented by the nine coins never lost, which means that there are nine types of angels. Gregory's interpretive creativity also invoked the nine types of precious stones in Ezekiel 28:13, and even the ninety-nine sheep also in Luke 15. On one crucial point, Gregory's work clearly differs from Dionysius: his list of the nine angelic ranks did not subdivide them into groups of three. Nevertheless, concludes Joan M. Petersen in her close examination of these texts, "there is sufficient resemblance to suggest that Gregory had some knowledge of the subject matter of the *De caelesti hierarchia*."¹¹ This knowledge, however, was not a direct firsthand familiarity with the Greek text, but rather a secondhand account or summary, perhaps given to him orally during his stay in Constantinople. In brief, the Dionysian and Gregorian arrangements of the angels were distinct but similar, indeed intertwined, since Gregory seemed aware of his Greek counterpart.

As for subsequent Christian angelology in the West, at least regarding the specific ordering of angels, Gregory's views prevailed for several centuries until the Dionysian corpus was translated into Latin. For example, the lists of the types of angels in Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) or Rabanus Maurus (ninth century) reproduce exactly Gregory's list in the *Moralia*, the one that differs considerably from the Dionysian ordering.¹² As noted earlier, the ninth-century scholar John the Scot (Eriugena) translated the Dionysian corpus into Latin, and wrote an influential commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy*. The Dionysian triadic order then became an option in the West but did not dominate Latin angelology for several more centuries.

The open situation of equally viable alternatives—Gregorian or Dionysian—began to change dramatically in the twelfth century. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), for example, still considered Gregory's ordering to be correct, and showed no Dionysian influence on any topic whatsoever, according to a thorough study.¹³ But the authority of Dionysius was on the rise, especially regarding the angels. Eriugena's version of Dionysian angelology was briefly authoritative; Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1142) wrote a very influential commentary on *The Celestial*

Hierarchy; through various means, the treatise was becoming known in England; and a new translation of the entire corpus was advanced by John the Saracen (Sarracenus).¹⁴ Most decisively of all, Bernard's exact contemporary, Peter Lombard (c. 1085–1160), advanced with great rigor the Dionysian system of ordering the angels. On this subject, Lombard's *Sentences* show a familiarity with Gregory's work but a clear preference for the Dionysian authority.¹⁵ Since the *Sentences* became the standard textbook in the High Middle Ages, it was the Dionysian triadic arrangement that prevailed. Thomas Aquinas, who owed much to Peter Lombard, discussed the angels at length in his *Summa theologiae*. In angelology and many other doctrines, the Dionysian authority was decisive for Thomas, even when he was concerned to reconcile the Gregorian order with the Dionysian. He also pondered whether angelic bodies took up any space, perhaps contributing much later to the deprecating parody about the head of a pin, although this way of putting it can be traced only to the fourteenth century.¹⁶

After the Areopagite's angelology had triumphed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially in the work of Peter Lombard and therefore subsequently in Thomas Aquinas and Scholasticism generally, it was a short step to Dante's description of a Dionysian triple triad of angels, and to his depiction of Gregory's heavenly chuckle at his earthly delusion. Thereafter, however, the interest of the Renaissance in humanity and its critique of the Dionysian authenticity qualified such celestial pursuits, and the priorities of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation relegated angelology to poetry and popular piety. Only recently has the modern, Enlightenment disdain for the celestial hierarchy shown any signs of giving way to a post-modern rumor of angels.¹⁷

Aesthetics

The Latin Middle Ages appropriated from *The Celestial Hierarchy* not only its contents regarding the celestial beings, but also its method for the interpretation of perceptible symbols in general. Its first two chapters presented principles for interpreting the "variety of sacred veils" that conceal and reveal the divine ray (121C, 146). These veils are the biblical and liturgical symbols that received such extended interpretation from the author, and thus received extensive commentary in this part and in the commentary on *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In the Dionysian universe, perceptible symbols play an indispensable role. The material world of sense perception is symbolic of a spiritual world of conceptions, and of God: "For it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without the aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature requires. Hence, any thinking person realizes that the appearances of beauty are signs of an invisible loveliness" (121CD, 146).

Before tracing some of the appropriation of this sentiment in the medieval interest in beauty as material guidance toward invisible loveliness, the context of the passage should be reviewed in order to determine what can and cannot be extrapolated from it. On the one hand, from this statement about the angels we can and should extrapolate a method for understanding the heavenly domain in general, including all we may know about God as well. In *Letter 9*, in both hierarchical treatises, in parts of *The Mystical Theology*, and in the references to "The Symbolical Theology" in *The Divine Names* and elsewhere, the entire corpus is consistent and emphatic on this point: the material world is anagogically (or upliftingly) symbolic of the immaterial world, not just concerning the angels but also and especially concerning God. On the other hand, we must not extrapolate from this quotation an equal Dionysian concern for all forms of sense perception. Although he mentions the sense of smell, especially for the sacrament of the ointment in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (477D, 228), he does not really emphasize it elsewhere. Nor do the senses of taste or hearing receive much notice, which might seem unremarkable but for the emphasis placed by other authors on music and harmony as beautifully symbolic of the higher realm. The Areopagite's interest in perceptible symbols is dominated by his emphasis specifically upon the sense of sight, on the visual depictions that are used to symbolize the invisible.

The Dionysian aesthetic, or doctrine of beauty, shows remarkable continuity with the overall Platonic tradition, including the essay entitled "Beauty" that introduced much of Plotinus's philosophy in the *Enneads*. Dionysius briefly but explicitly interprets the name and concept of beauty in chapter 4 of *The Divine Names*. In a standard Platonic wordplay, he there remarks that it is called "beauty" because it bids or calls all things to itself (701D, 76). (This Greek pun is also possible in English if *call* is linked to *calli-* as in calligraphy or calisthenics). Beauty's bidding or calling is an upward or anagogical movement, as part of the overall Dionysian motif of a spiritual return to God, within the Neoplatonic structure of procession and return. All beautiful things participate in divine Beauty as their cause and source. Mother Caroline Canfield Putnam's study of this very topic concentrates on the explicit doctrine of beauty in *The Divine Names*, which had its own medieval influence, and examines its Platonic subthemes of participation, causality, and so forth.¹⁸

Nevertheless, the Dionysian passages that had the most influence on medieval aesthetics were not from *The Divine Names* or any explicit discussion of beauty in and of itself. The influence came rather from the general hermeneutical principles enunciated in *The Celestial Hierarchy* regarding the anagogical interpretation of all symbols, whether beautiful or not, as part of the overall Dionysian method of ascending to union with God. Aesthetics, especially for later commentators on *The Celestial Hierarchy*, is part of a spiritual journey to God. When Dionysius mentions beauty, as in the above quotation, it

is in the larger context of understanding all perceptible symbols, most of which are artistically neutral. He concentrates not on any pleasing artistic forms, but on the contents or information found in both the biblical word-pictures for the angels and God and also in the visual presentation of the divine rites. The depictions of the angels as horses, for example, or the censuring processions by the hierarchy, are valued not for any loveliness of their own, but for their educational value as symbols.

This rationale for discussing aesthetics under the heading of symbolism generally (and therefore in connection with the opening chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy* instead of the brief discussion of beauty in *The Divine Names*) is supported by the actual historical channels for the Dionysian influence on the theological aesthetics of the Latin Middle Ages. That influence came principally through Eriugena and especially his commentary on this very book, as already mentioned. One important survey calls *The Celestial Hierarchy* the medieval "handbook of light-symbolism," and documents the Dionysian and Eriugenian connection on this point.¹⁹ This introduction can only touch the surface of such a complex and pivotal figure as Eriugena, both in his own right and in conjunction with Dionysius.²⁰ The ninth-century Irish guest in the Carolingian circles of Charles the Bald (823–77) made a significant impact on medieval theology through his translation and appropriation of Dionysius, as well as through his use of Augustine, not to mention his own creative genius. The works of Saint Denis were just becoming a significant part of the Frankish or Carolingian self-identity since Hilduin, abbot of Saint-Denis, had recently identified the author with the legendary Denis of earliest Christian history in France and had completed a Latin translation of the Dionysian writings around 835. Eriugena was asked to try his hand at a translation some twenty years later. The result, as seen shortly afterward in his major work, *Periphyseon*, is that his encounter with the Dionysian treatises proved formative for his own thought, and led him to Maximus the Confessor and Gregory of Nyssa. His massive *Periphyseon* and the subsequent commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy* adapted many Dionysian themes and passed them on to the Middle Ages, especially symbolic aesthetics and the overall philosophical framework of procession and return, which will be presented more fully in part 4. Despite his condemnation much later, it was Eriugena's use of these very chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, as he combined them with the Augustinian tradition, that influenced the medieval way of interpreting symbols, especially artistic beauty.

For Eriugena, "every visible and invisible creature can be called a theophany, that is, a divine apparition" or "a self-manifestation of God." This means that the world as a whole is a metaphor for God, and must be interpreted anagogically as an uplifting to God. "For everything that is understood and sensed is nothing else but the apparition of what is not apparent, the manifestation of the hidden, the affirmation of the negated, the comprehension of the incomprehensible."²¹

While a passage like this may whet the appetite for further analysis of Eriugena's use of Dionysius in general, these introductory pages must be confined to a few examples. The Dionysian passage quoted above ("the appearances of beauty are the signs of an invisible loveliness"; 121D, 146) receives this commentary from Eriugena:

Visible forms, whether those in the nature of things or those in the holy symbols of the divine scriptures, should be contemplated not because of themselves or the desires they instill in us, but rather because they are the images of an invisible beauty. Through them divine providence recalls human souls to the pure and invisible beauty of its own truth.²²

Such echoes of Dionysius are frequent, not just in the commentary but in Eriugena's overall output. For example, the *Periphyseon* presents this line of thought: "Therefore it is no small step but a great and indeed profitable one from the knowledge of the sensibles [perceptible things] to the understanding of the intelligibles [concepts]. For as through sense [perception] we arrive at understanding, so through the creature we return to God."²³ Here Eriugena clearly restates and passes on the Dionysian understanding of perceptible symbols and of scriptural allegory. But John, developing a fuller theological aesthetics, was interested in all five senses, in ugliness, in color, in music and harmony. He could speak of God as the artist and the world as the art.²⁴ Because he viewed existence or being itself as a theophany and the world as metaphor, he also could view art as anagogy, more explicitly than Dionysius ever did. Art, properly understood, was spiritually uplifting or anagogical. Eriugena's aesthetics, while based on Dionysian principles, went beyond the Areopagite's writings and even influenced the way Eriugena went about translating them. The classic example of his translating Dionysius according to his own interests is from the second chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. Dionysius had written:

The Word of God makes use of poetic imagery when discussing these formless intelligences [the angels] but, as I have already said, it does so not for the sake of art, but as a concession to the nature of our mind. It uses scriptural passages in an uplifting fashion as a way, provided for us from the first, to uplift our mind in a manner suitable to our nature. (137B, 148)

The phrase "not for the sake of art" translates the negative adverb *atechnos*. It means, to put it crudely, "inartfully" or "unskillfully." But Eriugena's emphasis on aesthetics led him to treat this prefix (*a-*) not as a negation, but as an intensifier, namely, "most artfully." Thus the Eriugenian translation reads *valde artificialiter*: "most artfully does theology use poetic imagery." This was not an accurate translation of Dionysius, but it was a natural evolution of Dionysian interpretive principles in terms of Eriugena's aesthetics.²⁵

Although Eriugena's overall system is too complex to be examined here, one more example points toward his influence in the later Middle Ages and

therefore to the continuation of the Dionysian influence on medieval aesthetics. Eriugena composed a poem on the occasion of the consecration of a church building. Entitled "Aurelae sidereae" (golden rays), it expresses some of his theological aesthetics regarding the beautiful objects in the church and the beauty of the building itself.²⁶ The interest in the symbol of light and the allusions to procession and return continue the Dionysian tradition and point to its later development as well. In this poem as in his work generally, Eriugena's previewed the poetry and other writings of Suger, abbot of Saint-Denis from 1122 to 1151, who led the rebuilding of the abbey church in the style that was later called Gothic.

Suger's use of the Dionysian-Eriugenian tradition to interpret and perhaps to inspire the new Gothic architecture is the most dramatic and complex example of the Areopagite's influence on medieval aesthetics. It is an engaging story, one which has been told often and well, despite certain exaggerations.²⁷ When Suger became abbot, he set out to enhance the abbey's buildings and prestige, as befitted its supposed founding by the headless martyr Saint Denis and its history as the royal abbey and burial place of the kings of France. When reflecting on uplifting, inspiring beauty, what better authority to invoke and to echo, especially in light of Bernard of Clairvaux's critique of ecclesiastical luxury, than the abbey's own Denis/Dionysius and *The Celestial Hierarchy*? Suger's extensive comments on the new church, its construction and dedication, include certain of his own poems. For example, this verse was inscribed on a pair of lavish doors:

Whoever thou art,
 if thou seekest to extol the glory of these doors,
 Marvel not at the gold and the expense,
 but at the craftsmanship of the work.
 Bright is the noble work;
 but, being nobly bright, the work
 Should brighten the minds,
 so that they may travel through the true lights
 To the True Light where Christ is the true door.
 In what manner it be inherent in this world
 the golden door defines:
 The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material
 And, seeing this light,
 is resurrected from its former submersion.²⁸

This poem indicates Suger's interest in two Dionysian themes: physical light and the anagogical role of material beauty in lifting the beholder up to spiritual beauty. Since the abbey church has long been considered the very first Gothic building, some have claimed a direct connection between the Neoplatonic themes in Dionysius and the birth of Gothic under Suger.²⁹

But a direct link between Dionysius' thought and Suger's new abbey church and therefore the birth of Gothic architecture should be qualified at two points. First, Suger seems never to quote Dionysius explicitly, and he surely knew of his works only through intermediaries such as Eriugena's translation and commentary. The poem on the door also reveals an emphasis on Christ that Suger may have gained from his neighbor and contemporary, Hugh of Saint-Victor, another Parisian abbot, who wrote his own commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy* just in time to influence Suger, although the hard evidence is slim.³⁰ But even though Eriugena and Hugh must also be examined for their debts to others besides Dionysius, such as Augustine, surely Suger's writings stand in a Dionysian tradition, broadly defined, a tradition not of light mysticism but of theological aesthetics, even if he rarely or never quoted Dionysius directly. The second qualification on claims for the Dionysian origins of Gothic architecture is equally serious, and yet outside the purview of this study. Recent historians of architecture have challenged the identification of Suger's abbey church as the first Gothic structure.³¹ If another building, or a combination of features of various buildings, is the true source of Gothic, then Suger's use of Dionysian aesthetics is not the creative inspiration for the new style but rather a perceptive commentary on it.

Despite this doubt about the origins of Gothic, Suger's output still stands as a fascinating record of medieval thought in this regard, and worthy of the scholarly and popular attention it has received in the late twentieth century. As for the scholarly study of medieval aesthetics, the further influence of Saint-Denis and Suger is too vast even to sketch here. Emile Mâle writes, "I am convinced that medieval iconography owes as much to St.-Denis as architecture, sculpture, and stained glass."³² As for the popular attention, beside the museum exhibitions, Suger's most famous summary of anagogical aesthetics is embedded in Umberto Eco's novel, *The Name of the Rose*, as the meditation of one Abbot Abo:

Thus, when—out of my delight in the beauty of the house of God—the loveliness of the many-colored gems has called me away from the external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.³³

The influence of Dionysius on medieval aesthetical theology may not be as specific and objective as on the word *hierarchy* or on the triadic structure of the angelic host. But as part of an evolving tradition that flows through Eriugena, the Dionysian corpus certainly had a major impact on the way beauty was understood theologically in the Latin Middle Ages, not least in the towering,

luminous beauty of Gothic architecture. Among the most visible, concrete and well-known legacies of the Middle Ages, this architecture is linked, ironically, to one of the most evasive, elusive, and least-known figures of earlier Christianity, the yet-anonymous author of *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

NOTES

1. In terms of studies available in English, *The Celestial Hierarchy* has been the least accessible part of the Dionysian corpus, at least until the Paulist Press edition. The English translation by John Parker still assumed that the author was Paul's disciple; *The Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies* (London: 1894; repr. Merrick, N.Y.: Richwood Publishers, 1976). The translation by The Shrine of Wisdom (Surrey: Fintry, 1949) is unreliable, not least because the translators admit to "rearranging and synthesising the subject matter" (dust jacket). On the other hand, R. Roques, G. Heil, and M. de Gandillac produced a splendid resource in French: *La hiérarchie céleste* [*Sources Chrétiennes* 58 and 58 bis]; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1958 and 1970). The introductions, Greek text, annotations, and indexes make this work the indispensable tool for anyone who wishes to study *The Celestial Hierarchy*. See also the thorough list of phrases taken from Platonic and patristic sources in Salvatore Lilla, "Note sulla Gerarchia Celeste dello Ps. Dionigi l'Areopagita," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986): 519–73.

2. The chapter titles are omitted in the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition (see note 1) and in Gunther Heil's recent German translation, *Über die himmlische Hierarchie. Über die kirchliche Hierarchie*, Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur, vol. 22 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986). Heil does use the chapter titles for much of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, but explicitly (p. xi) because they are accurate editorial additions. His introduction, notes, and bibliography also provide German readers a splendid introduction to the two hierarchical treatises. The recent Italian translation, equally helpful to its readers, includes the chapter titles, with the modern editor's own preview of each chapter; *Dionigi Areopagita. Tutte le opere*, trans. Piero Scazzoso, ed. Enzo Bellini (Milan: Rusconi, 1981).

3. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 2d. ed., 1963), no. 35, p. 39. Plotinus can be sampled in *The Essential Plotinus*, ed. Elmer O'Brien (New York: New American Library, 1964) or in the fine editions and studies by A. H. Armstrong. Armstrong is also the editor of two excellent collections of articles on Neoplatonic philosophy and spirituality: *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) and *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), which is volume 15 of *World Spirituality* (Ewert Cousins, gen. ed.). Other starting points are the recent

articles in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Scribner, 1982–89), such as that on “Neoplatonism” by Stephen F. Brown (9:95–101).

4. E. R. Dodds, commentary on *Elements of Theology*, pp. 220; cf. pp. xix–xx, 212–23. For more on this structure in Proclus, see James M. P. Lowry, *The Logical Principles of Proclus’ “Elements of Theology” as Systematic Ground of the Cosmos* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980).

5. Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), where procession and reversion are discussed in terms of objective theory and subjective theory. See also his earlier *Kinesis akinetos. A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) and my introduction to the Dionysian version of procession and return in Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 58–65 and throughout.

6. I have given chapter 2 of *The Celestial Hierarchy* a different and more thoroughly annotated commentary, with a section about negations and *The Mystical Theology*, in chapter 6 (“Biblical Absurdities”) of Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 84–96.

7. See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), pp. 57–60. His chapter 8, “Denys the Areopagite” (pp. 159–78) is also a fine introduction to the “mystical” side of Dionysius, discussed in part 5.

8. John’s *Scholia*, however, assumed that Dionysius meant Paul. In 2 Corinthians 2:12 (which Dionysius never cites), Paul refers to the “third” heaven as presumably higher than the first or second. Dionysius always starts his enumeration at the top, so that for him the third triad of angels is the lowest or last of the three (201A, p. 161).

9. Dante, *Paradiso* 28.130–35, trans. John Ciardi (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 569. On Dante and Dionysius generally, the best work seems still to be Edmund G. Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics* (London: J. M. Dent, 1913), esp. 83–110. Further Dantean references and allusions to Dionysius are presented in Ulderico Gamba, “‘Il lume di quel cero . . .’ Dionigi Areopagita fu l’ispiratore di Dante?” *Studia Patavina* 32 (1985): 101–14. Dante had himself used the order in Gregory’s *Moralia* in his earlier *Convivio* 2.6 (London: Dent, 1940), p. 84; perhaps *The Divine Comedy* has Gregory smile at his earlier earthly error as Dante’s way of moving past his own Gregorian phase on this point. For further bibliography and a smaller role for Dionysius in Dante’s angelology, or at least in his angelic cosmology, see Stephen Bemrose, *Dante’s Angelic Intelligences* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1983).

10. “Fertur vero Dionysius Areopagita, antiquus videlicet et venerabilis Pater,” *In Evang. Hom.* 34.12 (*PL* 76:1254). The Dionysian antiquity and triadic angelology were both honored in the East, as evident in John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith* 2.3; trans. F. H. Chase, Jr. (New York: Fathers of the

Church, 1958), p. 208. For a wide range of patristic texts, see Eric Peterson, *The Angels and the Liturgy*, trans. Ronald Walls (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964).

11. Joan M. Petersen, "'Homo omnino Latinus'? The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great," *Speculum* 62 (1987): 541. This article (pp. 529–51) also compares earlier lists of angelic ranks and provides helpful bibliography, such as her own earlier book *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in Their Late Antique Cultural Background*, Studies and Texts, vol. 69 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984). Also helpful are G. Bareille's article "Anges," in *Dictionnaire catholique* (1:1192–1222) and the introduction by R. Roques in *La hiérarchie céleste (Sources Chrétiennes 58, pp. lvii–lxxi)*, who also points out the Christian and Neoplatonic sources.

As for Gregory's innovation regarding the nine coins, see the discussion of these parables in Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 127–31, 234–45). No earlier example of this typology is given and Tertullian is mentioned as belittling those who found significance in such numbers (pp. 52 and 129). Nor does J. Petersen mention any earlier references on this point (although the ninety-nine sheep were earlier linked to the angels) in "Greek Influences upon Gregory the Great's Exegesis of Luke 15, 1–10 in *Homelia in Evang.* II, 34," *Grégoire le Grand*, ed. J. Fontaine, R. Gillet, and S. Pellistrandi (Paris: CNRS, 1986), pp. 521–29. See also Louth, *Denys*, pp. 36–37 and 121.

12. Isidore of Seville, *Sententiarum libri tres* 1.10.15 (PL 83:556) and *Etymologiae* 7.5, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911). Bruno Judic, "L'angelologie de Grégoire le Grand chez Raban Maur," *Studia Patristica* 23 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989), 245–49.

13. See Edmond Boissard, O.S.B., "Saint Bernard et le Pseudo-Aréopagite, *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 26 (1959): 214–63, and Mottoni, *Rassegna*, pp. 133–34.

14. Nikolaus M. Häring, "John Scottus in Twelfth Century Angelology," in *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. John J. O'Meara and Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 158–69. On Eriugena's angelology, see also Gersh's Appendix 2: *From Iamblichus*, pp. 308–12; Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Commentariorum in Hierarchiam Coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagite*, (PL 175:923ff.); David Luscombe, "The Reception of the Writings of Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite into England," in *Tradition and Change*, ed. Diana Greenway, Christopher Holdsworth, and Jane Sayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 115–43, esp. pp. 128ff.

15. *Sentences* 2.9 (Florence: Ad Claras Aquas, 1916), pp. 345–46 and 355–57 (PL 192:669–72).

16. "Parum vel nihil differunt si ad rem referantur" *Summa theologiae* 1a, q.108, art. 6, ad 4. Thomas discussed the angels in 1a, qq. 50–63 and 106–8.

"There can be no doubt that Questions 106–9 owe the line they follow, perhaps their very existence, above all to the fact of Dionysius," T. C. O'Brien, "The Dionysian Corpus," as appended to his edition of Questions 103–9, vol. 14, pp. 182–93 (London: Blackfriars, 1975). See also Thomas's late *De substantiis separatis*, ed. F. J. Lescoe (West Hartford, Conn.: Saint Joseph College, 1962), especially chapters 17–19, pp. 134–62; *Quodlibetal Questions 1 and 2*, trans. Sandra Edwards (Toronto: PIMS, 1983), pp. 36–39, 68–72, and 77–85; and Jean-Marie Vernier, *Les anges chez saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1986). The earliest known reference to the infamous example about angels on a pin seems to be from the "Sister Catherine" treatise (early fourteenth century) that was long ascribed to Meister Eckhart: "The Masters say, a thousand souls in heaven sit on the point of a pin," *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 382.

17. C. A. Patrides, "Renaissance Thought on the Celestial Hierarchy: The Decline of a Tradition," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959): 155–66; "Renaissance Views on the 'Unconfused Orders Angelick'," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962): 265–67. A new interest in angels is apparent in recent films, in the art of Anselm Kiefer, and in popular books by Billy Graham and Mortimer Adler. See G. MacGregor, *Angels: Ministers of Grace* (New York: Paragon House, 1988); C. McDannell and B. Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); S. Schneiderman, *An Angel Passes* (New York: New York University Press, 1988); and especially the lavishly illustrated book by Malcolm Godwin, *Angels: An Endangered Species* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

18. Mother Caroline Canfield Putnam, R.S.C.J., *Beauty in the Pseudo-Denis*, Philosophical Studies, vol. 190 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960). As for aesthetics understood theologically, see the massive work of Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Aesthetik*, translated as *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, esp. vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press; and New York: Crossroad, 1984) and its chapter affirming and defending Dionysius, pages 144–210. The theological aesthetics of Balthasar are helpfully digested by Louis Roberts, *The Theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1987). On the general subject, see also the work of M.-D. Chenu such as "The Symbolist Mentality," in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 99–145. As for the discussion of beauty in *The Divine Names*, "this chapter has become the starting point of a far-reaching 'aesthetic theory': for example in Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Ulrich von Strassburg and Cusanus ('Tota pulchra es')"; Werner Beierwaltes, "Negati Affirmatio or the World as Metaphor: A Foundation for Medieval Aesthetics from the Writings of John Scotus Eriugena," *Dionysius* 1 (1977): 150, n. 74. This entire article

(pp. 127–59, see esp. pp. 127, 131, and 147–48) is a complex but excellent—perhaps the best—introduction to the development of medieval aesthetics from Dionysius through Eriugena to Abbot Suger. It is a translation and slight expansion (cf. pp. 130–31) of “‘Negati affirmatio’: Welt als Metapher. Zur Grundlegung einer mittelalterlichen Aesthetik.” in *Jean Scot Erigène et l’histoire de la philosophie*, ed. R. Roques (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1977), pp. 263–75. Beierwaltes’s equally expert guidance through the earlier Neoplatonic aesthetics is available in “The Love of Beauty and the Love of God,” in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 292–313.

19. Josef Koch, “Über die Lichtsymbolik im Bereich der Philosophie und der Mystik des Mittelalters,” *Studium Generale* 13 (1960): 653–70. The section entitled “Das Handbuch der Lichtsymbolik” begins on p. 655 and calls *The Celestial Hierarchy* “das Hand- oder Grundbuch der Lichtsymbolik” (p. 656).

20. Eriugena has received much more attention recently than Dionysius, with several substantial monographs and many impressive collections of essays. The best recent works are by John J. O’Meara, *Eriugena* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Wolf-Ulrich Klünker, *Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Denken im Gespräch mit dem Engel* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1988); Dermott Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Willemien Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991). The essays were often the results of conferences: *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. John J. O’Meara and Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973); René Roques, *Libres sentiers vers l’érigénisme* (Rome: Edizioni dell’ Ateneo, 1975); *Jean Scot Erigène et l’histoire de la philosophie*, ed. R. Roques (Paris: CNRS, 1977); *Eriugena: Studien zu seinem Quellen*, ed. W. Beierwaltes (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980); *Jean Scot écrivain*, ed. G. H. Allard (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1986); *Eriugena Redivivus*, ed. W. Beierwaltes (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987); Edouard Jeuneau, *Etudes érigéniennes* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1987); Goulven Madec *Jean Scot et ses auteurs: Annotations érigéniennes* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1988); and *From Augustine to Eriugena*, ed. F. X. Martin, O.S.A., and J. A. Richmond (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991).

Some earlier studies retain their value, especially M. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Erigène* (1933; reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1964 and 1969), and two introductions in English: I. P. Sheldon-Williams, “Johannes Scottus Eriugena,” in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 518–33; and John J. O’Meara’s earlier brief study *Eriugena* (Cork: Mercier, 1969).

21. The full *Periphyseon* is available in English translation, also thanks to O’Meara and the prior work of I. P. Sheldon-Williams (Montréal: Bellarmin;

and Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987). All the works are found in *PL* 122, edited by H. J. Floss (1853). The first three books of the *Periphyseon* have received a thorough modern edition, with English translation, by I. P. Sheldon-Williams (with Ludwig Bieler) in *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, Dublin, vols. 7 (1968), 9 (1972), and 11 (1981). The references to the *Periphyseon* will use the column numbers of *PL* edition and the page number in the Bellarmin and Dumbarton Oaks English translation of Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara. The references in this case are *Periphyseon* 633A (p. 250), 681A (p. 308), 446D (p. 31), and 449 (p. 33f.).

22. Eriugena's commentary on the Areopagite's *Celestial Hierarchy* is edited by Jeanne Barbet, *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. 31 (Tournhout: Brepols, 1975). These comments on *CH* 1 121D (p. 146) are at chap. 1, 511–18.

23. *Periphyseon* 723BC (p. 357).

24. On scripture as allegory, see *Periphyseon*, 504BC (pp. 99–100) and the comments in part I above (cf. n. 22). On ugliness in the sense of monstrosity and absurdity, see René Roques, "Teratologie et théologie chez Jean Scot Erigène," in *Libres sentiers*, pp. 13–43. On color, see *Periphyseon*, 494D (pp. 87–88) and 662CD (pp. 285–86). On music and harmony, see *Periphyseon*, 638A (p. 255) and the article by Beierwaltes, "Negati affirmatio," p. 154. On God as the artist and creation as the art, see *Periphyseon*, 635D (p. 253).

25. René Roques, "'Valde artificialiter': Le sens d'un contresens," *Libres sentiers*, pp. 45–98. See Roques's other articles on similar topics in that volume and in *The Mind of Eriugena*, pp. 59–77.

26. Regarding the poem "Aurelae sidereae," see the Latin text, English translation, discussion, and bibliography in O'Meara, *Eriugena* (1988), pp. 180–90. For the building as symbolic of heavenly things, did Eriugena know and emulate Maximus in the *Mystagogy*? For the East, "Byzantine domed churches are Dionysius the Areopagite translated into stone and brick, marble and gold, mosaic and gem," according to Carl Schneider, *Geistesgeschichte des antiken Christentums* 2 (Munich: Beck, 1954), p. 100, as cited by Hans-Joachim Schulz in *The Byzantine Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo, 1986), p. 33. On the earlier Eastern views, see the fine study by Kathleen E. McVey, "The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983): 91–121. On Eriugena's other influence on medieval art besides Suger, see Yves Christe, "Quelques portails romans et l'idée de théophanie selon Jean Scot Erigène," *Mind of Eriugena* 182–89, and "Influences et retentissement de l'oeuvre de Jean Scot sur l'art médiéval: Bilan et perspectives," *Eriugena Redivivus*, pp. 142–61, which also notes Eriugena's use of Dionysian angelology.

27. Suger of Saint-Denis, *On the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures*, edited, translated, and annotated by Erwin Panofsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946). For an updated bibliography, see the second edition by

Gerda Panofsky-Soergal (1979). The definitive work about the abbey and its history before and under Suger is Sumner McKnight Crosby's magisterial and posthumous *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from Its Beginnings to the Death of Suger*, 475–1151, edited and completed by Pamela Z. Blum (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987). That history is also nicely summarized by Edward B. Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis in France* (Fribourg: University Press, 1990), pp. 26–45. Foley concludes that the abbey's twelfth-century liturgical life was influenced most of all not by its character as a royal abbey but by the deep devotion to the abbey's founder, Denis; see also his "St.-Denis Revisited: The Liturgical Evidence," *Revue Bénédictine* 100 (1990): 532–49.

28. Suger of Saint-Denis, *On the Abbey Church*, pp. 46–49. Regarding light, see especially Klaus Hedwig, *Sphaera Lucis: Studien zur Intelligibilität des Seienden im Kontext der mittelalterlichen Lichtspekulation* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1980).

29. Panofsky's edition *On the Abbey Church* emphasized Eriugena as the crucial link between Dionysius and Suger. This view was popularized and expanded to include the probable influence of Hugh of Saint-Victor by Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, 3d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). On the many facets of Suger's work, see the exhibition catalog *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis in the Time of Abbot Suger (1122–1151)*, ed. Sumner McKnight Crosby, Jane Hayward, Charles T. Little, and William D. Wixom (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981), and especially the fine symposium articles in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*, ed. Paula Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986). The story of Suger and the birth of Gothic has been popularized still further by William Anderson, *The Rise of the Gothic* (Salem, N.H.: Salem House, 1985). See also the interesting perspective on Suger in Christopher Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), pp. 31–45.

30. Peter Kidson argues that Panofsky (and thus Simson) grossly exaggerated Suger's familiarity with the Dionysian texts and thus overstated the Areopagite's influence on Gothic. "Panofsky, Suger and St. Denis," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 1–17. This corrective is well taken, but Kidson does not acknowledge that Suger's allusion to the Dionysian anagogical interpretation also refers to the very same perceptible beauties in need of such spiritual interpretation, namely, beautiful stones and metals (336BC, 188; the passage cited shortly by means of Umberto Eco's appropriation at n. 33). Thus, I would consider this, against Kidson, a direct reference to the corpus, albeit without a quotation. Furthermore, Pamela Z. Blum considers Suger's western portals to reflect his thorough reading of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; "The Lateral Portals of the West Facade of the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis,

Archaeological and Iconographical Considerations," in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*, pp. 199–227. For more detail on the influence of Hugh's christocentrism, and on Richard of Saint-Victor, see Grover Zinn, "Suger, Theology, and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition" in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*, pp. 33–40, and especially the fuller arguments of Conrad Rudolph, *Artistic Change at St-Denis, Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth-Century Controversy over Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

31. Thomas E. Polk II, *Saint-Denis, Noyon and the Early Gothic Choir: Methodological Considerations for the History of Early Gothic Architecture* (Frankfurt and Bern: Peter Lang, 1982); see the thorough review by Michael T. Davis in *Speculum* 62 (1987): 173–75. The viewpoint that Suger's contribution was not a new style but a reinterpretation of existing structures is forcefully advanced by Jan van der Meulen, as summarized in "Gothic Architecture," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 5: 580–602, including a polemically annotated bibliography. The current scholarly ambivalence about Suger's architectural significance is represented within the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* by the stark opposition between van der Meulen's viewpoint and the older view of Panofsky and Simson as continued in Gabrielle M. Spiegel's article "Suger of St. Denis," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 11: 502–4.

32. Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France, the Twelfth Century: A Study of the Origins of Medieval Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 155. For example, the south portal of Chartres displays nine ranks of angels, in clear Dionysian imagery. As to the stained glass, see Louis Grodecki's posthumous work *Gothic Stained Glass 1200–1300* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

33. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (New York: Warner Books, 1984), pp. 164–65 (Abbot Suger, *On the Abbey Church*, p. 65.) In calling this "the sweetest of theologies" (p. 165) Brother William echoes Suger's name in one of the novel's incessant puns and allusions. Eco has also written extensively on medieval aesthetics, including, in recent translation, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986) and *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

PART III

The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

CHAPTER 1 AS INTRODUCTION

Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder: What is the tradition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and what is its purpose?

The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy consists of the author's systematic interpretation of Christianity's main rites, which provides him several occasions to discuss hierarchical theory in general and the role of the clergy in particular.¹ The words "Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder" (369, 195) serve less as a heading for the first chapter than as a subtitle to the overall book. As already mentioned with regard to *The Celestial Hierarchy*, the subtitle is probably an early editorial addition rather than original with the author, since this very chapter concludes by implying that the author is writing not as an elder to a fellow-elder but as one hierarch or bishop to another, passing on privileged information pertinent to that office (377AB, 199–200).

The first chapter title continues, "What is the tradition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and what is its purpose?" On the one hand, this is quite descriptive of the contents of chapter 1. On the other hand, the body of the text itself refers to the human hierarchy only as "our hierarchy" and never as "the ecclesiastical hierarchy." The adjective *ecclesiastical* appears only once within the text, and there it refers to the assembled body of worshipers, as does every appearance of its noun form, *ekklesia*. Neither form ever refers to the whole structure of churchly ranks and rites. That structure is simply and consistently called "our hierarchy," which therefore casts doubt not only on this subtitle but on the received title of the treatise itself, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. This doubt is not dispelled by any internal reference to the treatise by name within the text, since there are none. Doubt about the title's originality is not a major concern, for it does not really mislead the reader. The text's own way of referring to

"our hierarchy" will be followed in this presentation, which will also point out any editorial subtitles that are potentially misleading.

The introductory chapter of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* first establishes its progression from *The Celestial Hierarchy* and then, by way of distinguishing the heavenly hierarchy from the human, discusses the rationale and method for symbolism, especially the liturgical symbols that it deals with. The chapter begins and ends with an admonition to share this enlightenment only in proper proportion to the recipient's capacities, a safeguard also applied to the relative receptivity of the angelic hosts above humans (372A, 195). Jesus illuminates and assimilates the angels in proportion to their capacity, and will do the same for us, insofar as we imitate the angels and "look up to the blessed and ultimately divine ray of Jesus himself" (372B, 196). This section contains perhaps the strongest of all the author's various statements about Jesus, "who is transcendent mind, utterly divine mind, who is the source and the being underlying all hierarchy, all sanctification, all the workings of God, who is the ultimate in divine power" (372A, 195–96). These high claims, that Jesus is the being of any hierarchy, for example, should be qualified by other conflicting claims, such as the statement that it is the scriptures that are the being of our hierarchy (376B, 198), to take the same example. Ambiguous Christology aside, the point is that the angels and we are all recipients, proportionately, of a descending process of revelation.

Since he has already written on the heavenly hierarchy (as reviewed briefly at 372C, 196), Dionysius can proceed to "our hierarchy" as centered in the hierarchy, since "its being and proportion and order are in him divinely perfected and deified, and are then imparted to those below him according to their merit, whereas the sacred deification occurs in him directly from God" (372D, 196). This comment serves notice that in this treatise, and in the system that it describes, the human hierarchy is completely dependent upon its hierarchy, not only for authority but also for the exclusive transmission of revelation and even for its very being.

To complete his transition from the angelic to the human hierarchy, Dionysius makes a crucial contrast:

Of course, as I have said already, those beings and those orders which are superior to us are also incorporeal. Their hierarchy belongs to the domain of the conceptual and is something out of this world. We see our human hierarchy, on the other hand, as our nature allows, pluralized in a great variety of perceptible symbols lifting us upward hierarchically until we are brought as far as we can be into the unity of divinization. (373A, 197)

The higher, incorporeal realm of the angels is purely conceptual, beyond our spatial and temporal world of sense perception. In the natural context of this world, our physical senses encounter perceptible phenomena. Because of God's

providence, these perceptible things turn out to be symbols of the higher conceptual realm that thus uplift us in proper hierarchical order to unity with God, that is, to divinization. Here we meet the author's central role for symbols, in extremely condensed form, as lifting us up to God. The thought is immediately repeated: "The heavenly beings, because of their intelligence, have their own permitted conceptions of God. For us, on the other hand, it is by way of the perceptible images that we are uplifted as far as we can be to the contemplation of what is divine" (373B, 197).

This uplifting from perceptible images to their conceptual meanings, to the contemplation of the divine, is intimately related to the return upward toward God already discussed as part of procession and return. The anagogy that occurs through interpreting symbols is itself the return to God; thus the author's anagogical interpretation of biblical and liturgical symbols is part of his overall conceptual structure or metaphysics.

The relationship between the conceptual and the perceptible was ostensibly the subject of a treatise by that name, "The Conceptual and the Perceptible" (373B, 197). But here, too, the supposedly lost treatise is not really missed, since the role of perceptible symbols in uplifting the interpreter to their conceptual meanings and beyond is thoroughly discussed throughout the Dionysian corpus.

The next paragraph on the definition of a hierarchy and of a hierarch, has already been quoted in full in the presentation of Letter Eight in part I. Definitions aside, it functions here to present the role of the hierarchy and of the hierarch in God's saving work, which is clearly defined as divinization or "being as much as possible like and in union with God" (376A, 198). This saving deification, the goal of every hierarchy, consists of "seeing and understanding sacred truth . . . of a feast upon that sacred vision which nourishes the intellect and which divinizes everything rising up to it" (376A, 198). Whatever other definitions of salvation or deification there may be, the Areopagite's viewpoint is completely dominated by the quest for spiritual knowledge. His entire enterprise is fundamentally an epistemology, whether it concerns the divine names, the biblical symbols for the angels, or the liturgical symbols of the ecclesiastical tradition. The extent of the author's interests in spiritual understanding will be demonstrated by the rest of this chapter on the general principle of anagogical, or uplifting, knowledge, and by the rest of the treatise, which applies that principle to the interpretation of Christian rites.

The chapter continues by saying that the Deity, as the generous source of all divinization,

has bestowed hierarchy as a gift to ensure the salvation and divinization of every being endowed with reason and intelligence. It has given it in a more immaterial and intellectual fashion to those who are blessedly above this world. . . . As for us, this gift which the heavenly beings have received

uniquely and unitedly has been passed on to us by the divinely transmitted scriptures in a way suited to us, that is, by means of the variety and abundance of composite symbols. (376B, 198)

Again Dionysius emphasizes the contrast between the angels' type of knowledge and the human need for symbols, starting with the scriptural images already discussed. But more than the Bible is involved at this point:

Furthermore, whatever was given by these sacred men in a more immaterial initiation, as already given to our neighbors in the heavenly hierarchy, from mind to mind, this too our leaders have revealed, through the means of verbal expression and thus corporeal, but at the same time more immaterial since it is free from writing. But the inspired hierarchs have transmitted these things not in the common part of the sacred act in undisguised conceptions, but in the sacred symbols. (376C, 199)

This "more immaterial initiation" beyond the written scriptures is not simply the unwritten tradition in general, but specifically the teachings conveyed in the exclusive portion of the liturgy, after the reading of the scriptures which was "common" or shared even with the uninitiated and after the dismissal of the uninitiated.

Before these symbolic features of the rites can be systematically presented and interpreted, Dionysius once again defines and justifies the use of symbols. Filled by God, our first leaders generously sought

uplifting and divinization for their subordinates. And so, using images derived from the senses they spoke of the transcendent. They passed on something united in a variegation and plurality. Of necessity they made human what was divine. They put material on what was immaterial. In their written and unwritten initiations, they brought the transcendent down to our level. (376D, 199)

That which is transcendent and united, divine and immaterial, is transmitted to us in symbols based on sense perception, using the earthly and composite, the human and the material. Why this use of symbols? For the two reasons discussed above in chapter 2 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, namely, secrecy and accommodation: "They did this for us, not simply because of the profane from whom the symbols were to be kept out of reach, but because, as I have already stated, our own hierarchy is itself symbolical and adapted to what we are. In a divine fashion it needs perceptible things to lift us up into the domain of conceptions" (377A, 199).

Our context within this created world of space and time means that we humans are dependent upon sense perception, upon the plurality implied in our awareness of extension in space and of sequence in time as the starting points for knowledge. Accommodating itself to this context, the divine message deigns

to be clothed in the garb of perceptible symbols, for our sake, that we might start with them and ascend through them to higher things.

But this must all occur in proportion to one's station along the way. The outsider is kept away even from the symbols, the initiate is gradually learning their explanations, and the hierarch is charged with concealing and sharing these truths. For this reason, Dionysius is sharing privileged interpretations with Timothy, who must renew his promise of confidentiality "never to pass to anyone except sacred-initiators of your own order the hierarch's superior sacred words" (377A, 199–200).

With a last admonition in this vein, this first chapter and its foundational statements of methodology and rationale give way to the remaining chapters and their specific presentations and interpretations of liturgical symbols. Although the chapters of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* do not actually carry titles, the heading given by the editor to each chapter's initial subsection actually functions as a title to the whole chapter. By itself, a list of these titles will indicate a few facets of the Dionysian ecclesiastical system, but the full rationale for their order will become clear only gradually:

- Chapter 1: What is the tradition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and what is its purpose?
- Chapter 2: The rite of the illumination
- Chapter 3: The rite of the synaxis
- Chapter 4: The rite of the ointment and what is perfected by it
- Chapter 5: Concerning the clerical orders, powers, activities, and consecrations
- Chapter 6: Concerning the orders of those being initiated
- Chapter 7: The rite for the dead

Each of these chapters presents a rite and then interprets it. Once certain technical terms are understood, an order begins to emerge from this list, one which reflects the Areopagite's human hierarchy. Illumination refers to baptism (or "divine birth"), and synaxis means the Eucharist. These two are joined by the consecration of the myron-ointment as the three sacraments at the head of "our hierarchy." Thus chapters 2 through 4 comprise a triad of essays that interpret the three sacramental rites. Chapter 5 considers the clerical triad of hierarchy, priests, and deacons, with special attention given to their rites of ordination. Chapter 6 treats the lay triad: those still being purified (itself a trio of catechumens, penitents, and possessed), the communicants, and the monks, with special attention to the rite of monastic profession. Chapter 7 concludes the work with a treatment of funerals and a few appended discussions.

Thus, the human hierarchy's own structure as a triple triad is already in view in the very list of the chapter topics:

Sacraments	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{baptism (chapter 2)} \\ \text{synaxis (chapter 3)} \\ \text{myron consecration (chapter 4)} \end{array} \right.$
Clergy (chapter 5)	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{hierarchs} \\ \text{priests} \\ \text{deacons} \end{array} \right.$
Laity (chapter 6)	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{monks} \\ \text{communicants} \\ \text{those being purified: (catechumens, penitents, and} \\ \text{possessed)} \end{array} \right.$
Plus funerals (chapter 7)	

The overall format of a liturgical commentary deserves some remarks as well. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is the earliest extant work of this kind—a full and systematic exposition of liturgical rites—in all Christian literature. Some earlier expositions of parts of liturgical texts survive, such as *The Mystagogical Lectures* ascribed to Cyril of Jerusalem, but nothing as systematic as this treatise by Pseudo-Dionysius. It is thus considered the first in a long line of liturgical commentaries that influenced Christian worship, East and West, for centuries. This part will therefore conclude with a more specific assessment of the place of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* in the history of liturgical interpretation.

CHAPTER 2: BAPTISM, OR “THE DIVINE BIRTH”

Chapter 2 of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* begins a format that is followed for the rest of the treatise: each chapter presents and interprets a liturgical rite, within an explicit tripartite structure. First comes an introduction, which is usually short, and carries a title actually descriptive of the whole chapter, as given above. Then the rite in question—called, in this case, “The Mystery of Illumination” (393A, 201)—is described with extreme brevity. Third, the ritual receives an elaborate interpretation under the title “Contemplation.” Thus each chapter introduces a rite, describes it succinctly, and then contemplates its spiritual meaning. The format had already appeared in some patristic exegesis of the Bible, notably Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*, which introduced, presented, and

then interpreted Moses' life in a third section also entitled "Contemplation," or "Theoria."

The consistency of this format orients the reader quickly. Preliminaries such as the name of the rite or its place in the human hierarchy are always found in the first section. The ritual itself is very briefly summarized without editorial comments in the second section, followed by the author's interpretation of each item, in order, in the third and largest section. This triadic structure may itself subtly express the Neoplatonic triad of remaining, procession, and return, since the three parts present the foundation, the successive events which the senses perceive, and the interpreter's return from sense perception up to the conceptual contemplation.

While the tripartite format is consistently Dionysian, the nomenclature of the headings is not. Here too the subtitles show signs of an editorial hand, and one usage in particular could be seriously misleading. In each chapter's second section, the subtitle applies the word *mystery* to the rite in question, implying a common category for the six rituals treated in the six chapters. This pattern in the titles is contradicted by the body of the text itself, where there are only three sacraments, and where the singular form *mystery* is never applied to a specific rite as a whole. The Areopagite used a creative variety of words for liturgical ceremonies, but the Greek word *telete* for sacrament (485A, 232) was only used for baptism, Eucharist, and the consecration of the ointment. The plural form *mysteria* could mean mysterious concepts, the eucharistic elements, or sacred ceremonies in general, but the singular was never used to indicate an entire rite. Thus the practice of calling each chapter's second section "the mystery of . . ." may rightly indicate the sections' common purpose in describing the contents of a rite, but it wrongly implies a common status for the six rites, since ordination, tonsure, and funerals are not Dionysian sacraments.²

To compound matters further, the headings in this second chapter are also misleading in their use of the name illumination for baptism.³ This nomenclature appears only in these two titles (392A, 200; 393A, 201) and in the etymology found later in chapter 3: "that sacred sacrament of the divine birth . . . first introduces the light and is the source of all divine illumination. And because this is so we praise it, giving it the designation of what it achieves, that is, illumination" (425A, 210). Similarly, the specific term *baptism* is only used twice, and refers to the actual immersion (404A, 207; 565A, 257), not to the overall ceremony, which is consistently called "the divine birth." These introductory comments on baptism explain the author's preference for the phrase "divine birth." Our likeness to God and union with God (392A, 200), which is the hierarchy's purpose, must have a divine start. "Divinization is to have a divine birth. . . . So, therefore, let us behold the divine symbols which have to do with the divine birth" (392B, 201).

The second section in this chapter is longer than those of other chapters, because it details not only the rite of baptism but also the preparation for it. Since the hierarch has proclaimed God's love for all, the process begins when someone responds and seeks out a sponsor, who then takes him to the hierarch (393B, 201).⁴ Some instruction is mentioned in this regard, but not described. The hierarch presides over the preliminaries, beginning with a hymn, some questions and their answers, the imposition of hands, and the sign of the cross. After the enrolling of the candidate and the sponsor, the hierarch continues with prayer. He has the deacons undress the man and faces him westward for the threefold renunciation and eastward for the triple profession of faith. While the candidate is anointed with oil by the priests, the baptismal water is consecrated with the myron, or ointment, by the hierarch. It is clear later on (505B, 237) that baptisms were also performed by the priests, which might mean that this hierarchical or "episcopal" consecration of the font was not part of every baptism. The catechumen is immersed three times as a priest calls out his name, and as the hierarch calls on God's threefold name. "Each time the initiate is plunged into the water and emerges, the hierarch invokes the three persons of the divine blessedness" (396D, 203). Finally, the baptized is anointed with the myron-ointment and is proclaimed ready to continue with the Eucharist. (For further details, see 396BCD, 202–3.)

The third section, "Contemplation," consists of the author's spiritual interpretations for most of these liturgical activities, following the same order as the rite itself. It thus serves as a sequential commentary on the rite of baptism in a relatively simple format, although the interpretations themselves are often complex and hard to follow. Since this section on baptism contains the author's first application of his interpretive principles to a specific rite, it begins with a brief summation of the method itself. That summary first makes a distinction between the superficial, introductory impression given to the uninitiated, namely, that physical washing symbolizes a moral purification, and the deeper or advanced teaching reserved for the more experienced and sophisticated interpreter (397B, 204). Later on, the explanations of the synaxis and the ointment consecration will also observe this distinction between an introductory lesson and the deeper meaning (428C, 212; 473B, 225). The advanced or higher meaning presupposes the author's overall view of symbols as "perceptible tokens of the conceptual things. They show the way to them and lead to them, and the conceptual things are the source and the understanding underlying the perceptible manifestations of hierarchy" (397C, 205). With this restatement of theory, the treatise begins its practice of liturgical hermeneutics.

To summarize drastically what receives numerous rhetorical flourishes from our author, the hierarch's generous teaching and welcome to all symbolizes God's own generosity and forgiveness (400B, 205), while the candidate's eagerness and indirect approach through a sponsor indicate appropriate self-

examination and proper hierarchical order (400C, 206). The disrobing and westward renunciation are plainly the first half of one's conversion, as completed by turning to the eastern light and professing new faith (401B, 206–7). The initial anointing with oil is compared with an athlete's preparation (404A, 207), while the triple immersion itself indicates burial, including Jesus' three days in the tomb. "Now because of this it is quite appropriate to hide the initiate completely in the water as an image of this death and this burial" (404B, 208).

In clear contrast to the earlier emphasis on the incongruous and dissimilar symbols for God and for the angels in the Bible, these various symbolic actions are expressly considered to be appropriate to their subject matter: "you can see that the hierarchic rites are the precise images of these realities. . . . Join me in observing how appropriately the symbols convey the sacred" (401C, 404B, 207). Neither here in this chapter nor anywhere else in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* does Dionysius present or even mention his earlier principle of incongruity, that every symbol falls short of its heavenly referent and therefore cannot be unequivocally true. Precisely as symbols, such things must be interpreted, which means using affirmation and negation simultaneously, so that we might be uplifted to the higher conceptual meanings, and beyond them to union with God. Yet *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, with all its explanations for symbolic acts, completely lacks any discussion or even hint of negation and incongruity in its theory and practice of interpretation. Rather than conclude that the author was inconsistent, or that biblical symbols need negation and liturgical symbols do not, we should ask whether his earlier insistence that all symbols combine relative congruity and incongruity (and therefore affirmation and negation) is silently assumed throughout this treatise.

CHAPTER 3: THE SYNAXIS OR COMMUNION

The third chapter contains the same format of three parts: an introduction including some etymology, a narration of the rite itself, and then its lengthy exposition. This sacrament is called by several names, including Eucharist, and especially synaxis, which means gathering.⁵ Like the name *communion*, the word *synaxis* reveals that "every sacredly initiating operation draws our fragmented lives together into a one-like divinization. It forges a divine unity out of the divisions within us. It grants us communion and union with the One" (424CD, 209). As "the sacrament of sacraments," the synaxis is the culmination of several other rites, such as baptism and ordination. Since Communion concludes those ceremonies, it therefore completes or perfects them (424D, 209).

Only a single page is needed to describe the service itself, or at least its main components. Although the author himself makes little of it, a convenient and conventional dividing point within the rite is the dismissal of the catechumens and others after the scripture readings:

The hierarch, having said a sacred prayer at the divine altar, begins the censuring there and then he makes the round of the entire sacred place. Returning to the divine altar, he begins the sacred singing of the psalms and the entire assembly joins him in this. Then the deacons begin the reading of the holy tablets, after which the catechumens leave the sacred precincts, followed by the possessed and the penitents, so that only those remain who are entitled to the vision and communion of the divine things. Some of the deacons stand on guard in the sacred place to ensure that the doors are kept closed. Others perform tasks appropriate to their order. (425BC, 210–11)

First, even those still awaiting initiation will receive an introductory lesson from the simple appearances of these things. Beyond the teachings contained in the readings, those who are dismissed at least know that the initiated ones stay to share bread and wine. This illustrates, at a minimum, the virtue of sharing things peacefully and in common, and commemorates the Last Supper (428B, 212). But all of this is preliminary and elementary, sufficient only for the uninitiated. As the initiated and even the teachers of these things, “we” can penetrate to a deeper contemplation of their meaning.

Dionysius continues, “I think we must now go inside the sacred things and reveal the meaning of the first of the images” (428D, 212), namely, the procession and return of the hierarch as he censures the entire area. In this fascinating passage, Dionysius applies the philosophical concept of procession and return not only to the hierarch’s censuring procession and return to the altar, but also to three other areas. As the later Scholiast said, “Note that the things to do with the censuring are understood anagogically in three ways” (*Scholia*, 140; cf. 128A). The symbol of censuring is applied first to the activity of the Deity, which proceeds outward to us but also remains in itself; second, to the sequence of this sacrament, which remains indivisible yet is pluralized into variegated symbols in order to return all partakers to its own oneness; and third, to the overall role of the hierarch, who generously and pedagogically stoops to a “multitude of sacred enigmas” and yet returns to his own lofty post without loss: “In his mind he journeys toward the One. With a clear eye he looks upon the basic unity of those realities underlying the sacred rites. He makes the divine return to the primary things the goal of his procession toward secondary things, which he had undertaken out of love for humanity” (429B, 213). This comprehensive application of the motif of procession and return resumes shortly when the central sacramental actions are discussed.

Dionysius next considers the Psalms and the scripture readings, which have few symbolic activities attached to them, but become the occasion for a cryptic enumeration of the biblical books that are read. For example, "they teach the lore of holy judges, of wise kings and of priests who live in God" (429C, 213), meaning the books of Judges, Kings, and the other books. The sung Psalms unite and harmonize the worshipers, preparing them to hear the fuller and clearer narrations in the readings, which progress naturally from the Old Testament to the New: "The truth of what was forecast by the one was confirmed by the events described by the other. The divine works are the consummation of the divine words" (432B, 214). This last sentence illustrates the Areopagite's complex vocabulary, and the magnitude of the decisions that stand behind any translation. Literally, the text says that *theurgy* is the consummation of *theology*, which may seem to be far removed from a discussion of the biblical testaments. But in the Areopagite's dictionary, *theurgy* is literally "God's work" (e.g., 436C, 218) and *theology* is often "God's word," as already mentioned. Since there is no mistaking the context as a discussion of the relationship between the two testaments, this creative expression means that the divine works of saving history recorded in the New Testament are the fulfillment of God's predicting words in the Old. The benefits of these readings, principally on the lowest orders of those yet being purified, is briefly mentioned here and is discussed more fully in chapters 4 (477A, 227) and 6 (532A, 243–44).

The description of the dismissal that follows the readings is the author's occasion to characterize more fully those who leave at this point, those who are yet being purified: the catechumens, the possessed, and the penitents (432C, 215). The catechumens are the lowest order, being as yet uninitiated and still awaiting their divine birth. The fatherly scriptures "incubate" them until the proper time for their birth and further nourishment (433AB, 215–16). Those considered to be possessed by demons have weakened before a powerful, opposing passion, but they could be strengthened by the scriptures (433C, 216). Further, those in penance are also liturgically dismissed by the deacons, although little is said about them. A final summary of the groups which are dismissed abandons this clear triadic pattern, and implies that there are more than three groups (436B, 217; cf. 477A, 227; 532A, 243).

Although the Dionysian interpretations simply continue with the creed that follows the dismissal, at this point we resume quoting the original narration of the rite itself from the second section:

The chosen deacons, along with the priests, put on the divine altar the sacred bread and the cup of blessing. And all this is preceded by the singing by the entire gathering of the hymn of universal faith. Then the divine hierarch says a sacred prayer and bids holy peace to all. All the others exchange the ritual kiss and the mystical reading of the sacred volumes is concluded. After the

hierarchy and the priests wash their hands in water, the hierarchy sits at the center of the divine altar surrounded by certain of the deacons, together with the priests. The hierarchy speaks in praise of the sacred works of God, sets about the performance of the most divine acts, and lifts into view the things praised through the sacredly displayed symbols. (425CD, 211)

The "hymn of universal faith" is undoubtedly the Nicene Creed. The author also calls it a universal song of praise, a confession of praise, and a symbol of adoration. Beyond these descriptive phrases, the author's preferred expression is a "hierarchical thanksgiving" (436C, 218). It is identified as the creed because of its position here, and because the Areopagite's summary of it outlines creation, incarnation, and communion, even though he never directly quotes the creed itself. This identification has been an important part of the historical task of dating the Dionysian corpus, since the eucharistic liturgy did not include the creed until well after the Council of Chalcedon, around A.D. 476, and even then not everywhere at once. A commentary that presupposes its inclusion in the divine liturgy, therefore, must have been written considerably after this date. Since the Dionysian writings were first cited around 525, simple arithmetic and round numbers suggest a midpoint between 476 and 525, namely, A.D. 500 as roughly the date of their composition.

The covered bread and cup are brought forward, the kiss of peace is exchanged, the names of the dead are read, and the clergy wash their hands. The exchange of peace indicates the community's reconciliation (437A, 218), and the external washing symbolizes inner purity (440A, 219–20). The reading of the names (by the head deacon at funerals; 556C, 251) reminds us to follow their example, and occurs here for a reason: "Reverently take note of the following also. It is while there are placed on the divine altar the reverend symbols by which Christ is signaled and partaken that one immediately reads out the names of the saints. It is made clear in this way that they are unshakably bound to him in a sacred and transcendent union" (437C, 219).

Then the hierarchy speaks in praise of the sacred works of God, a prayer recitation of saving history that is never directly quoted, but is paraphrased at length (440C–444A, 220–21). This anaphora (eucharistic prayer or series of prayers) describes the pitiable human condition, the divine generosity in assuming human nature in order to change it, the warrant of Jesus' saying, "Do this in remembrance of me," and the hierarchy's prayer for worthiness.

Next, in words precisely repeating the summary given above, the hierarchy "performs the most divine acts and lifts into view the things praised through the sacredly clothed symbols" (444A, 221–22; cf. 425D, 211, and 440B, 220). In Dionysian eucharistic theology, the emphasis is not so much upon the consecration of the material elements of bread and wine, as upon the sacred actions involving the loaf and the cup. The author describes and interprets these actions with care, which should be matched by our line-by-line investigation of

his meaning: "The bread which had been covered and undivided is now uncovered and divided into many parts. Similarly, he shares the one cup with all, symbolically multiplying and distributing the One in symbolic fashion. With these things he completes the most holy sacred act" (444A, 222).

This uncovering and dividing of the bread and wine has a complex christological meaning, specifically regarding the incarnation: "For the simple, hidden oneness of Jesus . . . has become a reality that is composite and visible" (444A, 222). The point is not simply that Jesus' body is represented in the material of bread and wine, but that the process of *becoming* a visible and corporeal body is symbolized in the unveiling and dividing of the loaf and cup. It has become pluralized so that many may partake of it and thereby be made one with Christ and with each other. At pains to explain this point, the author repeats and expands it:

This, then, is what the hierarch reveals in the sacred rites, when he uncovers the veiled gifts, when he makes a multiplicity of what had originally been one, when the distributed sacrament and those receiving it are made perfectly one, when a perfect communion of all the participants is achieved. By resorting to the perceptible, to imagery, he makes clear that which gives life to our minds. He offers Jesus Christ to our view. He shows how out of love for humanity Christ emerged from the hiddenness of his divinity to take on human shape, to be utterly incarnate among us while yet remaining unmixed. He shows how he came down to us from his own natural unity to our own fragmented level, yet without change. (444C, 222)

That Christ is said to have been "utterly incarnate among us while yet remaining unmixed" occasions a Chalcedonian apologetic (one that insists that there are two natures, divine and human, in Christ) in the earliest scholia. They argue against any Apollinarian sympathies (that would insist that there is only one nature, the divine, in Christ) about a compromised (not full) humanity (*Scholia* 152A; cf. 144D, 149A, and 157A). Note that here, as previewed much earlier, the motif of procession and return applies to the central events of the sacrament. Representing Christ's incarnation, the elements proceed into plurality so that those who partake can be returned to unity with God. The author continues the passage:

[The hierarch] shows how, inspired by love for us, his [Christ's] kindly activities called the human race to enter participation with himself and to have a share in his own goodness, if we would make ourselves one with his divine life and imitate it as far as we can, so that we may achieve perfection and truly enter into communion with God and with the divine things. (444CD, 222–23)

The Areopagite's interpretation of the fraction (breaking of the bread) and distribution is perfectly consistent with his overall understanding of the liturgy:

the sacramental descent into perceptible plurality results in a conceptual ascent to the simplicity and unity of the higher, divine realm.

To conclude the original narration of the rite:

Having thus revealed the kindly gifts of the works of God, he himself comes into communion with them and exhorts the others to follow him. After receiving and then distributing the divine Communion he concludes with the sacred thanksgiving. And while the general crowd is satisfied to look at the divine symbols he, on the other hand, is continuously uplifted by the divine Spirit toward the most holy source of the sacramental rite and he does so in blessed and conceptual contemplations, in that purity which marks his life as it conforms to God. (425D–428A, 211)

In the Dionysian hierarchical universe, it is essential that the hierarch receive communion before he distributes it. "Reception of the mysteries always comes before their mystical distribution. This is the universal order and the harmonious arrangement appropriate to the divine realities" (445A, 223). This "trickle-down" direction, essential to hierarchical theory ever since, applies not only to the distribution of communion but also to moral and spiritual leadership in general. After the others have communed, whether few or all, they "end the ceremony with a sacred thanksgiving" (445B, 223–24) appropriate to the infinite gifts of God.

This introduction to the Dionysian eucharistic liturgy and its interpretation raises several crucial questions. Does the author presuppose Christ's real presence, or is the synaxis only a set of symbols? The final chapter refers to a bodily communion, but with the "symbols" (565B, 257). What about the absence in this chapter, indeed in the whole book, of negative theology and of any apparent awareness of the incongruity of symbols? In terms of influence, how was this, the oldest liturgical commentary, received into the tradition of sacramental theology? Although the tradition of liturgical commentaries principally concerns this chapter on the eucharistic liturgy, it is surveyed below, at the end of this part.

CHAPTER 4. THE CONSECRATION OF THE OINTMENT (MYRON)

The fourth chapter of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* presents the consecration of an ointment for use in several other liturgical ceremonies. Dionysius calls this ritual "another rite of perfection belonging to the same order" as the synaxis (472D, 224), as opposed to the rites of purification or illumination. The introductory section is extremely brief, but does supply a capsule statement of procedure: "Our teachers have named it the sacrament of ointment. After we have examined in detail the sacred imagery its parts present, we shall thus be

uplifted in hierarchical contemplations through its parts to the One" (472D, 224). Note the similarities with an earlier statement of biblical exegesis: "With eyes that look beyond the world I must behold the sacred forms attributed to it [the angelic hierarchy] by the scriptures, so that we may be uplifted by way of these mysterious representations to their divine simplicity" (*Celestial Hierarchy* 4, 177C, 156). In both cases, Dionysius proposes a reverent regard for the traditional symbols, whether the biblical depictions of the angels or the liturgical actions of consecration, so that we might be uplifted through and beyond these things to the higher realm.

The second section, which presents the rite's imagery, is also extremely brief:

As happens with the synaxis, the imperfect orders have to be excluded as soon as the hierarch has spread the fragrance around the whole sacred space, and all have reverently completed the singing of the psalms and the readings of the most divine scriptures. Then the hierarch takes the ointment, covered by a dozen sacred folds, and places it on the divine altar. Everyone joins in that sacred song which God inspired in the prophets. A consecrating prayer is offered over the ointment and this is then used in the holy sacraments of sanctification for almost all of the hierarchy's rites of consecration. (473A, 224–25)

The third section ("Contemplation") begins just as the contemplations of baptism and the synaxis began, with an "introductory, uplifting lesson" (473B, 225). Here the word *anagogy* has the almost technical sense of an interpretation or teaching that uplifts. The preliminary lesson, in this case, is that "divine men cover in secret the fragrance of that sanctity within their minds" (473B, 225). Even the beginners would know that this rite concerns something fragrant and something hidden from their view, both by its overall secrecy and by the "dozen sacred folds." The hiddenness itself plainly teaches that divine knowledge is confidential. It is more difficult to appreciate how physical aromas are "images of that infinitely divine fragrance" (476A, 226). To meet this challenge, one must concentrate single-mindedly, as an artist does in accurately depicting something (473C, 225–26).

Here the interpretation goes beyond the exterior of this ceremony into its "more divine beauty" (476B, 226), since the ointment and its meaning are not equally hidden from all, but are revealed according to one's receptivity. First, this rite is in the exclusive domain of the hierarch, since it is clearly part of the highest power, that of perfection. Second, it shares with the synaxis the initial censuring procession, the scripture lessons, and dismissal. Although the discussion here presupposes the earlier interpretations of those elements, it also itemizes the effects of the scripture readings on various categories of lay people. The author starts with the uninitiated and the possessed, who are incubated and strengthened by the scriptures, and then move on to the communicants, who

are illuminated, and the perfected (the monks), who are united to God (477A, 227–28).

The features of this rite that are unique, as opposed to the features it shares with the synaxis, concern the consecration of the ointment itself, and the six pairs of folds that cover it. The ointment is “a mixture of fragrant substances,” and the composite nature of the ointment is itself considered symbolic, “giving a form to what is without form” (480A, 228), since it symbolizes Jesus. Although the author discusses this identification of the ointment with Jesus, he never says how its composition or mixture of substances is itself symbolic of Jesus. Could the reference be to the combination of divine and human natures? One modern interpreter has speculated that this mixture reflects a Monophysite Christology in that it gives preeminence to the divine over the human. For the balsam oil or other aromatic, despite its lesser quantity, dominates the other oil in the resulting fragrance, just as the invisible divinity came to dominate the bulkier humanity. This speculation is linked to the possibility earlier in the chapter of a pun on the word *artist* to allude to Peter the Fuller, (d. 488), a Syrian from Antioch who was associated with Monophysite leanings.⁶

Apart from any doctrinal overtones about mixing substances, the fragrance itself is symbolic in that its pleasure is perceived according to one’s capacity and proximity. It also whets the appetite for food, just as the rich source of divine fragrances, Jesus himself, bestows such aromas upon those who are receptive, in order “to cause a longing for God’s gifts, and to feed on conceptual food” (480A, 229). Those who are closest and most receptive are, of course, the angelic beings. In the course of the sacramental rite, even closer to the ointment than the presiding hierarch is the twelvefold cloth that covers it. This has a clear meaning to the Areopagite, since “the twelve folds signify the order of seraphim” (480B, 229). They are the closest to the divine source, and receive the fullest measure of its fragrant presence. Their physical descriptions in the scriptures have already been discussed in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, but are reviewed here, especially the six wings that not only cover the mysteries but also uplift the seraphim in flight (481B, 230). Thus it is not arbitrary that the covering involves twelve folds, since two six-winged seraphim are here symbolized, at least abstractly or perhaps even by artistic realism.⁷

Furthermore, the covering remains over the ointment during the consecration, which leads to a discussion of the symbolism of the ointment itself: “Hence the tradition of the sacred symbols covers the divine ointment with the seraphim even during the sanctification, and it does so to show and to demonstrate that Christ remains forever unchanged even when fully and truly made one of us” (484A, 231). As a symbol for Christ, who consecrates others without change in himself, the ointment becomes the consecrating medium in other rites, namely, the finale of baptism, the consecration of the baptismal water (to which Dionysius seems to be the earliest witness⁸), and the consecration of the altar (484D, 231–32). At baptism, the ointment gives a visitation of the Holy

Spirit, since Jesus received that visitation (in his human form) and transmits it to us. Its cruciform application to the font shows that even the pit of death is now subject to the one who “willingly died on the cross for the sake of our divine birth” (484B, 231). As a symbol for Jesus, the ointment also consecrates the altar in a rite mentioned later but never discussed. But since the altar itself symbolizes Christ, on whom we are to be consecrated, the imagery is compounded. Could the ointment that consecrates and the altar that is consecrated both represent Christ? This is no barrier to Dionysian exegesis, since “it is the most holy Jesus who consecrates himself for us” (485A, 232, citing John 17:19).

As if by afterthought, the author remembers to identify the sacred song sung by all during this consecration. It is Hebrew for “Praise the Lord,” namely the Alleluia. Neither here nor anywhere else in the corpus is a single word of any rite intentionally quoted. Allusions to the liturgical texts are always indirect and oblique, such as this avoidance of the simple Hebrew word *Alleluia* by translating it into Greek instead.

The chapter also closes with a reference to this rite as perfecting. On the one hand, the specific term for a sacrament is this same word, *telete* (perfector). On the other hand, Dionysius here has in mind his specific triad of purification, illumination, and perfection, that must now be correlated with the sacraments and the overall idea of hierarchy. He has stated that this rite is on the same level as the synaxis in terms of the highest power, that of perfection. The sacramental rite of the consecration of the myron ointment is given the highest honor: “It is, so to say, the perfecting rite of God which [way of speaking] praises in a double sense its divine work of perfection. God, first of all, having become man, was consecrated for us and, secondly, this divine act is the source of all perfection and of all consecration” (485A, 232).

After interpreting baptism, the eucharist, and the consecration rite as the three sacraments, and afterward introducing the category of perfection that is part of another familiar triad, the author is poised to correlate the three sacraments and the three powers of purification, illumination, and perfection. Characteristically, he does not do so directly, but in terms of yet another triad, the clerical ranks of hierarchy, priests, and deacons, which are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: THE CLERGY AND THEIR ORDINATIONS

In the formal structure of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the fifth chapter presents and interprets the ceremony of the consecration or ordination of hierarchs, priests, and deacons. This specific subject presupposes so much general orientation about hierarchical order and harmony that the chapter must first explain

the relationships of the three clerical offices to the three rites already presented. It does so in a wide-ranging discussion that employs yet another triad: purification, illumination, and perfection.

First, Dionysius presents every hierarchy as tripartite: the sacraments, those who preside over them, and those who are initiated (501A, 233). This applies perfectly to the human hierarchy, but only poorly to the heavenly one. Dionysius certainly presented a hierarchical relationship between superior and inferior beings with regard to the angels, but the celestial tripartite arrangement consisted of three groups of beings, with no mention of sacraments. Similarly, a brief discussion of a "hierarchy of the Law" here attempts to draw a parallel between the human hierarchy and the Old Testament tradition in that the latter also had sacramental imagery, initiators such as Moses, and those initiated. The point of discussing the human hierarchy alongside the heavenly and the newly introduced "legal hierarchy" is not really to force these weak parallels, but to present the human hierarchy as the mean term between extremes: "It is both celestial and of the Law for it occupies a place half way between two opposites. With the one [the celestial] it shares the contemplations of understanding; with the other [the legal] it has in common the use of varied symbolism derived from the realm of perception, symbolism by means of which there is a sacred uplifting to the divine" (501D, 234).

The symbols of the ecclesiastical hierarchy bridge the gap between the earlier and lowlier dependence upon sense perception (the hierarchy in the days of the Law) and the future and higher purity of conceptual contemplation (the heavenly hierarchy). Furthermore, and this is crucial for understanding the author's interpretive method, the symbols fill that gap by lifting us up to the divine. The orderly, hierarchical way this occurs requires initial, middle, and final powers:

The first godlike power of the most holy work of the sacraments is the sacred purification of the uninitiated. Its middle power is to illuminate and to initiate those whom it has purified. Its final power, embracing all that went before, is to bring about in the initiates a more perfect understanding of that to which they have been initiated. (504A, 235)

This triad has already been applied to the angels, as discussed in chapter 7 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. It is here briefly applied first to the clergy (who purify, illuminate, and perfect), next to those initiated (who are purified, illuminated for contemplation, and perfected in their understanding), and then finally to the sacraments:

Something has already been said about the triple power connected with the holy work of the sacraments. From scripture it has been shown that the sacred divine birth is a purification and an illuminating enlightenment, that the sacraments of the synaxis and of the myron-ointment provide a perfecting knowl-

edge and understanding of the divine workings and that it is through this that there is effected both the unifying uplifting toward the divinity and the most blessed communion with it. (504BC, 235–36)

In this summary statement, note first that the power of perfection is not a unitive power above and beyond illuminating knowledge. In fact, it is the perfection of knowledge and understanding, and as such it effects the unifying uplifting toward the divine. Second, there is no simple one-to-one correlation of the three powers to the three sacraments. Baptism is presented in terms of the two powers of purification and illumination, while both the synaxis and the myron consecration are associated with perfection. Furthermore, we know from earlier statements that baptism also includes perfection, in the final anointing of the candidate with the perfecting ointment, and that the synaxis and the ointment consecration also include purification in that the scripture readings in the first half of the service help to purify the lower order. This inclusion of purification in the rites of perfection can also be assumed, since a superior power always embraces the inferior. Thus all three powers are present in all three sacraments, although with different emphases.

Instead of explaining any of this, Dionysius presses ahead to the chapter's principal subject, the clerical rank's "three harmonious orders—the one which purifies, the one which illuminates, and the one which brings about perfection" (504C, 236). Hierarchical mediation requires that the superior pass things on to the inferior, and therefore the highest order, the hierarchs, comes first in the discussion. In terms of the triad of powers, the order of hierarchs is the perfecting or consecrating order, in which "the whole arrangement of the human hierarchy is fulfilled and completed" (505B, 236). The entire hierarchy with all three of its powers depends upon the hierarch, as already discussed in the first chapter. Even if a priest officiates at a baptism or the Eucharist, this presupposes the hierarch's prior consecration of the ointment, of the altar, and even of the priest himself in his ordination (505BC, 237). Thus the hierarch's efficacious presence permeates every rite and office.

The "light-bearing order of priests" guides the initiates in their illumination or contemplation, while the order of deacons purifies those still needing purification. Purification by deacons occurs in the disrobing and renunciations at baptism, their purifying reading of the scriptures, and the dismissal and guarding of the doors (508B, 238).

Dionysius summarizes his argument in these words: "I have now shown that the order of hierarchs has the task of consecration and of perfection, that the illuminative order of priests brings light and that the task of the deacons is to purify and to discern the imperfect" (508C, 238). Of course, the hierarchs have not only the highest power of perfection, but also the two lower powers as well; similarly, the priests conduct both illumination and purification. Again, a car-

dinal rule of the Areopagite's hierarchical system is that the higher powers always contain in themselves any lower power, but not vice versa. In this way, the ranks of the clergy are an image of the divine order and activity, since "the divinity first purifies those minds which it reaches and then illuminates them. Following on their illumination it perfects them in a perfect conformity to God" (508D, 239).

After this long introduction on the overall functions and places of the clergy within his hierarchical universe, Dionysius turns finally to the stated topic of the chapter, their ordination rites:

At his consecration the hierarch kneels on both knees in front of the altar. On his head he carries God's revealed word, together with the hand of the hierarch who is consecrating him. This latter performs the rite of consecration with most sacred invocations. The priest also kneels on both knees before the divine altar. The hierarch places his right hand on his head and in this way he sanctifies him with the consecrating invocations. The deacon kneels on one knee before the divine altar. The hierarch places his right hand on his head and with invocations suitable to the deaconal functions he consecrates him. The hierarch makes the sign of the cross on everyone whom he consecrates and for each of them makes the announcement and he gives each of them the kiss of consecration. All the clergy present at the ceremony take turns after the hierarch in kissing the one who has been consecrated in one of the above clerical orders. (509BC, 239)

It is necessary to quote the entire summary because the commentary that follows does not proceed according to the sequence of the rite or of this summary paragraph. Instead, it considers first the items that are common to all three consecrations, namely, the presentation at the altar, the genuflection, the imposition of hands, the sign of the cross, the announcement, and the concluding kiss. It then proceeds to the items that are particular to each order and to each ordination.

The presentation and genuflection at the altar symbolize the ordinands' complete devotion to God, the source of every consecration. The imposition of hands by a hierarch teaches the hierarchical principle that these powers come to the ordinands from God and through a mediator. The sign of the cross indicates a renunciation of the flesh and the imitation of Jesus (512A, 240). The ritual announcement of the candidate's name means that the ordaining hierarch is not merely following his own impulses, but rather God's choice. In the same way, Moses did not consecrate Aaron until God commanded it, Jesus did not consecrate himself or his disciples without ascribing this choice to the Father and Spirit, and the disciples did not choose a successor to Judas without asking God to point out the chosen one (512D, 241). The final kiss symbolizes the love of peers, the sacred communion of like minds, and the joyous shared love that conforms to God (513B, 242).

As for features distinctive to each order, the hierarchs alone have the scriptures placed upon their head, the priests bend both knees, and the deacons bend only one knee. Since the scriptures are handed down by God and reveal to us all that we can know of God, it is fitting that this revelation be symbolized by their placement on the head of the hierarch, who not only receives this enlightenment but also passes it on down to the others.⁹ Kneeling indicates humility; the single-kneed posture of the deacons indicates that they possess only the single power of purification, whereas the double-kneed posture of the priests indicates that they possess the two functions of purification and illumination (516B, 243). In all of this, we must remember that Dionysius may be reflecting some practices known to his actual community, but he wishes to present everything as the apostolic beginning of the tradition, even while giving these things his own particular interpretations.

His concluding comments introduce those who are guided by the clergy, namely, those who are purified, illuminated, and perfected. These, the lay orders, are the subject of the next chapter. He gives a succinct summary of the entire hierarchy of three triads: "it is through the three holy sacraments and powers that the three ranks of holy initiators preside over the three orders of those being initiated" (516A, 242).

CHAPTER 6: THE LAY ORDERS, INCLUDING MONASTIC TONSURE

The core of this chapter is the description and interpretation of the rite of monastic profession and tonsure. It is loosely organized in the same literary format as the preceding chapters. But it begins with a discussion not of the monks but rather of the other lay people (who do not have a comparable ceremony), and it includes a summary of the entire human hierarchy. Furthermore, and far from the subject of monastic tonsure, it concludes by expanding on the discussion begun in the previous work on how purification can apply to the angels.

Spanning the spectrum from catechumens and penitents through the communicants to the select group of monks, the lay orders are hard to designate by a singular collective noun. The author calls them all initiates, meaning both those who are already initiated and also those who are in the process of becoming initiated. The lay people are frequently subdivided into three groups: those being purified, the communicants, and the monks. The first group is liturgically identifiable at the dismissal (532A, 243). As mentioned above in the discussion of this pivotal moment in the liturgy, the group that is "yet being purified" is itself subdivided into three categories: the catechumens, the pos-

essed, and the penitents. Yet in this chapter there seem to be even more than three groups “of those purified by the incubating and purifying power of the deacons” (532A, 244), although the distinctions are blurred.

The intermediate, contemplative rank consists of the communicants, who are entrusted to the priests for illumination. This identification of the middle group of the sacred people, or the laity, employs the middle power of illumination, between purification and perfection (532B, 244). Accordingly, the most exalted order of the initiates, the sacred rank of monks, includes all purification and all contemplation in its elevation to the power of perfection. The order of monks is entrusted to the perfecting power of the hierarchs, who have completed or perfected the order’s understanding of the sacraments contemplated: “Thanks to their understanding, it has been uplifted into the most complete perfection proportionate to this order” (532D, 245).

Because of this exalted status, the tradition has called them by more than one name; “*therapeutae*” indicates their servanthood, and “monks” indicates their singular way of life.¹⁰ Although they are at the peak of the lay orders, they are completely subject to the clergy, as *Letter 8* reminded the monk Demophilus. Their rite of profession is a secondary ceremony in the hierarchy, presided over not by a hierarch as in the clerical ordinations, but by a priest. (Yet this would seem to be inconsistent with the author’s principle that the monks’ perfection needs to come from the perfecting order, the hierarchs. The perfecting rite of monastic profession and tonsure would seem beyond the priest’s purifying and illuminating powers. This apparent inconsistency and others may stem from some differences between the author’s theoretical system and the practices of his actual historical context.)

As for the rite that makes monks, the full passage reads:

The priest stands before the divine altar and chants the invocation for a monk. The person being initiated stands behind the priests and does not kneel on either one or both knees. The divinely granted scriptures are not put on his head. He simply stands while the priest chants the secret invocations over him. When this is finished the priest approaches the initiate. First he asks him if he will not only renounce but even refuse to phantasize anything which could be a distraction to his way of life. He reminds him of the rules governing a fully perfect life and openly asserts that he must surpass the median way of life. After the initiate has devoutly promised to do all this the priest makes the sign of the cross on him. He cuts his hair and invokes the three persons of the divine blessedness. He takes away all his clothes and gives him others. Then, together with all the other sacred men present at the ceremony he gives him the kiss [of peace] and confers on him the right to commune in the divine mysteries. (533B, 245–46)

This rite is distinguished from the clerical ordinations in that the monk does not kneel on both knees, or on one knee, but stands. The monks stand alone in

their solitary status, explains the punster Dionysius with typical wordplay. They are not entrusted with leading others, whether in the two priestly powers of illuminating and purifying or in the single power of the deacon (533C, 246). The renunciations separate the monks and their lifestyle from the intermediate order of lay people, placing them closer to the clergy than to their fellow initiates (533D, 247). The sign of the cross proclaims the death of fleshly desire, both here and in ordinations: “[Tonsure] is a sign of a pure and unencumbered life, a life adorned by no unworthy appearances forged by the mind but rising freely thanks to beauties which are not manmade but which lift the soul in unity and monastic state up to conformity with God” (536A, 247).

The change of clothing signals the change of order from the middle rank to the greater perfection, just as the baptismal change of clothing indicated the earlier uplifting from purification to contemplation and illumination. As in the ordinations, the kiss of peace presents the “joyous bonds of shared and loving well-wishing” (536B, 247). The concluding invitation to communion is mentioned here not because the new monk was previously denied this sacrament, for the middle order of the illuminated is certainly an order admitted to Communion. Rather, it is discussed here because now a monk will surpass the middle order’s contemplation with a perfected understanding and he will receive communion in a different way. Beyond the spiritual implications regarding new insights, this reference to a different way of receiving communion may refer concretely to the monks’ new status in standing closer, seeing more, and receiving Communion before the rest of the lay people (1088D–1089A, 272f.). Indeed, we learn here (and not in chapter 5) that the newly ordained is also immediately invited to participate in the Eucharist in his new office and its “proportionate share in the divine gift of this communion” (536C, 247–48).

In concluding this chapter, the author provides a summary for the entire human hierarchy and for *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, so far:

We must now sum up. The holy sacraments bring about purification, illumination, and perfection. The deacons form the order which purifies. The priests constitute the order which gives illumination. And the hierarchs, living in conformity with God, make up the order which perfects. As for those who are being purified, so long as they are still at this stage of purification they do not partake of the sacred vision or communion. The sacred people is the contemplative order. The order of those made perfect is that of the monks who live a single-minded life. (536D, 248)

This is the very passage used in part I to introduce the human hierarchy, yet drastically abbreviated. By now some of the complexities and interlocking relationships should be apparent. In conclusion, Dionysius repeats his standard argument that this, our human hierarchical arrangement, mirrors the ranks of heaven, and he anticipates again the argument that no angelic rank needs purification. But even the angels differ in the degree of their understanding, and

the lower celestial ranks can be purified from their relative “ignorance of truths not previously understood” (537B, 248–49). This may be a postscript to an individual chapter (and one which occasioned several complex scholia at *Scholia* 172CD and 173), but it is also a summary of the essay’s overall emphasis on the three powers. These powers are not moral purification, contemplative illumination, and a uniting perfection, but together involve the progressive understanding of sacred things, namely the proper uplifting interpretation of the biblical and liturgical traditions.

CHAPTER 7: FUNERALS, AND CONCLUSION

The seventh chapter of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* presents and interprets the Christian funeral rite¹¹ and concludes the work as a whole. As such, it stands outside of the triadic framework of three sacraments (chapters 2, 3 and 4), three clerical orders (chapter 5), and three lay orders (chapter 6).

The chapter begins with a discussion of death itself, and of the resurrection as reuniting one’s body and soul. It opposes mistaken pagan notions of death as the dissolution of being, the permanent rupture of body and soul, or the occasion for the soul’s assignment to a different body (553BC, 250). As death approaches, the faithful rejoice in song and prayer; then the body of the deceased is brought to the hierarch for the appropriate rites.

The ceremony itself is described with typical brevity:

The divine hierarch assembles the sacred gathering. If the deceased belonged to one of the clerical orders, then he is placed at the foot of the divine altar. Then the high priest begins with prayer and thanksgiving to God. If the deceased was one of the holy monks or of the sacred people the hierarch puts him in front of the sanctuary at the holy entrance reserved for the clergy. And then he recites the prayer of thanksgiving to God. The deacons then read out the true scriptural promises concerning our sacred resurrection and sing the psalms which also bear upon the same theme. The leader of the deacons then dismisses the catechumens. He reads out the names of the saints who are already dead and judges the one most recently deceased to be worthy of commemoration along with them. He calls upon everyone to pray for final beatitude in Christ. The divine hierarch then approaches and offers a most sacred prayer for the dead, at the conclusion of which he kisses the deceased, as do all those with him. After everyone has given the kiss the hierarch pours the oil on the deceased, prays for all, and lays the body in an honored place along with the bodies of others of his order. (556CD, 251–52)

Since the rite would provoke laughter among the profane, it must be contemplated in the light of Jesus (557A, 252). The placement of the corpse

according to one's station as clergy or laity indicates that "the fate of each one will correspond with the life he led here" (557A, 252). For this divine justice, the hierarch offers a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. After the scripture readings about the blessed inheritance, a chief deacon (a position mentioned nowhere else) dismisses only the catechumens, since they lack even "the first gift of light in the divine birth" (557C, 253). But the possessed and the penitents, who also need purification and who are also dismissed during the synaxis and the myron consecration, have previously received at least some initiation, despite their subsequent weaknesses. Since they may be strengthened by the rite's messages about fearlessness, rewards, and sorrows, they are allowed to stay for the rest of the funeral.

Next, the hierarch's prayer asks pardon for the deceased so that he might enjoy the rewards of the saints. At this point, the author expects the objection that the hierarch's prayer should be of no avail if these rewards are to match the deceased's life, which is now over: "By what prayer could the hierarch win for the dead person such a change of condition that it would be different from what he had earned during his life here?" (560D, 254). This challenge is supported by several scriptural examples, but is refuted nonetheless. First of all, an essential part of a holy life is to accept and to seek the mediating help of the leaders of the hierarchy (561B, 254–55). Furthermore, the hierarch seeks to conform his mediation to God's will, and therefore "does not offer this prayer for those who have died in a state of unholiness" (564A, 255). Conversely, the hierarch would never excommunicate someone if this judgment were not revealed from God (564B, 256).

The kiss of peace indicates the respect accorded one who has completed a faithful life. The anointing with oil (not myron) recalls the preliminary baptismal anointing, and its athletic imagery: "The sacred anointing with oil once called the initiate to sacred combat; now the pouring on of the oil reveals that in this sacred combat the deceased fought his way to victory" (565A, 257).

Finally, the hierarch places the body among those of others of the same order. This implies the transfer of the body to its final place of repose, although there is no indication of much movement at this point, much less a transfer to a locale outside or under the church. Since the body shared in the saint's journey, receiving along the way the imagery of the ointment and the symbols of communion even as the soul enjoyed the contemplative understanding of these rites, the body also receives honor in death and burial, and thereby anticipates the resurrection. This passing reference to the body's reception of the symbols of communion does not vitiate, but actually confirms, the impression that for Dionysius the crucial factor in the sacrament was the conceptual interpretation of the rite, not a bodily communion with Christ's body and blood.¹²

The chapter concludes with two unrelated appendixes. First, the secret "consecrating invocations" were not divulged in writing even in this communica-

tion to Timothy (565C, 257–58). Indeed, no liturgical text is quoted in the entire treatise. Second, the practice of infant baptism and infant Communion is defended, especially for the vicarious way that the renunciations and promises are spoken for the children by others. Only here, and not in chapters on baptism or the synaxis, does the corpus ever mention infant baptism or infant Communion. The initial answer to skeptics is that these things are mysteries revealed only partially, even to superior beings. They are simply to be accepted. Furthermore, in baptism the sponsors appropriately speak the renunciations and promises for the child, since they are taking on the responsibility to bring the child up in accordance with those promises (568B, 258). As for infant Communion, the last item treated in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* before its rapid conclusion, Dionysius says:

When the hierarch admits the child to a share in the sacred symbols it is so that he may derive nourishment from this, so that he may spend his entire life in the unceasing contemplation of the divine things, may progress in his communion with them, may therefore acquire a holy and enduring way of life, and may be brought up in sanctity by the guidance of a holy sponsor who himself lives in conformity with God. (568C, 259)

The very end of the treatise includes the modest protest that other interpreters could have contemplated and shared even more with Timothy, who himself will doubtless rise up to higher insight. This advanced enlightenment Dionysius wishes to receive from his epistolary son, “for I feel sure that my words will rekindle the sparks of God’s fire which sleep in you” (569A, 259).

Of course, this finale is a literary flourish, not a real invitation to surpass or supplement *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Nevertheless, it is instructive to review this liturgical commentary by noting what it chose to interpret and what it left out. The Areopagite consistently emphasized the liturgical actions and movements far more than the ritual words, which are never divulged and rarely interpreted, and more than the ceremonial objects, which are never described in themselves apart from their use in a gesture or activity. The suppression of all worship texts, even the word *Alleluia*, is not fully explained by the motive of secrecy, since the entire treatise is ostensibly addressed to a fellow initiate and hierarch or at least teacher. Even the phrase “lift up your hearts,” the well-attested opening of the anaphora and a convenient confirmation of Dionysian anagogy, or uplifting, is passed over in silence. Of course, too much precision in the explicit quotation of a text could have jeopardized the pseudonymous apostolicity of the overall project.

More subtle than this neglect of the texts is the author’s downplaying of the liturgical objects. When the hierarch processes throughout the church and returns to the altar, we learn nothing about the appearance of the hierarch himself, the building, the censer, or the altar. But we do learn the multiple layers

of meaning in this procession and return as movements or activities (429AB, 212–13, discussed above). Similarly, the “most divine acts” of the synaxis are the unveiling and distribution of the bread and cup, as symbolic of Jesus’ becoming incarnate and visible in this world of space and time (444ABC, 222–23, discussed above). Yet, as static objects, the bread and cup themselves are of negligible interest. We never learn of their shape, size, type, or contents, or anything about their appearance at all. Further, baptism involved a consecration of the font and immersion into the water, but these things are interpreted for their dynamic character as activities, not for the appearances of the material objects involved. Neither the font nor the water are ever characterized as to shape, depth, warmth, or any other quality mentioned by other commentators. As a final example, the clothing of a clerical rank or monastic state is never described, even though the priest’s activity of disrobing and robing a monk is symbolic of the latter’s change of rank.

The reasons for this dominant emphasis upon the ritual activities may be several, but the discussion must be suspended until more of the corpus is presented. Part V invokes my answer on this point, which is more fully argued elsewhere.¹³ Also delayed for more thorough discussion in part V is the related difficulty introduced above: why does the entire treatise speak not a word of negative theology or even acknowledge the incongruity of the use of this world’s symbols for divine things? This absence is striking since his biblical hermeneutics are otherwise so similar to his liturgical hermeneutics, and the earlier companion treatise *The Celestial Hierarchy* consistently incorporated such themes into its principles for understanding biblical symbols. These complex features—the emphasis on liturgical actions and the absence of negative theology—must be evaluated later in light of the overall corpus.

For now, we move from a summary of the human hierarchy and of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* to a sketch of the influence of this treatise. Perhaps the most helpful summary is an outline:

Chapter 1 on method, as introduction to “our hierarchy”

Three sacraments	{	consecration of the myron as perfection (chapter 4) the synaxis (Communion) as perfection (chapter 3) baptism as purification and illumination (chapter 2)
------------------	---	--

Three ranks of clergy	{	hierarchs as perfecting priests as illuminating (all three orders in chapter 5) deacons as purifying
-----------------------	---	--

Three ranks of laity	{	the monks as perfected (chapter 6) the lay people as illuminated three groups (at least) of those being purified (catechumens, penitents and possessed)
----------------------	---	---

Chapter 7 on funerals as conclusion

THE MEDIEVAL GENRE OF LITURGICAL COMMENTARIES

Introduction

Questions about the influence of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* involve a completely new set of topics and texts, not primarily from the Latin Middle Ages but from Byzantine Orthodoxy. The influence of this Dionysian treatise was not so much in its contents (namely, its specific descriptions and interpretations of ritual acts), as in its format as a liturgical commentary.¹⁴ Just as the genre of biblical commentary has its own history as a form of literature,¹⁵ so too can scholars trace the history of liturgical commentaries, namely, those treatises that systematically comment on the rites of the church. This history involves so many centuries and authors that only an introduction can be offered here, with pertinent bibliography.¹⁶

As always, the questions of influence are compounded by our modern perspective. Current scholarship evaluates the impact of the Dionysian corpus in terms of its sixth-century appearance, between the early church and the Byzantine or medieval church. But the medieval and Byzantine authors considered it to stem from the very beginning of church tradition, and they took its author to be the first century Athenian Areopagite, among the very first of the fathers. The original success of the pseudonym forever complicated any assessment of the author's real influence on medieval and Byzantine Christians, since their false assumption about his antiquity inflated their own view of his importance.

Our sketch of liturgical commentaries will focus on the eucharistic liturgy and on the methodological emphases of various authors who commented upon it. Recall that in chapter 3 of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Dionysius was determined to divulge no text of the liturgy whatsoever (cf. 565C, 257), not even a single word like *Alleluia* (cf. 485AB, 232). Except for paraphrasing certain prayers obliquely, such as the anaphora (440C to 444A, 220–21) or a funeral prayer for the dead (557BC, 252–53), no part of his exposition is an exegesis of the text of the liturgy, not even of the creed or the Lord's Prayer. Nor did he comment on the appearance of the building, of the vestments, or of such items as the altar or font. Rather, his concern was consistently for the activities that took place in the building and around the altar or font, and for the higher or spiritual meaning of those actions.¹⁷ It is this emphasis on liturgical allegory that we should compare and contrast with the handful of other commentaries on the liturgy, especially those that preceded Dionysius.

The Areopagite's Predecessors

Ambrose (339–97) presented the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but with little reference to the specific items of the communion liturgy, espe-

cially in contrast to his more detailed description of baptism.¹⁸ None of his lectures for the newly baptized is really a commentary on the liturgy in the sense of a sequential explanation of the components of the rite. Their completely different purpose and their Western, Latin milieu distinguish them sharply from *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. With Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86), Ambrose's distant Greek contemporary, we come closer to our proper subject since he did comment on the liturgy itself.¹⁹ Of the *Mystagogical Catecheses*, the fourth lecture considers the meaning of the Eucharist in general and the fifth presents and interprets certain features of the service. Cyril's comments on the liturgy are dominated by explanations of the liturgical texts that the initiates had recently heard for the first time: the peace, the Preface and Sanctus, an epiclesis, or invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine, as well as some other prayers and commemorations, especially the Lord's Prayer. Cyril's brevity and his emphasis on exegesis distinguish his work in its very format and intention from the lengthy Dionysian interpretations of the ritual acts and his silence on the liturgical texts. The interpretations themselves also sharply distinguish Cyril from Dionysius, but the formal considerations are enough to establish the novelty of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* over against Cyril's lectures.

The liturgical interpretations advanced by Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428) present a more complicated case, both in their contents and in their influence, since he was posthumously condemned as a heretic for other reasons. Theodore was of the Antiochene school, and understood both the scriptures and the liturgy according to typology. That is, events were linked together, whether prophetically from the Old Testament forward to the New Testament (in biblical interpretation), or historically from the present sacramental meal backward to the events of Christ's life (in liturgical interpretation). Unfortunately, one of Theodore's many students, Nestorius (d. c. 451), so rigorously emphasized the distinct, historical human nature of Christ that he was accused by Alexandrian theologians of separating the two natures of Christ too far, almost into two persons. Nestorius was condemned as a heretic and his notoriety extended to his teacher. When the Alexandrians and others continued their opposition to all things Nestorian, including (in their eyes) the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Justinian's imperial policy of ecclesiastical harmony attempted to satisfy them with the condemnation of some texts by Theodore, among others, at the Council of Constantinople held in 551. None of his work could escape guilt by association, including the liturgical interpretation. Nevertheless, Theodore's specific methodology and indirect influence should be examined in order to compare his work to *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

In Theodore's comments that introduce baptism and the Eucharist, he states a method of liturgical interpretation that is entirely consistent with his biblical exegesis: "Every sacrament consists in the representation of unseen and unspeakable things through signs and emblems. Such things require explanation and interpretation."²⁰ Theodore's liturgical typology correlated the compo-

nents of the liturgy with the events of Christ's passion, a method also implicit in Jerusalem's annual reenactment of the events of Holy Week. Theodore could comment on the liturgical texts themselves, as Cyril of Jerusalem did, and his typology could also have the eschatological flavor of looking ahead to the complete fulfillment of these things in a heavenly banquet.²¹ But his principal interpretive framework for the events of the rite itself, as opposed to the general idea of heavenly food, was his historical, christological typology, which looked back to the events of the passion: "In contemplating with our eyes, through faith, the facts that are now being re-enacted—that he is again dying, rising and ascending into heaven—we shall be led to the vision of the things that had taken place beforehand on our behalf."²² Theodore also supplied some specifics, such as understanding the Great Entrance in the liturgy to mean the carrying of Christ's body to the tomb and placing it on the linen cloths. This motif was later carried to extremes. In the homilies of Narsai (c. 500), the bread and wine indicated the embalmed and covered body of Christ being brought to the altar in the sanctuary (which stood for the tomb in the garden), and the removal of the veil was understood as the rolling away of the stone. This line of interpretation was influential on a popular level, and yet was never embraced by official Orthodox theology, both because the bread and wine were not yet the body and blood of Christ and also because Theodore and Narsai were considered Nestorian heretics in their Christology.²³

A comparison of Theodore's principles of liturgical interpretation with those of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* shows mainly contrasts. Theodore's understanding of liturgical symbolism was consistently typological, and the events of the rite were almost always linked to the saving events of Christ's suffering and resurrection. The Areopagite engaged in virtually no typological interpretation, and certainly none that related events of the liturgy to the passion of Christ. Dionysius sought, rather, to relate the events of the liturgy to eternal truths about God and our relationship to God. The only exceptions are a baptismal reference to Jesus' burial (404B, 208), and the uncovering and pluralization (i.e., breaking and distribution) of the bread and wine as symbolic of his appearance in this world's spatial and temporal plurality (444BC, 222).

Neither Cyril's emphasis on giving an exegesis of the liturgical texts nor Theodore's typology of Christ's passion find any continuation in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, although they were carried on by others. The Dionysian interest in the ritual actions as symbolic of eternal spiritual truths had no real predecessors in Christian literature.²⁴ But this does not imply complete originality on Dionysius' part. Late Neoplatonism, especially in the variety that included Proclus (c. 410–85), had an important place for religious ritual, dating especially from Iamblichus (c. 250–c. 330). Differing sharply from Plotinus (c. 205–70) and less dramatically from Porphyry (c. 232–c. 303), Iamblichus led a Syrian school of Neoplatonic theurgy (the works or rites addressed to the gods). In his work *On the Mysteries*, Iamblichus advanced elaborate methods and ideas about the

intermediate levels and triads of reality that connect the physical and spiritual worlds. Through them, the soul could ascend to God. In his hands, Neoplatonism was not a pure, speculative philosophy but a mediating, saving religion, with some rites that must be properly performed and understood. In these rituals, said Iamblichus, "the unutterable is voiced by means of ineffable symbols, the shapeless is captured in shapes, things superior to every image are represented through images."²⁵ Although the sacraments that interested Dionysius were completely different from the rites of Neoplatonism, the Areopagite interpreted the Christian symbols according to a method similar to that of Iamblichus: a symbol's perceptible appearance corresponds to its higher conceptual message of an eternal truth. Iamblichus could summarize, "Listen therefore to the conceptual interpretation of the symbols . . . abandoning that illusion of these symbolical things which comes from visual and aural impressions, and elevating yourself to the conceptual truth."²⁶

This material is complex and ultimately inconclusive, since Iamblichus provided so little application of his method. When it comes to precedents for the Areopagite's interest in the liturgical actions as timeless allegory, as opposed to Theodore's typology of Christ's passion or Cyril's exegesis of the liturgical texts, there are no credible candidates within Christianity. There is, however, a methodological similarity in Iamblichus regarding the rituals of later Neoplatonism.²⁷ For some readers this similarity could explain why Dionysian liturgical allegory seems to breathe a spirit different from other Christian interpretations of the Eucharist. For others, any such link to pagan philosophy and superstition is an affront to the orthodox integrity of the liturgical tradition in which this venerable work firmly stands.²⁸

The Byzantine East

With these other earlier examples in mind, we can evaluate more precisely the Dionysian influence on the subsequent history of liturgical commentaries. It starts, as do many questions of Dionysian influence, with Maximus the Confessor (580-662). In addition to his comments on various passages in the corpus as a whole, including *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Maximus also cited Dionysius respectfully in a liturgical commentary entitled *Mystagogia*, written around 630:

But since the symbols of the sacred celebration of the holy synaxis have also been considered by the most holy and truly divine interpreter Dionysius the Areopagite in a manner which is worthy of his great mind in his treatise *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, it should be known that the present work will not repeat these same things nor will it proceed in the same manner.²⁹

In this prefatory comment, Maximus goes on to assure the reader that he will not presume to interpret anything already covered by such an authority as Dionysius, but only "those things which God in his goodness wanted him

to leave for others.” (The Areopagite himself gave the same reason for using, but not duplicating, the work of his mysterious authority Hierotheus at 681BC, 69-70.) Although Maximus pays tribute to Dionysius again at the close of the *Mystagogia* and credits him with a specific idea near the end, the question of Dionysian influence is not so simply settled. First, the final chapters of the work, with their references to Dionysius, may not be by Maximus himself.³⁰ Second, he credits many of his liturgical interpretations to a certain unnamed “grand old man and truly wise in divine matters.”³¹ This could be a veiled reference to someone like Sophronius, Maximus’s monastic superior at Carthage, but it could also be a fictional literary device to present Maximus’s own ideas. Third, the specific liturgical interpretations advanced by Maximus and his “grand old man” are themselves quite complicated and diverse. While *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* may have influenced Maximus’s *Mystagogia* in terms of its form or genre as a liturgical commentary, the deeper questions concern the specific contents of these two works, namely, the items chosen for comment and the way they are interpreted.

In contrast to the Dionysian indifference to the church building, Maximus begins his work with a multifaceted interpretation of the church as an image of God, of the universe, of the material world, and of the human being. For example, the nave, sanctuary, and altar symbolize the human body, soul, and mind. When it comes to the rite itself, Maximus begins with a bit of historical typology similar to that of Theodore of Mopsuestia: the bishop’s initial appearance is an image of Christ’s first appearance in the flesh. But Christ’s passion is not emphasized, since immediately after this appearance, his “ascension into heaven and return to the heavenly throne are symbolically figured in the bishop’s entrance into the sanctuary and ascent to the priestly throne.”³²

From here on, despite a few samples of the kind of allegory that interested Dionysius (especially in the final and disputed chapters of the *Mystagogia*), Maximus pursues an emphasis all his own. To take a few examples, the closing of the doors, the kiss of peace, and the Creed all symbolize the eschatological future, namely, our eventual transition from material to spiritual things, our final perfect peace and unanimity with each other, and our future fulfillment in the faith. Similarly, the Trisagion and the Our Father symbolize the fullness of praise and adoption that will be ours in the eschaton. In general, the liturgy is a foretaste of the feast to come, an image of the final future. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* contained not a hint of such eschatological typology or correlation of the events of the liturgy with the future glory of heaven. In fact, the entire Dionysian corpus is devoid of eschatology, except for one passage (592C, 52–53). In terms of this crucial interpretive methodology, Maximus’s *Mystagogia* shows a remarkable creativity and originality, and no Dionysian influence at all.

After Maximus, the legacy of liturgical commentaries becomes even more complicated, both because it branches out to the West and also because the next

example in the East, Germanus I of Constantinople (c. 634–c. 733), weaves together all the strands of emphasis we have sampled so far. Although its authorship was once disputed, *The Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation* is now known to be by Germanus, who was the patriarch of Constantinople from 715 until 730. He was deposed for defending icons of Christ in defiance of the emperor's decrees against such images. The title is itself suggestive. Germanus honored the view of liturgical interpretation as contemplation, or *theoria*, in that the rites are contemplated for their higher or inner meaning. We have seen this tendency in Dionysius and Maximus, albeit with quite different emphases. The first half of the title, *Ecclesiastical History*, refers not to church history in the usual sense but to those historical and saving events that are symbolized in the church's liturgy, namely, the ritual typology of Christ's passion and death that we have encountered in Theodore of Mopsuestia. Since Germanus also included the kind of textual exegesis we have met in Cyril of Jerusalem, his work actually combines several types of liturgical interpretation: "The church is an earthly heaven in which the supercelestial God dwells and walks about. It represents the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ."³³ Thus the altar can correspond both to the tomb of Christ, an echo of Theodore's historical typology, and to the heavenly and spiritual altar, a theme consistent with Maximus. The Confessor is quoted at length regarding the heavenly future, especially toward the end of Germanus's work. But the heretic Theodore is never mentioned, even though Germanus shared his interest in the burial of Jesus, in the garments, and in the tomb itself as symbolized by the actions and vessels at the altar.

Why would Germanus risk echoing the Antiochene interest in the historical events of Christ's passion despite its association with the Nestorians' heretical separation of humanity and divinity of Christ? The probable answer is that this emphasis was prompted by Germanus's own historical context, the violent dispute about icons. Over against the iconoclasm of the emperor and his theologians, Germanus insisted that the historical, incarnate Christ could and should be depicted in images, yet without idolatry. For him and eventually for all Orthodoxy, it was essential to ground divine reality in the incarnate, human history of Jesus. For Germanus, a liturgical emphasis on the historical events of Christ's life and passion was perfectly consistent with the urgent need in his time to protect the humanity of Christ from the iconoclasts' arguments against any depictions of Jesus. The liturgical commentary of Germanus shows only minimal influence from Dionysius, even though he certainly knew of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* through Maximus. Germanus much prefers typology, whether historical or eschatological, and the exegesis of the liturgical text itself. He virtually ignores the Areopagite's emphasis on the ritual actions as timeless allegories of spiritual truths. The rare exceptions to this lack of interest in allegory occur only in passing and on insignificant items such as "the censer denotes sweet joy."³⁴

Since Germanus became the standard liturgical commentary for many centuries, thus continuing the themes of Cyril of Jerusalem, of Maximus the Confessor especially, and even of the unacknowledged Theodore of Mopsuestia, one can hardly claim much lingering influence from Dionysius at this point. It is true that the format of a liturgical commentary was new with the Areopagite and became an important genre of literature. But the contents of his treatise, the actual interpretations of the rites as allegories of eternal truths, were not all that influential. This also applies to the liturgical commentary that eventually replaced Germanus in the fourteenth century. In its dominant methodology, *On the Divine Liturgy* by Nicholas Cabasilas (b. c. 1322) returned especially to the textual exegesis already seen in Cyril of Jerusalem.³⁵ Orthodox tradition was obliged to honor *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* by Dionysius, even with its Platonic overtones about timeless truths rationally grasped by the individual far above this inferior world of space and time. But a full embrace was prevented by the powerful Orthodox insistence on the decidedly un-Dionysian themes of a christocentric salvation history and eschatology and the belief in sacramental realism within the corporate reality of the church.

The Medieval West

The evolution of liturgical commentaries in the Latin West is a major story in its own right, but the question of Dionysian influence can be answered quickly.³⁶ The pivotal figure is Amalarius of Metz (c. 780–850), whose commentary on the Mass had few Latin ancestors but many descendents. Since Amalarius was part of the same Carolingian circle as the Hilduin who translated the Areopagite's writings around 830, one could well pose questions about Dionysian influence, as long as Amalarius's overall context is kept in mind.

During the early ninth century, Charlemagne and his successors encouraged the liturgical expositions that Amalarius and some contemporaries industriously provided. But they were not working in a complete vacuum, even though Amalarius claimed and demonstrated considerable originality. Biblical commentaries, including their allegorical and typological methods, provided a model. Authors such as the Venerable Bede (c. 673–735) and Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) had already laid a foundation. The brief exposition of the Mass falsely attributed to Germanus of Paris (c. 496–576) is an important illustration. Written around 700, this commentary presented the liturgy in terms of the historical typology we have already seen in Theodore of Mopsuestia. The events of the Mass correspond to events in the life of Israel and especially in the life and passion of Christ. As in Theodore, the procession of bread and wine is likened to the burial of Jesus, complete with the linen cloths.³⁷

This type of historical and christocentric typology dominates the major commentary (*Liber officialis*) by Amalarius. He is explicit about it in his preface: "The sacraments ought to have a certain resemblance to those things of which they are sacraments. Therefore the priest resembles Christ, just as the bread and drink resemble the body of Christ. Thus the sacrifice of the priest at the altar is in a way like the sacrifice of Christ on the cross."³⁸

When it came to specifics, Amalarius interpreted practically everything in sight. The men are seated on the right or south side of the oriented (i.e., eastward) church, for example, and the women are seated on the north, in order to symbolize the scriptural text (1 Corinthians 10:13) that it is the stronger, virile souls who are placed amid the hot passions of this world.³⁹ More to the point, Amalarius consistently interpreted the rite as symbolic of Christ's sufferings, death, and burial. Since nothing like this liturgical interest in the passion of Christ appears in the Areopagite's *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Amalarius's main method or emphasis cannot be attributed to a Dionysian influence. The Pseudo-Dionysian concentration on timeless allegory or spiritual truths in general finds only minor continuation in Amalarius. In any case, Amalarius's career as a liturgical expositor, including the early editions of his major commentary, began well before Hilduin's Latin translation of the Dionysian corpus was made. The narrow question of direct Dionysian influence on Amalarius must be answered negatively. This only introduces the fascinating and difficult question of other influences on Amalarius, which is not our immediate topic. For example, did Theodore's emphasis on historical, christocentric typology appear in the West by coincidence, or through general application of biblical typology, or through a specific channel of influence such as the Venerable Bede, which then reached Amalarius?⁴⁰ To compound things, Amalarius himself visited Constantinople at length and made a point of learning all he could about the liturgy. He may well have caught the spirit of the liturgical commentary by Germanus of Constantinople, with its unacknowledged continuation of Theodore's methodology. Amalarius's travels, however, do not explain the earlier appearance of this emphasis in the other Latin authors mentioned above. Nor do they explain the assessment, by Amalarius himself and by his peers, that his work advanced truly new interpretations of the liturgy. His apparent novelty, in fact, resulted in Amalarius's condemnation for false teaching.

Despite his official rebuke, Amalarius was extremely influential on later commentators on the Latin Mass, such as Pope Innocent III (c. 1198–1216) and William Durandus (c. 1230–96), bishop of Mende, whose work became a standard in the later Middle Ages.⁴¹ Regarding Dionysian influence, the pattern seen in Amalarius holds true. Western Latin interpretations of the Mass were dominated by the historical typology of Christ's passion typical of Theodore of Mopsuestia, not by the allegory of timeless spiritual truths advanced by the

Dionysian *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. The commentaries on the Mass also lead us directly to the dramatic representations of the passion events, and therefore to the evolution of drama itself. The scriptural and liturgical dialogue of the angel and the women at the empty tomb (the trope or song "Quem quaeritis?" or "Whom do you seek?") is a crucial component in the history of the theater. While extremely interesting in its own right, this history must be pursued elsewhere.⁴² Here it merely illustrates once again the wide range of topics related to questions of Dionysian influence.

In general, the history of the genre of liturgical commentaries is not widely known. The authors mentioned in this quick sketch, and many others, should be investigated further for traces of specific Dionysian influence, perhaps especially in the West for impact which may have come after Amalarius through the Latin translations by Hilduin and especially Eriugena. But one must conclude that the clear medieval emphasis on historical typology, on the liturgy representing the passion of Christ, is not at all Dionysian. Specific emphases aside, however, the very genre or format of a liturgical commentary, in the West no less than in the East, may have been encouraged by the examples of Dionysius and Maximus. Beyond advancing a literary genre, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* also opened up a whole new and imaginative world of liturgical allegory, rather like Pandora's box. Once one author, indeed someone from the apostolic age, had expanded the boundaries of liturgical interpretation, others were only too eager to follow with creative efforts of their own.

NOTES

1. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* received only minimal notes in the Paulist Press edition, principally cross-references and some scriptural citations. Nor do the comments in this book note the many points of consistency or contrast between this Dionysian treatise and earlier Christian texts of liturgical ceremony or about the liturgy, except in conclusion regarding the very idea of a liturgical commentary. That important task has been performed by Thomas L. Campbell's 1955 doctoral dissertation, an annotated translation of the entire treatise, under Johannes Quasten's direction, published without change as *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981; cited as Campbell). See also the fine annotations in Gunther Heil's recent German translation (mentioned above in part I, n. 3), and the parallels to Syriac liturgical theology observable in Seely J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology with Special Reference to the Maronite Tradition* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983).

Two general introductions to *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* in English should

be used only with great caution: Dom Denys Rutledge, *Cosmic Theology: The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Denys: An Introduction* (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1965), and George S. Bebis, "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysios the Areopagite: A Liturgical Interpretation," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 19 (1974): 159–75. A more reliable introduction is by I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius," *Downside Review* 82 (1964): 293–302; 83 (1965): 20–31.

2. For a fuller, technical discussion of such terms as *mystery* and *sacrament*, see Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 39–46.

3. Regarding the baptismal language of illumination, see also Campbell, p. 116, n. 25.

4. The personnel is all male, not only here but throughout the corpus. There is no mention of women in Dionysius, generally or individually, whether as catechumens or as deaconesses or in any other role. The only exception is the important account of the death, or dormition, of the Virgin Mary (681D, 70), but even there she is not named. On this early testimony to the duties of a sponsor, see Campbell, p. 119, n. 37.

5. For Dionysius, the word *synaxis* refers to the entire communion rite, not merely to the first portion as in some other authors. For more background on this and other terms, see Campbell, pp. 135–39, nn. 86–91.

6. While extremely speculative, this theory could help explain what the author would gain, doctrinally, by elevating this sacrament to the highest level, namely, equality with the synaxis as a perfecting power. See Werner Strothmann, *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weihe in der Schrift "De ecclesiastica hierarchia" des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, Göttinger Orientforschungen, ser. 1, vol. 15 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977–78). On the other hand, and more substantially, the *Scholia* find several hints of Chalcedonian Christology in this treatise, as already mentioned regarding 444C (222), and explicitly oppose Apollinarianism, the mother of all Monophysites (*Scholia*, 144D, 149A, 152A, and 157A).

7. On the possible artistic representation of two seraphim as the cover of the myron, see Campbell, p. 170, n. 198.

8. See Campbell, p. 127, n. 59.

9. On the particulars of the ordination of a bishop, see Campbell, pp. 182–84, n. 262.

10. For more on the terms *monk* and *therapeutae*, see Campbell, pp. 192–95, nn. 295–97.

11. On the literature regarding funerals in the early church, see Campbell, p. 202, n. 324.

12. For a helpful, slightly different interpretation of this passage, see Andrew Louth, "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism in Denys the Areopagite," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 432–38.

13. See Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 75–77, and chap. 8, "The Synthesis."

14. The Dionysian treatment of the myron, or ointment, and its consecration is an example of the influence of the contents of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. See Sebastian Brock, "Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron," *Oriens Christianus* 63 (1979): 20–36, and the German studies mentioned in the Paulist Press edition (p. 224). For a Western example, Hugh of Saint-Victor has been studied for traces of substantive Dionysian influence; see H. Weisweiler, "Sakrament als Symbol und Teilhabe: Der Einfluss des Ps. Dionysius auf die allgemeine Sakramentenlehre Hugos von St. Viktor," *Scholastik* 27 (1952): 321–43.

15. On the early history of the genre of biblical commentaries, specialists should now see Karlfried Froehlich, "Bibelkommentare—Zur Krise einer Gattung," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84 (1987): 465–92.

16. The bibliography can be easily divided into works that treat the predecessors, the Eastern or Byzantine commentaries, and the studies of the Latin Mass commentaries. The predecessors Ambrose, Theodore, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Jerusalem, and some Platonic background are introduced by Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy* (New York: Pueblo, 1989). The best work on the Greek treatises is by René Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VII^e au XV^e siècle* (Paris: Institut Français d'Etudes Byzantines, 1966). Hugh Wybrew provides a helpful introduction to them in English: *The Orthodox Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1989). See also Hans-Joachim Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo, 1986); Robert Taft, S.J., "The Liturgy of the Great Church," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34/35 (1980–81): 45–75; and Paul Meyendorff, "Eastern Liturgical Theology," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1985), especially pp. 357–63. Works on specific authors will be mentioned below. Precisely because there seemed to be no general introduction to both the Byzantine and the Latin liturgical commentaries, surely not in English, I wrote a private paper for first-year seminarians, later printed as *The Medieval Development of Liturgical Symbolism*, Grove Liturgical Study no. 47 (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1986), which contains a fuller but still introductory survey of this material.

17. See also Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 74–77.

18. Ambrose's treatises *De sacramentis* and *De mysteriis* are edited by B. Botte in *Sources Chrétiennes*, vol. 25b. (Paris: Cerf, 1961). See the English edition by T. Thompson and J. R. Srawley (London: SPCK, 1950).

19. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments. The Pro-catechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses*, ed. F. L. Cross (London: SPCK, 1951; reprinted Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977).

20. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments*, Woodbrooke Studies no. 6, ed. A. Mingana (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1933), p. 17; see also the excerpts in *Ministry*, ed. J. Lienhard (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1984), pp. 110–16.

21. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Lord's Prayer*, pp. 71–73, 82–85; cf. R. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (London: Faith Press, 1961), pp. 76–82.

22. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Lord's Prayer*, p. 83, where Theodore also links all of this to heaven: "We must picture in our minds that we are dimly in heaven."

23. But this is not a "low" Christology or a reduction to a human nature only. J. Quasten explains Theodore's "awe-inspiring" overtones in terms of the "high" anti-Arian Christology in Antioch, in "The Liturgical Mysticism of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 15 (1954): 431–39. For Narsai's liturgical homilies, see the edition by R. H. Connolly, *Texts and Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909).

24. Bornert, p. 37.

25. Iamblichus, *Les mystères d'Egypte*, ed. E. des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), pp. 76–77.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

27. For more on Iamblichus, see Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 106–9, and the response by Andrew Louth, "Pagan Theurgy."

28. Within modern Orthodoxy, there are those who generally present the Dionysian writings, especially on the liturgy, as Neoplatonic, alien, and decidedly not orthodox. John Meyendorff consistently presents this position; see, for example, his essay on "The Byzantine Church" in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), p. 36, also printed in the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 2:468. See also Alexander Schmemmann's critique of liturgical commentaries generally (except for that by Maximus) in "Symbols and Symbolism in the Orthodox Liturgy," *Orthodox Theology and Diakonia* (Brookline, Mass.: Hellenic College Press, 1981), pp. 91–102, reprinted in *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), pp. 115–28.

There are other modern Orthodox authors who present the Dionysian interpretation of the liturgy with sympathy and approval, based upon the generally affirmative attitude of V. Lossky. For George S. Bebis, Dionysius was "a Christ-centered man . . . one of the outstanding theologians of the early Church," "'The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy' of Dionysios the Areopagite: A Liturgical Interpretation," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 19 (1974): 159–75. More recently, Hieromonk Auxentios and James Thornton have vehemently defended Dionysios as an Orthodox commentator on the liturgy, "Three Byzantine Commentaries on the Divine Liturgy: A Comparative Treatment," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987): 285–308.

This tension among Orthodox theologians is currently expressed in the explicit debate carried on in the pages of *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*.

It was prompted by Kenneth Paul Wesche's critical assessment in "Christological Doctrine and Liturgical Interpretation in Pseudo-Dionysius," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989): 53–73. But to Hieromonk Alexander (Golitzin), in concluding his direct rebuttal, "This Dionysius is no stranger, no secret admirer of foreign gods, nor a failed Christian, but our own, and the marriage between him and the Tradition over fourteen centuries ago was no mistake," "On the Other Hand," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990): 305–23. In an "Appendix: A Reply to Hieromonk Alexander's Reply" (pp. 324–27), Wesche continues to press his charge that Dionysius fails a crucial test of Orthodoxy regarding the role of the body in the process of salvation.

29. Maximus the Confessor, *The Church's Mystagogy*, trans. George C. Berthold (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), p. 184; see also pp. 206 and 213. The *Mystagogy* is also translated by Dom Julian Stead under the title *The Church, the Liturgy and the Soul of Man* (Still River, Mass.: St. Bede's Publications, 1982).

30. On the disputed material, see Bornert, pp. 87–88.

31. Maximus the Confessor, *The Church's Mystagogy*, p. 183. The description of the "old man" on p. 185 echoes some Dionysian self-description (cf. *Celestial Hierarchy* 3, 145B, 153).

32. *Ibid.*, p. 198. Further investigation of Maximus and especially his *Mystagogy* could be guided by the bibliographies of works already mentioned, especially that in the Paulist edition by George C. Berthold. Berthold himself has a more recent article of interest, "The Church as Mysterion: Diversity and Unity According to Maximus Confessor," *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 6 (1987): 20–29. On the church building itself as a microcosm of the cosmos, see the thorough discussion of the "Edessa Hymn" on this same theme by Kathleen McVey, "The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983): 91–121. Lars Thunberg's well-known work on Maximus, *Microcosm and Mediator* (Lund: Gleerup, 1965) is now supplemented by a more introductory overview, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). See especially chap. 6 and the appendix, "Symbol and Mystery in St. Maximus" (pp. 149–73), which argues quite rightly for a major distinction between Dionysius and Maximus in sacramental theology. A small, splendid, and often overlooked study of the similarities between the Confessor's explication of the liturgy and his interpretation of the scriptures is R. Bornert's "Explication de la liturgie et interprétation de l'écriture chez Maxime le Confesseur," *Studia Patristica* vol. 10, pt. 1, (Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. 107) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), pp. 323–27.)

33. The starting point for studying Germanus is the small but fine edition of the Greek text with introduction and English translation by Paul Meyendorff, *St. Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984). This quotation is from p. 57.

34 Ibid., p. 79. Rorem, *Medieval Development*, presents Germanus's work more fully as the culmination and combination of earlier strands of liturgical commentary.

35. Nicolas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty (London: SPCK, 1966). See also Andrew Louth, "The Influence of Denys the Areopagite on Eastern and Western Spirituality in the Fourteenth Century," *Sobornost* 4 (1982): 185–200. For all these Byzantine commentaries, from Maximus through Germanus to Cabasilas, the essential survey remains R. Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins*.

36. The Latin Mass commentaries, surveyed briefly in Rorem, *Medieval Development*, are now covered more thoroughly by Roger E. Reynolds, "Liturgy, Treatises on," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 7:624–33. See also his other fine articles, especially "Mass, Liturgy of," 8:181–97. See also the brief overview by Mary M. Schaefer, "Latin Mass Commentaries from the Ninth Century through the Twelfth Century: Chronology and Theology," in *Fountain of Life* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1991), pp. 35–49. I owe this reference to the kindness of Gordon Lathrop.

37. Pseudo-Germanus, "An Exposition of the Mass," in *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750. The Conversion of Western Europe*, edited by J. N. Hillgarth, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 186–92. For similarities to Theodore of Mopsuestia, see especially pp. 189–90. Hillgarth, a major specialist on this material in general and Isidore of Seville in particular, supplies other pertinent texts and helpful bibliography.

38. Amalarius's Latin works are edited by J. M. Hanssens, *Amalarii Episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, Studi e Testi, 138–40. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948–50). The *Liber officialis* is in volume 2, with this quotation translated from p. 14. Amalarius's work is not translated into English, except for occasional excerpts as in Rorem, *Medieval Development*. See the English biography by Allen Cabaniss, *Amalarius of Metz* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954), and the article by H. A. Reinhold about Amalarius's opposition, "The Pyrrhic Victory of Florus of Lyons," in *Liturgy for the People*, ed. William J. Leonard, S.J. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1972), pp. 206–14.

The largest treatment of Amalarius in English is the translation and revision of the doctoral thesis of Christine Catharina Schnusenberg, *The Relationship between the Church and the Theatre, Exemplified by Selected Writings of the Church Fathers and by Liturgical Texts until Amalarius of Metz—775–852 A.D.* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988). She supplies and interprets over one hundred quotations from Amalarius's liturgical interpretation, although with misprints and without English translation. See also a general work on Amalarius's era, *The Frankish Church* by J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 326–29; Rudolf Suntrup, *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in lateinischen und deutschen*

Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts, Münstersche Mittelalter-schriften, vol. 37 (Munich: Fink, 1978); and John Gibaut, "Amalarius of Metz and the Laying On of Hands in the Ordination of a Deacon," *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989): 233–40.

39. Amalarius comments on the separate seating of men and women in his *Liber officialis*, bk. 3 (Hanssens, *Amalarii Episcopi opera liturgica omnia* (Studi e Testi 139:264).

40. On this point, I thank Barbara Newman for supplying a copy of her unpublished paper "The Burial of Christ in Liturgical Allegory from Theodore of Mopsuestia to Amalarius of Metz."

41. For an introduction to Durandus, see James F. White, "Durandus and the Interpretation of Christian Worship," in *Contemporary Reflections on the Medieval Christian Tradition*, ed. George H. Shriver (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1974), pp. 41–52. Only book 1 and certain portions of Durandus's immensely popular and influential *Rationale divinarum officiorum* are translated into English; see *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, trans. J. M. Neale and B. Webb (New York: Scribner, 1893).

42. Beyond the work of Schnusenberg mentioned in n. 38, see O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), and Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France: The Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 126–53.

PART IV

The Divine Names

CHAPTER 1 AS INTRODUCTION

The Divine Names is the longest Dionysian treatise, and the most complex in both content and structure. On the surface, it seems straightforward on both counts. It contains the author's interpretations of the biblical names ascribed to God, such as good, light, beautiful, and so on. As to structure, chapters 1 through 3 present the introduction to his interpretive methodology and chapters 4 through 13 the interpretations themselves. But on closer examination complexities abound. Whence this interest and the examples of the names for God? Why are these names chosen, and why are they presented in this order, and what doctrine of God prevails? What understanding of good and evil accompanies the divine name "good"? In general, what light does this treatise shed on the author's profound and complicated combination of the Christian tradition, with its biblical names for God, and Neoplatonism, with its own interest in the divine names? Finally, what is the relationship of this work to the rest of the corpus? These questions, and others related to specific topics and passages, have challenged readers, starting with the lengthy expositions in the *Scholia*, for centuries. The best introduction to such complexities is the sequential presentation of the treatise according to its own order of chapters and topics, in the commentary form used so far. This will be followed by a discussion of the influence of this book and of its teachings upon medieval Latin theology.¹

The initial titles present a format that should be familiar by now: "*The Divine Names*. Chapter 1, Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder: What the goal of this discourse is, and the tradition regarding the divine names" (585A, 49). The same situation, and the very same wording, was encountered in the two treatises already discussed, along with the technical reasons for considering this statement to be an editorial addition. Yet here there is no ambiguity about the title of the treatise itself, since the exact wording (*On The Divine*

Names is later attested internally by the author in *The Mystical Theology* as he refers back to this work (1033A, 139). The true title for chapter 1 is simply "What the goal of this discourse is, and the tradition regarding the divine names."

The very first line of the treatise itself gives the reader pause: "And so, my friend, after *The Theological Representations*, I come now to an explication of the divine names, as far as possible" (585B, 49). The work here mentioned as immediately prior was either lost before the first appearance of the corpus or is wholly fictional. *The Mystical Theology* also refers back to this work, also locates it immediately before *The Divine Names*, and gives a brief summary of it (1032D–1033A, 138–39). Here too, in the opening chapters of *The Divine Names*, the author supplies a convenient summary of the presumably prior work, as presented below. In general, it is not necessary to believe that the Dionysian project involved works that were later lost, since the extant material summarizes them nicely. This is clearly true of *The Theological Representations* and *The Symbolic Theology*, which ostensibly precede and follow respectively *The Divine Names*. It also applies to such lesser titles as "The Divine Hymns" (mentioned in *Celestial Hierarchy* 7, 212B, 166), "The Conceptual and the Perceptible" (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1, 373B, 197 and 2, 397C, 204–5), and "The Soul" (*Divine Names* 4, 696C, 73).

In presumed continuity with that prior work, Dionysius presents his first methodological principle: "This is why we must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed" (588A, 49). Here he previews the work's contents and its form: the dialectic between the divinity as hidden beyond being and yet revealed, and the insistence on exclusive use of the Christian scriptures for this revelation. The transcendence of the Deity, beyond existence itself as we know it, is a key aspect of the Dionysian doctrine of God: "Since the unknowing of what is beyond being is something above and beyond speech, mind, or being itself, one should ascribe to it an understanding beyond being" (588A, 49). Such transcendent understanding is "unknowing" in that it is beyond human knowing: "Nor can any words come up to the inexpressible Good, this One, this Source of all unity, this supra-existent Being. Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, it is gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name" (588B, 50).

But this transcendent Divinity is revealed proportionately to one's capacities and is named in the Bible. Thus "we can use only what scripture has disclosed" (588C, 50). First, in the scriptures themselves the Deity teaches us this very dialectic: the Divinity is invisible, incomprehensible, "unsearchable and inscrutable" (588C, 50, quoting Romans 11:33 and alluding to Colossians 1:15, among other passages), and yet it is revealed in proportionate enlightenments

that draw faithful minds up to the permitted contemplation and participation in the divine. On the one hand, “with a wise silence we do honor to the inexpressible.” On the other hand, “we are raised up to the enlightening beams of the sacred scriptures,” which illuminate us with the permitted and revealed information about God (589B, 50–51). “We learn, for instance, that it is the cause of everything, that it is origin, being, and life” (589B, 51).

What the scriptures reveal about the divine names refers, explicitly, to the “beneficent processions of God” (589D, 51). Here the same term introduced above as part of the metaphysical construct of procession and return applies to the scriptural names for God, indicating a link between the downward procession and the affirmation of divine names. The passage immediately constructs a downward sequence, ostensibly from the scriptures. It descends from God’s simplicity and unity (as “monad and henad”) to God’s trinity as three persons, to the divine activity as the cause of all things, supplying harmony and beauty, and finally to the philanthropic sharing of the human condition, an act of generosity which calls human nature to rise up to the Deity (589D–592B, 51–52). In this passage, God is presented as proceeding downward from unity to internal triune plurality, then to the creation of the world, and finally to entering that world in the incarnation, when the timeless “simplicity of Jesus became something complex” and temporal, yet without confusion (592B, 52). Since this is precisely the descending sequence later ascribed to the contents of *The Theological Representations* (1033A, 138–39), we can also take this passage to be a summary of the same work here at the beginning of *The Divine Names*. Note also that at the end of this sequence, humanity’s lowly state is summoned up, signaling the complex discussions yet to come about processions downward and the return upward, about the affirmations here sampled and the negations so far only implied.

Having sampled the scriptural revelation, Dionysius then speaks more directly about his epistemology, his method for interpreting the Scriptural tradition. For now, in this life, human beings know things only according to the veils of the scriptures and the hierarchical traditions (a phrase elsewhere associated with liturgical practices). These veils cover conceptual meanings with perceptible appearances. Thus the transcendent is now expressed in symbols. But we shall eventually enjoy the angelic privilege of a more direct contemplation through conceptions alone, without earthly sense perception, which will lead to union with God (592C, 52). This final future, the author’s only comment on eschatology in the corpus, is approximated even now in the way we employ perceptible symbols:

But as for now, what happens is this. We use whatever appropriate symbols we can for the things of God. With these analogies we are raised upward toward the truth of the mind’s vision, a truth which is simple and one. [Then]

we leave behind us all our own notions of the divine. We call a halt to the activities of our minds and, to the extent that is proper, we approach the ray which transcends being. (592CD, 53)

This statement about knowing and unknowing is bipartite: first, the movement upward from symbols to the truth, that is, to their meanings; second, the further advance beyond conceptions in a cessation of mental activity and final approach to the divine. The first stage we have already seen in the uplifting interpretation of biblical and liturgical symbols in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. The second stage, the cessation of thought, is expressed most directly in *The Mystical Theology*, especially chapter 5. At that point, we will again encounter this quotation and the two stages of the Dionysian ascent, as well as a similar structure in the Neoplatonist Plotinus.

This method of knowing and not knowing is the cognitive side of the author's doctrine of God, who is both revealed and yet transcendent. The Areopagite closes the section by deftly combining epistemology with theological metaphysics: "And if all knowledge is of that which is and is limited to the realm of the existent, then whatever transcends being must also transcend knowledge" (593A, 53). This key concept is worth restating: since human knowledge is of beings, God who transcends being must also transcend our knowledge.

But "how then can we speak of the divine names," since they constitute a major form of knowledge about God? Absolute transcendence surpasses our finite minds. Indeed, since union with this transcendent one "occurs in the cessation of all intelligent activity," those who approach this union praise it "through the denial of all beings" (593C, 54). God cannot simply be called word or power or mind or life or being, for God is completely beyond our every conjecture, name, thought, and conception: "And yet, since it is the underpinning of goodness, and by merely being there is the cause of everything, to praise this divinely beneficent Providence you must turn to all of creation. It is there at the center of everything and everything has it for a destiny" (593D, 54).

Thus, "realizing all this, the theologians [scripture writers] praise it by every name—and as the Nameless One" (596A, 54). The scriptures themselves say that this is the name above every name, and therefore without a name: "And yet on the other hand they give it many names, such as 'I am being,' 'life,' 'light,' 'God,' the 'truth' " (596A, 55). The author here mentions names that will receive more thorough attention later: good, beautiful, wise, beloved, God of gods, Lord of Lords, Holy of Holies, eternal, existent, Cause of the ages, and so on, at some length. The long list ends with the depictions of God as sun, star, fire, water, wind, dew, cloud, archetypal stone, and rock (596C, 56). The author presents all this material as taken from the scriptures, and it can indeed be documented as such, even if some attributions are debatable.

To sum up the dialectic of the Dionysian methodology: "And so it is that as Cause of all and as transcending all, he is rightly nameless and yet has the names of everything that is" (596C, 56). God's causation of all things justifies the use of all created things or thoughts among the divine names; yet the divine transcendence beyond all these things and thoughts demands the denial of all names.

The current treatise, says the author at the end of chapter 1, does not interpret all the scriptural comments about God. Those based upon sense perception, such as God's supposedly human or fiery form and the physical implements associated therewith, are reserved for the subsequent treatise, *The Symbolic Theology* (597B, 57). That essay, also lost or fictitious, will descend to the lower realm of sense perception for its biblical subject matter (eyes and ears, chairs and cups, and the like). This is previewed again in *The Divine Names* (700C, 75; 913B, 117; and 984B, 131), and is summarized later in *The Mystical Theology* (1033B, 139) and in *Letter 9* (1104B–1113C, 280–88, already discussed; see also *Celestial Hierarchy* 15, 336A, 187). But *The Divine Names* itself is confined to the "conceptual names of God," those taken from the realm of concepts, such as goodness, enlightenment, beauty, and love, just to cite those interpreted first. In short, *The Divine Names* interprets the biblical names for God that come not from the lower realm of physical perception, but from the higher domain of our concepts or ideas.

Before continuing his presentation of a methodology appropriate to the interpretation of these conceptual names for God, Dionysius concludes this initial chapter by reminding Timothy of the reverence appropriate to such explication and of the confidentiality demanded by the tradition. As for himself, he prays that he may rightly praise "the beneficent and divine names of the unutterable and unnameable Deity," thus concluding with this felicitous summary of the paradox, and with a quotation from Psalm 119:43 (597C, 58).

CHAPTER 2

Concerning the unified and differentiated Word of God and what the divine unity and differentiation is

The second chapter of *The Divine Names* continues the author's methodological introduction by arguing that all these names for God apply to God's single and undivided being or subsistence, and not to any one of the three Persons in particular. He says that he has elsewhere (in *The Theological Representations*) shown how "in scripture all the names appropriate to God are praised regarding the whole, entire, full, and complete divinity rather than any part of it, and that they all refer indivisibly, absolutely, unreservedly, and totally to God in his

entirety" (636C, 58). The first example of a name for the entire divinity is the name good or goodness, which is also the first name presented for a full interpretation later, in chapter 4. According to the author's exegesis, the name good is applied to God as an entire being, indeed explicitly to all three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The same is true of the names being and life. Furthermore, "how often is the term 'Lord' used by scripture in regard to both the Father and the Son? The Spirit too is 'Lord' " (637B, 59). This can also be illustrated with beauty, wisdom, and other names, even the biblical attribute and name of Creator, since "all things are from God" (1 Corinthians 11:12), "all things were created through him and for him (meaning Christ, Colossians 1:16) and "when thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created" (Psalm 104:30). This should not be surprising, since the scriptures explicitly testify to God's oneness, for example, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). In summary, says the Areopagite, "the attributes of God refer in all their truth and meaning to the complete Deity" (637C, 60).

This general rule does not introduce a confusion of the scriptural distinctions within God, for the Word of God (theology) plainly speaks of God "sometimes without, sometimes with distinctions," a practice that we must simply receive and honor (640A, 60). The unified names for God, already sampled, may contain a "denial in the sense of a superabundance," such as "transcendently good" (hyper-good), or may have a causal sense, such as good in the sense of the cause of all good things. The differentiated names for God, those with distinctions, are simply Father, Son, and Spirit, and whatever might pertain specifically to the incarnation (640C, 60–61), which is expressed against Apollinarius, Eutyches, and Nestorius, according to a scholion of John of Scythopolis (*Scholia* 216B). Thus all other names, including most of those explained in this treatise, refer simply to God in general.

So far, the chapter has advanced a fairly simple argument, complete with copious although debatable illustrations from scripture. In this argument, the concepts of unity and differentiation have meant God's one united being and three differentiated Persons. Indeed, the overall point of the chapter is that every name for God, even those that a specific passage may apply to one of the three Persons, is actually a name for the entire Godhead (except, of course, the precise names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). This overarching point is repeated in the chapter's final words. Methodologically, it is a necessary argument, since the subsequent interpretations of names for God will take biblical names used for Christ, for example, and treat them as general names for God without any specific christological significance.

But when Dionysius goes "more deeply into speaking about divine unity and differentiation," ostensibly in order to remove all confusion and obscurity (640D, 61), the argument becomes much more complicated, and in fact seems confused and obscure. The difficulty is that at this point we learn a second way

to understand unity and differentiation, which interacts subtly with the unity and trinity presented above. Those “fully initiated” assert that the divine unities are the “hidden and permanent, supreme foundations of a steadfastness” that is utterly ineffable. This view of unities as foundations uses the Neoplatonic language of remaining or foundation, the initial state of simple identity that precedes the procession into plurality and the return back to unity. Confirming this identification of unity with remaining or foundation is the author’s very next argument, which links differentiations with processions, since procession naturally involves plurality: “They say that the differentiations within the Godhead have to do with the benign processions and revelations of God” (640D, 61). These processions concern both God’s movement into trinitarian plurality (although the word *procession* here is not the classic terminology for the Spirit’s procession from the Father) and also God’s creative work as the cause of all things and all attributes in their plurality and differentiation. This was summarized in chapter 1 (592A, 51–52) under the heading of “beneficent processions of God.”

The author could not openly put it this way, but this second set of meanings for unity and differentiation—remaining identity and pluralizing processions—comes from Neoplatonism. To compound matters further, this second and Neoplatonic way of understanding unity and differentiation interacts with the first and Christian use of the terms unity and differentiation, namely, the one united being of God and three differentiated persons. As such, this material in chapter 2 of *The Divine Names* repays the scholar’s every investigation regarding the hidden Dionysian interplay of Christian theology and Neoplatonic philosophy. An introduction to this material must first summarize the complex flow of the argument presented in the text itself.

Dionysius starts by acknowledging that the question of unity and differentiation is compounded by two sets of meanings: remaining and processions, unity and trinity. He writes: “there are certain specific unities and differentiations within the unity and differentiation, as discussed above” (641A, 61). The plural forms of these words refer here to God’s remainings and processions (the former is an unusual way to put it; the latter, the usual way) while the singular forms refer to God’s oneness and threeness. He then specifies what he means by “unities and differentiations within unity and differentiation.” The key point to keep in mind in this complicated exposition is that God’s processions were earlier specified as embracing both the movement from oneness to threeness and also the creation of this world in its plurality, which reveals God to us, as confirmed here by calling the differentiations processions and revelations.

He first examines how there are differentiations in unity, in the sense of the various, that is, differentiated, attributes of the one united Deity, which are revealed to us in this world (existence, divinity, goodness). Such attributes are all applied to the “shared undifferentiated unity” of the indivisible Trinity.

These different attributes or differentiations, revealed to us because of the divine processions down into our created world, even include the attributes of identity and oneness, which deceptively invoke unity here. But the point is that since these are distinct attributes, they are differentiations, as are other qualities such as ineffability, unknowability, being beyond assertions and denials, and so forth. *The Mystical Theology* further discusses this paradox, that one attribute of God is that of being beyond all assertions of attributes, and even beyond their denials. This list of different attributes for the one united Godhead is a form of differentiations in unity. The argumentation is crucial for the course of this treatise, as presented below, because the "divine names" are all considered attributes of God, not names for hypostases (gods or henads) that depend upon the ultimate One, as in previous Neoplatonic interpretations of divine predicates or names. This instance of differentiations in unity receives the following terse comment: "The indivisible Trinity holds within a shared undifferentiated unity its supra-essential subsistence, its supra-divine divinity, its supra-excellent goodness, etc." (641A, 61). Thus, of all the various combinations of unities and differentiations within unity and differentiation that are logically possible, the first one specified by Dionysius is that of differentiated attributes within the one united Godhead. This form of differentiations in unity (illustrated in a general and unhelpful way with the example of one light coming from several lamps) is not to be confused with the original trinitarian argument, here repeated: within the unity of God there are three Persons, whose names and specific attributes (for example, Father as source) are not to be interchanged (641D, 62).

Then the author presents a second way that the two forms of unity and differentiation can be combined:

On the other hand, if differentiation can be said to apply to the generous procession of the undifferentiated divine unity, itself overflowing with goodness and dispensing itself outward toward multiplicity, then the things united even within this divine differentiation are the acts by which it irrepressibly imparts being, life, wisdom and the other gifts of its all-creative goodness. (644A, 62)

Here the act of creation includes the primal creation of existence and life and wisdom per se, which is logically prior to the creation of individual things that exist and live and have wisdom. Creation is again considered under the heading of differentiation, in that the original divine unity proceeds outward and overflows toward the multiplicity of the created order. (This way of describing the relationship of creator to the creation would be vulnerable to charges of pantheism, were it not for qualifications introduced later.) Living things, for example, participate in life itself, which was simply given or created by the procession of God down into multiplicity or differentiation.

As part of the divine procession downward, creation is therefore a form of differentiation in the Neoplatonic sense mentioned above. But there is also a unity here, in the Christian sense first discussed, namely, that the creator is the one whole being of God as opposed to a specific individual among the three Persons. For creation is not to be ascribed to only one of the Persons, but to the whole divinity, as already documented exegetically. Putting the notion of creation in terms of participation—that is, that living things participate in God’s created gift of life—Dionysius expresses it this way: “Now this is unified and one and common to the whole divinity, that the entire wholeness is participated in by each of those who participate in it; none participates in only a part” (644A, 62). Two examples are attempted (a circle with many radii and one center, a single seal used to make many impressions), but they are acknowledged as inadequate (644AB, 62–63).

These are extremely complex paragraphs, and they could well receive other interpretations. But the two important cases of “unities and differentiations within unity and differentiation” are, first, the different attributes, and therefore names, ascribed to the one united God (641A, 61), and, second, the creator as this united God rather than as a single trinitarian Person (641D, 62). These points take their place within the chapter’s larger methodological argument that all the divine names, attributes, and activities (such as creation) pertain to the entire Divinity.

Yet the original or modern reader might ask, what of the activities of the incarnate God the Son? Yes, of course, this is an instance of differentiation, “that benevolent act of God in our favor by which the transcendent Word wholly and completely took on our human substance” (644C, 63). From here on, the incarnation as differentiation occupies the chapter until its final summary. The author starts by putting this doctrinal locus into context. First, this teaching, and indeed all the scriptural instances of unity and differentiations, is a mystery beyond our minds’ ability to fathom and known only through revelation: “For the truth is that everything divine and even everything revealed to us is known only by way of whatever share is granted” (645A, 63). Even calling the transcendent one God or life or being is to trade on the revealed activities or energies such as deifying or bearing life or causing being. Negating and transcending our mental efforts, we admit that no divinization or life or being “bears any real likeness to the absolutely transcendent Cause of all things” (645B, 64). The author provides an illustration: “Or, again, we learn from the sacred scriptures that the Father is the originating source of the Godhead and that the Son and the Spirit are, so to speak, divine offshoots, the flowering and transcendent lights of the divinity. But we can neither say nor understand how this could be so” (645B, 64). This unusual terminology for the Son and Spirit, echoed in *The Mystical Theology*’s summary of *The Theological Representation* (1033A, 138), has been traced to the Neoplatonist Proclus. This may account for the phrase, “so to speak.” The same disclaimer also accompanied the earlier use of the

Neoplatonic terms *foundation* or *remaining* to describe God's unity (641A, 61; 697B, 74) and will shortly qualify the term *sympathy* (648B, 65). The author's purpose here, however, is not to call his pseudonym into question by alluding to a Neoplatonic source, with or without disclaimers, but to illustrate the mystery of God and the inadequacy of our language about God in general and Christ in particular.

Even Father and Son are names accommodated to our level, linked to our notions of fatherhood and sonship, whereas the persons so named must transcend even divine Fatherhood and Sonship. This is explained in a passage that protects the author from suspicions of pantheism:

In reality there is no exact likeness between caused and cause, for the caused [even the concepts revealed or caused in us which stand behind the names God, life, being, Father, or Son] carry within themselves only such images of their originating sources as are possible for them, whereas the causes themselves are located in a realm transcending the caused, according to the argument regarding their source. (645C, 64)

With this elaborate qualification about all our knowledge of God and about the discontinuity between God and our very existence, the chapter returns to the discussion of the incarnation, itself part of the issue of unity and differentiation.

Everything about the incarnation surpasses reason: the very idea, the generosity involved, the virginal conception, and the physical miracle of walking on water, "and we do not understand whatever else has to do with the supernatural nature of Jesus" (648A, 65). The author claims to have discussed all this elsewhere, although there is no such extant discussion except for the brief comments in *Letter Four*. Analyses of the Areopagite's teaching about Christ must sift the entire corpus and gather the various unsystematic comments. He further avoids a systematic presentation of his Christology by diverting attention to what his "famous teacher [Hierotheus] has marvelously praised in his *Elements of Theology*" (648A, 65).

Dionysius refers several times in his writings to the presumed influence and works of Hierotheus, principally in chapters 2 through 4 of *The Divine Names*, beginning with this discussion of the incarnation. As already noted regarding chapter 6 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Dionysius credited Hierotheus with the angelic arrangement of three triads, a typically Neoplatonic structure (200D, 160). He is also credited with *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy's* designation of the synaxis as "the sacrament of sacraments" (424C, 209) and with the idea that God's love was first expressed in the procession that originally created us. The latter thought is perhaps related to Hierotheus's view of God's love, as summarized in chapter 4 of *The Divine Names*. No actual historical figure or sources have been identified with Hierotheus or his works. Some of these attributions, and others now to be introduced, suggest that the character of Hierotheus is a

thinly veiled allusion to a Neoplatonic teacher or author, perhaps Proclus, who in fact wrote a book entitled *Elements of Theology*. In any case, it is a fictional device designed to give these expressions an even earlier apostolic authority than Dionysius himself. But since the Dionysian pseudonym also involves Paul as the author's first direct influence, he must also situate Hierotheus within a Pauline context. Thus Hierotheus, the ostensible teacher of Dionysius and Timothy, is himself led by the light of Paul (649D, 67; 865B, 105).

To return to this chapter's reference to Hierotheus and his book, shortly to be cited regarding the incarnation, he is said to have learned some things directly from the scriptures, while other things required a more advanced, investigative exegesis. Even beyond this biblical tradition, certain things "were made known to him through [a] more mysterious inspiration" (648B, 65). This advanced inspiration is expressed in terms reminiscent of previous, non-Christian texts: "not only learning but also experiencing the divine things. For he had a 'sympathy' with such matters, if I may express it this way, and he was perfected in a mysterious union with them and in a faith in them which was independent of any education" (648B, 65). The passage contains the same disclaimer used twice above for Neoplatonic terminology (641A, 61; 645B, 64). The term *sympathy* had a technical history in Stoic cosmology and Neoplatonic ritual; it was used to summarize the intimate relationships of all things, including material objects used to worship the immaterial. Here, Hierotheus has a sympathy for the divine things and thus he not only learns but also experiences or suffers the divine. The Greek pun on the words *learn* and *experience* (*mathon* and *pathon*) stems from Aristotle's comment on the rituals of the mystery religions, although John of Scythopolis explains it purely in terms of Jesus' learning through suffering (Hebrews 5:8; *Scholia* 228B). It is echoed again in the next chapter, where Hierotheus's special experience of divine things is given a eucharistic flavor. There Hierotheus is described as "experiencing communion with the things praised" (681D, 70), which will raise the question of the relationship between Christian worship and some terms usually associated with the rites of other traditions.

For now, the point has been simply to introduce Hierotheus as a lofty Dionysian authority, here with regard to the incarnation as one instance of divine differentiation. Citing his *Elements of Theology*, the treatment begins with the divinity of Jesus, the fulfilling cause of all, perfection that transcends perfection, being beyond every being, "inexpressible and ineffable, and it transcends mind, life, and being" (648D, 66). This "transcendent possessor of transcendence" has come down to our level to become a being, continues the ostensible summary of Hierotheus, shifting now from the divine nature to the human. The transcendent God has taken on humanity; "he has come to join us in what we are without himself undergoing change or confusion" (649A, 66). This may seem to be Chalcedonian language that avoids the confusion of the two natures, but

here it refers only to the divine nature, which remained unchanged. On whether the human nature was changed or transformed, the author is here—and often—silent, and thus not explicitly Chalcedonian. His emphasis is on the divinity of Christ, that “amid the things of our nature he remained supernatural and amid the things of being he remained beyond being” (649A, 66).

At this point, Dionysius explicitly turns from the christological example of differentiation back to the object or goal of the overall discussion, namely the explaining of “the common and united names that are applied to the differentiated being of God” (649B, 66). He repeats the explanation of divine differentiations as the benevolent processions of the Godhead, especially in creation, yet without the loss of unity. Take being or existence itself as an example:

Since God is a “being” in a way beyond being, he bestows existence upon everything and brings the whole world into being, so that his single existence is said to be manifold by virtue of the fact that it brings so many things to being from itself. Yet he remains one, nothing less than himself. He remains one amid the plurality, united throughout the procession, and full amid the emptying act of differentiation. (649B, 66)

This example of existence is followed by similar descriptions of the Godhead. God is the supreme One who gives oneness or individuality to so many, yet without losing his original oneness. God is the supreme God beyond God who gives godhood or divinization to so many, yet without losing his unique divinity, as Paul says (1 Corinthians 8:5ff.)

The final paragraph summarizes the chapter. It begins,

In the divine realm unities hold a higher place than differentiations. They have the first place and they remain united even after the One, while retaining its singularity, has turned outward to differentiation. Such common and unified differentiations, such kindly processions of the entire Godhead, I shall seek to praise as well as I can, using the divine names which reveal them in scripture. (652A, 67)

The expression “unified differentiations” would be a contradiction in terms, except that “unified” refers to the entire Godhead whereas “differentiations” refers not to the different Persons of the Trinity, but to the different processions of this united God. These different processions are revealed as different attributes of God by the various names for God found in the Bible. The different names indicate differentiated attributes of the single, united Godhead who provides these revealing processions down into our realm of comprehension. The current treatise, therefore, seeks to interpret these names as ways of expressing the different attributes of the one God, even if some biblical texts seem to ascribe a particular name to one Person only, such as the Son. In the

Areopagite's exegesis, except for the precise names of Father, Son, and Spirit, these divine names should all be applied to God in God's unity. In closing, he repeats the notion yet again: "But, as I have already said, one thing must be understood. Every kindly name of God, even when applied to any one of the divine persons, must be taken as belonging, without distinction, to the entire Godhead" (652A, 67).

CHAPTER 3

The power of prayer; concerning the blessed Hierotheus, piety, and our writings on theology

After the general introduction of chapter 1, and the complex methodological prolegomena of chapter 2, Dionysius is almost ready to begin his specific investigations of the divine names: "For a start, then, let us look, if you will, at the most important name, "Good," which shows forth all the processions of God. But we should really begin with an invocation of the Trinity, the source and, indeed, the superior of what is good" (680B, 68). Chapter 3 has two specific concerns, both introductory to the sequential treatment of individual names in the chapters to follow. The first concern is that any such enterprise should begin with prayer. Fundamentally, our relationship to God, only infrequently called the Trinity, consists of God's processions and our return or uplifting, as summarized again here. On this page, Dionysius briefly integrates into this relationship his understanding of prayer, which he rarely discusses explicitly. Although the Trinity is not in some other place, yet "if we invoke it with prayers that are holy, with untroubled mind, with a suitability for union with God, then we are surely present to it" (680B, 68). Prayer as a coming into God's presence is anagogically interpreted in terms of an upward movement, and is illustrated nicely:

Let us stretch ourselves prayerfully upward to the more lofty elevation of the kindly Rays of God. Imagine a great shining chain hanging downward from the heights of heaven to the world below. We grab hold of it with one hand and then another, and we seem to be pulling it down toward us. Actually it is already there on the heights and down below and instead of pulling it to us we are being lifted upward to that brilliance above, to the dazzling light of those beams. (680C, 68)

Although the Areopagite's examples are rarely so illustrative of his meaning, this pertinent image is followed by another helpful illustration. The point, common to several Christian theologians and Neoplatonic philosophers, is that prayer does not change God or pull God down into our presence, but rather changes

and elevates us: "That is why we must begin with a prayer before everything we do, but especially when we are about to talk of God. We will not pull down to ourselves that power which is both everywhere and yet nowhere, but by divine reminders and invocations we may commend ourselves to it and be joined to it" (680D, 68–69). This rationale for beginning with prayer, however, does not actually include a prayer, at least not in the text, although *The Mystical Theology* does open with an explicit prayer (997AB, 135).

The author's second concern in this chapter is the relationship of his work to that of the illustrious Hierotheus, introduced in chapter 2: "Now it may be that some explanation is due for the fact that even though Hierotheus, our famous teacher, has put together his splendid *Elements of Theology*, I too have composed other theological works together with this present one as though what he wrote were not quite sufficient" (681A, 69). Within the fictional world that he has concocted, the author must both assure the readers of his reverence for Hierotheus and explain the need for further writings. He does both with the single observation that Hierotheus's writings were so lofty and condensed that some points need a more elementary explication, whereas other points were not covered at all in the master's writings: "I am therefore encouraged to explicate and to separate the condensed and singular mental gymnastics of that man's most powerful intellect, although of course in an argument proportionate to my own powers" (681B, 69). Further encouraged by "Timothy's" request for help in understanding *The Elements of Theology*, Dionysius humbly presents his own efforts as an elementary and supplemental companion to those "writings [that are] second only to the divinely anointed scriptures themselves" (681B, 69).

The imaginative Dionysius has not only created a fictional character with an exalted reputation, but also gives Hierotheus the leading role in a fanciful, but influential, episode involving various apostles and a famous body:

As you know, we and he and many of our holy brothers met together for a vision of that mortal body, that source of life, which bore God. James, the brother of God, was there. So too was Peter, that summit, that chief of all those who speak of God. After the vision, all these hierarchs chose, each as he was able, to praise the omnipotent goodness of that divine frailty. But next to the sacred writers themselves was my teacher. He surpassed all the divinely-rapt hierarchs, all the other sacred-initiators. He was so caught up, so taken out of himself, experiencing communion with the things praised, that everyone who heard him, everyone who saw him, everyone who knew him (or rather, did not know him) considered him to be inspired, to be speaking divine praises. (681D, 70)

This paragraph is striking, both for its uniqueness as a supposedly historical narrative in a work otherwise devoted to conceptual argumentation and for its specific contents and unusual vocabulary. In its context, the passage functions

as an illustration of Hierotheus's exalted status as a spiritual leader. Although it is not essential to the flow of the argument, it teems with intriguing implications. The divine frailty praised by all the hierarchs seems to indicate the incarnation, which is praised in an apparently eucharistic context, since "communion with the things praised" refers elsewhere explicitly to the bread and the cup (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 3: 425D, 211; 440B, 220; 444A, 222). This particular gathering was occasioned by "a vision of that mortal body, that source of life, which bore God." According to the earliest and then the traditional interpretation, this phrase seems ("perhaps," says John of Scythopolis's scholion at *Scholia* 236C) to refer to the death or dormition of the Virgin Mary, although she is never named. It was partly on this Dionysian authority that the idea of a gathering of the disciples and others around Mary's body was accepted into Christian tradition as historical fact, a topic taken up later in this part.²

More significant for the internal concerns of interpreting the corpus itself is the implication that the extraordinary spiritual experience of Hierotheus, "so caught up and taken out of himself," was related to the eucharistic "communion with the things praised." The language of being taken out of oneself is literally the language of ecstasy. Later impressions and adaptations of Dionysian mysticism must be tested against the author's own accounts of unusual spiritual experiences, including his particular use of the term *ecstasy*. This term is discussed more fully in the commentary on chapter 7 (868A, 106; cf. 981B, 130), with implications that will then carry us into a direct discussion of these things in the next treatise, *The Mystical Theology*.

For now, we may imitate Dionysius in not dwelling on this example. He says that he does not need to remind Timothy of this auspicious occasion, since Timothy was presumably there too (684A, 70). In any case, the specific praises offered at that event cannot be explained openly, although Hierotheus himself excelled at such explanations when they were necessary for evangelism and education. This brings us back to the main point, the author's relentless praise for his mentor, and his excessive humility about his own works: "Such was the purity of his mind, the scrupulous accuracy of his exposition, and such were his other sacred words that I could not take it on myself to look upon this great sun. I know well that I am not really capable of comprehending those conceptual truths" (684B, 71). Only the divine injunction forces the most humble author to attempt to write something down, and even then nothing about the things that are above him: "The law tells us to learn everything granted to us and to share these treasures generously with others" (684C, 71). Even in conclusion, before proceeding to the explication of the first divine name, he claims only to be expanding "the truths so briefly set down by Hierotheus" (684D, 71). The reader exasperated by Dionysian brevity may well marvel at the implied density of the elusive Hierotheus.

CHAPTER 4

Concerning "good," "light," "beautiful," "love," "ecstasy," and "zeal"; and that evil is neither a being, nor from a being, nor in beings

Despite its inclusive title, this lengthy chapter is principally concerned with the one name good, its related names, and its implications for an understanding of evil. With this discussion, the author begins the specific task that will occupy the rest of the book, namely, the interpretations of specific names for God. Why he discussed these names in the order that he does and not other names in another order is a fascinating structural question, but one whose answer must await the unfolding of his sequential presentation. He does say that the divine name good comes first for a reason: "Let us move on now to the name "Good," which the sacred writers have preeminently set apart for the supra-divine God from all other names. They call the divine subsistence itself "goodness." This essential Good, by the very fact of its existence, extends goodness into all things" (693B, 71).

The first and recurring illustration for God as the good or goodness is the sun, whose rays illuminate everything. As the "archetype far superior to its dull image" (693B, 72), the Good sends its rays of goodness to everything capable of receiving them. The first to receive them are the "intelligible and intelligent beings," the author's Neoplatonic expression on this occasion for the angels. Their immaterial and immutable existence and enlightenment they owe to the rays of the Good, and "they share with those below them the good gifts which have come their way" (696A, 72). Their purification, illumination, and perfection all come from the source of the Good, which they exemplify, manifest, and communicate as its angels or messengers (696B, 72-73). The author does not pause to describe the angelic qualities more fully, since he says he has done so in an essay entitled "The Properties and Ranks of the Angels." Although the subject matter is identical to that of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, one hesitates simply to identify the two works, since *The Celestial Hierarchy* seems to follow *The Divine Names*, whereas "The Properties and Ranks," seems to precede it. Perhaps this hesitation takes too literally the author's own references to the sequence of his works, but a discussion of this question is best delayed until his works are all presented. In any case, the reference here to the angels is consistent with the contents of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, including the brief mention of purification, illumination, and perfection, a triad rarely discussed outside the hierarchical treatises.

Next on the descending path of the rays of the Good after the celestial intelligent beings are the souls, meaning rational or human souls. These too owe their existence and enlightenment to the Good, and are uplifted by the angels to the "generous Source of all good things." This topic was discussed, ostensibly, in the otherwise unknown treatise "The Soul" (696C, 73). Those beings that are still lower also owe their entire being to the Good. The animals owe it

their irrational soul and very life, the plants owe it their life, and even material things lacking soul and life owe their very one existence to the Good. Even nonbeing, amazingly, longs for the Good that transcends all being as an excess of being. Thus, like the sun's all-embracing rays, the Good shines on everything, from angels through humans to animals and inanimate objects.

Since the Good is the cause of all the heavens, including the sun, one must also interpret the divine name Light and understand the imagery of the rays of the sun. The sun shines on all things, giving life and providing for the orderly divisions of time. Because it holds all things together, the sun makes all a sum, to attempt an English version of the pun inherited from Plato (*Cratylus*, 409a; *helios/aolles*, 700B, 75). Similarly, and also in Platonic language, "the Good returns all things to itself" (700B, 75). Dionysius disavows any deification of the sun (which intrigued the Neoplatonic Emperor Julian [361–63]), since it is a created thing that shows God's invisible power; he quotes Paul (Romans 1:20) at unusual length. Yet, since this view of the sun's light concerns perceptible symbolism, it will be dealt with in *The Symbolic Theology*, and not in *The Divine Names*.³ Entirely consistent with his overall plan, the author is here considering not the perceptible things but rather the "conceptual content of the term 'light' as applied to the Good" (700C, 75), namely, the concept of spiritual illumination.

The Good is a conceptual light in that it evicts the darkness of ignorance in order to illuminate and to perfect all receptive minds. Enlightenment is here linked with the return to God, and with the contrast between unity and plurality:

For just as it is ignorance which scatters those in error, so it is the presence of the light of the mind which gathers and unites together those receiving illumination. It perfects them. It returns them toward the truly real. It returns them from their numerous false notions and, filling them with the one unifying light, it gathers their clashing fancies into a single, pure, coherent, and true knowledge. (701B, 76)

Here, as elsewhere, the concept of procession and return provides the overall framework for a specific discussion of the Good or the Light.

There are several other names that the author attaches to this discussion of the Good, claiming scriptural warrant in each case; they are beautiful and beauty, love and yearning. Beauty is identified with the Good, since it too gathers or returns all things together, supplying the harmony and coordination so essential to a hierarchical universe. Here, too, the author inherits and enjoys a pun. "Beauty 'bids' [*kaleo*] all things to itself (whence it is called 'beauty' [*kallos*]) and gathers everything into itself" (701D, 76).⁴ As the cause of harmony, Beauty holds all things together "by the longing inside them to have beauty. . . . The Beautiful is therefore the same as the Good, for everything looks to the Beautiful and the Good as the cause of being, and there is nothing in the world with-

out a share of the Beautiful and the Good" (704B, 77). The harmony of all things, and the coordination of their movements inspired by Beauty, prompts a parenthetical but interesting discussion of various movements in divine or angelic minds and in human souls. In the former case, a circular movement is associated with the angels' union with God, a straight movement marks their providential descent to those below, and a spiral or curved movement shows the combination of this descent and the simultaneous remaining around the Beautiful and the Good. By now, the reader will recognize the overtones of remaining, procession, and return, both here and in the subsequent adaptation of these three movements to the human soul.

Dionysius then summarizes his discussion of the Good, and its partner name, the Beautiful: "To put the matter briefly, all being derives from, exists in, and is returned toward the Beautiful and the Good. Whatever there is, whatever comes to be, is there and has being on account of the Beautiful and the Good. . . . And so it is that all things must desire, must yearn for, must love, the Beautiful and the Good" (705D, 79).

The Areopagite has here introduced his discussion of yearning (*eros*) and love (*agape*). First, the divine yearning accounts for God's loving creation of the world. At this point the author feels a need to defend his equation of yearning (*eros*) with love (*agape*), because of some unidentified critics of the word *eros*. One must not be distracted, he says, by distinctions between words, like "straight or direct, Motherland or Fatherland," when in fact they mean the same thing. He adds a comment about his method of interpreting words and concepts, and moving beyond them:

The truth we have to understand is that we use letters, syllables, phrases, written terms and words because of the senses. But when our souls are moved by intelligent energies in the direction of the things of the intellect then our senses and all that go with them are no longer needed. And the same happens with our intelligent powers which, when the soul becomes divinized, concentrate sightlessly and through an unknowing union on the rays of "unapproachable light" (708D, 80, quoting 1 Timothy 6:16).

Like the summary statement at the beginning of *The Divine Names* (592CD, 53), this text outlines a movement with two stages: the one, a movement from the level of the senses that perceive syllables and words to the conceptual level of their meanings; the other, a movement beyond these concepts to the unknowing union that is discussed more directly in *The Mystical Theology*.

The point here is that even though the word yearning (*eros*) has an unseemly nature when applied to erotic human sexuality, the scriptures use it frequently in a divine sense. Ignatius used it too (*Letter to Romans*, 7:2; 709B, 81), which prompted the *Scholia* to ponder and defend the supposition that Dionysius knew the second-century works of Ignatius (*Scholia* 264CD). *Eros* is a synonym of *agape* in that both signify "a capacity to effect a unity, an alli-

ance, and a particular commingling in the Beautiful and the Good" (709CD, 81). Thus the Good even experiences ecstatic love in that it is carried outside itself (the literal meaning of ecstasy) in its zealous yearning for all things. The Good is *Agape* and *Eros*, both Love and the beloved, both Yearning and the yearned-for (712C, 82).

The divine movement of Love, "always proceeding, always remaining, always being restored to itself" (713A, 83) prompts Dionysius to credit Hierotheus with yet another Neoplatonic formulation. His illustrious teacher's supposed book "Erotic Hymns," or "Hymns of Yearning," is quoted to show that the movements of yearning are several. The superior beings provide for the inferior, the inferior return to the superior, and peers commune with peers. Since providing or providence is part of the procession downward, this point too is linked to procession and return, as evident already in this chapter and elsewhere in the corpus (see 713B, 83, n. 160, for specific references). In this regard, Dionysius not only invokes Hierotheus but also puts words in his mouth:

Let us say that there is a simple self-moving power directing all things to mingle as one, that it starts out from the Good, reaches down to the lowliest creation, returns then in due order through all the stages back to the Good, and thus turns from itself and through itself and upon itself and toward itself in an everlasting circle. (713D, 84)

With this summary the chapter might well end, were it not for the vexing question of evil, which proceeds to double the chapter's already extraordinary length.

Quite apart from its specific teaching about evil, the second half of the chapter is unique in the corpus for two reasons. First, this exhaustive and exhausting exposition is unequaled in length and thoroughness anywhere else in the Dionysian writings. In fact, it contrasts sharply with the compressed and terse style used elsewhere. Second, the material in this chapter shows a specific dependence upon works of Proclus, and which therefore links the corpus conclusively to the late fifth or sixth century. Thus the period of inconclusive doubts that began with Valla and Erasmus ended when this tie to Proclus was proven in 1895, and modern Pseudo-Dionysian studies began. (On authorship, see the commentary on *Letter 7* in part I).

The discussion of evil is attached, formally speaking, to the assertion that all things yearn for and love the Beautiful and the Good. Yet what of the demons? "What was it that made them evil? What in fact is evil? Where did it come from? And where is it to be found?" (716A, 84). These questions and others now occupy most of the author's attention, but he saves some space at the end for the classic dilemma, "If there is any providence at all how can it be that there is evil?" (716B, 84; 733A, 95)

The answers, to summarize them drastically, hinge on the earlier Dionysian assertion that all things depend upon the Good for their very existence. Evil,

therefore, has no existence. "Evil is not a being" (716D, 85), since all beings share in the Good, proportionately to their capacity. "Insofar as it is evil it neither is nor confers being" (717C, 86). The author states and restates this point:

To put the matter briefly. All beings, to the extent that they exist, are good and come from the Good and they fall short of goodness and being in proportion to their remoteness from the Good. . . . In other words, all things in being will have more or less of being according as they share more or less in the Good. . . . And so it is that evil is not a being. (720B, 720D, 721B, 87–88)

Nor does evil inhere in created beings, nor in their creator. This argument introduces a sequence of points. Evil is not in God the Good, since God is a harmonious unity, fully Good (721CD, 88–89). "Evil is not to be found in the angels either," since as images of God they only announce or transmit the Good, even though the punishment they convey may seem evil to us (724B, 89–90). "Not even the devils are evil by nature. . . . their evil consists in the lack of the angelic virtues" (724C and 725B, 90–91). They fell from the Good, and thus owe their existence to the Good: "Therefore they do not totally lack a share of the Good, for they certainly exist and live and exercise their intelligence and have within them some stirrings of desire" (725B, 91). Nor are human souls evil, for their—that is, our—experience with evil is a deficiency or a lack of the good. This notion of evil as a lack of good is clarified by the example of light and darkness: "We say that the surrounding air turns dark because of a deficiency, an absence of light. But light itself is always light and illuminates the darkness. So too with evil. It is neither in demons nor in us *qua* evil. What it is actually is a deficiency and a lack of the perfection of the inherent virtues" (728A, 91–92).

The sequential argument continues. Just as evil is not in God, or in the angels, the demons, or human souls, so too it is not in the irrational animals, who roar or bark because of natural qualities that have their own good purposes. Evil is not in nature as a whole, but it works against the created good of nature. Nor is it in our bodies, for "ugliness and disease are a defect in form and lack of due order" (728D, 92). Nor do bodies cause evil in souls, for evil does not need a body nearby, as seen in the case of the demons. In minds, souls, and bodies, evil is rather a weakness and a defect. Finally, in this sequence, "there is no truth in the common assertion that evil is inherent in matter *qua* matter, since matter too has a share in the cosmos, in beauty and form" because of its very existence from the Good, along with all created things (729A, 92–93). In sum, "what we are left with is this, namely, that evil is a weakness and a deficiency of the Good" (732B, 94). For the demons, this means opposing a mind shaped by goodness, for the souls an activity contrary to reason, and for the body the renunciation of what is natural.

At the end of the chapter (733BC, 95–96), Dionysius asks the question shared by Proclus, Boethius (c. 480–524), and countless others before and since: “Given the fact of Providence, how can there be evil?” Evil has no being nor is it inherent in the things that have being, which all lie inside the workings of Providence. Thus Providence and evil have only an indirect relationship, except that “providence even makes good use of evil effects to turn these or others to good use individually and collectively” (733B, 95). Suddenly the argument turns to free will and implies that evil stems from wrong choices: “Therefore we should ignore the popular notion that Providence will lead us to virtue even against our will. Providence does not destroy nature” (733B, 95). The concluding comments, and supporting scriptural passages, shift the responsibility for evil from God’s providence to human freedom. This may seem to preserve God’s justice, as the author claims (736B, 96), but the evasive argument is not really supported with any discussion of free will itself. In this respect it differs from the more thorough treatments by Proclus and Boethius. The expression “providence does not destroy nature” had a long and complicated history of its own, including Thomas Aquinas’s later and well-known text, “grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it” (cf. 733B, 95, and note 12 below).

In final summary, “evil, as I often, so often said, is weakness, impotence, a deficiency of knowledge, of ceaseless knowledge, of belief, of desire, and of activity of the Good” (736A, 96). The chapter as a whole moved from Goodness to the light of its rays, to its partner and synonym Beauty, to the yearning for this by all things, except where evil is mixed with the good. Yet no summary survey can fully reflect the wealth of detail in this lengthy and complicated exposition.

CHAPTERS 5, 6, AND 7 ON BEING, LIFE, AND WISDOM

The three divine names Being, Life, and Wisdom are the subjects of the next three chapters and are all introduced at the beginning of chapter 5. They form an intentional triad of names, as also discussed below regarding chapter 13.

Chapter 5

Concerning “Being,” and also concerning paradigms

The name Being is applied by the scriptures to the one who says, “I am who I am,” in the Areopagite’s conventional understanding of the words divinely spoken to Moses in Exodus 3:14 (*Divine Names* 2, 637A, 59). The goal here is to explore Being not in its unknown transcendence but Being as revealed in the

“being-making procession of the absolute divine Source of being into the total domain of being” (816B, 96), again expressing creation in terms of procession. Dionysius admits that these chapters cannot capture the transcendent goodness, being, life, and wisdom of the hidden Godhead, but they can discuss how God is revealed as the supreme Cause of this world’s goodness, being, life, and wisdom (816C, 97).

The sequence here is crucial. The name Good was treated first, since it speaks of the universal Providence of the one God, and applies to all processions, to beings and nonbeings, even though the only example given of a nonbeing is God’s own self, since God transcends being. The subsequent names Being, Life, and Wisdom do not refer to different things, but to “general or specific ways in which he acts providentially” (817A, 97). The name Good therefore is more comprehensive than the name Being, since the former includes God in a way that the latter does not, inasmuch as God is beyond Being. But the name Being is still quite inclusive, since it refers to God’s relationship to all beings, both living and nonliving. Life, correspondingly, is a name one step more confined, since it applies only to the living, but at least includes both the rational and the irrational. Finally, and one step more specific, “the name ‘Wisdom’ reaches out to everything which has to do with understanding, reason, and sense perception, and surpasses them all” (816B, 97). When arranged by successively more restrictive categories, the proper order is Being, Life, and then Wisdom. However, if organizing a hierarchy of individuals, those who have only being are below those who also have life, and those who have both being and life are below the living beings who also have wisdom, and so on (817B, 97–98).

Neoplatonism made much of the triad of being, life, and mind, which undoubtedly informed the Areopagite’s arrangement of these names, although he could also point out the biblical warrant for each of them individually. But unlike some Neoplatonists, Dionysius understood all these names as attributes of the one God, rather than of any subordinates.

Thus we consider the name Being. Not that God is a being, or even that God “is” in the sense that a creature is. “Rather, he is the essence of being for the things that have being. Not only things that are but also the essence of what they are come from him who precedes the ages” (817D, 98). Now the attribute of being or existence is primal for all things, in that they exist, just as the number one is foundational for all subsequent numbers and just as a circle’s center point is the starting point for each radius (821A, 99–100). From this primal Source and Cause of Being, which yet transcends and precedes Being, come all manner of individual beings, the ranks of angels and all souls and creatures (821CD, 100–101) and all facets of being such as time and eternity (825C, 103 and chapter 10). This section is both an ontology and a lyrical hymn of praise to the one beyond all being, “the eternity of being, the source and the measure of being, . . . / who precedes essence, being, and eternity, . . . / the creative source,

middle and end of all things" (824A, 101). Nevertheless, the attributes of finite beings can be applied to the infinite Preexistent One, if divinely understood: "That is, through the knowledge we have, which is geared to our faculties, we may be uplifted as far as possible to the Cause of everything" (825A, 102). *The Celestial Hierarchy* also discusses quite thoroughly this hermeneutical use of what is revealed on our level in our understanding of what is above us. This use is now applied not only to perceptible symbols about God, but to the very concept of being or existence itself.

Chapter 6

Concerning "Life"

Here, too, the name Life is biblical ("I am the life," John 11:25; cf. *Divine Names* 2, 637B, 59). This name refers beyond itself, beyond even the source of life: "the divine Life beyond life is the giver and creator of life itself" (856B, 103). All living things depend upon this source, whether heavenly lives, demonic, human, animal or vegetable. This "transcendently originating life is the cause of all life, produces it, brings it to completion, gives it specific form" (857B, 104). Here too "when we speak in praise of it [the supreme Source of Life] our words must be drawn from all of life" (857B, 104), and adapted from the lower to the higher realm according to the hermeneutical principle mentioned above and articulated in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter 2. In other words, "It may be contemplated and praised amid every manifestation of life, for it lacks nothing or, rather, it is overflowing with life. It is absolute Life and working far beyond life it transcendently fashions all life, or however else one might humanly praise ineffable Life" (857BC, 104–5). Less than two pages long, in contrast to the fourth chapter's twenty-five pages on the name Good, the chapter on Life thus signals the start of briefer expositions.

Chapter 7

Concerning "Wisdom," "Mind," "Word," "Truth," "Faith"

Despite its compound title, the seventh chapter concentrates almost exclusively on the divine name Wisdom, taken from Proverbs and related texts. In this view, God's proverbial Wisdom is understood as Christ. And yet this discussion is not christological so much as epistemological, concerning wisdom, knowing, and unknowing. Since God "transcends all reason, all intelligence, and all wisdom" (865B, 105), the scripture writers use negations for God, but not because God is deprived of anything. They say that God is invisible, ineffable, and inscrutable, indeed beyond all our so-called wisdom, and therefore seemingly

“foolish.” This incongruity “seems absurd and strange, but uplifts [us] to the ineffable truth which is there before all reasoning” (865C, 105). Such an incongruity—that God is beyond our wisdom, and therefore unwise or foolish (1 Corinthians 1:25)—is understood anagogically, for it lifts us out of this realm of human words into the higher, prior truth. At this point, Dionysius summarizes his anagogical method of interpretation, in perfect harmony with his discussion in chapter 2 of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and elsewhere. But he also introduces a new dimension: “And this transcending characteristic must be given to the words we use about God. They must not be given the human sense. We should be taken wholly out of ourselves and become wholly of God, since it is better to belong to God rather than to ourselves. Only when we are with God will the divine gifts be poured out onto us” (865D–868A, 106).

Here a discussion of theological method and biblical hermeneutics has included the language of ecstasy, the sense of being “taken wholly out of ourselves,” as earlier applied to Hierotheus while he was experiencing communion (*Divine Names* 3, 681D, 70). The author uses *ekstasis* and cognates to mean standing outside oneself in various ways, including inebriation. God’s ecstasy means that the divine transcendence goes outside itself in a loving and creative excess of goodness (*Divine Names* 4, 712A, 82; *Letter* 9, 1112C, 287). Human ecstasy here means that we stand outside of our usual human use of language and rise to the divine meaning. Thus, exegetical insight leads to a new spiritual state: to become wholly of God, to belong to God, to be with God. As the chapter has already intimated, it is the right use of negations that helps us transcend human words and that thus stands the soul outside itself and renders it ecstatic (981B, 130). Here exegesis, negative theology, and mysticism are joined.

The name Wisdom must be understood negatively, in that it is a foolish wisdom, not a wisdom at all on our level. The divine Wisdom is the cause of all wisdom and understanding, and therefore transcends all wisdom, even the lofty and immaterial thoughts of the angels (868B, 106). As for human souls and their dependence on the various senses, “because of the fragmentary and varied nature of their many activities they are on a lower level than the unified intelligences” (868C, 106–7). Thus, if God is more than wise, how can the words *wise* and *wisdom* be used? Here the negations do not mean deprivations, as if God were less than wise, “but, as I have often said previously, we must interpret the things of God in a way that befits God, and when we talk of God as being without mind and without perception, this is to be taken in the sense of what he has in superabundance and not as a defect” (869A, 107). Human words, such as *wisdom*, do not capture the transcendent God, not because God lacks our attributes, as if He were unwise out of a lack of wisdom. Rather God transcends all these attributes, and is thus unwise or foolish out of a superabundance of wisdom: “Hence we attribute absence of reason to him because he is

above reason, we attribute lack of perfection to him because he is above and before perfection, and we posit intangible and invisible darkness of that Light which is unapproachable [1 Timothy 6:16] because it so far exceeds the visible light" (869A, 107). In the case of wisdom or knowledge, God's total and supreme knowledge of all things includes foreknowledge, since God is the prior cause of all things that brought them into being. Divine Wisdom knows all by knowing itself as the source and cause of all: "God knows all things, not by understanding things, but by understanding himself" (869C, 108).

This entire discussion of Wisdom raises the question, "If God cannot be grasped by mind or sense perception, if he is not a particular being, how do we know him?" (869C, 108) Here and throughout the corpus, the answer is that we cannot know God's unknowable nature "beyond the reach of mind or of reason." But we can know God from the created arrangement of things, from what is revealed in the created realm which comes from God and is in the image of God. We can work backward, so to speak, from the caused to the cause, and can know God by way of denials and by way of transcendence as well: "We pass by the way of the denial and the transcendence of all things and by way of the cause of all things" (872A, 108). (Regarding these three ways in Thomas Aquinas, see note 14, pp. 177–78.) Dionysian thought depends upon its epistemology, or theory of knowledge, as nicely summarized here:

God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things. He is known through knowledge and through unknowing. Of him there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name, and many other things. On the other hand he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him (872A, 108–9).

This view of knowing and unknowing involves more than an interesting mental paradox; it describes the spiritual journey toward union with God. Chapter 7, on wisdom, continues:

This is the sort of language we must use about God, for he is praised from all things according to their proportion to him as their Cause. But again, the most divine knowledge of God, that which comes through unknowing, is achieved in a union far beyond the mind, when mind turns away from all things, even from itself, and when it is made one with the dazzling rays, being then and there enlightened by the inscrutable depth of Wisdom. (872AB, 109)

Although the mystical side of Dionysian epistemology has been introduced here in connection with the specific name Wisdom, the treatise as a whole leads to this same emphasis, as is clear from its eventual conclusion and from the treatise that follows it. The chapter itself ends with a brief appendix on the divine name Word (*logos*), the subject of such extended discussion in other patristic

authors. This Word is truth (an allusion to John 17:17 at 872C, 109, which was overlooked in the notes to the Paulist Press edition), which is the “only true, single, and simple knowledge of God” (873A, 110).

CHAPTERS 8 THROUGH 12 ON VARIOUS NAMES

Chapter 8

*Concerning “Power,” “Righteousness,” “Salvation,” “Redemption”;
and also inequality*

Chapter 8 begins a series of brief chapters on miscellaneous scriptural names for God. The pattern for interpreting a divine name is now clear, and is first applied to Power. Of course, the Godhead transcends power as we know it, so how can the scriptures call God power? Because God is the cause of power, in angels, in humans, and in all things: “God is Power in that all power is initially contained within his own self. He is Power insofar as he exceeds all power. He is the cause of all power” (889D, 110–11). All created powers owe their power, even the power for being, to this inexpressible and unknowable Power beyond all being (892B, 111). Angels, humans, animals, plants, and all nature—the stars, fire, water—derive their power and existence from this source: “In short, nothing in the world lacks the almighty power of God to support and to surround it, for that which completely lacks power has neither existence, nor individuality, nor even a place in the world” (893A, 112). At this point, Dionysius plays with a conundrum, which he credits to one clever Elymas: how can God be called all-powerful, since Paul says there is something he cannot do, namely, deny himself? This the Areopagite considers child’s play, since these very categories of self-denial and one’s own being are not able to express the things of God, “the omnipotent, blessed, the sole and mighty ruler, as sovereign in the reign of eternity” (893C, 112).

Similarly, the title Righteousness is given to God because of God’s just and appropriate determinations, which order all things (896A, 113). This Righteousness cannot be criticized when the faithful seem to lack material goods, for God’s justice is in granting the higher goods, the things of God. The name Salvation applies to God because God “ensures that each being is preserved and maintained in its proper being and order” (896D, 114). Dionysius concedes that some consider salvation as the rescue of the world from evil, but he much prefers to define salvation statically as “that which preserves all things in their proper places without change, conflict, or collapse toward evil” in the first place (897A, 114). Redemption indicates that God “redeems from the passions, from impotence and deficiency anything which has gone astray toward error or disorder or has

suffered a failure to reach its proper virtues" (897B, 114). Despite the chapter title, equality is mentioned later in chapter 9 (at 917A, 119), and inequality is not discussed at all.

Chapter 9

Concerning greatness and smallness, sameness and difference, similarity and dissimilarity, rest, motion, equality

God is praised both as great and also as in the "still, small breeze" (1 Kings 19:12), which indicates the divine smallness. God is called great because the divine greatness is infinite, beyond quantity and number (909C, 115). God is small in that he takes up no space and thus penetrates through all things (912A, 115–16). As for the designation same, the passage "Thou art the same" (Psalm 102:27) applies to God because God's identity never varies (912BC, 116), "but 'difference' too is ascribed to God since he is providentially available to all things and becomes all things in all for the salvation of them all" (912D, 116, quoting 1 Corinthians 15:28). The attribute difference also applies to the different appearances that the vision of God takes, provided we "use holy, god-pleasing, and mystical explications in our clarification of the difference of forms and shapes attributed to God" (913A, 117). Thus, to offer correct exegesis of any allusions to the basic three dimensions, God's breadth "is the immensity of his procession to all things, his length is his powers surpassing the universe, his depth the hiddenness and unknowing incomprehensible to all creatures" (913AB, 117). Yet these dimensions depend upon sense perception, and are thus the kind of perceptible symbols to be discussed in the (nonexistent) *Symbolic Theology*, says the author, not the kind of bodiless or conceptual divine names appropriate to the current book.

The name similar applies to God because "he bestows a similarity to himself on all those who are returning to him in imitation as far as possible" (913C, 117). They who are in the divine image and likeness are being returned to their Cause. Yet God is also dissimilar to them, for there is none at all like God (916A, 118; cf. 909B, 115, and the biblical citations provided there). But how can both similarity and dissimilarity apply? Part II presented *The Celestial Hierarchy's* discussion of dissimilar similarities (congruity and incongruity), with the help of this passage from *The Divine Names*: "For the very same things are both similar and dissimilar to God. They are similar to him to the extent that they share what cannot be shared. They are dissimilar to him in that as effects they fall so very far short of their Cause and are infinitely and incomparably subordinate to him" (916A, 118). This comment and the preceding discussion of the different images for God pertain not only to these names but to the entire Dionysian theology of interpretation. Insofar as an image is similar to God it is affirmed and insofar as it is dissimilar it is denied or negated. Here we glimpse

again the interplay of affirmation and negation as a method for interpreting perceptible symbols and for conceptual names.

God's resting is the divine remaining in an unchanging identity, immutable and immobile, the cause of all rest and stability (916B, 118). Yet the scriptures also say that God moves. This is not a physical motion or change, or a change of mind, but a way to express God's creative, sustaining providence, which generates countless processions and activities. The circular, straight, or spiral movements ascribed above to the angels and to humans (*Divine Names* 4, 705A, 78) are here applied to God, and again echo the concepts of remaining, procession, and return. The circular movement (rotating around oneself) indicates God's foundational identity. The straight motion outward means the "unswerving procession of his activities" that create all things. Finally, the spiral movement combines the procession outward and the remaining still, thus yielding a curve or spiral, "so that all things are one and all things that have gone forth from him may return to him once again" (916D, 119).

Chapter 10

Concerning "Omnipotent," "Ancient of Days," and also concerning eternity and time

Some of these names are straightforward, both in their biblical origins and in their interpretation: "The divinity is described as omnipotent because he has power over all, and is in total control of the world. . . . They call him Ancient of Days because he is the eternity and time of everything, and because he precedes days and eternity and time . . . the cause of eternity, of time and the days" (937AB, 120). But the nature of eternity is worth pondering, since not everything called eternal is truly uncreated, unchanging, and immutable in the sense that God is eternal and precedes eternity. Sometimes the scriptures call eternal those things which exist in time, but seem everlasting. They occupy the middle ground between what is temporary and what is truly eternal and thus transcends time. This mean term between the two extremes creates a triad (eternal, everlasting, and temporal) that was well known to Neoplatonic authors. As the cause of time and eternity, God can be described in temporal and eternal terms, although he transcends time and eternity (940A, 121).

Chapter 11

Concerning "peace," and what is intended by "being-itself," "life-itself," "power-itself," and things said in this vein

The scriptures can say "he is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14) because as the source and cause of universal peace God unites all things, brings all things together,

and pacifies all things. This includes the superior and inferior beings who are united to each other and to this source of peace in all the world (949A, 121). Because it remains in itself and yet proceeds outward to all things, such peace is ineffable and unknowable, as “Justus” has said (949AB, 122). Nevertheless, we do know that God’s peace goes out to unite angelic minds and human souls in “a divine harmony, a perfect concord, a oneness of mind and disposition, an alliance in which nothing is confused and all things are held inseparably together” (952A, 122). All things seek peace, even in pursuing their own individuality, for this is the peaceful order of things (952B, 123). Even those at conflict are seeking peace, although dimly and wrongly (953A, 123–24). Towering over all is the peaceful example of Jesus the lover of humanity, putting us at peace with himself and in himself to the Father, as ostensibly discussed in *The Theological Representations* (953AB, 124).

At this point, the author adds a crucial appendix explaining his use of terms such as “life itself” and “subsistence of life itself.” The former phrase is derived from beings, and is ascribed to God as their cause. The latter, which removes the concept one step further from our realm, is used to indicate God’s ultimate transcendence over all things, including the primary beings he has caused. But being-itself is not a divine or angelic being who causes being, just as life-itself is not some separate god who is the cause of all living things and of life itself. “Nor, in summary, is God to be thought of as identical with those originating and creative beings and substances which men stupidly describe as certain gods or creators of the world. Such men, and their fathers before them, had no genuine or proper knowledge of beings of this kind. Indeed, there are no such beings” (953D, 125). Here Dionysius explicitly distances himself from the late Neoplatonic tradition of understanding Being and Life, and other names for the Divine as distinct entities, even gods, who are located below the One God. In his view, these terms are ways of naming the many attributes of the one God, whose activities toward us are manifold, while attempting to preserve the transcendent character of these attributes. To express this transcendence, we use unusual terms: not just being, for being belongs to our level, but being itself (being per se), and, to move to a yet further level, the subsistence of being itself.

The divine names, in other words, indicate attributes of the one God, not divine hypostases, or entities, that mediate between God and those below.

Chapter 12

*Concerning “Holy of Holies,” “King of Kings,” “Lord of Lords,”
“God of Gods”*

The twelfth chapter considers very briefly the biblical names Holy of Holies, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God of Gods. These depend first upon the basic meanings of holiness, kingship, lordship, and divinity, and second upon

the duplication of these words in that familiar pattern. As for the first of these names, the author acknowledges his fondness for puns: "In my way of speaking, holiness is hole-less." This would be the free, punning translation of the line which reads, more literally, "holiness (*hagiotēs*) is freedom from all defilement (*hagous*)," namely, a "purity that is total and is utterly untainted" (969B, 126). Kingship and lordship are defined routinely, while divinity (*theos*) receives its common association with sight (*thea*) in this way: "as for deity, this is the Providence which sees all things" (969C, 126).

Since the scriptures call certain exalted and primary beings (such as select angels) holy, kings, lords, and even gods, when God is the subject, these terms need to be doubled. This doubling pattern, as in Holy of Holies, means that God is above even the primary holy beings, and indeed the cause of their holiness, or kingship, lordship, and divinity, which they in turn share with those below them.

CHAPTER 13 AND CONCLUSION

Concerning "Perfect" and "One"

Chapter 13 concludes the sequence of specific divine names and their interpretations, and offers some crucial summary comments on the whole issue of names for God and knowledge of God. The designation perfect ("as your heavenly Father is perfect," Matthew 5:48) indicates not only that God is absolute perfection, eternally perfect and defining perfection in himself, but also that he is even beyond such perfection (977B, 128). But the principal name of this final chapter is the name One, which "means that God is uniquely all things through the transcendence of one unity and that he is the cause of all without ever departing from that oneness" (977C, 128). Just as every number participates in oneness as a multiple of one (or even as a fraction such as one-half, one-third, or one-tenth) so "everything, and every part of everything, participates in the One" (977C, 128). This One precedes and defines oneness and multiplicity as their cause and their underlying element, for "there is nothing at all lacking a share in that One which in its utterly comprehensive unity uniquely contains all and everything beforehand, even opposites" (980A, 128).

The name One is attached to scriptural passages about "one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ . . . [and] . . . one and the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 8:6 and 12:11). Despite these three trinitarian names, it is the Godhead as a whole that Dionysius designates as the One, "the overwhelming indivisibility of that oneness of God" (980B, 129). Yet this designation of God as one is not simply the monotheistic side of Christian trinitarian theology; it does not refer simply to the unity of God in the context of the Trinity. There are two enormous qualifications one must add to this terminology, the first pointed out by modern scholars and the second added by the author himself.

The first qualification on the name One as merely biblical and monotheistic is the author's clear adaptation of the Neoplatonic tradition about the One, specifically in the explanations given to Plato's treatise, *Parmenides*. Traces of the Neoplatonic tradition remain on the surface of Dionysius' text in his designation of God as the one cause and the one goal. The first half of this nomenclature, God as cause or source, is a mainly Christian doctrine of creation; the second half, God as the goal and end of unity or oneness itself, is a mainly Neoplatonic formulation of salvation. In the Neoplatonic viewpoint, we are returned from the many to the One: "Given this power of God's unity, we must be returned from the many to the One and our unique song of praise must be for the single complete deity which is the one cause of all things and which is there before every oneness amid multiplicity, before every part and whole" (980C, 129).

The more significant use, and transformation, of the Neoplatonic tradition about God as the One does not appear in an explicit text, but is implied in the very structure and spirit of *The Divine Names* as a whole. For Plato, the opposite of this world's transience and plurality is the eternal One, whose very transcendence means that any further attempts at identifying attributes fall short and name something below and dependent upon the One. On this subject, the complexities of Plato's *Parmenides* were the subject of many commentaries through the centuries, as Platonists continuously sought out the correct interpretation of the master's meaning. By the Areopagite's time, Proclus had expanded this exegetical tradition into an elaborate and complex system. On the one hand, the One could be described with negative predicates or attributes, in what they called the first hypothesis. On the other hand, since no affirmative predicates or attributes were applicable to the One, these affirmations, the second hypothesis, were ascribed to subordinate hypostases. These included Aristotle's *Nous* (mind) and eventually an entire series of gods, to oversimplify a sophisticated philosophical system. Thus the One is completely ineffable, and any positive attributes or names must apply to those subordinate entities that are dependent and consequent upon the One. The Areopagite transformed this system in a Christian way by applying not only the negative predicates to the transcendent God, but also the positive ones, properly understood. For Dionysius, these other names do not indicate lesser entities, such as the henads (the units or monads) of late Neoplatonism, but rather indicate attributes of the one God, as we have already seen. Yet even these attributes require qualification, since they do not truly describe the transcendent God, but must also, like the lowlier perceptible symbols, be interpreted and ultimately negated. The transformation of the *Parmenides* tradition is, of course, not acknowledged by the author, but the second qualification of the divine names—that they ultimately require negation—is acknowledged and even demanded, most emphatically.

There is a specific way in which the Neoplatonic tradition of interpreting Plato's *Parmenides* may have influenced the Areopagite's organization of *The Divine Names*. In Neoplatonism the triad of Being, Life, and Mind was a trio of individual principles standing, hierarchically, between the ineffable One and the lower individual beings, living things, and minds. The Areopagite considered the same three names in the same sequence in this treatise: chapter 5 treated Being, chapter 6 considered Life, and chapter 7 subsumed Mind under the overall heading of Wisdom. This triad, coming in order after the first name, Good, is clearly reminiscent of Neoplatonism. But Dionysius ascribed all these names to the "first principle" (God), which in the Neoplatonic exegesis of Plato could not receive any positive attributes, only negations. Thus, as we have just seen (956AB, 125), for the Christian Dionysius there are no such distinct entities or principles as subordinate gods or henads. Being, Life, and Wisdom (or Mind) are not a second level of divine reality, but names that express attributes of the one supreme God.⁵

But the location of these names after and in a sense subordinate to the name Good raises overarching questions about the structure of the treatise as a whole, at least about the order of the names treated in chapters 4 through 13. A straightforward transformation of the Platonic tradition would have started with the name One and then gone on to the other names and attributes, ascribing them to the same first principle and not to secondary ones. But the Areopagite started in chapter 4 with the name Good and ends with the name One in this final chapter. Along the way, he incorporated the well-known philosophical triad of Being, Life, and Wisdom (chapters 5, 6, and 7) and added numerous attributes or names from the Bible, such as righteousness (chapter 8), greatness and smallness (chapter 9), Ancient of Days (chapter 10), and Holy of Holies (chapter 12).⁶ In all these cases, Dionysius is careful to honor his original claim that these names are all taken from the Bible, even when the real motive may have been to enter into dialogue with the Neoplatonic understanding of the *Parmenides*.

His overall sequence started with the name Good, which was presented as the premier name for God. When Dionysius ends *The Divine Names* by denying that there is any really accurate name for the transcendent God, his disavowal of the divine names climaxes with the admission that even the first and "most revered" name of Good is inadequate to the task of naming the ineffable (981A, 130). After the highest name, the treatise proceeded to the triad of Being, Life, and Wisdom, and then to other presumably less significant names, ending with the biblical potpourri of Holy of Holies, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and so on. But in the end, the sequence seemed to return to the loftier conceptual plains of the divine uniqueness and unity with the name One, here called the "most enduring of them all" (977B, 127). Is there an order to this sequence? It seems to be a procession downward, until the final chapter's abrupt return to the heights. Thomas Aquinas (and Balthasar) here perceived the very

doctrine of procession and return: the divine descent out of goodness down to creation and the divine return of all things back up to ultimate oneness, as discussed below.

At the beginning of these comments on chapter 13 regarding the divine name One, I noted that there were two qualifying reasons why this name is not simply the monotheistic side of Christian theology. The first, the complicated and concealed relationship with Neoplatonism, has now been sketched. The second qualification with regard to this use of One is articulated by Dionysius himself. This entire chapter on God as One is not part of the Christian theology of God as both one and three, but rather part of the Dionysian epistemology of God as both one and not-one, both three and not-three, both Good and beyond Good, both known and ultimately beyond knowing: "And the fact that the transcending Godhead is one and triune must not be understood in any of our own typical senses. No. There is the transcendent unity of God and the fruitfulness of God, and as we prepare to sing this truth we use the names Trinity and Unity for that which is in fact beyond every name, calling it the transcendent being above every being" (980D–981A, 129). Here, in singing God's praises, we use the names Unity and Trinity, the latter in order to indicate God's fruitfulness or power to generate the Son and Spirit, but this is not an ultimate truth:

But no unity or trinity, no number or oneness, no fruitfulness, indeed, nothing that is or is known can proclaim that hiddenness beyond every mind and reason of the transcendent Godhead which transcends every being. There is no name for it nor expression. We cannot follow it into its inaccessible dwelling place so far above us and we cannot even call it by the name of goodness. In our urge to find some notion and some language appropriate to that ineffable nature, we reserve for it first the name which is most revered. Here, of course I am in agreement with the scripture writers. But the real truth of the matter is in fact far beyond us (981A, 129–30).

Neither One nor Three nor even Goodness, the author's premier scriptural name, is fully accurate from the point of view of God's own ultimate terms. The Scholiast wants us to know that Dionysius is not here denying the basic Christian confession but rather teaching, with Paul, God's inscrutability (Romans 11:33; *Scholia* 412D). But this does not mean that the treatise is in vain, or that there is nothing the mind can do to approach God: "That is why their [the scripture writers'] preference is for the way up through negations, since this stands the soul outside everything which is correlative with its own finite nature" (981B, 130). As already mentioned, the way to interpret these things, which will elevate us above our conceptual level and lead us outside ourselves in literal ecstasy, is the way of negations. As discussed under Wisdom (868A, 106), when we negate and thus transcend the words we use for God, we become wholly outside of ourselves (ecstatic) and wholly of God. The way of negation is the

way of union: "Such a way guides the soul through all the divine notions, notions which are themselves transcended by that which is far beyond every name, all reason and all knowledge. Beyond the outermost boundaries of the world, the soul is brought into union with God himself to the extent that every one of us is capable of it" (981B, 130). The treatise has labored mightily to interpret the divine names, but here it points beyond such conceptual labor to another realm. We transcend our finite mental level through the negation of all our concepts, which leads to union with God, who is beyond our every name and every conception. But since these conceptions must first be attained, the conceptual labor of *The Divine Names* is not in vain. It may not be the ultimate approach to God, but it is a necessary, even penultimate stage in the journey. As such, it has its value, but it must ultimately give way to union with God in silence. In just this way, *The Divine Names* now gives way to *The Mystical Theology*, even though these two treatises have a relationship to each other that is much more complicated than such a simple progression would imply, including a presumed intervening treatise.

In terms of its contents, *The Divine Names* has run its course and ends with this statement of negations and union with God. But in terms of its literary form as a communication to Timothy, it contains an epilogue (981CD–984A, 130–31). The author humbly ranks his own attempts at interpretation far below not only the celestial praises of the angels and of the scripture writers, but also below his own peers. If he has presented anything rightly, ascribe this, he says, to the cause of all good things. If he has omitted anything, it should be interpreted using the same methods. Where he is in error, he asks for generous help and strength. He concludes, "So here I finish my treatise on the conceptual names of God, and, with God's guidance, I will move on to *The Symbolic Theology*" (984A, 131).

As already discussed, the latter treatise is nowhere to be found. But here and elsewhere (597B, 57, and 913B, 117), Dionysius indicates an intimate relationship between the two treatises: *The Divine Names* concerns the conceptual names for God, meaning those names, such as goodness or existence, drawn from our realm of concepts. Perceptible phenomena like the sun or the morning star are the scriptural symbols that depend upon the lower realm of sense perception. They are ostensibly interpreted in *The Symbolic Theology*. Thus the author pairs these two works, here described as sequential, because they are devoted, respectively, to the conceptual and the perceptible data about God in the scriptures. *The Mystical Theology* explicitly takes up this question of the contents and order of these treatises, in the context of the overall Dionysian agenda. Although that terse essay both summarizes and climaxes the corpus, it would be difficult if not impossible to interpret it without the preparatory fuller exposition of *The Divine Names* and the other treatises surveyed so far.

THE MEDIEVAL INFLUENCE OF THE DIVINE NAMES

Introduction

The Divine Names has a special place in the Dionysian corpus and in any discussion of the Areopagite's influence, for two reasons. First, it is the longest of the Areopagite's works, and was often considered his most important treatise, along with the extremely brief *Mystical Theology*. Second, its extended discussions of the divine names present the author's doctrine of God quite directly, in contrast to the indirect discussion of God in the presentations of the angels or of the churchly hierarchy. Later theologians, whether Byzantine, such as Gregory Palamas (c. 1296–1359), or Latin, such as Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–74), showed a deep interest in the Dionysian doctrine of God and therefore in *The Divine Names*. The following sketch of the influence of the treatise concentrates on the Scholasticism of the Western Middle Ages, pivoting on Thomas and his systematic organization of theology. Of course, neither Thomas nor any other student of Dionysian theology concentrated on *The Divine Names* to the exclusion of the other treatises. But since they regarded this work as central, it will serve as the starting point for a discussion of the Dionysian influence on the medieval doctrine of God and therefore on the history of systematic theology.

However, before pursuing that broad and difficult topic, several other specific questions pertaining to the medieval use of *The Divine Names* should be at least mentioned. In Byzantine theology, the influence of Dionysius was directly dependent upon the advocacy of Maximus the Confessor (580–662), as noted in part I. When John of Damascus (c. 675–c. 749) thereafter included the Dionysian writings in his definitive summary of Orthodox doctrine, *The Orthodox Faith*, their importance for later Orthodox theologians was assured. For example, during the fourteenth-century Byzantine dispute between Barlaam and Gregory Palamas over the unknowability of God and therefore over a way of prayer called Hesychasm, both sides needed to claim the authority of the venerable Dionysius for their positions, even if there were other and more formative influences on their arguments.⁷

Five other items should also be noted, even if here too the Dionysian material was not the principal influence. First, *The Divine Names* has a place in the long and multiple traditions—Hellenic, Christian, Islamic, and Jewish—that concern the names for God (*de nominibus Dei*). For example, while commenting on two texts from the biblical book of Exodus, the fourteenth-century Dominican theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1327) showed a full awareness of several traditions on this point, giving major attention to the work of Thomas Aquinas and of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) as well as lesser

attention to Dionysius.⁸ Second, and more specifically, the apparent description of a gathering of the apostles to view the body of the Virgin Mary (681D, 70) has been part of both the Eastern tradition about her dormition or falling-asleep (*koimesis*), and also the Western belief in her assumption into heaven. The evidence is ambiguous, and papal ratification of the assumption as infallible dogma in 1950 did not rely on the sixth-century Pseudo-Dionysius. Nevertheless, for a thousand years and more, this text was thought to be a first-century eyewitness account.⁹ Third, in that same chapter of *The Divine Names*, Dionysius described uplifting prayer with the imagery of “a great shining chain hanging downward from the heights of heaven to the world below” (680C, 68). The golden chain (*catena aurea*) dates from Homer’s *Iliad* (viii. 18–20), and became a powerful symbol of the hierarchical ordering of all reality. It appears in Neoplatonic and Christian authors such as Macrobius (c. 400), Boethius, the twelfth-century Cistercian Abbot Isaac of Stella, and the more modern writers surveyed by Arthur Lovejoy’s famous book, *The Great Chain of Being*.¹⁰ Fourth, *The Divine Names* was both influential and controversial when it described creation in terms of God’s overflowing: “the Cause of all things is himself overflowing with them in one transcendent excess of all” (972A, 127; cf. 693B, 71, and 177C, 156). On the one hand, medieval theologians such as Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274) and Thomas Aquinas claimed Dionysian precedent for the idea that “the Good diffuses itself.” Yet, on the other hand, this idea had to be protected from the implication of such a smooth continuity between creator and creation that pantheism might be suggested.¹¹ Fifth, in this treatise Dionysius remarked that “providence does not destroy nature” (733B, 95), a sentiment with a long and complicated history, most notably in Thomas Aquinas: “grace does not scrap nature, but brings it to perfection.”¹²

Beyond these specific cases, the general question of Dionysian influence on the history of systematic theology centers on the great theologian just mentioned, Thomas Aquinas. This begs the question, for the moment, of the intermediate lines of influence such as John Scotus Eriugena, Hugh of Saint-Victor, Saracenus the translator, and Thomas’s own teacher, Albert the Great (c. 1200–80), who had a great interest in Dionysius. Indeed, the earliest work we have from Thomas’s hand, famously illegible, is his set of notes on Albert’s lectures about the Dionysian texts. But Thomas’s unquestioned prominence makes him the pivotal and most intriguing case of Dionysian influence on high medieval theology. Until recently, Thomist scholarship has tended to emphasize the impact of Aristotle upon Aquinas, an emphasis that has unnecessarily minimized the Neoplatonic and Dionysian influence.

The preceding discussions of allegory in the Bible (part I) and of the angelic hierarchy (part II) have already indicated some examples of Thomas’s use of Dionysius. A more systematic presentation, only suggested here, would take account of the sheer quantity of Aquinas’s direct quotations of the Areo-

pagite. One diligent student counted 1,702 explicit quotations, from all Dionysian treatises and spread throughout all of Thomas's life and works.¹³ This statistic alone ranks Dionysius as one of Thomas's principal authorities, to be compared with Augustine and the Philosopher, Aristotle. In fact, Dionysius's presumed Christian antiquity gave him pride of place over all other authors, after the biblical books themselves. Besides this quantity of references in general, Thomas wrote a full commentary on *The Divine Names*. He considered only one other early Christian author, Boethius, to be worthy of a commentary, although he commented thoroughly on Aristotle as well as on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and on various scriptural books. His substantial commentary on *The Divine Names* could and should be studied for a direct and systematic encounter between Dionysius and Aquinas, for it would yield considerable insight into the nature of this line of influence.¹⁴

Systematic Theology as Procession and Return

Beyond the statistics or the commentary on *The Divine Names*, another way to approach the treatise and its influence upon Thomas is to investigate the impact of the Neoplatonic and Dionysian framework of procession and return upon the Thomistic system as a whole, and therefore upon the history of systematic theology. As already glimpsed (at the beginning of part II), procession and return is a Neoplatonic way of saying that all things proceed from and return to the same source and goal. This framework may seem simply biblical, since Paul says "from him and through him and to him are all things,"¹⁵ and since the Bible as a whole starts with creation in Genesis and ends with the final restoration in Revelation. Furthermore, all the basic creeds move from God the Father and creation through the Son and the Spirit to the resurrection and the last things.

Nevertheless, whatever its biblical or credal support, this particular way of organizing a system or summary of theology has not always been standard in the history of Christian doctrine. As a specific outline, it has its own history. Its first appearances as a literary structure were not in the writings of the early church, where a rare example of systematic theology like Origen's *First Principles* follows another framework entirely.¹⁶ It is true that Augustine's *Confessions* follows this outline in books 1–9, for his personal journey is there presented as a movement away from God, the church, and his mother Monica, and then a return to them all, as led by God. But this is the odyssey of a soul, reminiscent of Ulysses or of the Neoplatonist Plotinus, not a systematic outline for God's own procession in terms of the Trinity and creation, and then God's saving return or restoration of all.¹⁷ Only after the Neoplatonist Proclus (c. 410–85), was this framework first tentatively applied to Christian thought as an actual outline for systematic theology.

Thomas Aquinas was quite aware that some of his predecessors had employed this conceptual and literary framework, although he may not have been completely accurate about its pedigree. *The Divine Names* is an excellent example. In his commentary on this work, Thomas correctly noted that Dionysius speaks of the names for God in terms of the divine procession into the created realm (649B, 66). But Aquinas went still further and identified the overall literary structure of the entire treatise as procession and return. According to Thomas, *The Divine Names* proceeded from the sublime name of Good down through lesser names only to return to the lofty name of One.¹⁸ There is no evidence that Dionysius intended *The Divine Names* to be read this way, although *The Mystical Theology* summarizes the treatise as part of a descending, affirmative procession (1033AB, 139), as discussed at length in part V. Nevertheless, Thomas was right to detect the basic conceptual framework of procession and return in the Areopagite, even if he was wrong about its function as a literary outline in this particular work and about its Christian antiquity.

Boethius is another example of an early appearance of procession and return in Christian theology and also of Thomas's work as a theological commentator. Exactly contemporary with Pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius (c. 480–524) was thoroughly conversant with later Neoplatonism, especially the works of Proclus, and therefore with the philosophical system of procession and return. He used these terms freely in his (Latin) *Theological Tractates* as well as in *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Here, too, Thomas saw more than the specific words in Boethius, for he argued that the order of the *Tractates* follows the systematic outline of procession and return. To Thomas, these brief treatises start with God's one essence and procession into three Persons, continue with "the procession of good creatures from the good God," and end with the "restoration of creatures by Christ."¹⁹ As in the case of Thomas's interpretation of *The Divine Names*, there is scant basis for seeing such a systematic intention in the order of the *Theological Tractates*. Boethius surely wrote them in a different order the one presented by the standard edition of his works.²⁰

Thomas thus identified the two earliest examples of a theologian substantially influenced by the notion of procession and return, namely, Dionysius and Boethius, even if he was perhaps too eager to detect their use of this framework as a literary outline. After Dionysius and the advocacy of his corpus by his interpreter, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus summarized and systematized orthodox theology in *The Orthodox Faith*. This work, often considered to be the first full systematic theology in Christianity, cites Dionysius freely and shows some dependence upon the framework of procession and return for its outline. Starting with God's unity and then Trinity, it proceeds to creation, Christology, and other items. But the final sections are not so clearly structured by the use of the idea of return as a way to present salvation or—a topic that the Damascene neglects generally—eschatology.²¹

But the crucial chapter in the Christian use of these Neoplatonic categories as a theological framework *and* as a clear literary structure is the fascinating story of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*. Eriugena (d. c. 877) knew the Dionysian corpus intimately as its translator into Latin and as a commentator on *The Celestial Hierarchy*. He also knew how some of its themes, such as procession and return, were developed by Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus. Whereas Dionysius largely maintained the Neoplatonic commitment to a timeless and ahistorical motion of procession and return—that is, that they were not really sequential—Eriugena explicitly employed this motif to describe God's entire relationship to the world and its history from creation to the final fulfillment. In other words, it was Eriugena who added the crucial historical dimension to Neoplatonism's eternal procession and return.

His major work, *Periphyseon*, speaks of "the procession of the creatures and the return of the same" and "the return of all things into the Cause from which they proceeded."²² For Eriugena, this is not merely an occasional theme but rather the organizing principle for his entire system. God's initial creative procession into plurality results in the final cosmic return of all things to God. Division, procession, creation, and descent are balanced by reunification, return, deification, and ascent: "When all things which have proceeded from It either through intelligible or sensible generation shall by a miraculous and ineffable rebirth return to It again."²³ It is well known that the Neoplatonic and Dionysian theme of procession and return informed not only the contents but also the outline of the *Periphyseon*, although there were other factors also at work, as Donald Duclow points out: "Beginning with Book II, the fourfold scheme of nature's division is fully assimilated to the dialectic of procession and return. . . . [The] scheme forms a cycle of procession and return in the literary structure of the work."²⁴ Eriugena further associated the categories of procession and return with the Augustinian language of nature and grace, which proved exceptionally effective for later systematicians like Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1142) and Thomas Aquinas. Thus both John of Damascus and Eriugena inherited the Neoplatonic theme of procession and return through Dionysius, and both used it as a literary or structural outline, with Eriugena clearly the more dramatic and explicit case.

Although some of Eriugena's views were condemned as heresy, which made every subsequent reader cautious about invoking his authority, later medieval theologians did continue to use the Neoplatonic theme of procession and return. Several twelfth-century authors, such as Hugh of Saint-Victor, passed it on, usually as integrated into the Augustinian framework of nature and grace.²⁵ Peter Lombard (c. 1085–1160) knew the systematic outline of John of Damascus and wrote a standard textbook in theology, the *Sentences*, which dominated the conceptual landscape that Thomas Aquinas and his predecessors inhabited. Employing a well-known Augustinian distinction, Lombard's first three books concern

things and the fourth signs. In Thomas's commentary on the *Sentences* (all medieval professors lectured on the *Sentences*), he interpreted Lombard's work, at least the first three books, according to this same literary framework of procession and return. "Hence," says Thomas, "in the first part, he [the Master of the *Sentences*] determines about divine things in their *proceeding* from their principle, in the second, in their *returning* to their end."²⁶ As already noted, Thomas perceived this systematic outline in Dionysius and Boethius, even where it does not really appear as a structural outline in their writings. Perhaps Aquinas also perceived it in the *Sentences*, even if Peter Lombard himself did not originally construct the work that way.

The framework of procession and return was known to Thomas through various channels, including Dionysius and perhaps Eriugena, although not in any explicit way. In addition to those already mentioned, especially Albert the Great, these channels of influence also involve Thomas' investigation of Proclus's *Liber de causis*, which he long considered to be a work by Aristotle. In general, there were more, and more significant, avenues of Neoplatonic influence upon Thomas than most scholars, especially Thomists, have been willing to acknowledge.

As for Thomas's use of procession and return as a literary outline, any account must start with his interpretation of Lombard and the Boethian tractates, as outlined above. Then, within a year or two, Thomas organized his own *Summa contra Gentiles* according to this same plan: "The first consideration is concerning those things which pertain to God in himself, the second is the procession of creatures from him, the third is the relationship of creatures to God as their goal."²⁷ Shortly thereafter, Thomas started the *Summa theologiae*, that immense summary of sacred doctrine which so influenced the history of systematic theology. Its aim, says Thomas, is to make God known as he is in himself and as the beginning and end of all things. This hint of procession and return (God as the beginning and end of all) becomes explicit in the next lines, in Thomas's own outline of the entire project:

We now intend to set forth this divine teaching by treating, first, of God, secondly, of the journey to God of reasoning creatures, thirdly, of Christ, who, as man, is our road to God. The treatment of God will fall into three parts: first, his nature, secondly, the distinction of persons in God, thirdly, the coming forth [*processum*] from him of creatures.²⁸

Thomas's *Summa theologiae* follows this outline quite faithfully and in great detail. The first part, on God, starts with God's single essence or nature, moves to the three Persons of the Trinity, and then to the procession of creatures from God. This is followed by a treatment of the movement of creatures back to God, and then by a discussion of Christ as the way for that return. Under the Latin headings *exitus* and *reditus*, this outline has been identified by various inter-

preters of Thomas as the same Neoplatonic framework of procession and return discussed here. In 1939, M.-D. Chenu pointed this out as “the plan of the *Summa theologiae* of St. Thomas”:

Beyond the scientific world of Aristotle, Saint Thomas appeals to the Platonic theme of emanation and return. Since theology is the science of God, all things will be studied in their relation to God, whether in their production or in their final end, in their *exitus et reditus*. . . . The Christian neo-Platonists are plainly the thinkers who can supply Saint Thomas with expression and support for this vast theme, and, de facto, the Dionysian tradition, so full of life in his day, does just this.

Chenu also noted that if the First Part of the *Summa* is concerned with emanation or procession, and the Second Part with return, then the Third Part, on Christ, may seem to be an appendix or afterthought:

Two traits give this work its general physiognomy, and both are immediately dependent upon the principle of emanation and return:

1. in the *Summa*, emanation and return unfold in two sections closely knit together in the unity of two reverse movements; the *Ia Pars* and the *Ila Pars* are related to one another as are *exitus* and *reditus*.
2. in the *Summa*, Incarnation, which is the center of the economy, enters into the circuit of emanation and return only as a means willed by God; it is dealt with in a *IIla Pars* which, judging in the abstract, would seem to play the role of no more than a part added to the whole as an afterthought.²⁹

Chenu goes on to defend Thomas against this abstract judgment, arguing that the placement of Christology within the *Summa* does not reflect a Neoplatonist's afterthought, but rather the free and historically contingent act of God. This defense, however, has been challenged.

To abbreviate a long, complicated, and important argument advanced quite forcefully by Wayne Hankey, the fundamental outline of Thomas's *Summa theologiae* and all its subsequent impact on the history of theology must be credited to the inner logic and system of the late Neoplatonism of Proclus, which Thomas gleaned from Dionysius, Boethius, and Proclus himself. To attribute such a decisive influence on Thomas to late Neoplatonism, Dionysian and otherwise, is to challenge several major interpretations of this period in the history of systematic theology, as Hankey is well aware. First, he opposes the attempt, by the entire Thomist school, including Chenu, to maintain Thomas's essentialism, or doctrine of being, by minimizing the Neoplatonic influence, as if this legacy compromises Aquinas. “It remains to see him within the history of Christian Neoplatonism where these structures [procession and return] are fundamental.”³⁰

Hankey's interpretation also involves immense theological and ecumenical implications, far beyond the technical debates over Thomas. For example, in this light, the so-called Western insistence on the logical priority of the oneness of God "before" the threeness, as opposed to the Cappadocians' (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa) preference for starting with the three divine Persons, comes from the channel of late Neoplatonic influence, and not from Augustine as is often claimed in explanations of the different theological perspectives behind the dispute over the *Filioque*. It was Thomas, not Peter Lombard or Augustine, who insisted upon starting with *de Deo uno* (the theological subject of the oneness of God) and then proceeding to *de Deo trino* (the three Persons). This he learned from the Platonic tradition of the *Parmenides*,³¹ especially Dionysius' description of the treatise that supposedly preceded *The Divine Names*, namely, *The Theological Representations*: "the divine and good nature is said to be one and then triune" (*Mystical Theology* 3, 1033A, 138; cf. *Divine Names* 1, 589D–592A, 51). Such a perspective challenges the well-worn impressions about a western, Augustinian view of the Trinity over against the eastern, Cappadocian view.

This particular question of the Dionysian legacy involves not just theology but the larger history of Western philosophy. The framework of procession and return that informed the structure of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* may not have influenced Thomas Aquinas directly, for it seems that he did not read the *Periphyseon* himself. But Eriugena's work did filter down through the centuries of philosophy, perhaps by way of Jacob Boehme (1575–1624) in particular, into German idealism including G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). More generally, the Dionysian dialectic that God is both knowable and unknowable, both immanent and transcendent, is part of a long philosophical and theological tradition that extends into our own time. Had not the limits for our inquiry been set at the appearances of this motif as a *literary* construction in the Latin Middle Ages, we would have encountered far more material. Bonaventure and Meister Eckhart, to take two medieval examples, employed the conceptual motif of procession and return quite thoroughly, but not as a literary outline.³² Those frustrated by the medieval limitations of this presentation should also investigate John Macquarrie's 1983 Gifford Lectures on "dialectical theism" (sometimes called panentheism). Macquarrie devotes successive chapters to Plotinus, Dionysius, Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa, G. W. Leibniz, Hegel, Alfred North Whitehead, and Martin Heidegger.³³ Without some chronological limits, this part would have faced not merely Aquinas, Hegel, and Heidegger, but materials as far-flung as Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetic line, "Thee, God, I come from, to thee go."³⁴

In summary, *The Divine Names* has played a central role in a long conceptual tradition, Neoplatonic and Scholastic, that has influenced Western thought far beyond the confines indicated in these few pages.

NOTES

1. The best brief introduction to *The Divine Names* is the German translation by Beate Regina Suchla, *Die Namen Gottes, Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur*, vol. 26 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988), pp. 1–20. Readers particularly interested in *The Divine Names*, Thomas Aquinas, and Heidegger should also consult the introduction and translation by John D. Jones (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980). Also widely available is the translation by C. E. Rolt, *The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology* (London: SPCK, 1940, and many subsequent printings).

2. This passage, and its association with traditional beliefs about the Virgin Mary, is discussed again near the end of this part with regard to the influence of *The Divine Names* (see n. 9). As Andrew Louth has pointed out (*Denys*, p. 109, n. 10), the Paulist Press translation is unfortunately ambiguous. The author portrays himself and the others as present on this occasion, not as having some kind of “vision.”

3. At this point, the translation in the Paulist Press edition should be corrected. The Greek text at 700C simply says “these things . . . in *The Symbolic Theology*.” The translation (p. 75) supplies a verb in the past tense: “All of this has been dealt with in *The Symbolic Theology*.” But every clear reference to that lost or fictitious treatise places it after *The Divine Names*. Thus, the proper verb to supply should be in the future tense: “All of this *will be* dealt with in *The Symbolic Theology*.”

4. This pun on the words beauty (*kallos*) and *bid* or *call* (*kaleo*) comes from Plato (*Cratylus*, 416C) and evokes the aesthetics of Plotinus, already mentioned in part II. The Paulist Press edition could have also mentioned another echo from Plato (*Symposium* 211AB) in the same paragraph (704A, 77).

5. This drastically oversimplifies the penetrating insights of Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato ‘De Divinis Nominibus’ dello pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1962), pp. 156ff.

6. Still another theory about these names should be mentioned. E. von Ivánka has noted their possible connection to three contemporary churches in Constantinople: Hagia Sophia (wisdom, *Divine Names* 7), Hagia Dynamis (power, *Divine Names* 8), and Hagia Eirene (peace, *Divine Names* 11). See his article “Der Aufbau der Schrift ‘De divinis nominibus’ des Ps.-Dionysios,” *Scholastik* 15 (1940): 386–99, and the summary in Louth, *Denys*, p. 92.

7. On Palamas, Barlaam, and Byzantine theology generally, see the works of John Meyendorff, such as *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964), pp. 133, 185–92, and 202–10. For more on Palamas, see the excellent edition of *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters: A Critical Edition, Translation and Study* by Robert E. Sinkewicz, C.S.B. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988). Sinkewicz’s comment about Palamas applying a

"christological corrective" to the Areopagite (pp. 20–21) confirms Meyendorff's viewpoint.

8. Bernard McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on Speaking about God," *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), pp. 15–30. See also Donald F. Duclow, "Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa: An Approach to the Hermeneutic of the Divine Names," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1972): 260–78, and Neil A. Stubbens, "Naming God: Moses Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 54 (1990): 229–67. Ephrem the Syrian may be a Dionysian predecessor with regard to the many names for God; see his "Hymn 31 on the Faith," in Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye* (Rome: C.I.I.S., 1985), pp. 43–48, as discussed in Louth, *Denys*, pp. 79–81. The general tradition about the divine names is now surveyed by Günter Bader, "Gott nennen: Von Götternamen zu göttlichen Namen: Zur Vorgeschichte der Lehre von den göttlichen Eigenschaften," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 86 (1989): 306–354.

9. In addition to the sources mentioned in the Paulist edition (p. 70, n. 130) see also Walter J. Burghardt, "The Testimony of the Patristic Age Concerning Mary's Death," *Marian Studies* 8 (1957): 58–99, and especially the massive research project introduced at the 1987 Oxford Patristics Conference by Simon C. Mimouni, "'Histoire de la Dormition et de l'Assomption de Maria': Une nouvelle hypothèse de recherche," *Studia Patristica* 19 (1989): 372–80. Hilda Graef remarks, without documentation, that "this legend also quotes a passage from Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (c. 500) which has played a considerable role in establishing the belief, since the works of this anonymous writer were attributed to the disciple of St. Paul throughout the Middle Ages" in *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), p. 138.

10. On the general history of this idea, and particularly on Isaac of Stella, see Bernard McGinn, *The Golden Chain: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac of Stella* (Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications, 1972), pp. 61–102. Lovejoy's book, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), and this entire hierarchical theme are both discussed in detail in Marion L. Kuntz and Paul G. Kuntz, eds., *Jacob's Ladder and the Tree of Life: Concepts of Hierarchy and the Great Chain of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

11. Thomas Aquinas made frequent reference to the idea that the Good diffuses itself (*Bonum diffusivum sui*): *Summa theologiae* I, q. 5, art. 4 ad 2; I, q. 73, art. 3 ad 2; and *de Veritate* 21.1 ad 4, translated by Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). See J. Peghaire, "L'axiome 'Bonum est diffusivum sui' dans le néo-platonisme et le thomisme," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 1, section spéciale (1932): 5–30; and Klaus Kremer, "'Bonum est diffusivum sui.' Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Neuplatonismus und

Christentum," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. pt. 2, *Principat*, vol. 36 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), pp. 994–1032. While Peghaire's article (like Kremer's) is quite helpful for Plotinus, Proclus, Dionysius and Thomas, he does not cover Bonaventure (e.g., *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 6.2; Cousins, *Bonaventure*, p. 103); see Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," *The Journal of Religion* 58, sup. (1978), *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage*, ed. David Tracy, pp. S82–S96, and the response by Ewert Cousins (pp. S97–S104), as well as Hayes's *The Hidden Center* and Cousins's "God as Dynamic in Bonaventure and Contemporary Thought," in *Thomas and Bonaventure: A Septicentenary Commemoration*, ed. George F. McLean (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1974).

On whether diffusion, or overflowing, implies pantheism in Dionysius, see the scholarly opinions surveyed by Gersh, *From Iamblichus*, pp. 19–22, William J. Carroll, "Participation and Infinity in Dionysius the Areopagite," *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 2 (1983): 63–64; and R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), p. 161. Some of the other Dionysian passages of interest to medieval theology on this point are clustered at the beginning of chapter 4 of *The Divine Names* (693B–700D, 71–75).

12. "Gratia non tollat naturam sed perficiat": *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, art. 8 ad 2, trans. Thomas Gilby (London: Blackfriars, 1963), vol. 1, p. 31. On the larger history of the phrase, see B. Stoeckle, "Gratia supponit naturam": *Geschichte und Analyse eines theologischen Axioms* (Rome: Herder, 1962), especially pp. 99–112.

13. On Thomas and Dionysius in general, beyond the items mentioned below in more specific contexts, see J. Durantal, *S. Thomas et le pseudo-Denis* (Paris: F. Alcon, 1919); T. C. O'Brien, "The Dionysian Corpus," app. 3 in vol. 14 of the Blackfriars edition of Thomas's *Summa theologiae* (London: Blackfriars, 1975), pp. 182–93; Robert J. Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956); Walter M. Neidl, *Thearchia: Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Gott bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita und Thomas von Aquin* (Regensburg: J. Habel, 1976); Rosa Padellaro de Angelis, *L'influenza del pensiero neoplatonico sulla metafisica di S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Rome: Edizioni Abete, 1981); and Leo J. Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990). For the statistics of 1,702 uses, see the article in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:353.

14. Thomas's commentary on *The Divine Names* should receive its critical treatment (by James Reilly and Anthony Celano) in the Leonine edition. There have been texts published in the 1864 edition of Thomas's works (Parma 15: 259–405) and by Ceslari Pera (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1950). The latter contains an introduction by Peter Caramello that surveys the history of the Dionysian corpus in the Latin literature before Thomas, conveniently translated by Kevin

Doherty as "Peter Caramello's Introduction to C. Pera's Edition of *The Divine Names* of St. Thomas," in *The Thomist Reader, Texts and Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Thomist Press, 1958): 72–93. There is no complete English translation of Thomas's commentary yet generally available, but see the excerpt in M. C. D'Arcy's *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (London: Dent, 1933), pp. 186–91, and the selected translations (from Thomas's introduction and his comments on chapter 5) in a thesis by Sister M. Dominic Twohill, O.P.: "The Background and St. Thomas Aquinas' Reading of the *De divinis nominibus* of the Pseudo-Dionysius" (Fordham University, 1960). Regarding Thomas on the Dionysian comment about the ways of "denial and the transcendence of all things and by way of the cause of all things" (827A, 108), see Michael B. Ewbank, "Diverse Orderings of Dionysius' *Triplex Via* by St. Thomas Aquinas," *Mediaeval Studies* 52 (1990): 82–109. See also Deborah Black, "The Influence of the *De divinis nominibus* on the Epistemology of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference* 10 (1985): 41–52.

15. Romans 11:36, quoted by Dionysius in both *The Divine Names* (708A, 79) and, most strategically, at the beginning of *The Celestial Hierarchy* (121A, 145). Meister Eckhart preached on this passage (as translated in *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*, pp. 207–12), which the editor, Bernard McGinn, calls "one of Meister Eckhart's favorite scriptural texts" (p. 6). See also John 16:28.

16. Charles Kannengiesser, "Divine Trinity and the Structure of *Peri Archon*," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, ed. Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 231–49. Kannengiesser's fuller analysis of the structure of *Peri Archon* was presented to the Midwest Patristics Society meeting on March 31, 1990 (Loyola University, Chicago). See also the earlier pamphlet by Hugh T. Kerr, *The First Systematic Theologian: Origen of Alexandria* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1958).

17. Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969). On procession and return (and more) in *The Confessions*, see also R. D. Crouse, "'Recurrens in te unum': The Pattern of St. Augustine's *Confessions*," *Studia Patristica* 14 (1976): 389–92; Joseph W. Houle, "The Mystical Journey and the Garden Archetype in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine," *Studies in Formative Theology* 9 (1988): 63–77; David J. Leigh, "Augustine's *Confessions* as a Circular Journey," *Thought* 60 (1985): 73–88; and Carl A. Levenson, "Distance and Presence in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Journal of Religion* 65 (1985): 500–512. Even more recent is *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith"*, ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), especially the articles by Richard Lumen, "Journeys and Gardens: Narrative Patterns in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine" (pp. 141–57) and Luc Verheijen, "The *Confessiones*: Two Grids of Composition and Reading" (pp. 175–201).

18. Thomas Aquinas, commentary on *The Divine Names* (Parma 15:295). For a similar theory of procession and return within *The Divine Names*, see Hans Urs von Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles* (San Francisco and New York: Ignatius and Crossroad, 1984), , trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil, pp. 189–90.

19. Thomas's commentary or exposition on (the first part of) Boethius's *De Trinitate* is edited by Bruno Decker (Leiden: Brill, 1955 and 1959). It is most accessible in Armand Maurer's English translation of books 1 to 4 as *Faith, Reason and Theology* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987), and of Books 5 and 6 as *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 4th rev. ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986). Thomas's comments that organized Boethius's five treatises according to procession and return are in his prologue (Decker, p. 47; Maurer, p. 5). On Boethius and Thomas generally, see Ralph McInerny, *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1990).

20. Boethius's *Theological Tractates* are edited and translated by H. J. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 74 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973). The historical order of the composition of the *Opuscula sacra* or *Theological Tractates* has been investigated by V. Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der 'skythischen Kontroversen'* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1935), as summarized in John Mair, "The Text of the *Opuscula Sacra*," in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 206–13. Although Gibson herself traces "The *Opuscula Sacra* in the Middle Ages" (pp. 214–34) in the same volume, including their importance for the twelfth-century scholastics before Thomas, she says nothing about Boethius's original editor, who apparently arranged the treatises in this nonchronological but striking thematic order. That Boethius used the language of procession and return is clear from various passages (e.g., pp. 61 and 91 in the Loeb edition), even if he did not originally write the treatises in the order that seemed like procession and return to Thomas. See also Leo Elders, *Faith and Science: An Introduction to St. Thomas' 'Expositio in Boethii De Trinitate'* (Rome: Herder, 1974). See especially Wayne J. Hankey, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani, Pavia, 5–8 ottobre, 1980*, ed. L. Obertello, (Rome: Herder, 1981), pp. 367–75, and his major work, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), as discussed below.

21. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958). There may be an earlier (fifth-century) model for this general outline in Theodoret of Cyr's *Compendium of*

Heretical Fables, book 5, which bears the title "Epitome of Divine Teachings." See the outline given in the Migne edition (PG 83:440). The opening chapters of Theodoret's work bear further investigation for their relationship to the Dionysian tradition: 1, "De principio et Patre," 2, "De Filio," 3, "De sancto Spiritu, et divinis nominibus." Nevertheless, like John of Damascus, Theodoret does not conclude his work with soteriology or eschatology, thus preventing either book from serving fully as a precedent to the use of this framework by Eriugena or Thomas.

22. Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 528D–529A (p. 128) and 638C (p. 311). More bibliographical details about the Latin text of *Periphyseon* and its English translations were presented above in part II, n. 21.

23. *Periphyseon* 1019B, p. 711. Maieul Cappuyns masterfully presented Eriugena's thought in terms of "La théologie descendente: La processio ou creatio" and "La théologie ascendente: La reversio ou deificatio," in *Jean Scot Erigène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée* (repr., Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1969), pp. 302–80. Stephen Gersh refers to this dynamic as the "upward and downward movements" throughout *From Iamblichus*. See also the recent monographs mentioned above in part II, n. 20, by Dermott Moran and especially Willemien Otten, who locates Eriugena's anthropology within the framework of procession and return (e.g., pp. 118ff.).

24. Donald Duclow, "Dialectic and Christology in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*," *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 102 and 111, n. 53. The literary structure is also indicated in the *Periphyseon* 528D (p. 128), 688D (p. 317) and especially 741C–744A (pp. 381–83). For the other factors in Eriugena's outline, see Guy-H. Allard, "La structure littéraire de la composition du *De diuisione naturae*," in *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. John J. O'Meara and Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973), pp. 147–57.

25. On Hugh's use of this theme, see Grover Zinn's articles, "The Regular Canons," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1985), p. 221, and "Hugh of St. Victor," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 6:322.

26. In *I Sententiis*, d. 2, div. textus, as quoted by M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans., A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Regnery, 1964), p. 306.

27. *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.9 [4]. Leonine edition, 4:22. See Simon Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas, Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), pp. 250–57.

28. *Summa theologiae* 1a, q. 2, prol., ed. T. Gilby (London: Blackfriars, 1964), 2:3, with the Latin text facing on p. 2. See also "principium rerum et finis earum" on the same page and 1a, q. 1, art. 3, ad 1 (Blackfriars 1:14).

29. "Le plan de la *Somme théologique* de S. Thomas," *Révue Thomiste* 45 (1939): 93–107. The article was incorporated into Chenu's *Introduction à l'étude*

de saint Thomas d'Aquin (Paris: Vrin, 1950), which was translated as *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*. Quoted are the English translations (pp. 304, 306, and 310) of the passages originally on pp. 97, 99, and 101 of the 1939 article. This influential essay has also been translated and published as a booklet, *The Scope of the Summa of St. Thomas*, trans. Robert Edward Brennan, O.P., and A.-M. Landry (Washington, D.C.: Thomist Press, 1958).

30. Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself*, p. 139. "The 'exitus-reditus' is found at all levels of his *Summa*," Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas' First Principle: Being or Unity?" *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 169. See also Edward Booth, O.P., *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Thomas F. O'Meara, "Grace as a Theological Structure in the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 55 (1988): 130–53.

31. On this point, see Hankey, *God in Himself*, and Sherwin Klein, "Plato's *Parmenides* and St. Thomas's Analysis of God as One and Trinity," *The Thomist* 55 (1991): 229–44.

32. See Bonaventure's *Collations on the Six Days* 1.17 (Quarrachi 5:332), and Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center*. On Eckhart, Bernard McGinn identifies the theme of procession and return as the inner coherence of the Meister's thought; *Meister Eckhart: Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, ed. Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 30–31.

33. John Macquarrie, *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism* (New York: Crossroad, 1985). Besides the fascinating lines of influence, which could be stretched to include F. W. J. von Schelling and Paul Tillich, note also Macquarrie's fine essay on Dionysius himself. See also Edward Booth's article, which concludes: "Hegel had drawn much from Proclus for a philosophy centred on self-thinking mind; and Schelling drew from pseudo-Dionysius for a philosophy of being and supra-existence: as two antagonists taking up again the difference between their predecessors, thirteen hundred years before," "*To hypereinaí* of pseudo-Dionysius and Schelling," *Studia Patristica*, vol. 23 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989), pp. 215–25.

34. *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 167. See also Leonard Bowman, "Bonaventure and the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins," *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*, vol. 3; *Philosophica* (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1973), pp. 553–70; and Maria Lichtmann, *The Contemplative Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), which considers Plato and various Platonisms at some length. The subject of this section of part 4 is also treated (more from the perspective of Thomas Aquinas than of Dionysius) in my "'Procession and Return' in Thomas Aquinas and His Predecessors," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 13.2 (1992): 147–63.

This page intentionally left blank

PART V

The Mystical Theology

The Mystical Theology, for all its influence and importance, is remarkably short, only about five pages of text. The inviting brevity and its centrality to the corpus might suggest that this essay could itself conveniently represent the Pseudo-Dionysian system.¹ Yet precisely in its brevity and density, the work resists quick comprehension and will mislead a reader who is unaware of its overall context. Several crucial facets of the Areopagite's thought—amply explained elsewhere and now essential to the accurate interpretation of *The Mystical Theology*—are here compressed into a single word or omitted altogether. *The Mystical Theology* explicitly summarizes some previous works, such as *The Divine Names*, and thus indicates that the author did not intend to use this treatise as an introduction to his thought.

The Mystical Theology is thus a brief summary or even the climax of Dionysian thought, but so compressed a summary of such complex thought that it cannot stand alone, or as the first of his works. It will here be quoted in full, line by line, accompanied by interpretive commentary. Because the work itself summarizes most of the Dionysian system, the comments will integrate material from previous parts in order to summarize and to conclude this commentary on the whole of the Dionysian corpus. Conversely, when a significant Dionysian theme, such as the angels or hierarchical authority, is not discussed in *The Mystical Theology*, this omission too will be investigated. There are difficult questions about the relationship of this treatise to the others, and doubts about the consistency of the overall corpus. Finally, the use and misuse of this seminal essay in the history of Christian mysticism will also be surveyed.

Even before quoting the beginning of chapter 1, the title of the treatise itself, *The Mystical Theology*, invites comment and scrutiny, the kind given in previous parts to the titles added by editors to the chapters of Dionysius' other works. In this case, both *mystical* and *theology* need clarification. The traditional translation of *mustikos* as *mystical* can be quite misleading if the connotations of

later mysticism are read back into the Dionysian corpus and into this title. In the premedieval usage of Dionysius and other authors, the word does not mean the suprarational or emotional ecstasy of extraordinary and solitary individuals. It carries the simpler, less technical sense of something mysterious, something hidden to others but revealed to those initiated into the mysteries. Thus, certain occurrences of *mustikos* are translated as *mysterious* (997B, 135, cf. n. 2; 1001A, 137) and other occurrences as *hidden* (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 7, 565C, 257). Indeed, the first translation into (Middle) English called this work “Denis’ Hidden Divinity” (see n. 39). As for *theology*, here, too, a presumably straightforward word has a special meaning, as employed throughout the corpus and throughout this introductory commentary. In the Dionysian usage, *theology* carries the literal meaning of God’s word or the scriptures, just as the *theologians* are invariably the scripture writers. Thus, the word *theology* in the title accurately indicates the author’s intentions, stated here and elsewhere, to interpret the Bible, although with a heavy philosophical agenda.

In the author’s own lexicon, the title of *The Mystical Theology* would mean “the secret God-word.” In one sense, this is an accurate title; the essay concerns a confidential discourse about God loosely based upon some scriptural texts. On the other hand, certain shades of meaning in the title and the chapter titles are not consistent with the contents of the treatise, such as the plural form in the title of the third chapter: “the affirmative and negative theologies.” Perhaps the title of the treatise was intended to parallel the title of *The Symbolic Theology*, a title that is well-attested within the text itself. Whatever the origins and intentions of the title and the chapter titles, the reader should not let this terminology, or any anachronistic interpretations of it, dictate the meaning of the texts themselves.

CHAPTER 1

What is the divine darkness?

Chapter 1 of *The Mystical Theology* begins, uncharacteristically, with a prayer:

Trinity!! Higher than any being,
 any divinity, any goodness!
 Guide of Christians
 in the wisdom of heaven!
 Lead us up beyond unknowing and light,
 up to the farthest, highest peak
 of mystic scripture,
 where the mysteries of God’s Word
 lie simple, absolute and unchangeable
 in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence.

Amid the deepest shadow
 they pour overwhelming light
 on what is most manifest.
 Amid the wholly unsensed and unseen
 they completely fill our sightless minds
 with treasures beyond all beauty.
 For this I pray; and, Timothy, my friend, my advice to
 you . . .

(997AB, 135)

First, the chapter title ("What is the divine darkness?") successfully previews the chapter's climactic comments about Moses entering a "darkness of unknowing" (1001A, 137), which was later interpreted and translated as the "cloud of unknowing." Here we should also note the absence of the subheading that opened the three treatises already encountered, namely, "Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder." More natural to the text itself is the simple reference here to "Timothy, my friend," the ostensible recipient of this opening advice as well as of the discourse and the corpus overall.

The essay begins with a prayer, which is both continuous and discontinuous with the rest of the corpus. The other treatises do not actually begin with prayer, although the deeper contemplation of the synaxis starts with a prayer of sorts to the sacrament itself (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 3, 428C, 212). Yet the author has often indicated the need for such prayerful beginnings, as in the third chapter of *The Divine Names* (680B, 68). In theory there and in practice here, his concern is not just with a prayer to God in general, but with an invocation of the Trinity in particular. This is not the dominant Dionysian way to refer to God; he usually uses the terms *thearchy*, or *Godhead*. The prayer itself reviews and previews several consistent themes. God is higher than existence, godhood, and the good itself, and leads or lifts us up beyond "unknowing and light." The themes of light and knowledge, of darkness and the unknowing that is higher than knowledge, were among the very first themes encountered in part I, regarding *Letter 1*. The ongoing discussions of illumination, enlightenment, knowledge, and unknowing reach their peak in this treatise, based upon the hidden (mystic) meaning of the scriptures. With typical oxymorons like "brilliant darkness," the author encapsulates his teaching about the light beyond shadow, the insight beyond knowledge, the unseen treasure beyond beauty for the mind beyond sight.

With this prayerful preview, Dionysius begins his spiritual advice to Timothy.

For this I pray; and, Timothy, my friend, my advice to you as you look for a sight of the mysterious things, is to leave behind you everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and, with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge.

By an undivided and absolute abandonment of yourself and everything, shedding all and freed from all, you will be uplifted to the ray of the divine shadow which is above everything that is.

But see to it that none of this comes to the hearing of the uninformed . . .
(997B–1000A, 135–36)

In *The Divine Names* and elsewhere, we have already investigated the imagery of light and the Dionysian description of God as beyond all being or existence and beyond all knowledge. The question posed here is fundamental, even universal: how can we relate to such a transcendent God? How can we approach and even be united with One so far removed from our experience and our categories, whether of sense perception or of conceptual thought? The answer is specifically Dionysian, although inherited from Plotinus and others, and later shared with many: we are uplifted to this transcendent God through the intentional and systematic abandonment of all these inferior categories, leaving behind everything that has to do with sense perception and mental concepts. This abandonment is, literally, an ecstasy in the sense (discussed in part 4) of standing outside ourselves and our natural, affirmative uses of language about God. The ending of *The Divine Names* explicitly previewed the ecstatic function of negation in the scriptures (981B, 130), which is now thoroughly encountered in this treatise.

Also consistent with the rest of the corpus is the precise term for this movement upward out of ourselves to God, namely, the uplifting, or anagogy, mentioned in the second last line of the quotation. Elsewhere, this uplifting is specified as the anagogical interpretation of scriptural and liturgical symbols, lifting us up from the level of sense perception to the level of conceptual contemplation. The passive voice is also typical. Neither Timothy nor the Areopagite nor any other Dionysian character makes this ascent on his own; rather, Timothy “will be uplifted” by the generous power above him, all in good order. In this text, ecstasy and anagogy are one and the same movement, standing out of one’s self and being lifted up to God. The journey here recommended to Timothy and shortly to be exemplified in Moses is one beyond “the perceptible and the conceptual,” an ascent that will also provide the outline for chapters 4 and 5 of *The Mystical Theology*. The uplifting journey leads one beyond all sense perception, not because the pleasures of the senses are tempting, but because the symbols based upon the senses of taste, smell, and especially sight need to be interpreted for their conceptual meaning. Then these interpretations, the understandable or intelligible things, must also be left behind, as the author advises Timothy here and afterward will be explained more fully to all readers, at least those initiated in such things:

But see to it that none of this comes to the hearing of the uninformed, that is to say, to those caught up with the things of the world, who imagine that there is nothing beyond instances of individual being and who think that by their own intellectual resources they can have a direct knowledge of him

who has made the shadows his hiding place. And if initiation into the divine is beyond such people, what is to be said of those others, still more uninformed, who describe the transcendent Cause of all things in terms derived from the lowest orders of being, and who claim that it is in no way superior to the godless, multiformed shapes they themselves have made? What has actually to be said about the Cause of everything is this. (1000AB, 136)

The need to conceal privileged insights from the uninitiated was also impressed upon Timothy at the beginning of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (372A, 195) and elsewhere. But for Dionysius this concern for secrecy is more than a literary convention. It is one of the two principal motives for the divine use of perceptible symbols in the first place, namely to conceal the conceptual truths from the outsiders and to reveal them to the initiated (*Celestial Hierarchy* 2, 140C, 149).

In this case, the uninformed are identified as those who naively think that there is nothing beyond the level of being or existence which is known to us, and that we on this level can have a direct knowledge of the transcendent One who is actually hidden in shadows or darkness (quoting Psalm 18:11, and anticipating Dionysius' account of Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai). Yet these misguided souls would seem to be at least nominally Christian, and thus initiated in the sense of being baptized. What the author is about to discuss is apparently intended only for the truly advanced and spiritually elite. Even farther away from such insights are those who confuse the created things of this material world with the transcendent Cause of all by their use of homemade physical idols, as also summarily dismissed in *Letter 7* (1080B, 267).

Beyond such denigrating confusion of existent things with their supreme Cause and the source of being itself is this higher clarity:

What has actually to be said about the Cause of everything is this. Since it is the Cause of all beings, we should posit and ascribe to it all the affirmations we make in regard to beings, and, more appropriately, we should negate all these affirmations, since it surpasses all being. Now we should not conclude that the negations are simply the opposites of the affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion.

This, at least, is what was taught by the blessed Bartholomew. (1000B, 136)

This passage summarizes the author's theology, both in the sense of his doctrine about God as the Cause of all and as surpassing all, and in the sense of his theological method of affirmation and negation. The two sides of his doctrine of God fit precisely with the two facets of his method, for affirmations are associated with causation and negations with transcendence. As the Cause of all beings, God can be named and described with anything from the realm of beings, even with images from the animal kingdom or the material world, as discussed in *Letter 9* and in chapter 2 of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. But, as also discussed there, it is more appropriate to negate any such descriptions, since

God surpasses all existence. Thus both affirmation and negation are part of one's talk about God, although negation is more in keeping with God's transcendence.

Not that the negations are simply the logical opposites of the affirmations, as Aristotle had claimed. Since the affirmations based upon created things are not ultimately true, and require negation, it might be tempting to be content with the negations as the opposites of the affirmations, as expressing and capturing the truth. Nevertheless, although these negations are grammatically and logically true, they still do not capture the One who is beyond all negations. God is beyond any negation, whether the simple lack or privation of an attribute or the more advanced denial which knows that God does not lack but rather transcends any given attribute. Even in this initial statement of method, as at the end of this entire treatise on theological method, the author refutes the impression that negations are sufficient, although they are surely superior to affirmations.

If the readers wonder how they can pass beyond both affirmations and negations, they are ready for further guidance into the Dionysian method, cloaked in the authoritative mantles of Bartholomew and Moses:

This, at least, is what was taught by the blessed Bartholomew. He says that the Word of God is vast and minuscule, that the Gospel is wide-ranging and yet restricted. To me it seems that in this he is extraordinarily shrewd, for he has grasped that the good cause of all is both eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless. It has neither word nor act of understanding. . . . (1000BC, 136)

Of course, an author who ascribed his entire corpus to Dionysius, the Athenian disciple of Paul, could well further the fiction by invoking the apostolic authority of Bartholomew, as did other spurious works, even though Bartholomew left no authentic writings.

Here theology is both vast and minuscule, referring to the scriptures' way of being discursive at some times and terse at others. This is not a comment about theology in the abstract, but about the Bible's way of doing God-talk, as confirmed by the parallel comments that the Gospel is both wide-ranging and restricted, and that the good cause of all (the God whose Word is "theo-logy") is both eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless. The relationship of the preceding discussion on affirmations and negations to this insight attributed to Bartholomew is not immediately apparent, but turns out to be a close and crucial relationship. It is precisely the affirmations about God in the scriptures that are vast, wide-ranging, and eloquent, since they can draw upon all of creation to describe the Creator or Cause of all. Yet the scripture writers, as Dionysius has often said, also used and indeed preferred negations regarding God. This alternate dimension of the scriptures, the negative way, can be exceedingly brief, indeed minuscule, restricted, taciturn. The *via negativa* can be established with a very few negative words, as compared with the discursive assertions of the affirmative way. It even points the way beyond its own few words to a further state, being completely without or beyond words, indeed wordless.

Ultimately, theology is not only wordless but even thoughtless in the Dionysian sense of being beyond words and thoughts:

It has neither word nor act of understanding, since it is on a plane above all this, and it is made manifest only to those who travel through foul and fair, who pass beyond the summit of every holy ascent, who leave behind them every divine light, every voice, every word from heaven, and who plunge into the darkness where, as scripture proclaims, there dwells the One who is beyond all things. It is not for nothing that the blessed Moses . . . (1000C, 136)

As seen throughout the treatise, God transcends every human word or concept, dwells on a plane above them all, and yet is revealed to those who leave behind every perceptible light, every voice, every conceptual word from heaven. This leaving behind occurs in a sequence of holy ascents, and beyond every ascent, into “the divine darkness” mentioned in the Sinai narrative and in this chapter’s title.

With an opening prayer, the advice to Timothy, a pledge to secrecy, and the apocryphal insights of the Apostle Bartholomew, the stage is set for the climactic example of Moses on Mount Sinai:

It is not for nothing that the blessed Moses is commanded to submit first to purification and then to depart from those who have not undergone this. When every purification is complete, he hears the many-voiced trumpets. He sees the many lights, pure and with rays streaming abundantly. Then, standing apart from the crowds and accompanied by chosen priests, he pushes ahead to the summit of the divine ascents. And yet he does not meet God himself, but contemplates, not him who is invisible, but rather where he dwells. This means, I presume, that . . . (1000CD, 136–37)

This narrative, which continues with some explanation and then an account of the further progress of Moses to union with God, is an extraordinary text, with several layers of meaning. Of course, the original account of Moses on Mount Sinai in the biblical book of Exodus is complex and intricate in itself. This scriptural narrative was already a frequent subject of exegetical selectivity and embellishment among patristic authors as a paradigm for Christian spirituality, as best illustrated by Gregory of Nyssa’s entire treatise, *The Life of Moses*, which, furthermore, anticipates some of the Dionysian themes and even the specific outline of introduction, narrative, and contemplation, the very format used for the interpretive chapters of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Clearly for Gregory and for our author, among others, the sequence of events in this biblical scene is more than historically accurate as an objective narrative. It is also spiritually significant as an authoritative model. Since the model can be shaped according to the exegete’s interpretive selectivity and embellishment, it takes on the interpreter’s own imprint in the retelling. For Dionysius, it is a crucial model indeed, for God is manifest only to those who make this journey, who leave behind the lights and the voices, who approach the summit of the divine ascents.

Yet what specific spiritual process is modeled here and how does it relate to the rest of the corpus? Since the author is extremely enigmatic at this point, we must examine the exact terms used in the Dionysian embellishments of the Exodus story and then note their occurrences elsewhere in the corpus. For example, Moses is first purified. This should immediately remind the reader of the spiritual ascent from purification to illumination and perfection discussed so often in the hierarchical treatises. Although one would search in vain for the precise terminology of illumination and perfection in the rest of Moses' ascent, we must remember the Areopagite's creative flexibility in using terms and words. Illumination, the middle power (of purification, illumination, and perfection), was characteristic of the middle rank of laypeople, which was usually called the contemplative order. Since illumination makes it possible to contemplate sacred things (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5, 504B, 235; cf. *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 6, 532B, 244, and 537B, 248), these two terms were tied closely together. Now Moses is said to contemplate not the invisible God but at least where God dwells, which means that the middle power of illumination is here invoked indirectly through the activity of contemplation. More apparent still is the close relationship between the third stage (perfection) and Moses' final union with God, since perfection includes union within itself. Thus, Moses experiences three steps: purification, contemplation, and union.

The specific terminology used for Moses' purification would also alert the Greek reader to another instance of purifying, namely, the ritual washing of purification by the hierarch during the communion liturgy (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 3, 440A, 219). In general, Moses is the acknowledged prototype for the hierarch (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5, 501C, 234), even though Dionysius never makes explicit the parallels between Moses' Sinai ascent and the hierarch's liturgical role, as Gregory of Nyssa did. But a parallel is implicit in the similar sequence and the shared use of several unusual, even technical, terms. Beyond the purification, Moses departs from the profane crowds, just as the liturgical dismissal causes some—namely, those not allowed go on with the service, those not yet purified in the more general sense—to depart. Dionysius embellishes the biblical record with some specific details, saying that Moses moves past the sounds of the trumpets and the various lights. From other passages, it is clear that a Dionysian hierarch should also know how to transcend the bare sounds of the scriptures (*Divine Names* 4, 708C, 80) and the physical lights of the liturgy (*Celestial Hierarchy* 1, 121D, 146). Next Moses and certain chosen priests are further separated from the crowd and approach the summit, just as the hierarch with the priests and chosen deacons leave the nave and enter the inner sanctuary. Moses does not yet meet God, but rather contemplates where God dwells, which means not just physical sight but also spiritual comprehension, just as the hierarch sees and teaches the advanced contemplation of every liturgical rite. Yet a Dionysian hierarch, like Moses, also knows how to go beyond all symbols, their contemplation, and even beyond every resulting con-

cept. These terminological parallels between Moses on Mount Sinai and the hierarch during the communion liturgy are supported by the author's other two examples of extraordinary spiritual experience, Hierotheus (*Divine Names* 3, 681D, 70) and Carpos (*Letter* 8, 1097C, 278). In both cases, as discussed above, their "mystical" experience is linked to a liturgical context through a specialized vocabulary.

But this is not yet the pinnacle of Moses' experience, nor the end of the spiritual paradigm on Mount Sinai:

This means, I presume, that the holiest and highest of the things perceived with the eye of the body or the mind are but the rationale which presupposes all that lies below the Transcendent One. Through them, however, his unimaginable presence is shown, walking the heights of those holy places to which the mind at least can rise. But then he [Moses] breaks free of them, . . . (1000D-1001A, 137)

Moses' initial observations of lights and sounds and his subsequent contemplation of where God dwells are stages along the way but not the final goal. Even these perceptions and conceptions, the loftiest work done by the "eye of the body or of the mind," fall short of the supreme Transcendent One. They are, literally, the hypothetical *logoi* or interpretive presuppositions for what stands below God, at the height of human capacity but nevertheless below the divine reality. In advanced contemplation, the mind can rise to the place where God dwells, to the heights where God walks, to the context of the divine presence, but not to the actual sight of God nor to union with God. To reach that final goal, the mind must be left behind. Here is the Dionysian mystical ecstasy, the hidden or mysterious state of being out of one's mind, namely, beyond not only sense perception such as sight but also beyond the mind's loftiest and purest conceptions about God.

But then he [Moses] breaks free of them, away from what sees and is seen, and he plunges into the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing. Here, renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, he belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united to the completely unknown [God] by an inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing. (1001A, 137)²

In the Exodus account, Moses ascends to the top of the mountain and then enters the thick cloud or darkness where God is. This sequence Dionysius takes to mean first that at the pinnacle of the senses, we are led beyond seeing or being seen into a physical darkness, since God is intangible and invisible. But more important, he also understands it as a "truly mysterious [mystical] darkness of unknowing." Even though the contemplative knowledge of spiritual things is carefully achieved through gradual ascents or upliftings, Moses could only hope thereby to contemplate where God dwells, never to contemplate or to know

God directly. Plunging into the darkness of unknowing means renouncing all that the mind can conceive. Just as God's brilliant light transcends our powers of sight, so too the infinity of the transcendent surpasses our finite powers of thought. Leaving behind the senses and one's mind means losing one's self, belonging completely to the Unknown One who is beyond everything. Here the example of Moses confirms the advice to Timothy and the directives of *The Divine Names*. With the scriptures, we use negations when we speak of God, so that we are "taken wholly out of ourselves and become wholly of God" (868A, 106; cf. 981B, 130). In conclusion, the chapter offers Moses' experience as the paradigm of un-knowing or beyond-knowing for everyone, a sentence worth repeating: "Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united to the completely unknown [God] by the inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing" (1001A, 137). Ultimately, the supreme union with God occurs beyond all knowledge. Just as the thick darkness is not so much the deprivation of light as its transcendence, so here un-knowing is not so much the deprivation of knowledge but its transcendence, a knowing "beyond the mind by knowing nothing." In this way someone is united to the unknown one, a biblical allusion to Paul's sermon about the unknown God who was invoked on the Athenian altar (Acts 17:23).

The fundamental goal of the Dionysian journey and the Dionysian corpus is clearly and repeatedly stated in this first chapter of *The Mystical Theology*: to pass beyond sense perception and contemplative conceptions in order to be united with God beyond all knowledge. But how does this happen? What, specifically, is the sequence of this spiritual journey? The example of Moses alludes to the three sequential powers of purification, illumination, and perfection, albeit in different terminology. Yet these powers were presented above as three levels of spiritual comprehension, which is still only vague and general in this treatise. Furthermore, the allusions to the hierarch's liturgical experience do not really provide a model for anyone else, nor do they take the hierarch himself beyond the contemplation of liturgical symbols.

To specify the sequence of this spiritual journey of unknowing, later medieval commentators often added a culminating role for love. To them (as I will show in the discussion of the influence of this treatise below), the Dionysian un-knowing meant a love beyond knowledge. But there is no mention of love in this chapter or in the entire treatise. The true sequence and guidance for this spiritual journey of knowing and unknowing is in the proper combination of affirmations and negations, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. More specifically still, there is a way to understand negations themselves in a particular sequence that will provide the desired guidance beyond the perceptible and the conceptual, even to union with God. The rest of the treatise is devoted to the complex issue of the right combination and sequence of affirmations and negations that lead to God.

CHAPTER 2

How one should be united, and attribute praises, to the Cause of all things who is beyond all things

The second chapter begins the further explanation of the things discussed in chapter 1, using the sense of sight as the epitome and summary of all sense perception:

I pray we could come to this darkness so far above light! If only we lacked sight and knowledge so as to see, so as to know, unseeing and unknowing, that which lies beyond all vision and knowledge. For this would be really to see and to know: to praise the Transcendent One in a transcending way, namely through the denial of all beings. We would be like sculptors who set out to carve a statue. They remove every obstacle to the pure view of the hidden image, and simply by this act of clearing aside they show up the beauty which is hidden. Now it seems to me that . . . (1025AB, 138)

The goal of darkness above light, of unknowing beyond knowledge, involves the denial of all we see and know. The sculptor's "clearing aside" is a denial or removal, which eventually clears the way to the hidden beauty.³ The transcendence of God demands a denial of all sense perception, here indicated by the sense of sight, and a denial of all knowledge. This is the general sequence of moving beyond perceptible symbols to their meanings, and then beyond these conceptual meanings to unknowing, that we have seen before in *The Divine Names* (e.g., 592CD, 53, and 708D, 80). The sequence will reappear in this treatise in the general flow of chapters 4 and 5, that God is not perceptible, and also not conceptual. But there is a more specific sequence still:

Now it seems to me that we should praise the denials quite differently than we do the assertions. When we made assertions we began with the first things, moved down through intermediate terms until we reached the last things. But now as we climb from the last things up to the most primary we deny all things so that we may unhiddenly know that unknowing which itself is hidden from all those possessed of knowing amid beings, so that we may see above being that darkness concealed from all the light among beings. (1025B, 138)

This cryptic reference to a sequence of assertions, from the first things down through intermediate terms to the last things, is hard to explain at first. Surely assertions are the same as affirmations, and denials are negations, although the author's careful choice of different terms bears investigation. But when did he ever arrange any assertions or affirmations in such a descending sequence, from first down through middle to last? Similarly, what does it mean to say that "now as we climb from the last things up to the most primary we deny all things"? The arrangement of descending affirmations is described in the past tense, while the ascending denial of all things from the last up to the first is described in the

present tense. Are we really to look for previous affirmations and present (or future) negations in the corpus itself, in a literary order? Further, do not affirmation and negation *together* constitute the process of interpreting perceptible symbols, those more or less incongruous images arranged in a continuum in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter 2?

This is Dionysius at his most cryptic, yet it is not impenetrable or intentionally obscure. The very continuum in *The Celestial Hierarchy* is a vertical ordering of the higher and lower symbols, hinting at the explanation for this terse statement of sequence. Here in *The Mystical Theology*, Dionysius says that he made assertions, starting with the highest, proceeding down to the middle terms, and ending with the lowest and last. The movement upward involves the denial of all things, starting from these last and returning up to the primary. On this sequence, still vague, the chapter says no more, deferring to chapter 3 for further specification. But any Dionysian reference to movements downward and upward should by now alert the reader to the overall conceptual framework of procession and return, that procession of God downward into our conceptual and perceptible realm, and our return upward from sense perception and knowledge to God.

While these concerns immediately occupy the third chapter, strikingly absent in all of this is the author's persistent concern for proper hierarchical order, which is clear elsewhere in the corpus. The spiritual journey upward is supposedly guided by the benevolent angelic powers, but they are not mentioned in this treatise. Similarly, the higher churchly authorities have charge of uplifting their subordinates, but there seems to be no hierarchical authority in *The Mystical Theology*. These gaps may be puzzling, and one can cogently argue that the author is inconsistent. But one can also argue that the author presents himself here as a hierarch who is authoritatively directing the readers in their journey upward. Thus he does not so much discuss hierarchical authority and good order as embody it and carry it out in the advice and spiritual direction that he gives to his subordinates, Timothy and all readers.

CHAPTER 3

What are the affirmative theologies and what are the negative?

The title of chapter 3 is misleading in one sense, but ultimately very helpful. In the text itself, the author rarely uses the term *theology* in the plural, and he never attaches it to the adjective *negative*. But the entire discussion of affirmation and negation is approaching its climax, and does indeed involve the scriptures. The title rightly signals the topic of biblical affirmations and negations, their relationship and their sequence.

This chapter, perhaps the most crucial and significant of the entire corpus, amplifies the previous chapter's cryptic reference to a downward arrangement of assertions and an upward movement of denials. In a most complex way, it integrates the essential themes of the Dionysian method—biblical assertions and denials, affirmation and negation, procession and return, words and silence, knowledge and unknowing—and correlates this method and these themes to a rationale behind the sequence of his treatises.

The chapter starts with a summary of *The Theological Representations*, as already encountered at the beginning of *The Divine Names* and elsewhere:

In my *Theological Representations*, I have praised the notions which are most appropriate to affirmative theology. I have shown the sense in which the divine and good nature is said to be one and then triune, how Fatherhood and Sonship are predicated of it, the meaning of the theology of the Spirit, how these core lights of goodness grew from the incorporeal and indivisible good, and how in this sprouting they have remained inseparable from their co-eternal foundation in it, in themselves, and in each other. I have spoken of how Jesus, who is above individual being, became a being with a true human nature. Other revelations of scripture were also praised in *The Theological Representations*.

In *The Divine Names* I have shown . . . (1032D–1033A, 138–39)

As is evident from the start of the new paragraph, the overall purpose here is a sequential sketch of previous treatises, starting with the nonextant *Theological Representations*, continuing with *The Divine Names*, and ending with *The Symbolic Theology*. This sequence is also glimpsed in the first and last words of *The Divine Names*, which presents itself as coming “after *The Theological Representations*” (585B, 49) and as moving “on to *The Symbolic Theology*” (984A, 131).

The condensed contents ascribed to *The Theological Representations* echo the author's earlier summary of the procession of God from unity to trinity, and the further movement of the Son into the created order in the incarnation (*Divine Names* 1, 589D–592B, 51–52). While the specific imagery, such as lights and sprouting (cf. *Divine Names* 2, 645B, 64), used for the Trinity is itself intriguing and significant, the main point is that *The Theological Representations* is here identified not only with the revelations of scripture in general, but with affirmative theology in particular. The content of this affirmative theology was earlier associated with the revelatory downward divine processions. Indeed, the author naturally considers the sequence (affirmations first about divine unity, then trinitarian plurality, and then the incarnate Son's actual sharing in the human state) to be a movement down from God's transcendent heights to the lower realm of the human condition. (This is *The Mystical Theology*'s only reference to Christ, which concerned some medieval commentators, as

discussed below.) Of course, the author's several references to this lost (or perhaps never-written) treatise serve various purposes. In *The Divine Names*, chapter 2, it conveniently allowed him to presuppose an earlier, thorough treatment of the crucial point that all the names for God apply to the entire Godhead (636C–640D, 58–60). In chapter 1, he also reminded the readers that in that treatise he had already argued that we can neither discuss nor know the unknowable, transcendent, triadic unity of God (593B, 53). Although he presented *The Theological Representations* there as including some elements of negative theology, he invokes it here in *The Mystical Theology* with regard only to the assertions that are appropriate to affirmative theology.

This pattern of an affirmative procession downward continues with the next synopsis:

In *The Divine Names* I have shown the sense in which God is described as good, existent, life, wisdom, power, and whatever other things pertain to the conceptual names for God. In my *Symbolic Theology* I have discussed . . . (1033A, 139)

Although *The Divine Names* contained several forceful statements of negative theology, namely, that all these names and concepts are not ultimately appropriate as assertions about God, the author nevertheless presents that treatise here in terms of affirmative theology. He has shown “the sense in which God is described as good, existent, life, wisdom, power,” which are the five major names for God interpreted in chapters 4 through 8 of that book. Just as he earlier said that *The Theological Representations* contains some consideration of negations but describes it here as affirmative theology, so too he presents *The Divine Names*, which we know to have qualified the naming of God with the principle of negation, in terms of affirmations about God, or the assertions of certain names for God. The brief summary reminds us that these names are the conceptual names for God, those names involving mental concepts such as goodness or being. Such names depend upon our human minds, but do not stoop to use the physical senses, a further descent reserved for *The Symbolical Theology*.

The author presents *The Divine Names* not only as coming after *The Theological Representations* and before *The Symbolical Theology* in a purely formal sequence. In addition, its subject matter, at least in this brief summary, also comes below that of the preceding treatise and above that of the following one. The former treatise considered the divine procession from unity to trinity and even into the human realm of the incarnation. *The Divine Names* is occupied with God's self-revelation within that human domain, especially in the human range of concepts applied to God. The sequence is somewhat forced, but it facilitates the chapter's summary of prior treatises as an illustration of affirmative theology in its descending pattern, a summary that becomes more explicit shortly. It thus contributes, albeit crudely, to the overall exposition in

the chapter and in the treatise with regard to the relationship of affirmation and negation, both to each other and also to the literary structure of the Areopagite's corpus.

The next move, from *The Divine Names* to *The Symbolic Theology*, has a clear logic to it that we have encountered before, namely, the progression from the conceptual names downward to those images for God that are based upon physical sense perception:

In my *Symbolic Theology* I have discussed analogies of God drawn from what we perceive. I have spoken of the images we have of him, of the forms, figures, and instruments proper to him, of the places in which he lives and of the ornaments he wears. I have spoken of his anger, grief, and rage, of how he is said to be drunk and hung over, of his oaths and curses, of his sleeping and waking, and indeed of all those images we have of him, images shaped by the workings of the symbolic representations of God. And I feel sure you have noticed . . . (1033AB, 139)

We have already encountered the topics of this nonexistent treatise in its summaries as contained in *Letter 9* (1104B, 280–81, and 1113BC, 288) and in *The Divine Names* (597B, 57). There the author not only listed many of the same items, such as God's anger, grief and oaths (1105B, 282), but also conveniently explained some of the more incredible ones, such as God's drunkenness and sleep (1112C and 1113B, 287–88). Further references to *The Symbolic Theology* occur in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, with regard to the four elements (336A, 187), and in *The Divine Names*, with regard to physical light (700C, 75) and the three dimensions of breadth, length, and depth (913B, 117).

All four of the references to this treatise in *The Divine Names* (597B, 57; 700C, 75; 913B, 117; 984A, 131) involve the intentional sequence of subject matter from the conceptual names for God to the perceptible symbols for God. For example, in *The Divine Names* the author opposes "the error of confusing the bodiless divine names with those which include perceptible symbols. The latter is what I will discuss in my *Symbolic Theology*" (913B, 117). Now the Bible's use of perceptible symbols clearly involves some negation, lest the superficial level of the scriptural text mislead the reader. *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter 2, presented this argument quite forcefully with regard to symbols not only for the angels but also and especially for God. Even though *The Symbolical Theology* is purportedly devoted to such interpretation of perceptible symbols for God, which necessarily includes negation, it is here associated with *affirmative* theology. It is aligned with *The Theological Representations* and *The Divine Names* as part of a pattern of descending affirmations about God, moving from God's unity and trinity down to the conceptual names and further down to the perceptible symbols, with no mention here of any role for negation in any of the three works.

This highly selective summary of the sequence of topics and treatises includes even a sequential order with regard to their relative length. After noting the symbols for God, chapter 3 continues:

And I feel sure that you have noticed how these latter come much more abundantly than what went before, since *The Theological Representations* and a discussion of the names appropriate to God are inevitably briefer than what can be said in *The Symbolic Theology*. The fact is that . . . (1033B, 139)

The missing treatises also have a purported length that reinforces the point about their subject matter. Here, as elsewhere, the appropriate response to such claims is not one of regret for the loss of these treatises, for it is entirely plausible that only these “summaries” were ever written in the first place. The response should rather be one of resolve and curiosity to comprehend what purpose the author had in referring to fictitious works, and even to their inevitable lengths.

The Theological Representations and *The Divine Names* are presented as “inevitably briefer” than *The Symbolic Theology*, and we can infer from the rationale yet to come that the first was the briefest of all. Thus the second of these three treatises, which here summarize affirmative theology, is longer than the first, and the third longer than the second, as the sequence of treatises proceeds from the loftiest affirmations down to the lowliest. At this complex and crucial moment, Dionysius is combining the earlier point about the biblical message as both brief and lengthy (1000C, 136) with his own terse statement of descending assertions and ascending denials (1025B, 138), all within the condensed discussion of his previous works. To explain why the descent of affirmative theology corresponds to an increasing length for its exposition, the author mentions first the reverse of this phenomenon, that the ascent of negative theology corresponds to a decreasing length for its exposition. This ascent of increasing brevity has its own inevitable outcome:

The fact is that the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing. In the earlier books my argument traveled downward from the most exalted to the humblest categories, taking in on this downward path an ever-increasing number of ideas which multiplied with every stage of the descent. But my argument now rises . . . (1033BC, 139)

Taking the downward movement first, as the overall chapter does, the earlier ambiguous references to a downward sequence for affirmative theology, which expanded as it descended, are all confirmed here. It is now explicit that the argument traveled downward from the most exalted assertions (meaning God’s oneness) “through the intermediate terms” (1025B, 138) (such as the conceptual names for God) to the humblest categories (such as the perceptible

symbols for God), and that this downward path meant an ever-increasing plurality of ideas and an increasing length of exposition "with every stage of the descent." Dionysius elsewhere makes the characteristically cryptic comment that the extent of the procession corresponds to the extent of the pluralization (*Divine Names* 5, 821A, 99). Thus the affirmations, and the treatises that discuss them, increased in length from the core biblical revelation of God as one and three and incarnate, to the more numerous biblical names for God involving human conceptuality, to the virtually infinite possibilities for describing God from the whole perceptible world of creatures in all of nature. The range of topics glimpsed in the summaries of *The Symbolic Theology* here and elsewhere is enormous, and so too, ostensibly, is any exposition of these topics. This descent into literary plurality is a creative way of expressing the divine procession from simple unity down into various ideas and then further still down into this world's physical plurality of sequence in time and extension in space. Even the author's presentation of some of his treatises and of their relative lengths involved the philosophical undercurrents of procession and return.

The quotation above contains the chapter's turning point from the expanding procession downward and its association with affirmative theology to the return upward, which is also cast in terms of relative length and is associated with the principle of negation. The text should be quoted again, and continued:

The fact is that the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing [compare the descending affirmations of earlier books] . . . But my argument now rises from what is below up to the transcendent, and the more it climbs, the more language falters, and when it has passed up and beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him who is indescribable. Now you may wonder why . . . (1033BC, 139)

Here the author has introduced the converse of an affirmative procession downward that involves increasingly lengthy expositions: the upward movement involves fewer and fewer expressions and ideas, since language itself starts to falter. This presupposes the principle of negation, that our capacity to form ideas about God is restricted, that our language fails us as we approach such transcendence, that the safest thing to do is to deny or to negate statements about God. The previous chapter had already alluded briefly to an ascending path of denials: "as we climb from the last things up to the most primary we deny all things" (1025B, 138). Just as the author described the descending assertions as expanding into literary plurality when the affirmations moved down into this world's perceptible plurality, so he now describes this ascending pattern of denials as gradually confined to fewer and fewer words as it climbs higher and

higher. The result of this ascending negative theology will be to pass beyond speech and knowledge, to ascend with Moses into the darkness beyond intellect. The final goal of this journey is beyond even negations, in perceptible and conceptual silence and union with the indescribable One, as discussed more fully below. But before this final, silent approach to the ineffable One, the earlier stages of the ascent involve denying everything "from the last things up to the most primary," an order that involves fewer and fewer words and concepts, until speech and knowledge fail us entirely.

The mental structure depicted in this chapter, and here obliquely attributed to the literary structure of some preceding Dionysian works, may be summarized as a descending sequence of assertions, which proceeds downward and increases in size with the extent of the descent, paired with an ascending sequence of denials, which returns upward and decreasing with the extent of the ascent, until this ascending negative way reaches the vanishing point of silence and union with the ineffable. The relationship of this structure to the philosophical framework of procession and return is obvious and yet subtle. The assertions' descent, both in subject matter and in their format of increasing plurality, is the divine procession from simplicity down to the plurality of this world. The corresponding ascent of denials until final silence is the return to union with God. But the Areopagite's main use of this motif is not objective ontology. He does not depict God as the source and the goal, the origin and the destiny of the world in terms of creation and salvation, although this is implied. Rather, as introduced above early in part II, his principal use of this motif of procession and return is subjective epistemology. God has provided a self-revelation in terms of the created order so that we might be uplifted through and beyond the interpretation of the things in the created order to the final silent union with the transcendent God. The entire Dionysian enterprise is a cognitive exercise, dominated throughout by the right interpretation of the revealed names and symbols for God, whether in the Bible or in the liturgy, and climaxed by the intentional abandonment of all such interpretations. The abandonment is itself a conscious cognitive technique.

Since the third chapter of *The Mystical Theology* expresses this dialectic of descending assertions and ascending denials with opaque and difficult brevity, the author recognizes the need for further explanation, and for examples:

Now you may wonder why it is that, after starting out from the highest category when our method involved assertions, we begin now from the lowest category when it involves a denial. The reason is this. When we assert what is beyond every assertion, we must then proceed from what is most akin to it, and as we do so we make the affirmation on which everything else depends. But when we deny that which is beyond every denial, we have to start by denying those qualities which differ most from the goal we hope to attain. Is it not closer to reality to say . . . (1033C, 139–40)

This passage first confirms the structure suggested above, that the sequence of assertions or affirmations proceeds downward from lofty heights, while the sequence of denials starts upward from the lowest depths. The passage also confirms what this structure might mean in terms of affirmative theology, already summarized earlier in the chapter. Although God is beyond all assertions, assertions should start with what is highest or closest to the truth, what is most akin to God, the first affirmation upon which all else depends. From the summaries of *The Theological Representations* we know this starting point to be God as One and then Three, even though *The Divine Names* had a different emphasis, which gives preeminence to the name Good. By implication, the subsequent sequence of assertions, and of treatises, proceeds further and further from this proximity to the truth until it reaches even the unlikely images for God drawn from the created perceptible world. This continuum can be seen in another way, the way of negation, in which we should begin with the lowest and last items that we might attempt to affirm; thus “we have to start by denying those qualities which differ most from the goal we hope to attain” (1033C, 140). The sequence of negations begins with what differs most from God, those lowly images most obviously unlike God and therefore the ones most easily denied. Then we can gradually ascend to the negation of some intermediate items, and finally ascend to the lofty and advanced challenge of denying even the highest attempted affirmations about God.

Since negations are, after all, negations of something, namely of some assertion or affirmation, the continuum of assertions that descend into incongruity is the same continuum that is to be negated, although in the reverse order. The most helpful apophatic sequence is to start with the descriptions of God that are easiest to negate and then to move upward to deny those descriptions that might otherwise seem more plausible, and finally to negate even those truths that are the highest in our realm, since our realm is obviously finite and ultimately insufficient. Even before Dionysius supplies his compressed examples, we should be reminded here of the similar discussions in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter 2 (especially at 144CD, 152–53). There we encountered a continuum of images or concepts that were dissimilar similarities. Such characterizations of God—ranging from Being and Mind down to sun of righteousness and star of the morning to fire, water, ointment, stone, even a lion or charging bear, and even a worm—are all both similarities and dissimilarities. They are all similarities to be affirmed, since all created things, even worms, can reflect the Creator, and yet they are all dissimilarities to be denied, since even the loftiest concepts of God are surpassed by God’s true transcendence: “The very same things are both similar and dissimilar to God” (916A, 118). The process of understanding how some depiction is both similar and dissimilar to God is the process of interpreting that depiction, whether it is a conceptual name for God

or a perceptible symbol. All such statements are both true and false; they are to be both asserted and denied. Anything we say or think about God is to be both affirmed and negated.

But these statements are not encountered simply at random. One can arrange them in a continuous sequence from the most congruous or similar—namely those seemingly most worthy of affirmation—down through intermediate imagery, and then down to the lowly and degrading symbols, even to the shocking depths of creation's menagerie. Chapter 2 of *The Celestial Hierarchy* presented the similar and dissimilar characterizations of God in the same descending and ascending imagery that is here used in *The Mystical Theology* for affirmations and negations about God. The presentations in these two treatises are perfectly consistent and should be read together for mutual clarification. Most important, together they confirm that the author does not envision two separate series of statements about God, one a series of affirmative similarities to be asserted, and the other a series of negative dissimilarities to be denied. Rather, the very same depictions of God, from the fitting to the outrageously incongruous, are statements to be both asserted and denied, to be affirmed and also negated.

As introduced in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and as practiced in *The Mystical Theology*, with its quick examples here and in chapters 4 and 5, affirmation and negation are two sides of the same coin, two facets of the same statement. In both treatises, the interpretive theological method is a process of affirmation *and* negation, which are separated only for emphasis and for pedagogical clarity. They are considered separately, with different starting points, for a consistent and anagogical reason: it is easier for our limited interpretive capacities if we start the affirmations with what is closest to the truth and then proceed to affirm what may also be true in the lowly images. Conversely, to see the other half of the picture, it is helpful to begin our negations with what is easiest, indeed necessary, to deny and then to return upward to the more plausible and even the lofty assertions, still recognizing their insufficiency by negating them too.

This complex chapter concludes its dense and terse argument with some examples, equally compressed:

Is it not closer to reality to say that God is life and goodness rather than that he is air or stone? Is it not more accurate to deny that drunkenness and rage can be attributed to him than to deny that we can apply to him the terms of speech and thought? (1033CD, 140)

First, we note that these are typical Dionysian examples attributed to the scriptures, as interpreted elsewhere in the corpus. Drunkenness and rage are perceptible symbols that were already mentioned in this chapter (1033AB, 139), in conjunction with *The Symbolic Theology*, where they were supposedly interpreted, as summarized in the *Letter 9* (1105B, 282, and 1112C, 287). Air and stone are other symbols used to describe God (the “still, small breeze” of

1 Kings 19:12 and the cornerstone), as mentioned in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter 2 (144D, 152) and at the beginning of *The Divine Names* (596B, 55–56). Life, goodness, speech, and thought are all ideas linked to the Bible's conceptual names for God, as cited and interpreted in *The Divine Names*, chapters 4 (goodness), 6 (life), and 7 (word and mind). As cryptic as it is, this pair of rhetorical questions at the end of chapter 3 is consistent with the author's particular use of the scriptures.

The first set of examples is cast in terms of affirmative theology, demonstrating that one would naturally affirm first that God is life and goodness before stooping to use the images of air or stone. The second is put negatively, that it seems more accurate—and thus prior—to negate God's inebriation and rage than to deny the powers of speech or thought. But we know that the symbols of air and stone must be not only affirmed, but also interpreted with a measure of negative theology, and that the divine drunkenness and anger are not simply denied, because they too communicate something true about God when they are properly interpreted. Similarly, what was first affirmed, life and goodness, must ultimately be denied, as evident in the exposition of these names elsewhere. Those terms that were finally denied, speech and thought, could and should be asserted first for what they do reveal about God.

In other words, all these examples can be situated on the same continuum of depictions about God, ranging from the appropriate to the ludicrous, and can be approached with a dialectical interpretive method of affirmation and negation. The brief examples in the two questions could have been interchanged, and put this way: Is it not closer to reality to say that God speaks or thinks (or, rather, expresses and conceives himself, and thus is expressed and conceived) than that he drinks and rages? Is it not more accurate to deny that air and stone depict him than to deny that we can apply to him the concepts of life and goodness? The items given as examples of affirmations can and must also be negated, insofar as they are rightly interpreted, and the examples of negations also have something in them that is worth affirming, once rightly interpreted.

Thus affirmation and negation are not separate enterprises applied to separate lists of characterizations, but the two complementary facets of the same interpretive process for all depictions, names, and symbols. This too is nicely consistent with the philosophical framework of procession and return, as introduced above at the beginning of part II. Procession and return are not separate movements, or a sequential movement at all, but complementary facets of the one relationship of effects to their cause, as proceeding from their cause and returning to it. Not only does this concept have no real spatial meaning, despite the physical metaphor of up and down, but it also has no true temporal sequence, as if the procession occurs before the return in any sense of chronological history. The two terms of the single concept are separable only insofar as a cause

is logically—not spatially or temporally—prior to its effects, but otherwise is inseparable and simultaneous.

It is the inescapable complementarity of procession and return, of affirmation and negation in the Pseudo-Dionysian method that explains how this chapter could have presented *The Theological Representations*, *The Divine Names*, and *The Symbolical Theology* as a progression of affirmative theology, even though it is clear elsewhere that all three also contained elements of negative theology. In fact, the author could have characterized these treatises in terms of the uplifting return of negative theology, starting with *The Symbolical Theology* and its easily deniable symbols, ascending to the conceptual level of *The Divine Names*, and finally reaching the trinity and unity of God as discussed in *The Theological Representations*. This would have been an alternative, equally consistent framework for presenting his interpretations of these materials, all attributed to the Bible but permeated with his philosophical agenda. Yet he here chooses to present the three treatises in terms of the affirmative side of the dialectic, not saying whether he would identify any of his other treatises with negation, at least not in this oversimplifying isolation of one half—the affirmative half—of the single interpretive method. The subsequent chapters of *The Mystical Theology* will supply some of this negative exposition, but we should also be aware of the methodological continuities of such material with the early chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

Before moving on to the last two chapters and their presentation of the two forms of negative theology, a summary of chapter 3 is in order. Affirmations about God are not all equal and interchangeable. They can and should be arranged in a descending sequence of decreasing congruity. The affirmative side of theology could start with the loftiest, apparently most congruous depictions and then move or proceed down to the less appropriate and then to the least appropriate. At the same time, this set of affirmations must also be negated. Here, too, not all negations are equal. As the mirror image of affirmations, the negations are arranged in an ascending order of decreasing incongruity, beginning with those perceptible attributes most obviously in need of negation and then moving up to that which is less objectionable but still false, and then to the highest and seemingly most congruous or similar or true. Yet these last must also be ultimately negated when human speech and thought reach their limits before the ineffable God. Thus affirmative theology and negative theology do not indicate two separate spheres, much less two activities distinct from a third enterprise called symbolic theology. Rather, they are the two complementary aspects of a single theology (the Bible's talk about God), which together constitute the interpretive method for symbols and for concepts. It is precisely symbolic theology that holds affirmative and negative theology together, at least in the case of perceptible symbols. Thus, both perceptible symbols and mental concepts for God are understood according to a method that includes negation,

even though the role of negations differs in the two realms, as the next two chapters of *The Mystical Theology* will illustrate.

CHAPTER 4

That the supreme Cause of every perceptible thing is not itself perceptible

After all the compressed complexities of chapter 3, one might wish for a more discursive section to clarify the idea of descending assertions and ascending denials. But the author has no more to say about affirmative theology, and offers only two, even denser paragraphs about negations. Chapters 4 and 5 of *The Mystical Theology* are clearly a pair, as the titles indicate: "That the supreme Cause of every perceptible thing is not itself perceptible" (chapter 4), and "That the supreme Cause of every conceptual thing is not itself conceptual" (chapter 5). Here the principle of negation is applied in general theory to the perceptible and the conceptual, as it has already been applied to specific examples of perceptible symbols and conceptual names in actual practice. But negation applies to these two realms in two distinct ways, as seen before and as now to be summarized. Here is the entire text of chapter 4 of *The Mystical Theology*:

So this is what we say. The Cause of all is above all and is not in-existent, lifeless, speechless, mindless. It is not a material body, and hence has neither shape nor form, quality, quantity, or weight. It is not in any place and can neither be seen nor be touched. It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion. It is not powerless and subject to the disturbances caused by sense perception. It endures no deprivation of light. It passes through no change, decay, division, loss, no ebb and flow, nothing of which the senses may be aware. None of all this can either be identified with it nor attributed to it. (1040D, 140–41)

The Dionysian method of arranging negations in an ascending order, clearly operative in the transition from the fourth to the fifth chapter, may also be at work here. The initial set of double negatives ("not in-existent, lifeless, speechless, mindless") actually precedes the author's announced concern to negate the perceptible. Comments that God lacks being or life, that God is mute or stupid, would seem to be deniable by even the rankest beginner. Negations start here, with the easiest of denials, that God is *not* nonexisting, nonliving, unspeaking, unthinking.

Then, the sequence moves to the realm of the perceptible, namely, to the world of space and time and their perception by the senses. The senses detect plurality in spatial extension and temporal movement, but none of this is fully true of God. No objects or actions, no matter or movement can be attributed to

God, properly speaking. "It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible" (1040D, 141). This single point is expressed in several ways by the chapter, encompassing a denial of both material shape and temporal change. The specific phrases here do not need individual comments; they add up to the same message: nothing perceptible by the senses can be properly attributed to God.

And yet we have seen countless examples of perceptible symbols that seem to attribute to God something that can be perceived by the physical senses, even some perceptible symbols mentioned a few lines earlier in this very treatise. Is this an inconsistency? Not at all, for these symbols are both asserted and denied. In this case, negation applies to the symbols perceived by the senses, not insofar as they are dismissed or rejected, but insofar as they are used and interpreted. The right interpretation of the symbols employs negation and affirmation, since it knows how to deny what is false and how to affirm what is true in the symbol, thereby lifting the interpreter up from the level of sense perception to the level of conceptual truth of the symbolic. In fact, Dionysian anagogical interpretation consistently says that we are uplifted to these concepts through the perceptible symbols, not simply away from them, since they are the very guidance and path to the conceptual truths. As illustrated at length above in parts II and III, the first chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* clearly identify a rationale and a method for using perceptible symbols in the spiritual uplifting to accurate concepts about the higher things. According to the former, God uses scriptural imagery "so that he might lift us in spirit up through the perceptible to the conceptual" (*Celestial Hierarchy* 1, 124A, 147) and according to the latter, "our hierarchy is itself symbolical and adapted to what we are. In a divine fashion it needs perceptible things to lift us up into the domain of conceptions" (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1, 377A, 199).

The uplifting interpretation of perceptible symbols incorporates the principle of negation into itself, for it negates and transcends their use of the categories of sense perception, as effectively argued in the second chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy*. In this chapter negation applies to the perceptible insofar as symbols based upon sense perception are interpreted rightly, and thus transcended. Chapter 5 of *The Mystical Theology* will further remind us that these and all interpretations are also subjected to negation, not in further interpretation but in final rejection and abandonment. But before "we climb higher" to that advanced and final use of negation in the next and last chapter, we need to investigate further the relationship of negative theology to biblical and especially to liturgical symbols.

The role of negative theology in the interpretation of biblical symbols is explicit in *The Celestial Hierarchy's* discussion of incongruity and dissimilarity. This is applied to the biblical symbols for God and for the angels, with a direct invocation of negative theology. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* employs the same interpretive method with regard to liturgical symbols, namely, the uplifting

through the perceptible to the conceptual. Yet, as noted above, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and its liturgical interpretations never once state that the principle of negation is at work here. Certain ritual symbols are even called precise and appropriate (401C and 404B, 207). Does this imply that the liturgy contains only similar imagery that invites affirmation, with no component of dissimilarity that demands negation? If so, if these symbols are not both similar and dissimilar, then the Areopagite's interpretive method falls apart here, and affirmations stand alone without negation. In that case, not only the method but the corpus is split asunder, for then *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is inconsistent with the rest of the corpus, with *The Mystical Theology's* explicit rationale for negations, with *The Divine Names'* occasional but forceful statements of negative theology, and even with the discussion of dissimilarity and incongruity in its partner treatise, *The Celestial Hierarchy*.

Powerful arguments have been marshaled to divide the corpus in two: the individualized negative theology of *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*, and the corporate, hierarchical spirit of purification, illumination, and perfection in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.⁴ It is true that these pairs of works seem to breath different spirits, at least on the surface. But, as mentioned above, one can find the triad of purification, illumination, and perfection openly included in *The Divine Names*, albeit in a reference to the angels (696B, 72–73), and implied in *The Mystical Theology*, although obscurely (1000CD, 136–37). Furthermore, the apparent individualism of these two treatises and their lack of hierarchical authority is slightly less dramatic when we consider their overall form as a superior's advice or direction to a subordinate. Still, these are inconclusive refutations of the basic claim for a bifurcated corpus. The central argument concerns negative theology: if it is not operative in the hierarchical treatises, then the corpus is seriously inconsistent.

But we have seen repeatedly that the principle of negation is hard at work in the opening chapters of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, which introduce the method to be applied to the scriptural accounts of the angels, and which introduce certain features of both the angelic and the human hierarchy and thus both hierarchical treatises. Chapters 1 through 3 of *The Celestial Hierarchy* consider features common to the celestial and human realm, and chapter 2 includes some explicit liturgical symbols (124A, 146). Only with chapter 4 does a specific discussion of the angels begin. Negative theology, incorporated into the method of interpreting incongruous symbols, is then applied to the biblical depictions of the angels in the final chapter, but without much notice of its presence. The last chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy* refers only quickly to dissimilar similarities and it also implies why this apophatic method does not need constant repetition or even examples: "Not only do these things suffice to the wise but the explanation of one incongruous image suffices for the like-mannered interpretation of comparable ones" (337C, 189).

Since the role of negative theology in the interpretation of perceptible biblical symbols was explicitly discussed only in the early, methodological introduction of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and was largely assumed thereafter, including the work's own concluding examples of actual interpretations, could perhaps this same role for negation be understood as simply presupposed in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and in its interpretation of liturgical symbols? This might seem to be an enormous assumption, and indeed it requires an argument somewhat more specialized than appropriate to this commentary. But there are many signs that the Areopagite's corpus was not completely inconsistent, that in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* he did not violate his own commitment to subject all perceptible symbols to thorough interpretation, that he maintained throughout his works an awareness of the ultimate incongruity of all symbols and therefore a commitment to negation in the sense of supercession.

First, the two hierarchical treatises are obviously linked, with the initial chapters of the former serving to introduce both hierarchies and therefore the subsequent book, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, as well. Hence, the former work's second chapter, on incongruity in perceptible symbolism, should be applied to both essays and to both spheres of symbols. Second, the corpus has one perfectly consistent anagogical method for interpreting symbols, whether biblical or liturgical, as documented at length above, even though the idea of incongruity or negation is not noted with regard to ritual symbols. Third, this uplifting method is itself part of a consistent motif of procession and return, since the return to God occurs in the uplifting from the perceptible to the conceptual, and beyond. Thus the two hierarchical treatises can supply literary balance in the corpus in that they express the anagogical return over against the portrayal of previous treatises as expressing the downward procession. But this is true only if the principle of negation so clearly identified with the return is also at work in the liturgical interpretation of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

Fourth, and most specifically, the Areopagite's own testimony to a pedagogical sequence of beginning with the most incongruous images and working up to the more appropriate images (a sequence mentioned here in *The Mystical Theology* and in *The Celestial Hierarchy*) may also apply to the movement within the two hierarchical treatises from the biblical symbols for the angels to the liturgical symbols for God. This progression from incongruity to appropriateness is not so much in contrasting subject matter (angels over against God), but in the contrasting form and content of the symbols themselves. Dionysius expressly says that the liturgical tradition is somewhat superior to the biblical in that it is "more immaterial" (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1, 376C, 199). This is true formally, since the biblical material is written down, indeed on "tablets," whereas the other is an oral tradition, "free from writing," especially in the Dionysian refusal to write down any liturgical text at all. But the statement is also true in terms of contents, since the biblical symbols chosen for emphasis

concern the material forms or physical appearances ascribed to the angels (fire or human features or the animal world), whereas the ritual symbols chosen for emphasis all concern the temporal sequence of ceremonial movements and gestures as indicating divine activities, as summarized at the end of part III. In the Dionysian worldview, the realm of space and matter is lower than the realm of time and motion. While both are part of this world's perceptible plurality, and thus need to be transcended through negation on the way up to the conceptual realm, the liturgical plurality of temporal sequence is a slightly higher realm than that of material extension.

Thus, with more documentation, one could argue that Dionysius presents the liturgical symbols as less incongruous than the biblical and thus a next stage for the experienced interpreter, just as the exclusive portion of the rite was the next stage for the initiated after the more elementary readings of the scriptures in the liturgy. If this is true, then we should expect an explicit role for negations at the initial stage of encountering the lowliest, most incongruous symbols, as Dionysius himself has said. When the method has been thoroughly presented in the opening of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, it can be employed with minimal reminders nearer the end of that treatise, or even with no repetition at all of its negative component at the very end of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and, according to this argument, in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. When advanced interpreters encounter the higher, more appropriate symbols, such as some of those met in the liturgy, they do not revert to the beginner's mistakes of regarding these things only affirmatively as simply true, but rather continue to apply to them as symbols the dialectical interpretive method of affirmation and negation. Thus are they lifted by means of perceptible symbols, by denying and transcending them, up to the meanings of these symbols, whether biblical or liturgical, incongruous or apt.

In this perspective, both *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* are related to this fourth chapter of *The Mystical Theology* and to its discussion of the negation of the perceptible. As anagogical, or uplifting, interpretations with an awareness of relative incongruity, they amplify the author's references to a return to God through negations. Anagogy and return are the same upward journey, at least in its first stages, thus integrating the author's concern for biblical and liturgical interpretation into his philosophical structure of procession and return. The relationship of this part of *The Mystical Theology* to the two hierarchical treatises could be construed as a preview of works yet to come, works that follow this brief treatise devoted to overall method. This order of the Dionysian works would also be consistent with his own internal cross-references, as has been noted by other scholars. It is the intentional order of the English edition of the complete works. In its third chapter, *The Mystical Theology* first summarizes *The Divine Names*, portraying it for these purposes in terms of an affirmative procession downwards. Then, in its fourth chapter,

the treatise summarizes the first stage of the negative return upward and thereby previews the uplifting interpretation of the hierarchical treatises yet to come, which first introduce and then embody the principle of negative theology in their anagogical interpretation. The sequence is supported by the natural progression from this chapter to the start of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and its attention to the role of negation in interpretation.

Nevertheless, this rationale for a literary order is not completely comprehensive, since the use of negative theology in *The Mystical Theology*'s fourth chapter and in the interpretive enterprise of the two hierarchical treatises is only the first stage of the ascent or return to God, and only the first of two Dionysian uses of negation. In the fifth chapter "we climb higher" beyond all interpretations and concepts and thus go past the two treatises presumably previewed in the fourth chapter. In theory, the place for *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is between the fourth and fifth chapters of *The Mystical Theology*. While this may be pressing too hard for a formal sequence, the fourth chapter's concern to negate the perceptible is demonstrably related to the two hierarchical works.

CHAPTER 5

That the supreme Cause of every conceptual thing is not itself conceptual

"Again, as we climb higher we say this. It is not soul or mind, nor does it . . ." (1045D, 141). The chapter's opening spatial metaphor, "as we climb higher," confirms in passing much of what has been said so far. The ascending sequence of denials began with what differed most from God, then traveled upward to deny a continuum of perceptible images for God in the uplifting process of anagogical interpretation, and now goes higher still with another category of negations, the denial of the conceptual. The Dionysian ascent or return to God is essentially bipartite, with two distinct uses of the notion of negation, as summarized in chapters 4 and 5 of *The Mystical Theology*. First, in the anagogical ascent from the body's senses to the mind's concepts in the interpretation of symbols, perceptible images are negated and transcended in order to arrive at their conceptual meaning. Then these meanings and any other concepts the mind may entertain are negated and left behind as the mind and all knowledge give way to the unknowing beyond the mind and to silent union with God. We have already encountered this pattern and its final goal in *The Divine Names*:

But as for now, what happens is this. We use whatever appropriate symbols we can for the things of God. With these analogies we are raised upward toward the truth of the mind's vision, a truth which is simple and one. [Then] we leave behind us all our own notions of the divine. We call a halt to the activities of our minds and, to the extent that is proper, we approach the ray which transcends being. (592CD, 53)

The experienced reader may be reminded of a similar bipartite scheme in the Neoplatonist Plotinus: "For all men there is one way with two stages: the first for those who are rising to the intelligible [conceptual] realm from here below and the second for those who have already reached it and taken root there and who must proceed until they have reached the summit, the highest point in the realm of intelligence, which is the 'goal of their journeying.'"⁵ Plotinus's quotation of the passage in Plato's *Republic* (532e 3) about the "goal of their journeying" further alerts the reader to the Platonic imagery of the cave in book 7 of *The Republic*, which has similar stages in the metaphor of ascent within a cave and then out of it. The Areopagite's appropriation of this tradition is distinguished by its systematic application of the principle of negation.

As interpreted anagogically and in accordance with Dionysian negative theology, the symbols lead us upward to the concepts symbolized. In this case, negation is part of the interpretive process. Then the concepts thus attained are themselves transcended and negated, in that they are abandoned as the mind ceases to function in the final approach to God. A second passage from *The Divine Names* confirms this two-step ascent as comprehending much of the Dionysian agenda:

The truth we have to understand is that we use letters, syllables, phrases, written terms and words because of the senses. But when our souls are moved by intelligent energies in the direction of the things of the intellect then our senses and all that go with them are no longer needed. And the same [then] happens with our intelligent powers which, when the soul becomes divinized, concentrate sightlessly and through an unknowing union on the rays of "unapproachable light." (708D, 80)

This final goal of unknowing union also appeared at the end of *The Divine Names*, where the scriptural negations were the soul's ecstatic way up out of itself into union with God (981B, 130). *The Mystical Theology*, in its early example of Moses, its methodology in chapter 3, and in the sequence of the final two chapters, summarizes not only the two stages of the ascent, but also the final goal of unknowing union. Moses first moved up beyond the sights and sounds of Sinai to contemplate the things of God, and then broke away even from these lofty concepts to plunge into the mysterious darkness of unknowing, renouncing his mind and becoming wholly of God by an "inactivity of all knowledge" (1001A, 137). The ascent by denials mentioned in chapter 2 means that as we ascend toward that darkness beyond intellect, "we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing" (1033C, 139). This entire process reaches its peak, and goes beyond it, in the fifth and final chapter of *The Mystical Theology*, climbing still higher than the interpretive negation of the perceptible things:

Again, as we climb higher we say this. It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. Nor is it speech

per se, understanding per se. It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding. It is not number or order, greatness or smallness, equality or inequality, similarity or dissimilarity. It is not immovable, moving, or at rest. It has no power, it is not power, nor is it light. It does not live nor is it life. It is not a substance, nor is it eternity or time. It cannot be grasped by the understanding since . . . (1045D–1048A, 141)

Some of these negated concepts are taken directly from the conceptual names that *The Divine Names* treated as affirmations about God. For example, all the latter items just listed, from greatness and smallness through motion and rest, were discussed in chapter 9 of *The Divine Names* (909B, 115ff.). The same is true with life (chapter 6), mind and speech (chapter 7), power (chapter 8), and eternity and time (chapter 10).

The list thus far has no particular order; the general concern is simply to deny that any concept can truly capture the transcendent Cause of all concepts, just as the fourth chapter rather randomly negated various forms of sense perception. The point is that our understanding cannot grasp the transcendent. No matter how carefully the interpretive process may examine symbols for the concepts they symbolized, these concepts themselves must ultimately be recognized as human and finite. They must therefore be abandoned in the flight to the divine and the infinite. The principle of negation functioned in one way in the attainment of such spiritual concepts, but now functions in a different way in their abandonment. Here too we glimpse the earlier imagery of an apophatic ascent in which words and ideas decrease as language falters. The interpretive use of negation with regard to perceptible things required extensive discussion, as two entire treatises attest. The second application of negation with regard to the abandonment of the resultant conceptual meanings is much briefer, as this fifth chapter shows. The number of words needed, or even possible, decreases dramatically during the ascent from the numerous discursive interpretations to a few terse negations. With these negations, we are drawing nearer the final goal, but we have not yet attained it.

Even the highest possible concepts, even the names of Father, Son, and Spirit are now summarily dismissed:

It cannot be grasped by the understanding since it is neither knowledge nor truth. It is not kingship. It is not wisdom. It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness. Nor is it a spirit, in the sense in which we understand that term. It is not sonship or fatherhood and it is nothing known to us or to any other being. It falls neither within the predicate of nonbeing nor of being. Existing beings do not know it as it actually is and it does not know them as they are. There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, . . . (1048A, 141)

Denying the characterizations of oneness, divinity, and goodness, the author qualifies even the highest efforts to name God in *The Divine Names*, a limitation which that treatise had already admitted (981A, 129–30). Even the trinitarian names presumably discussed in the first (and therefore “highest”) essay on affirmative theology, *The Theological Representations*, must also be negated, since the meaning we give these terms is finite and unworthy of the infinite. Our very concept of existence itself cannot capture the transcendent One, who therefore does not exist in our sense. The Scholiast, perhaps Maximus the Confessor in this case, reassured the reader at this climactic point: “Do not let this chapter disturb you and do not think that this divine man is blaspheming. His purpose is to show that God is not a being among beings, but is beyond beings. For if [God] himself has brought forth all beings in creation, how can he then be found to be one being among other beings?” (*Scholia* 429C). As the ascent nears its ultimate goal, speech and conceptuality itself continue to fail us, and only a brief but potent list of negations is needed to make the point. There is no speech or name or concept that fully and accurately expresses God. But negations are not the end. There is more, and there is nothing more:

Darkness and light, error and truth—it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation, it is also beyond every denial. (1048B, 141)

In the very end, even the denials are denied. Not that a double negative yields a positive to start the process over again, for Dionysius has already said that the negations are not simply the opposites of the affirmations (1000B, 136). Rather, just as God as the cause of all is beyond every assertion, so too God as transcending all is beyond every denial. Negation itself is a human concept, and thus cannot capture an infinite and transcendent God. The negations are negated in that they too are left behind. Literary and conceptual discourse has decreased in the ascent from expansive interpretations to terse negations, and now ceases altogether in a final passage into the cloud of unknowing. Here, completely beyond the mind with its affirmations and negations, one meets God and is united with God. Yet this union cannot be described, even negatively. Affirmation and negation may have combined to guide the approach, but the final arena for meeting God is beyond all this. In the work’s last words, God “is also beyond every denial.” Negation is negated, and the human mind, befuddled, falls silent. The treatise, the corpus, its author, and this commentary have nothing more to say. Only silence.

INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Introduction and Background

Although this terse essay, *The Mystical Theology*, ends in deliberate silence, having nothing more to say, later readers and commentators have had much to say about it, more than can be summarized here. *The Mystical Theology* had an influence on medieval mysticism as long and as deep as the text is short and dense. This section will sketch the medieval evolution and expansion of the main theme of the essay and indeed of the entire corpus: the spiritual ascent to union with God through knowing and more particularly through unknowing.⁶

That the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus seems best known for its contributions to the theme of unknowing and apophatic theology might well please the author, who probably chose the pen-name Dionysius to help make this very point. According to Acts 17, Paul's sermon on the Areopagus in Athens seized on the inscription of a nearby altar, "To an unknown God." Quite apart from the Greco-Roman cult of the unknown gods, Paul's speech went on to proclaim the God who *is* known in Christ, now raised from the dead. Since the biblical text then named one Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris as among those who did not mock but who believed, a much later philosopher of divine unknowing found in this name the perfect pseudonym. Although Acts also singles out Damaris by name, no one later spoke or wrote in memory of her. Damaris was almost forgotten and Dionysius became unexpectedly famous.

With this choice of a pseudonym and by his own powers of mind and pen, the author gave both the authority of the apostolic age and also new depth and complexity to a venerable Platonic and Judeo-Christian tradition. An Alexandrian and Cappadocian legacy from Philo through Clement and Origen to Gregory of Nyssa had already meditated on the unknowability of the transcendent God. Gregory in particular had concentrated on Moses and his ascent of Mount Sinai into the cloud or darkness.⁸ Like Pseudo-Dionysius, these authors had been more or less influenced by a Platonic tradition that grew from Plato's *Parmenides* and his other works through Numenius, the *Chaldean Oracles*, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus.⁹

Although it also appears elsewhere in the corpus, the Dionysian unknowing reaches its dramatic climax in *The Mystical Theology*'s concluding negations and in the apex of Moses' ascent "into the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing" where one is "supremely united with the unknown [God] by an inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing" (1001A, 137). Modern readers might be quick to qualify the Pseudo-Areopagite's originality here, in light of the double tradition of negative theology among the Christian and non-Christian Platonists. But to the medieval authors who concern us now, Dionysius was the apostolic founder of this tradition.

The motif of knowing and not-knowing received comments from John of Scythopolis, and perhaps Maximus the Confessor, in the *Scholia* on these texts and others elsewhere in the corpus. For example, the *Scholia* say that “the ‘unknowing’ of God by those who are wise in divine things is not an absence of education but rather a knowledge which knows, in silence, that God is unknown.”

Regarding Moses on Mount Sinai, they add, “Note that he understands unknowing as darkness. How God is known through unknowing, he mentions here and we have discussed more fully regarding the second chapter of *The Divine Names*. . . . It is by an ‘inactivity of all knowledge’ that we are united to the unknown [God].”¹⁰ Beyond the *Scholia*, the theme of unknowing was continued by John of Damascus, notably in his heavy use of Dionysian negative theology in the opening lines and chapters of his influential synthesis of patristic teaching, *The Orthodox Faith*.¹¹

But, as with most aspects of Dionysian influence in the West (except for Pope Gregory’s angelology and Abbot Hilduin’s biography of Saint Denis), the real story starts with John Scotus Eriugena in the middle of the ninth century. It was clearly through Eriugena’s translation and creative appropriation that the apophatic method of Dionysius, Maximus, and John Damascene came into the Latin Middle Ages. For Eriugena, “nothing can be said worthily about God.”¹² In his own *Periphyseon*, he gave a clear and systematic emphasis to the negative way, yet without divorcing it from the affirmative.¹³ The frequent Dionysian prefix *hyper-* came out in Latin as *super-* (as in the English word supernatural; Eriugena’s was the very first occurrence of that now-familiar word).¹⁴ The theme of unknowing also provides a dramatic example of John’s oft-noted achievement in juxtaposing his two great authorities: “For what the Holy Fathers, I mean Augustine and Dionysius, most truly say about God—Augustine [says] that He is better known by not knowing, Dionysius that His ignorance [i.e., ignorance about God] is true wisdom—should, in my opinion, be understood.”¹⁵ Although Augustine was not really a proponent of negative theology, he was here invoked in order to support a Western use of the Greek, Dionysian dialectic of knowing and especially unknowing.

Eriugena’s creative combination of the Areopagite and Augustine lay dormant for almost three centuries, until the theological renaissance of the twelfth century. His *Periphyseon* was preserved verbatim in the *Clavis physicae* in the early twelfth century by Honorius of Autun, and indirectly by several channels.¹⁶ The corpus clearly surfaced around 1140 at two abbeys on the edge of Paris: Saint-Denis, with Abbot Suger, and Saint-Victor, with the pivotal work of Hugh.

In order to appreciate the journey of *The Mystical Theology* into Western mysticism through the Latin commentaries and paraphrases, we should pause at this point to specify just what it does and does not say. The Areopagite’s

ascent to union with God through knowing and unknowing dominates *The Mystical Theology* so completely that there is no reference whatsoever to the role of love in that ascent. Nor did the *Scholia* add this theme. Those steeped in mystical expositions of charity, the affections, delight, and love in the final union with God may find this gap startling, but there is yet more. Whether as bridegroom, lover, the crucified, or savior, Christ is not mentioned in *The Mystical Theology*, except for one comment summarizing another, nonexistent treatise. These omissions starkly contrast the Dionysian treatise with the Western tradition of Augustine earlier and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) in this same twelfth century. Bernard and many other men and women after him most ardently pursued precisely what is not central in the Dionysian corpus, a mysticism of love, especially for Christ as crucified.

Whereas Bernard (and William of Saint-Thierry [c. 1085–1148]) seem to have been relatively unconcerned with Dionysius,¹⁷ theologians and writers who came later attempted to assimilate into their spirituality a *Mystical Theology* without love and virtually without Christ. Those who knew the entire corpus could read this brief essay in light of the various Dionysian comments about Christ and especially in light of a discussion about God's own love in *The Divine Names*. That text mainly explains the language of yearning (*eros*) to speak about God, but it also clearly interprets the human movement or ascent toward God as stimulated by God's own love, since all things desire and love the Good (708A, 79).¹⁸ But love is rarely mentioned as part of that ascent and when it is, it seems to come at the beginning of the journey rather than at its culmination (*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 2, 200–201). Of course, the traditional contrast of affective and intellectual tendencies should not be overdrawn, since rarely were love and knowledge mutually exclusive ways to union with God.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the pivotal question regarding the Dionysian influence on Western mysticism is this: how did the Areopagite's clear emphasis upon union with the unknown God through knowing and unknowing relate to the Western emphasis upon union with the loving God through love, as seen earlier in Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Bernard, especially in their exegesis of the *Song of Songs*?

The Victorines

To pursue the relationship between these emphases, so pivotal to later developments, we resume the story in early twelfth-century Paris at the new Abbey of Saint-Victor. Joining the abbey soon after its foundation by the renowned Parisian teacher William of Champeaux (c. 1070–1121), Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1142) masterfully continued the founder's scholarly and contemplative directions. His interests were encyclopedic ("study everything!"), embracing the scriptures, the fathers, and all theology. Fundamentally an Augustinian, Hugh

nevertheless embraced certain Dionysian themes, specifically by writing and rewriting a commentary on *The Celestial Hierarchy*. Through this channel, there flowed into his own thought, into his Victorine heirs, and into greater Western currency the familiar Dionysian themes of hierarchy, the uplifting or anagogical role of perceptible symbols, the three ways—purification, illumination, and perfection—and the second chapter's discussion of affirmations and negations. Hugh reworked much of this material and made it his own.²⁰ Although he showed little direct interest in *The Mystical Theology*, his treatment of its themes of knowledge and negation soon proved decisive for its interpretation in the West.

Commenting on a passage in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, Hugh wrote these evocative and well-known lines: "Love surpasses knowledge and is greater than intelligence. . . . One loves more than one understands, and love enters and approaches where knowledge stays outside."²¹ For Hugh, this was a natural conclusion to draw from a Dionysian comment about angels. *The Celestial Hierarchy* had carefully noted (205B, 161–62) the etymologies of the word *seraphim* as "fire-makers" or "carriers of warmth" and that of *cherubim* as "fullness of knowledge" or "carriers of wisdom." To Hugh (but never to Dionysius) this fire is "the fire of love," meaning that love is superior to knowledge just as the seraphim are superior to the cherubim. Hugh's adaptation of the Areopagite's explanations of the Hebrew names is the start of the juxtaposition of the ancient Dionysian unknowing and the traditional Latin emphasis on love represented so famously by Hugh's contemporary, Bernard. Loving is higher than knowing. Where knowledge stops on the threshold in ignorance (unknowing), love can still advance and approach. It mattered not that Dionysius himself never put love above knowing and unknowing in the approach to God, for a Western Dionysian tradition was now supplying this crucial amplification. Hugh's thoughts were developed by the Victorines Richard and Thomas Gallus, and his commentary started to circulate as an aid and attachment to the corpus itself.

Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173) advanced much of Hugh's free appropriation of the Areopagite's corpus. His interests were concentrated on what we call mystical theology, but not on the Dionysian essay of that name. Richard provided his own biblical allegories of the stages in the spiritual journey, creatively reworking the themes of darkness and light, love and knowledge, and Moses' ecstatic ascent into Sinai's dark cloud. In his systematic exposition of spiritual discipline, levels of ascent and modes of contemplation, the link between knowledge and love becomes specified more and more clearly. Richard continued Hugh's suggestion that where knowledge stops, love can continue the final ascent to God. Although he quoted Dionysius several times and assimilated much of his thought, Richard seemed to use the Areopagite more as an apostolic illustration than as actual inspiration.²² Nevertheless, together the twelfth-century Victorines Hugh and Richard set the stage for a full-scale Western appropriation of *The Mystical Theology* and of the entire Dionysian corpus into the main-

stream of medieval mysticism. The final and decisive step in this relentless process was the interpretation and actual rewriting of Dionysian texts by the abbot Thomas Gallus (d. 1246).

A regular canon from the Abbey of Saint-Victor and an ardent Dionysian, Thomas Gallus came to Saint Andrew at Vercelli in northern Italy around 1220 as its founding abbot (whence his other name, Vercellensis). To read Saint Denis, he used neither a Greek text nor the translation of Eriugena, but the new translation by John the Saracen (Sarracenus), completed around 1167.²³ For twenty years, Gallus contemplated these texts, as he said, "with such vigilance! with such labor!"²⁴ He wrote a paraphrase of the entire corpus (*The Extract*, 1238) and commentaries on each treatise (*The Explanations*, 1242), which included the first known commentary on *The Mystical Theology*. Like his Victorine predecessors, Gallus was persuaded of the complete harmony between the biblical testimony in the *Song of Songs* and the Dionysian way of unknowing in *The Mystical Theology*, and not only wrote commentaries but also supplied cross-referenced indexes to prove it.

In light of Hugh of Saint-Victor's correlation of love and knowledge (that *dilectio* is greater than intelligence, and one loves more than one understands), consider Gallus's version: "We are convinced that the affection is ineffably more profoundly and more sublimely drawn to God by God himself than is the intellect, because men and angels love more than they have the power to reason or understand."²⁵ In his comments on *The Mystical Theology*, Gallus specified this relationship of love to the intellect in hierarchical terms, for the mind has a lower intellect or understanding and a higher form of knowledge called the affection or loving power. This is the "supreme power of the affection—the spark given off by the higher reason, which is alone capable of union with the Holy Spirit."²⁶ For Gallus, continuing Hugh's interpretation of the seraphim above the cherubim, our union with God occurs at the apex or height of our affection or loving power, which is above the intellect.²⁷

Beyond his commentaries, Gallus also read this Victorine connection of love and knowledge into the Dionysian corpus itself in his paraphrase of *The Mystical Theology*. In his version, Moses "is united to the intellectually unknown God through a uniting of love which really is true knowledge."²⁸ Further glosses or comments on parts of *The Mystical Theology* associated with Gallus summarize this position: Moses is "united with God through a knowledge and affection above the intellect."²⁹ When Gallus harmonized *The Mystical Theology* with the *Song of Songs*, the Dionysian mental darkness was coupled with Solomon's lovesick night.

Gallus's paraphrase or *Extract* was immediately and immensely popular as an alternative and easier way to extract the Areopagite's meaning. The semi-official corpus that circulated in the thirteenth century consisted of the translations by Eriugena and Sarracenus, the *Scholia*, the commentaries by Eriugena

and Hugh, and the paraphrase by Gallus. Thus for the high Scholastic period, the full Dionysian corpus, with aids, contained within itself Hugh's comments that put love beyond knowledge and Gallus's paraphrase that interpolated this view into the very text of *The Mystical Theology*.³⁰ After Hugh and Thomas Gallus, many readers quite naturally concluded that the purpose of the Areopagite's forceful negations was to clear the way for the higher, nonintellectual union of love beyond the mind. In the affective Victorine version, *The Mystical Theology* culminates in love. Not that the Victorines meant to alter the text; they, like others, simply assumed its basic harmony with the Bible and the other venerable fathers.

After Thomas Gallus, the story is more complex: the tributaries of Dionysian influence diversified considerably. But the narrative can be simplified by distinguishing the line that followed the Victorine synthesis of love and knowledge from the line that did not. In the first category are Bonaventure, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and many later authors; in the latter, Albert the Great, and Meister Eckhart.

Bonaventure and *The Cloud of Unknowing*

Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274) cited Dionysius freely. He advanced a hierarchical theory that put the Franciscan order at the very top, corresponding to the seraphim, even above the pope, as mentioned in part I.³¹ A devoted follower of Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure also gave explicit pride of place in his summary of his predecessors to Dionysius with regard to contemplation, followed by Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor. So it is no surprise that Bonaventure's discussions of union with God repeatedly invoke *The Mystical Theology* and do so with a Victorine imprint.³²

The general motif of spiritual ascent, so pervasive in Bonaventure's classic *The Soul's Journey into God*, has various biblical and Platonic sources, and powerful tributaries of its own, such as *The Ladder of Divine Ascents* of John Climacus (c. 570–649) and Bernard's own creativity. It is not uniquely Dionysian. But Bonaventure's view that the understanding of symbols is an ascent from the perceptible and visible to the conceptual and invisible is part of a specifically Dionysian legacy of anagogical interpretation, as mediated through Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor.³³ The ascent itself involves the familiar triad of purification, illumination, and perfection (or union). In the Areopagite, these three were all cognitive: we are purified from ignorance, then illuminated further, and then perfected in our understanding. In Bonaventure (again, by way of Hugh), the three ways were more distinct: moral purification, intellectual illumination, and the perfect union of love. His treatise *The Triple Way or Love Enkindled* stated plainly at the very outset "purgation leads to peace, illumination to truth, and perfection to love."³⁴

That the highest of the three ways, perfection, involves a love beyond the middle way of the intellect's illumination continues the main Victorine achievement in reconciling a loveless *Mystical Theology* with the Western tradition. At least twice, Bonaventure's subtle eloquence blended substantial passages from the first chapter of *The Mystical Theology* into his narrative. When his late *Collations on the Six Days of Creation* spoke of the highest wisdom, without form, it naturally invoked the Victorine version of the Areopagite's advice to Timothy: rise up beyond the perceptible and the conceptual since at the peak is the supreme union of love and love alone. After further comments about love, Bonaventure connects the Song of Songs to *The Mystical Theology*'s instruction to go beyond the intellect, giving new terms to Hugh's dictum: "for there it is not intellect which enters, but love." Poetically invoking Moses' ascent, Elijah's encounter, and Plotinus's sculptor (compare *The Mystical Theology* 1025B, 138), Bonaventure has the removal (negation) of the stones followed by the fire of love, "for love always follows removal."³⁵ Bonaventure puts the Victorine solution in a nutshell: after negation comes love.

We see the same interweaving of love with Dionysian negations at the end of Bonaventure's essay *The Soul's Journey into God* (1259), which goes yet further in supplying what *The Mystical Theology* lacked. Of Francis's example in dying or passing over into God, Bonaventure wrote: "In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind, and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God."³⁶ The "height of our affection" occurs at the peak of the ascent beyond the intellectual power of the mind, after knowledge has turned into unknowing. Bonaventure here quotes *The Mystical Theology*'s opening prayer and familiar advice to Timothy, followed by the forceful statement that this all comes about by "grace not instruction, desire not understanding, . . . in burning affections," and so on.

But here Bonaventure goes beyond his Victorine predecessors. When they encountered the loveless, mostly Christless *Mystical Theology*, they added love. Bonaventure's use of *The Mystical Theology* adds not only love but also Christ, for in his reading the Dionysian darkness equals death and resurrection with Christ: "With Christ crucified, let us pass out of the world to the Father."³⁷ As he said at the outset, "there is no other path but through the burning love of the Crucified." In sharing with Bernard and Francis a non-Dionysian devotion to Christ in the flesh, Bonaventure invoked the Areopagite's authority only where it fit into his own tradition. Nevertheless, his creative work is the culmination of the Victorines' integration of Dionysian darkness into the Western legacy of love for Christ crucified, and an echo of Paul's original answer to the Athenians' unknown God. It may seem incongruous to pair the Areopagite's apophatic cloud with Francis's ardent stigmata, but not to someone of Bonaventure's synthetic genius.

In turning now to the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing*, we advance from a general Victorine legacy to the specific, textual influence of Thomas

Gallus, as mediated through the Carthusian Hugh of Balma (d. 1304). Hugh's *Viae Syon lugent* (also known as *The Triple Way* or *The Mystical Theology* and once attributed to Bonaventure) is more or less a commentary on *The Mystical Theology*. Its third and culminating section, on the way of union, concentrates on Dionysius' opening prayer and his advice to Timothy. Hugh quotes directly from Gallus's commentary on *The Mystical Theology*, and takes further the Victorine emphasis on love above the mind: "This ascent, which is called ascent by unknowing, is nothing else than to be impelled directly by the ardor of love, without any creaturely image, without any thought going before, without any accompanying impulse from the understanding; so that it is the affection alone which hits the target."³⁸ Whereas for Gallus and his predecessors, love was the true, higher form of knowledge, for Hugh of Balma there was little or no continuity at all between the lower, intellectual process and the higher union of love. Although Hugh's work is not well known today, it was the source of the "anti-intellectualism" often noted in *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

As for the anonymous (Carthusian?) author of the *Cloud*, he also translated *The Mystical Theology* into the Middle English *Dionise Hid Divinity*, or *Denis's Hidden Theology*, where he immediately acknowledged his heavy dependence upon Thomas Gallus.³⁹ At least the fourth chapter is translated not from Saracenus's Latin translation, as the first three are, but rather from Gallus's *Extract*, or paraphrase. More to the point at hand is Gallus's precedent in interpolating love into the first chapter of *The Mystical Theology*. In the Middle English version, we are "to enter by affection into the darkness where [God] truly is," just as "Moses, exercising his affection alone, . . . entered by himself into the darkness of unknowing."⁴⁰ Furthermore, after the opening Dionysian prayer, the English version adds: "For since all these things are beyond the reach of mind, therefore with affection above mind, insofar as I can, I desire to win them to me by this prayer."⁴¹ The theme of "affection above mind" is certainly taken from Gallus and Hugh of Balma, and the text itself may owe something to the comment on *The Mystical Theology* attributed by some to Gallus: "The state of union cannot be obtained except through the most fervent desire of a mental prayer and by virtue of an affection above the mind."⁴² In summary, what Gallus did once, the author of the *Cloud* does four times in the first chapter of *The Mystical Theology*: he adds love or affection to the peak of the Dionysian ascent, just as he adds the other Christian themes of grace and faith along the way.⁴³

The *Cloud of Unknowing* itself confirms this picture of an interpolated love which transcends knowledge. The author took the title from *The Mystical Theology*, and claimed its overall authority: "Saint Denis said, 'The truly divine knowledge of God is that which is known by unknowing.' And now whoever cares to examine the works of Denis, he will find that his words clearly corroborate all that I have said or am going to say, from the beginning of this treatise to the end."⁴⁴ Despite this singular appeal to the authority of the Areopagite,

The Cloud of Unknowing had many sources, including Thomas Aquinas and Richard of Saint-Victor. But it does confirm the overall picture sketched so far, for it is an appeal to the Western, Victorine Denis of Thomas Gallus and Hugh of Balma.⁴⁵ Although the two treatises share certain things, such as their low interest in Christ, *The Cloud of Unknowing* breathes a different spirit from *The Mystical Theology*, especially in that the *Cloud*'s type of unknowing is followed by the higher union of love.

In general, we can conclude that Bonaventure and *The Cloud of Unknowing* are two variations on a Victorine theme of integrating the Dionysian unknowing into the dominant Western theme of union through love. Yet not everyone thought *The Mystical Theology* needed to be augmented this way, as we see in Albert the Great and in Meister Eckhart.

From Albert to Eckhart

Albert the Great, or Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–80), is a figure associated with almost every aspect of medieval learning, including the Dionysian tradition. Immediately upon finishing his required lectures on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Albert turned from that Latin textbook to the supposed source of the Greek fathers, the nearly apostolic Dionysian corpus that was newly enjoying its Victorine revival. From 1246 to 1252 he lectured through the entire corpus, including *The Mystical Theology*, moving from Paris to Cologne in the meantime and taking young Thomas Aquinas with him as student and scribe. Thomas's lecture notes (the earliest work from his illegible hand) were then transcribed and became Albert's written commentaries on the Dionysian texts. These expositions are a key episode in Scholastic theology and in medieval mysticism, both in their own right and also with regard to Albert's influence on others, especially Thomas and Eckhart. As A. Haas puts it, "Albert the Great . . . in following Pseudo-Dionysius inaugurated a strongly Neoplatonic form of mystical theology and thereby founded speculative German mysticism."⁴⁶

Although Albert's large corpus includes numerous works on spirituality, and hundreds of references to Dionysius, our attention must focus on his commentary on *The Mystical Theology*. Based upon the translation by Sarracenus, this brief exposition combined timeless insights into the Areopagite's original meaning with contextual comments on the doctrinal currents of the thirteenth century. Here and throughout his works, Albert maintained the Dionysian relationship of affirmative and negative theology. Since no name captures God, Albert honored the apophatic tradition; but since every name reveals something of God, he pursued his well-known encyclopedic interests in every branch of knowledge. As Albert said, the author's "principal objective is to establish the procedure involved in negative theology," a procedure learned from affirmative theology.⁴⁷

So this first section is in two parts, the first dealing with how we know God, the second (in chapter two) with how we become one with him. . . . Rational investigation would be futile if it never arrived at intellectual union. . . . God is what is best and he is the ultimate perfection of our intellects, so for our intellect being united with him is for the very best . . . We have to be united with God in our understanding.⁴⁸

Albert's exegesis of *The Mystical Theology* is most interesting in its contrast to his Victorine predecessors Hugh and Richard. He knew their work, but he did not adopt their addition of love at the peak of the Dionysian ascent.⁴⁹ He accepted the Areopagite's relentlessly intellectual approach to union with God and his omission of any reference to love in *The Mystical Theology*. Albert did mention the traditional formula in *The Divine Names* about experience surpassing learning, but he never inserted the idea of love above the mind in the union with God.⁵⁰ Not that normal knowledge suffices, but what transcends it is not an affective state or some higher form of knowledge called love, but rather a higher, "blurred and undefined knowledge 'that' [God] is."⁵¹ Where affirmations and even negations finally fail, there is then no ultimate union of love but rather a doxological acknowledgment of God's transcendence. Albert ends his commentary by insisting that God's "transcendence defeats all negation. And so neither negations nor affirmations arrive at any sufficient praise of him, to whom belong power and infinite splendor and eternity, forever and ever. Amen."⁵²

While the main point here concerns the role of love, Albert also accepted the Dionysian decision to exclude Christ from *The Mystical Theology*,⁵³ an exclusion too glaring for others, as we have already seen in the case of Bonaventure. In Albert's hands, negative theology and *The Mystical Theology* were not occasions to interpolate love and Christ, but rather a rigorous theological method of recognizing the divine transcendence. In this, Albert was part of the rehabilitation of the Greek interest in negative theology after some recent disputes, including the 1225 condemnation of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*.⁵⁴

Thomas Aquinas continued many of Albert's concerns, including his interest in the Dionysian corpus, as surveyed in part IV. Aquinas was not as enamored of *The Mystical Theology* in itself as other medieval theologians, but he preserved the Dionysian negative theology in general: "Dionysius says that what we assert of God is loose (or, according to another translation, 'incongruous') because no word [name; *nomen*] used of God is appropriate to him in its way of signifying, as we have remarked."⁵⁵ But Albert's influence extended far beyond Thomas, both as an author and as a teacher. As Haydn outlived young Mozart, so too Albert survived Aquinas, who died in 1274. Old and famous, he still had time, it seems, to meet another young Dominican, Eckhart, later called Meister Eckhart.

When Eckhart (c. 1260–1327) apparently encountered Albert in 1277 he was only a teenager, not yet the Meister or the heretic. His mature thought and

extensive writings are so complex and controversial that our questions about Dionysian influence are rather narrow by comparison.⁵⁶ The difficulty of interpreting Eckhart's place in the Dionysian tradition is also compounded by his debt to the decidedly non-Dionysian women mystics Hadewijch of Antwerp (fl. 1230–50) Mechthild of Magdeburg (c. 1210–1280), and Marguerite of Porete (d. 1310). From them, from others, and from his own homiletical daring came statements about such a complete union with God, a union without distinction, that it was condemned as heresy.

Our specific concern here is with the role of unknowing in the union with God. Eckhart never tired of extolling the unknowability of God, who is "above names and ineffable," sometimes invoking the authority of the venerable Dionysius to reinforce his preference for negations.⁵⁷ When Moses entered the darkness, said Eckhart, he went "into the surpassing light that beats down and darkens our intellect." Then he immediately quotes part of *The Mystical Theology's* opening prayer and the Areopagite's first letter to Gaius: "Perfect ignorance is the knowledge of him who is over all that is known." He also credits Sarracenus's prologue to *The Mystical Theology*: "Since man ascends to knowledge of God through removal [negations], what God is remains hidden and covered at the end."⁵⁸ Like Albert, Eckhart the Dominican made no place for a Victorine, Franciscan love at the end of this process: "Nowhere and never do we find God as God save in intellect."⁵⁹ To be sure, Eckhart does not completely neglect love and he acknowledges that complete union with God does go beyond both love and knowledge. "Knowledge is better than love. But the two are better than one, as knowledge carries love within itself."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Meister Eckhart clearly continued Albert's reading of the Dionysian divine union that omitted the interpolation of love beyond knowing, or of love as somehow the highest form of knowing. Eckhart was not overly dominated by the Dionysian influence, as shown by his lack of interest in hierarchical mediation and in the metaphor of ascent. But he was true to the Areopagite and to Albert with regard to a union through knowing and unknowing, and in his quite Dionysian lack of interest in the experience or feelings of love in divine ecstasy and union.

Conclusion

Just as Gallus and Albert differed in the thirteenth century, so Eckhart provides a fourteenth-century contrast to the affective tendencies in the *Cloud of Unknowing*. Gallus and the *Cloud* did not reject knowledge completely, and Albert, Eckhart, and Dionysius himself did not ignore love. But the emphasis of each group is clearly different. Gallus, Bonaventure, and *The Cloud* represent an affective Dionysian strand in that they locate union with God in a love that goes beyond unknowing. Albert and Eckhart reject the convenient synthesis in this

reading of the Areopagite, and rightly accept unknowing in itself as the genuinely Dionysian way to union with God.

After Eckhart and the author of the *Cloud*, the crossing and interpenetrating emphases on the affective and intellectual in medieval mysticism are too intricate to trace in this brief space. The Dionysian corpus was well known to Eckhart's followers Johann Tauler (c. 1300–61) and Henry Suso (c. 1295–1366), as well as to the author of the *Theologia Germanica*.⁶¹ Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293–1381, called another Dionysius) and his critic, the Dionysian commentator Jean Gerson (1363–1429), both knew the Dominican tradition of Albert and Eckhart quite well, but embraced instead the Victorine line of interpolated love. Gerson was particularly influenced by Albert's commentaries, but nevertheless thought that Dionysius taught an amorous union of the mind with God. A. Combes argued that "unfaithful to the Areopagite, Gerson let himself be seduced by the teachers of an affective mysticism," namely Gallus and Hugh of Balma.⁶²

Full-scale appropriations of Dionysian philosophy and spirituality were undertaken by Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64), who called Dionysius "the greatest of theologians," and by his namesake Dionysius the Carthusian (1402–71), author of his own commentary on the complete works.⁶³ These and other fifteenth-century authors (and later ones, especially John of the Cross [1542–91]) must be seen in the context of the questions posed earlier of whether and how to add love and Christ to *The Mystical Theology*. This is not to say that Dionysius is the key to all medieval mysticism. Dozens of authors, mostly women associated with the affective tradition of love for Jesus, showed little or no interest at all in the Dionysian corpus and no concern to reconcile *The Mystical Theology* with their experiences or their reflection.⁶⁴ That these women ignored Dionysius has a certain justice to it, since the Dionysian corpus itself completely ignored women, even the virgin Mary (except for one allusion) and the other hearer supposedly converted by Paul's sermon about the unknown God, the Athenian woman named Damaris. Nevertheless, page for page, no treatise influenced medieval spirituality more than *The Mystical Theology*.

NOTES

1. For example, see F. C. Happold, *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1963), pp. 211–17; Elmer O'Brien, S.J., *Varieties of Mystic Experience* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), pp. 73–91; Louis Dupré and James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., *Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), pp. 77–88, which also includes a selection from *The Divine Names*, chap. 13. For a sympa-

thetic and more integrated perspective, see Louis Bouyer's section on Dionysius, entitled in part "Mysticism, Scripture, and Liturgy" in *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*, trans. Iltyd Trethowan (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 179–86. For recent work emphasizing *The Mystical Theology*, see Michel Corbin, "Négation et transcendance dans l'oeuvre de Denys," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 69 (1985): 41–76, and Charles André Bernard, S.J., "La doctrine mystique de Denys l'Aréopagite," *Gregorianum* 68 (1987): 523–66. See also Deirdre Carabine, "Apophysis East and West," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 55 (1988): 5–29.

2. The careful reader will note that this quotation corrects our earlier rendition in the Paulist Press translation, namely, "one is supremely united by a completely unknowing inactivity of all knowledge." The reference to the "unknown" refers rather to God and echoes the "unknown God" of Acts 17, as discussed at more length below. For liturgical echoes in Moses' ascent, see my fuller documentation in Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 140–42, and in "Moses as the Paradigm for the Liturgical Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius," *Studia Patristica*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989), 275–79.

3. The image of the sculptor who reveals beauty by removing the obstacles has a long history, notably in Plotinus's *Enneads* 1.6 (1) ("On Beauty"), 9. It interested the Scholiast greatly (*Scholion* 424A).

4. Notably by Vanneste, *Le mystère*, pp. 30–36. My own response to Vanneste is more fully documented in Rorem, *Synthesis*, pp. 7–10 and throughout.

5. Plotinus also quoted this phrase ("goal of their journeying") from Plato's *Republic* (532e 3) in his *Enneads* 1.3 (20), 1.

6. "Apart from the Gospels and some of the Pauline Epistles, there is no single short work in the whole body of Western religious literature that has had so profound a theological influence and so extraordinary a spiritual impact as the anonymous *Mystical Theology*." Walsh, *Pursuit*, p. 51.

For their help in commenting on this section, I am grateful to Bernard McGinn and Zachary Hayes. Of specific interest to the line of argumentation pursued here are the studies by Lees, *Negative Language*; Walther Völker, *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1958), pp. 218–63; and H.-C. Puech, "La ténèbre mystique chez le pseudo-Denys," *Études Carmelitaines* 23, no. 2 (1938): 33–53. On the overall topic of Dionysian influence in medieval mysticism, see David Knowles, O.S.B., "The Influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Western Mysticism," in *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp*, ed. Peter Brooks (London: SCM, 1975), 81–94, and the entries in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:323–78. From seeing Bernard McGinn's nuanced presentation of the Areopagite himself, I would expect that his forthcoming four-volume survey will trace the Dionysian legacy in medieval mysticism most expertly; *The Presence of God: A History of Christian Mysticism*, vol. 1, *The Foundations of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroads, 1991).

7. For an update of the classic 1913 study by Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, see Pieter Willem van der Horst, "The Unknown God (Acts 17.23)," in *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 19–42. A slightly different version of this article, expanded by a bibliography and by further reference to "Luke's Use of the Altar-Inscription," appeared as "The Altar of the 'Unknown God' in Athens (Acts 17.23) and the Cult of 'Unknown Gods' in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, pt. 2, *Principat*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 1426–56. See also Vanneste, *Le mystère*, especially pp. 180–81.

8. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, ed. A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). Philo wrote *On the Life of Moses*, but said very little about his ascent of Mount Sinai; *Philo VI*, ed. F. H. Colson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), pp. 483–84. On Philo, Clement, and Origen in this regard, see Joseph C. McLelland, *God the Anonymous: A Study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1976). See also Josef Hochstaffl, *Negative Theologie: Ein Versuch zur Vermittlung des patristischen Begriffs* (Munich: Koesel, 1976). For a solid study of the apophatic way in Christian and Neoplatonic authors, see Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2, *The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986).

9. In addition to Mortley, *Way of Negation*, see the treatment of these authors by Edouard des Places, S.J., "La théologie négative du Pseudo-Denys, ses antécédents platoniciens et son influence au seuil du moyen âge," in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 17 (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987), pp. 81–92. See also the excellent articles by P. Hadot ("Neoplatonist Spirituality I: Plotinus and Porphyry"), H. D. Saffrey ("Neoplatonist Spirituality II: From Iamblichus to Proclus and Damascius"), W. Beierwaltes ("Love of Beauty and Love of God"), and R. T. Wallis ("The Spiritual Importance of Not Knowing") in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 230–49, 250–65, 293–313, and 460–80. On Proclus and Dionysius especially regarding negation, see Marco Ninci, *L'universo e il non-essere*, vol. 1, *Trascendenza di Dio e molteplicità del reale nel monismo dionisiano* (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1980).

10. *Scholia* on DN 7 (872B, 109) in PG 4:341A (by John of Scythopolis), and on MT 1 (1001A, 137) in PG 4:421B (also by John) and 421C (perhaps by Maximus).

11. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, pp. 165–73; see also p. 208 for the triadic angelology of "the most holy and sacred Dionysius the Areopagite, who is very well-versed in theology." In general, whether the topic is Hesychasm with its Jesus prayer, or monastic asceticism, or mystical union and *theosis* (deification), the Dionysian texts do not seem to be nearly as prominent in the Byzantine East as they were in the spirituality of the medieval West.

12. Eriugena, *De predestinatione liber* (PL 122:390), as translated more fully by Walsh, *Cloud*, p. 48.

13. For the general bibliography on Eriugena, see the section on medieval influence in part II. On affirmation and negation, see *Periphyseon* 458A–462D (pp. 45–51). This passage and Eriugena's translation represent a dramatic improvement over Hilduin's work in the Western reception of Dionysian negative theology, since the latter had rendered *apophasis* as *sententia* and *apophasko* as *dicere*; see Walter Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages: From Jerome to Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. Jerold C. Frakes, rev. and expanded ed. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), p. 118.

14. For example, *Periphyseon* 459D–460C (pp. 47–48), 645C (p. 265), and 680D (307); see *Ioannis Scoti Eriugenae Periphyseon indices generales*, ed. G. H. Allard (Paris: Vrin, 1983), pp. 535–40. On the word *supernatural*, see August Deneffe, S.J., "Geschichte des Wortes 'supernaturalis,'" *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 46 (1922): 337–60.

15. *Periphyseon* 2, 597D, p. 162. The Dionysian reference is *DN* 7 (872A, 109); the Augustinian reference is *De ordine* 2.16.44: "de summo illo Deo, qui scitur melius nesciendo." This text and its influence is discussed by E. Jeaneau, as reported in Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, p. 40. Augustine's superficial negative theology is discussed in Mortley, *The Way of Negation*, pp. 217–18.

16. Honorius of Autun accurately called this work a "liber excerptus," *Clavis physicae*, ed. Paolo Lucentini, *Temi e Testi*, vol. 21 (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1974). Anselm of Laon and various authors at Chartres also contributed to the Eriugenian tradition, thus preserving some Dionysian sentiments. Also of interest in this same (twelfth) century were Abelard's commotion over the Dionysian biography and Lombard's use of Dionysian angelology.

17. Regarding Bernard of Clairvaux and William of Saint-Thierry, Dom André Fracheboud's arguments for a Dionysian influence (*Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:329–36) have been refuted as too general by Dom Édmond Boissard, "Saint Bernard et le Pseudo-Aréopagite," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 26 (1959): 214–63. See the summaries of their work by Bernard McGinn, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Early Cistercians," *One Yet Two*, pp. 222–23.

18. In an unpublished paper, "God as Eros: Reflections of Cosmic Love in the Christian Tradition," Bernard McGinn discusses Dionysius and many other authors.

19. See especially McGinn, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union" pp. 7–24, and now the fuller version of the same paper: "Love, Knowledge, and *Unio mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition," in *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn (New York: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 59–86 (notes on pp. 203–19), plus the comments on pages 185–93 (notes on pp. 240–41). See also Louis Dupree's

reluctance to distinguish sharply between cognitive union and affective union (p. 20).

20. On Hugh, see especially the work of R. Roques, *Structures*, pp. 325ff.; Grover A. Zinn, "Book and Word: The Victorine Background of Bonaventure's Use of Symbols," *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974* (Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1973), 2:143–69. "Hugh was the most influential channel of Dionysianism in the early part of the century" (B. McGinn, *One Yet Two*, pp. 211–12).

21. "Dilectio supereminet scientiae, et major est intelligentia. Plus enim diligitur, quam intelligitur, et entrat dilectio, et appropinquat, ubi scientia foris est," *PL* 175:1038D. Cf. *De sacramentis*, 1.10.3. Hugh's reference to the "ignem amoris" is at 1035C.

22. "Richard a connu Denys, mais il l'a souvent utilisé comme une illustration que comme une inspiration de sa propre pensée," Gervais Dumeige, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:328. *Richard of St. Victor: Selected Writings on Contemplation*, ed. Clare Kirchberger (New York: Harper, 1957). Kirchberger's introduction is thorough with regard to Richard's debt to and differences from Dionysius, but, like Richard himself, he reads love into the Dionysian ascent (pp. 51–52). Grover A. Zinn, *Richard of St. Victor: The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

23. For what little is known on the twelfth-century Sarracenus, who commented on *The Celestial Hierarchy* and translated the entire corpus including the Greek words simply transliterated by Eriugena, see G. Théry, "Documents concernant Jean Sarrazin, reviseur de la traduction érigénienne du Corpus Dionysiacum," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 18 (1951): 45–87.

24. "Sensum, quem in ipsis libris (quibus vigiliis! quo valore!) per annos viginti conceperam," Prologue to Gallus's *Extract*, in *Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia* 15:29, and in *Dionysiaca* 1:cix. Quoted more fully in Dondaine, p. 31, n. 27, and in Lees, *Negative Language*, pp. 183–84. On Gallus in general, the foundational work was by G. Théry, who concluded that he "transposed into theology that which Dionysius said in philosophy. In a word—and this is our deep conviction—he Christianized Dionysius" (Théry, "Documents concernant Jean Sarrazin," p. 33; see also pp. 148–49). Research on Gallus was continued by J. Walsh, whose (unpublished) 1957 Gregorian dissertation is quoted liberally in Lees, *Negative Language*. Walsh provides English translations of excerpts from Gallus in his editions of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Pursuit of Wisdom*, although they are not always identified fully. See also his "Thomas Gallus et l'effort contemplatif," *Revue d'Histoire de Spiritualité* 51 (1975): 17–42 (formerly *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*), and "The Expositions of Thomas Gallus on the Pseudo-Dionysian Letters," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 30 (1963): 199–220, which provides the Latin text of what D. Callus called "An Unknown Commentary on

the Pseudo-Dionysian Letters," *Dominican Studies* 1 (1948): 58–73. Whereas the *Extract* is readily available (in Latin), the *Explanations* are not, including the very rare 1934 edition by Théry of *Thomas Gallus: Grand commentaire sur la Théologie Mystique* (see Dondaine, p. 32, n. 29, and Völker, *Kontemplation und Ekstase*, p. 228 n. 3). Théry and Völker (pp. 226–28) considered the *Gloss*, or comments attributed to Eriugena (*PL* 122:267–84), to be the work of Gallus; Walsh, without explanation, rejected this attribution (*Pursuit*, p. 84, n. 55). Ruello's detailed study suggests Adam of Marsh, a contemporary of Gallus who used his work; "Un commentaire dionysien en quête d'auteur," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 27 (1952): 141–81. See also R. Javelet, "Thomas Gallus ou les écritures dans une dialectique mystique," *L'homme devant Dieu: À Henri de Lubac*, 3 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 2:99–110.

25. Walsh, *Cloud*, p. 123, from Gallus' Isaiah commentary.

26. Walsh, *Pursuit*, p. 291; cf. pp. 305 and 311, n. 24, as well as pp. 66 and 85, and *Cloud*, p. 162.

27. *Extractio* on DN 7 in *Dionysiaca* 2:696. To Gallus, Dionysius presented the apophatic theory of this affective union with God, and the Song of Songs presented its cataphatic practice, with no contradiction or tension. See the discussions of this theme in Tugwell, p. 54; Walsh, *Cloud*, pp. 72 and 243; and "Thomas Gallus et l'effort contemplatif," pp. 35–36; and McGinn, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union," pp. 12–13.

28. "Per unionem dilectionis (quae effectiva est verae cognitionis) unitur Deo intellectualiter ignoto," *Extractio* on MT 1 in *Dionysiaca* 710 (578); *Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia* 16: 455D; and the Pseudo-Eriugena *Gloss* (*PL* 122:275C). The actual Dionysian text, with no mention of love, is in MT 1 (1001A, 137). On Dionysian ascent and ecstasy as a cognitive affair, see Vanneste, *Le mystère*, pp. 200–17, and Rorem, *Synthesis*, p. 137. But Kirchberger (pp. 51–52), McGinn (*One Yet Two*, p. 220), and Louth (*Denys*, p. 115) seem at times to read Dionysius through the medieval, affective overlay under discussion here. On the "apex mentis," see Endre von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), pp. 317–25, and *Scholastik* 30 (1955): 185.

29. "Per superintellectualem cognitionem et affectionem," Pseudo-Eriugena, *Gloss*, in *PL* 122:269B. The entire essay (also quoted below in conjunction with *The Cloud of Unknowing*, from 276A) is perfectly consistent with Gallus's known works.

30. The details of this composite corpus are studied by Dondaine, who concludes (p. 125) that it presented "un Denys clarifié, repensé par des latins et en quelque mesure augustinisé."

31. The specialist on Bonaventure's use of Dionysius (some two hundred citations) is Jacques G. Bougerol, O.F.M. See, for example, his "Saint Bonaventure et la Hiérarchie dionysienne," already cited in part one, n. 16, regarding the Dionysian hierarchy. A more general article is his "Bonaventure et le

Pseudo-Dionysius," *Etudes Franciscaines* 28, supplement (1968): 33–123. These two articles are reprinted in his *Saint Bonaventure: Etudes sur les sources de sa pensée* (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989). His conclusions are also in *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Bonaventure* (Tournai: Desclee, 1961), translated as *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964).

32. Bonaventure considered Augustine to be supreme in doctrine and faith, followed by the more recent Anselm; in preaching and morality, Gregory the Great and now Bernard; in contemplation, the goal of the others, Dionysius and now Richard; in all three, Hugh; *De reductione artium ad theologum*, Quaracchi 5:319–21. Whether Gallus influenced Bonaventure is debatable. Paul Philippe (*Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2:1976 and 1980) says that Bonaventure "a adopté les thèmes dionysiens de Thomas Gallus," but gives no evidence. The English translation of Bougerol's *Introduction* (p. 80, from the French, p. 40), also suggests that he did, but the translator followed the mistaken indexer of the French original in identifying Thomas Gallus as Thomas of Wales (de Galle), and added the confusion of Thomas Aquinas on his own; see Dondaine, p. 144. Perhaps the source of this undocumented impression is the Quaracchi editors' use of Gallus as a "translation" in their notes to Bonaventure's text (e.g. 5:341), even when Eriugena and Sarracenus were actually the translators Bonaventure used (earlier and later in his career, respectively). On the other hand, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's *Habilitätionsschrift* pointed out two places where Bonaventure mentions Gallus by name: *III Sent* d. 1, a. 2, q. 2, p. 24, n. 8; and *Collatio XXII in Hexameron* 24 (Quaracchi 5:441a). I owe this reference to the kindness of Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., who translated Ratzinger's work as *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971); see the perceptive comments on pp. 87–94.

33. Cousins, *Bonaventure*, pp. 63 and 76 (*Itinerarium* 1.9 and 2.11); B. McGinn, "Ascension and Introversion in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*," in *San Bonaventura 1274–1974* 3:548. The overall history of the theme of ascent in Christian literature owes less to Dionysius than to Gregory of Nyssa's (apophatic) ascent of Moses (in *The Life of Moses*) and especially to John Climacus's (non-apophatic) treatment of ascent, which was immensely influential in the East: *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (New York: Paulist Press, 1982). See the literary analysis by Richard T. Lawrence, "The Threefold Structure of the Ladder of Divine Ascent," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 32 (1988): 101–18. This theme of spiritual ascent is surveyed in Margaret R. Miles, *Practicing Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), chap. 4, "Staying is Nowhere: Ascent," pp. 63–85.

34. *De triplici via* (Quaracchi 8:3). Jean-Fr. Bonnefoy, *Une somme bonaventurienne de théologie mystique: Le "De triplici via"* (Paris: Vrin, 1934), see pp. 11–14 regarding Dionysius (this work is extracted from *La France*

Franciscaine 15 (1932): 227–64). The three ways are not distinct stages but a dynamic process. See Hayes, *Hidden Center*, p. 45.

35. "Quia ibi non intrat intellectus, sed affectus. . . . Ablationem sequitur amor semper," Quarrachi 5:341–42, as discussed in John O. Reidl's article with an inflated title, "Bonaventure's Commentary on Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*," in *Thomas and Bonaventure*, ed. George F. McLean (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1974), pp. 266–76. See also "Et haec est cognitio excellentissima, quam docet Dionysius, quae quidem est in ecstático amore et elevat supra cognitionem fidei secundum statum communem," In *III Sent.* d. 24, a. 3, q. 2, dub. 4 (Quaracchi 3:531; McGinn, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union," p. 11). McGinn's fuller version of this article ("Love, Knowledge, and *Unio mystica*") gives the text on p. 67 with the Latin on p. 208, n. 60. Bonaventure also perpetuates Hugh of Saint-Victor's inventive exegesis of Dionysius, that the warm *love* of the Seraphim is superior to the intellectual knowledge of the Cherubim, a reading passed on to Hugh of Balma and Gerson.

36. "Apex affectus," Cousins, p. 113 from *Itinerarium* 7:4 (Quarrachi 5:313). See also "magis exercitatio affectus quam eruditio intellectus," *Itinerarium*, prologue (5:296); Cousins, *Bonaventure*: "the exercise of affection rather than erudition of the intellect" (p. 56). Although the *Itinerarium* quotes Dionysius early, middle, and late, it would be impoverishing to subject such a rich and subtle tapestry of spiritual teachings to just this one narrow question of sources.

37. Cousins, *Bonaventure*, p. 116, with reference to John 13:1, *Itinerarium* 7.6 (Quaracchi 5:313) and prologue (Cousins, *Bonaventure*, p. 54). Bonaventure's Franciscan devotion to Christ crucified is discussed by E. Cousins, "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ," in *Christian Spirituality* 2:382–86.

38. Walsh, *Pursuit*, p. 302. Hugh's treatise is found in some older editions of Bonaventure's works, such as that of Cologne (1609; 7:657–87). It will apparently receive a critical edition from P. Dubourg, S.J., in *Sources Chrétiennes*. Walsh provides an English translation of a portion of the prologue (*Pursuit*, p. 68), a major section (pp. 302–10, earlier translated in *The Way* 9 [1969]: 243–50), and the postscript (p. 192). It is also cited in Walsh's notes to the *Cloud* and to *Denis's Hidden Theology* (in *Pursuit*), although sometimes without page numbers or location.

39. James Walsh has introduced, translated, and annotated *Denis's Hidden Theology* in *Pursuit*, pp. 49–97. The author of the *Cloud* acknowledges his debt to Gallus (p. 74). For a well-grounded discussion of English mystics, including their relationships to the Dionysian tradition, see Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

40. Walsh, *Pursuit*, p. 76 and 77; the latter quotation is directly dependent upon Gallus.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

42. "Supermentalis affectionis," Pseudo-Eriugena, *Gloss* (PL 122:276A). Perhaps the *Cloud* author's "you shall be carried up in your affection" (Walsh, *Pursuit*, p. 75) also owes something to Pseudo-Eriugena, *Gloss* "consurge per principalem affectionem" (PL 122:272A). The possibility that the *Cloud* author used this *Gloss* would be consistent with the hypothesis that it is by Gallus or at least stood in the same tradition.

43. The theme of grace is added on p. 75 of Walsh, *Pursuit* (see p. 88, n. 17) and on p. 77 (see p. 91, n. 55). Regarding the addition of faith (p. 76), Walsh comments, "The reference to faith is the translator's; none of his possible sources have it. It represents the most direct Christianization of the pseudo-Dionysian Neoplatonism" (p. 90, n. 41).

44. *Cloud* 70 (Walsh, *Cloud*, p. 256); the Dionysian quotation is from *Divine Names* 7 (872A, 109). See also the edition by Phyllis Hodgson, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 3 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Ameristik, 1982).

45. Walsh cites Gallus and Hugh of Balma quite frequently in his notes to the *Cloud*. He concludes that the author of the *Cloud* succeeded in "investing an apophatic Neoplatonism with Christian devotion" (p. 73; cf. pp. 26, 43, and 294). "The *Cloud* author, it has been submitted, follows Hugh of Balma in isolating the unitive way of love from the preparatory phases of purgation and illumination" (Lees, *Negative Language*, p. 333).

46. A. Haas, "The Schools of Medieval Mysticism," *Christian Spirituality* 2:145.

47. The modern reader is very well served by the introduction and translation of this work by Simon Tugwell in Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*. The quotation is from p. 177 (cf. p. 141). Albert also gives accurate summaries of *The Divine Names* (pp. 177 and 183), *The Celestial Hierarchy* (pp. 138 and 194) and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (p. 177). As to Albert's regard for the Areopagite, he said that Dionysius "should be followed more than others," and made twelve hundred references to him in three works alone (*Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:346). See also E. Wéber, "L'interprétation par Albert le Grand de la Théologie Mystique de Denys le Ps.-Aréopagite," in *Albertus Magnus—Doctor Universalis*, ed. G. Meyer and A. Zimmermann (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald, 1980), pp. 409–39, and "Eléments néoplatoniciens en théologie mystique au xiii^{ème} siècle," in *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1986), pp. 196–217; Francis J. Catania, "'Knowable' and 'Nameable' in Albert the Great's Commentary on the Divine Names," in *Albert the Great: Commemorative Essays*, ed. Francis J. Kovach and Robert W. Shahan, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), pp. 97–128; and U. Gamba, "Commenti Latini al *De Mystica Theologia* del Pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita Fino al Grossetesta," *Aevum* 16 (1942): 251–57.

48. From Tugwell's translation, pp. 141, 156, 164, and 168; for more on this theme, see pp. 135, 144, 146–48, 160, and 185. The first quotation illustrates Albert's scholastic methodology in subdividing the Dionysian text, even beyond its original structure.

49. Dondaine found no trace of influence of Gallus's *Extractio* on Albert (p. 119, n. 38). Albert seemed unaware of Gallus's distinction, which quickly became standard, between Sarracenus's translation as *Nova* and Eriugena's as *Vetus*. Since Albert mostly consulted Sarracenus, he calls Eriugena's version the "other" translation (pp. 148, 179, and 187).

50. Tugwell, pp. 72 and 150; see the references to emotions on p. 157 and to rapture on p. 162. Not that Albert neglected the affective side of the Christian life generally; the point here is his specific exegesis of *The Mystical Theology*.

51. Tugwell, p. 172; see Tugwell's discussion on p. 63, including a quotation from Albert: if we cannot know God by the intellect, "it is clear that we cannot know him in any other way."

52. Tugwell, p. 198. See Tugwell's further summaries of Albert's understanding of Dionysius: "the intellectual nature of beatitude" (p. 61), "the essentially cognitive nature of faith" (p. 71), "our union with God is fundamentally intellectual" (p. 73), and "the essential constituent of eternal life is knowledge" (p. 124).

53. Tugwell, pp. 180–82.

54. This material, including the background of Thierry of Chartres, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Alan of Lille, is covered in Tugwell's essay "Albert and the Dionysian Tradition," pp. 39–95, with notes 1–261. He concludes that Albert was faithful to Dionysius and "surprisingly Eriugenist" (pp. 84 and 91).

55. *Summa theologiae* Ia, q. 13, art. 12, ad 3 (Blackfriars ed., trans. Gilby) 1:95; see also Ia, q. 13, art. 3. This apophatic sentiment is very common in Thomas, with or without reference to Dionysius. The major discussion and bibliography of Thomas is in part IV. J. Turbessi remarks that *The Mystical Theology* "had little influence on Thomist thought or on Thomist spiritual doctrine generally" (*Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 3:355. See also Tugwell).

56. The Dionysian questions can be illuminating, however, as already seen in the possible influence of the Areopagite's Neoplatonic procession and return, by way of Thomas's *exitus* and *reditus*, on Eckhart's "overflow" (trinitarian *bullitio* and creative *ebullitio*) and the "breakthrough" of the soul to God. See *Essential Eckhart*, pp. 30ff. The title *Essential Eckhart* follows the precedent of *Teacher and Preacher*. See also Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (Munich: Beck, 1985), pp. 55–59.

57. *Essential Eckhart*, p. 205. McGinn calls this "the absolute centrality of apophaticism in the Meister's thought" (p. 30) and also cites pp. 192, 196, and 206ff. See also his *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, p. 70, and his fur-

ther references in "The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart," *Journal of Religion* 61 (1981): 10, n. 47.

58. *Teacher and Preacher*, p. 118; cf. *Essential Eckhart*, pp. 243 and 280.

59. *Teacher and Preacher*, p. 226.

60. Eckhart's German sermon 19 "Sta in porta" on Jeremiah 7:2 (not in *Essential Eckhart* or *Teacher and Preacher*): "diu bekantnisse ist bezzer dan diu minne. Aber zwei sint bezzer dan ein, wan diu bekantnisse treget die minne in ir . . . diu minne waere blint, enwaere bekantnisse niht," *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen Werke*, ed. J. Quint (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1958), 1:314–15. For comparisons and contrasts, see Wayne Teasdale, "Dionysian and Eckhartian Mysticism," *Cistercian Studies* 21 (1986): 228–58.

61. Before leaving the period of Eckhart and *The Cloud*, one more author of that era should also be mentioned. Rudolph of Biberach was Eckhart's contemporary in Strasbourg, but he paralleled *The Cloud* in continuing the affective Dionysian line of Thomas Gallus and Bonaventure, to whom Rudolph's *De septem itineribus* was often mistakenly ascribed. *De septem itineribus aeternitatis*, ed. Margot Schmidt (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1985); Margot Schmidt, "Rudolphe de Biberach," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 13:846–50.

The *Theologia Germanica* (ed. Bengt Hoffman [New York: Paulist Press, 1980]) introduces one of the interesting questions of Dionysian influence and reaction outside the medieval boundaries of this essay. It held an early fascination for Martin Luther, who was familiar with Dionysius in general and advised shunning *The Mystical Theology* "like the plague" (see the Paulist edition's introductory article by Karlfried Froehlich, p. 44).

62. A. Combes, *La théologie mystique de Gerson* (Rome: Desclée, 1963), p. 85. Regarding Gerson's use of Albert to interpret Denys, see also Combes's summary comments in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:371, and his *Jean Gerson commentateur dionysien* (Paris: Vrin, 1940), pp. 445ff. and 824: "Amorosa unio mentis cum Deo que fit per theologiam mysticam congrue transformatio nominatur. Sic divinus Dionysius, sic et sancti patres elevati locuti sunt." See also the Gerson texts assembled by Steven E. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), pp. 50ff.

63. Nicholas of Cusa's admiration for and use of Dionysius reaches a peak in chap. 14 of *De non aliud*, where he calls the Areopagite "theologorum maximus" and provides excerpts from the entire corpus. See Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), especially pp. 82–83; and M. L. Führer, "Purgation, Illumination, and Perfection in Nicholas of Cusa," *Downside Review* 98 (1980): 169–89. For more on Cusanus and Dionysius, see Ludwig Baur, *Cusanus-Texte*, vol. 3, *Marginalien*, pt. 1, *Nicolaus Cusanus und Pseudo-Dionysius im Lichte der Zitate und Randbemerkungen des Cusanus* (Heidelberg: Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1941). On the fifteenth-century controversy over

whether or what to add to Dionysian unknowing, see E. Vansteenbergh, *Autour de la docte ignorance: Une controverse sur la théologie mystique au XV^e siècle*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, vol. 14 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1915).

On Dionysius, the Carthusian namesake, see Anselm Stoelen, "Denys the Carthusian," in *Spirituality through the Centuries*, ed. James Walsh, S.J. (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1965), pp. 220–32; and Raymond Macken, *Denys the Carthusian*, Analecta Cartusiana, vol. 118 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984).

64. Apparently the only medieval woman mystic with a substantial interest in Dionysius was Angela di Foligno; see Paul Lachance, O.F.M., *The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela di Foligno According to the Memorial of Frater A.*, Studia Antoniana, vol. 29 (Rome: Pontificum Athenaeum Antonianum, 1984). It is also possible that Julian of Norwich knew of the Dionysian angelology, as seen in her *Showings*, chap. 80, trans. Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and James Walsh, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 336, at least according to the slender hypothesis offered by Andrew Louth, "The Influence of Denys the Areopagite on Eastern and Western Spirituality in the Fourteenth Century," *Sobornost* 4 (1982): 190–91. As for Damaris, John of Scythopolis's Prologue to the *Scholia* (PG 4:16C) apparently assumes a slim patristic tradition (e.g., Ambrose and Chrysostom) that she was the wife of Dionysius.

AFTERWORD

On the Question of Influence in the Middle Ages

The sections on the questions of medieval influence in the five parts of this commentary have touched upon exceedingly diverse topics—from hierarchy and allegory through the choirs of angels and the aesthetics of Gothic architecture to liturgical hermeneutics, philosophical theology, and medieval mysticism. In adding to my own commentary these five sketches about the medieval uses of the Areopagite's works, my primary intention has been simply to introduce some of the material and to assemble bibliography on those points. Perhaps it is rash to venture into dialogue with experts in so many historical and theological specialities, scholars who can and should point out errors or misleading generalizations. Nevertheless, the Dionysian corpus and its legacy simply transcend modern specializations, and its readers must do so as well if they wish to appreciate its integrated character and multifaceted influence. The encyclopedic interests of medieval thinkers like Albert the Great point the way. "Study everything," said Hugh of Saint-Victor—and everything to do with the Dionysian corpus is worth studying.

In addition to tracing the varying uses of the individual treatises on specific topics, as attempted above, the story of the Dionysian legacy in the Middle Ages could also be told as a unified narrative about the corpus as a whole, at least until the thirteenth century. Since few Western readers were able or courageous enough to examine Dionysius in the original Greek, most of them sought the help of the translations, paraphrases, comments, and commentaries that gradually constituted the Latin Dionysian corpus. At each stage a stratum of interpretation was added, which then influenced the next layer. Thus the influence of the medieval Dionysius cannot be appreciated from the Greek text and a modern translation, but only from these Latin translations and aids. Since many of them are not yet carefully edited or widely available, the full picture of Dionysian influence requires much more work.

The main outlines of a thorough and unified narrative would cover several well-known clusters of "Dionysians," whose interpretations were often known to each other and certainly to their intellectual heirs. First are the authors of the early *Scholia*, principally John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor (among others). Second are the ninth-century Carolingian translators and commentators Hilduin, Eriugena, and Anastasius, the papal librarian. Third are the twelfth-century Parisians Suger, Hugh, and John Sarracenus. Fourth are the thirteenth-century correspondents Thomas Gallus and Robert Grosseteste, as well as Albert the Great. At this point, the narrative divides into two distinct ways of interpreting the Dionysian ascent to God—one affective and the other intellectual—as seen in the thirteenth century in Bonaventure and Albert the Great, respectively, and in the fourteenth century in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Meister Eckhart. From this perspective the later interpreters such as Ruysbroeck, Gerson, Cusanus, and Dionysius the Carthusian are variations or combinations of the same two schools. Analyzing any one of these contributors to the Dionysian legacy would constitute a formidable challenge. To cover them all in a monograph on the medieval Dionysius would seem beyond the grasp of any one scholar. Even doing justice to the first and second layer, the *Scholia* and the Carolingians, may be too ambitious, but is my own goal nonetheless, starting with work well under way on the *Scholia*.

For the moment, the methodological questions about the medieval uses of Dionysius can be summed up in two comments, one modern and one medieval. The first is from Gervais Dumeige on Richard of Saint-Victor: "[He] knew Denys, but he used him more often as an illustration rather than the inspiration of his own thought."¹ The same could be said of many medieval authors, for they were often eager to invoke such an ancient authority even when he was not the original source for their argument. In fact, in using the Dionysian corpus this way they often misused it as well. In this they illustrated the second, medieval comment, the one attributed to Alan of Lille, and quoted above at the end of part I: "Authority has a wax nose; it can be bent in diverse directions."²

Of all the texts considered to be Christian authorities during the Middle Ages, none but the Bible claimed greater antiquity than the Dionysian writings and few if any had their original ideas bent in more directions. Most of what has been said here about the medieval use of Dionysius can be summarized with the imagery of this author's flexible nose. First, the Areopagite's original local hierarchy of clergy and laity was stretched into a universal pyramid of ultimate authority. Second, the author's vague comment about scriptural symbols was bent into a hoary warrant for excluding biblical allegory from theological argumentation. Third, the format of a liturgical commentary was stretched and bent so as to multiply allegories and typologies. Fourth, Neoplatonism's timeless procession and return was given a chronological and eschatological bent and transformed into Christianity's salvation history of creation, incarnation, and

final salvation. Fifth, the ascent to unknowing was considered as preparatory to a final union of love as medieval Dionysians added Christ and love to *The Mystical Theology*. Furthermore, even though the three ways were originally all phases or levels of thought in Dionysius, they were later shaped into moral purification, intellectual illumination, and a unitive perfection through love, although this material was not among the subjects chosen for direct presentation in this commentary. The venerable Dionysian authority was repeatedly stretched and bent, sometimes almost unrecognizably, to serve the needs of the interpreter. The wax nose of the authoritative Areopagite proved flexible indeed.

Of all the Dionysian themes in the Middle Ages, those associated with *The Celestial Hierarchy* were distorted the least. The objectivity of arithmetic preserved the angelic hierarchy as a triple triad, and the anagogical ascent through visible beauty was preserved, seemingly forever, in the uplifting lines of Gothic architecture. This is fitting, for of all the Dionysian treatises *The Celestial Hierarchy* received the most medieval attention. John Scotus Eriugena, Hugh of Saint-Victor, Suger of Saint-Denis, John Sarracenus, Robert Grosseteste, and Jean Gerson all singled it out for special attention. The explanation for this emphasis goes beyond the medieval interest in angels, and beyond the slim possibility that Eriugena, Hugh, and the others intended to go on from this work as the first treatise in their manuscripts to write commentaries on the others as well, as Albert and others did. *The Celestial Hierarchy* may also have attracted so much medieval attention because its opening chapters addressed the general principles of hierarchy and symbolism—both of perennial medieval interest. Whatever the reasons for its medieval popularity, *The Celestial Hierarchy* is the one place where the Dionysian authority had its nose bent out of shape the least.

Left to other contexts is the doctrinal question of whether Dionysius was ultimately an orthodox Christian author or decisively “contaminated” by Neoplatonism? The answer hinges on the definition of orthodoxy, and especially the overall issue of the relation of Christianity and Neoplatonism. How I, for example, as a theologian within the tradition of the Lutheran Reformation, would evaluate the Areopagite’s Christianity may prove quite irrelevant to other readers. Nevertheless, there is a lesson here from the historical record. From one perspective, the history of the medieval interpretation of Dionysius was the history of emphasizing and even adding several distinctively Christian themes. From the *Scholia* and Eriugena through Gallus and Gerson, even devoted disciples felt the need to make explicit some specifically Christian themes that were only implicit at best in the corpus itself. Neoplatonism’s timeless procession and return was interpreted as Christian salvation history (creation, incarnation, and eschaton) not by Dionysius himself but first by Eriugena. The Dionysian ascent to union with God was overwhelmingly cognitive, including

the technique of negation, until later writers such as Bonaventure and the author of *The Cloud* read into it not only the cardinal Christian concepts of grace, faith, and especially love, but also Christ himself. The medieval authors naturally assumed all this Christian orthodoxy in the Areopagite, because to them he simply *was* one of the very earliest Christian authors. Most modern readers, however, dating the treatises much later, challenge this assumption. Some of them criticize the Areopagite's Christian credentials, not so much for what he said, but rather for what he slighted or omitted altogether.

In any case, the dialogue about the texts themselves continues, and the reader of this commentary is encouraged to join it.³ If anyone has also glimpsed something of their importance in the history of Christian thought, consider this too as an invitation to join the attempt at a more detailed and nuanced account.

NOTES

1. *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:328; see part V, n. 22.

2. *PL* 210:333; see part I, n. 39.

3. Besides Louth, *Denys*, cited often in this commentary, there is the on-going debate between two Orthodox scholars, Kenneth Paul Wesche and Alexander Golitsin, over the orthodoxy of Dionysius (part III, n. 28). Two venerable and formidable voices both sympathetic to Dionysian orthodoxy have recently been translated into English: Louis Bouyer (part V, n. 1) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (part II, n. 18).

APPENDIX

Overview of the Dionysian Writings

Although the chapter titles in the Dionysian corpus are editorial rather than original with the author, they are usually accurate indicators of the contents of the treatises. When listed in full, they can provide a convenient overview of each work and the corpus as a whole. When supplemented by a listing of the section headings relating to medieval influence, such data offers a fuller guide to the content of this book.

PART I *The Letters* 3

- Letter* 1. To the monk Gaius. 7
- Letter* 2. To the same monk Gaius. 8
- Letter* 3. To the same Gaius. 9
- Letter* 4. To the same monk Gaius. 9
- Letter* 5. To Dorotheus, the deacon. 11
- Letter* 6. To the priest Sosipater. 11
- Letter* 7. To Polycarp, a hierarch. 12
- Letter* 8. To the monk Demophilus. Concerning one's proper work,
and kindness. 18
- Letter* 9. To Titus the hierarch. Asking by letter, what is the house
of wisdom, what is the mixing bowl, and what are its foods and
drinks. 24
- Letter* 10. To John the theologian, apostle and evangelist, an exile on
the island of Patmos. 27

- Influence in the Middle Ages 29
- Hierarchy in the Church 30
- Biblical Allegory in Theological Argumentation 36

PART II *The Celestial Hierarchy* 47

- Chapter 1. Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder:
Even though in various ways every divine enlightenment proceeds, out

of its goodness, toward those provided for, it not only remains simple in itself but also unifies those it enlightens.	49
Chapter 2. That divine and heavenly things are appropriately revealed even through dissimilar symbols.	53
Chapter 3. What a hierarchy is and what its benefit is.	57
Chapter 4. What the designation "angel" signifies.	60
Chapter 5. Why the heavenly beings are all called "angel" in common.	61
Chapter 6. What is the first rank of the heavenly beings, what is the middle, and what is the last?	62
Chapter 7. Concerning the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones, and theirs, the first hierarchy.	63
Chapter 8. Concerning the dominions, powers, and authorities, and theirs, the middle hierarchy.	65
Chapter 9. Concerning the principalities, archangels, and angels, and theirs, the final hierarchy.	66
Chapter 10. Repetition and Conclusion regarding the angels' coordination.	68
Chapter 11. Why all heavenly beings are called "heavenly powers" in common.	68
Chapter 12. Why human hierarchs are called "angels."	69
Chapter 13. Why the prophet Isaiah is said to have been purified by the seraphim.	70
Chapter 14. What the traditional number of angels signifies.	71
Chapter 15. What are the formed images of the angelic powers? the fiery property, the human likeness, the eyes, etcetera.	72
Influence in the Middle Ages	73
Angelology	74
Aesthetics	77

PART III *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 91

Chapter 1. Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder: What is the tradition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and what is its purpose?	91
Chapter 2. The rite of the illumination.	96
Chapter 3. The rite of the synaxis.	99
Chapter 4. The rite of the ointment, and what is perfected by it.	104
Chapter 5. Concerning the clerical orders, powers, activities, and consecrations.	107
Chapter 6. Concerning the orders of those being initiated.	111
Chapter 7. The rite for the dead.	114
The Medieval Genre of Liturgical Commentaries	118
Introduction	118
The Areopagite's Predecessors	118
The Byzantine East	121
The Medieval West	124

PART IV *The Divine Names* 133

Chapter 1. Dionysius the Elder to Timothy the Fellow-Elder: What the goal of this discourse is, and the tradition regarding the divine names.	133
Chapter 2. Concerning the unified and differentiated Word of God, and what the divine unity and differentiation is.	137
Chapter 3. The power of prayer; concerning the blessed Hierotheus, piety, and our writings on theology.	145
Chapter 4. Concerning "good," "light," "beautiful," "love," "ecstasy," and "zeal"; and that evil is neither a being, nor from a being, nor in beings.	148
Chapter 5. Concerning "Being," and also concerning paradigms.	153
Chapter 6. Concerning "Life."	155
Chapter 7. Concerning "Wisdom," "Mind," "Word," "Truth," "Faith."	155
Chapter 8. Concerning "Power," "Righteousness," "Salvation," "Redemption"; and also inequality.	158
Chapter 9. Concerning greatness and smallness, sameness and difference, similarity and dissimilarity, rest, motion, equality.	159
Chapter 10. Concerning "Omnipotent," "Ancient of Days," and also concerning eternity and time.	160
Chapter 11. Concerning "peace," and what is intended by "being-itself," "life-itself," "power-itself," and things said in this vein.	160
Chapter 12. Concerning "Holy of Holies," "King of Kings," "Lord of Lords," "God of Gods."	161
Chapter 13. Concerning "Perfect" and "One."	162
The Medieval Influence of <i>The Divine Names</i>	167
Introduction	167
Systematic Theology as Procession and Return	169

PART V *The Mystical Theology* 183

Chapter 1. What is the divine darkness?	184
Chapter 2. How one should be united, and attribute praises, to the Cause of all things who is beyond all things.	193
Chapter 3. What are the affirmative theologies and what are negative?	194
Chapter 4. That the supreme Cause of every perceptible thing is not itself perceptible.	205
Chapter 5. That the supreme Cause of every conceptual thing is not itself conceptual.	210
Influence in the Middle Ages	214
Introduction and Background	214
The Victorines	216
Bonaventure and <i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i>	219
From Albert to Eckhart	222
Conclusion	224

This page intentionally left blank

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The following bibliographies of primary and secondary sources also function as indexes to the notes that contain references to these works. At the end of each bibliographical entry, the part number and note number in brackets indicate where that work is mentioned. For example, for references to Alan of Lille's *De fide catholica*, the bracketed data [I, n. 39; Afterword, n. 2] mean that this work is cited in part I, n. 39 and in the Afterword, n. 2.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Alan of Lille. *De fide catholica*. PL 210. [I, n. 39; Afterword, n. 2]
- Albert and Thomas: *Selected Writings*. Edited by Simon Tugwell. New York: Paulist Press, 1988. [V, nn. 15, 27, 47, 48, 50–55]
- Amalar. *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*. Edited by J. M. Hanssens. *Studi e Testi*, vols. 138–40. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948–50. [III, nn. 38, 39]
- Ambrose. *De mysteriis*. Edited by B. Botte. *Sources Chrétiennes*, vol. 25b. Paris: Cerf, 1961. [III, n. 18]
- . *De sacramentis*. Edited by B. Botte. *Sources Chrétiennes*, vol. 25b. Paris: Cerf, 1961. [III, n. 18]
- . *On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries*. Translated by T. Thompson and edited with an introduction and notes by J. R. Srawley. London: SPCK, 1950. [III, n. 18]
- Augustine. *De ordine*. Edited by Robert P. Russell. New York: Cosmopolitan Science & Art Service Co., 1942. [V, n. 15]
- Boethius. *Theological Tractates*. Edited and translated by H. J. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester. *Loeb Classical Library*, vol. 74. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973. [IV, n. 20]

- Bonaventure. *Collatio XXII in Hexameron*, in *Opera omnia*. Quaracchi, 5. English translation by José de Vinck. *Collations on the Six Days*, in *The Works of Bonaventure*, vol. 5. Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1970. [I, n. 28; IV, n. 32; V, n. 32]
- . *De reductione artium ad theologum*. In *Opera omnia*. Quaracchi, 5, 319–21. [V, n. 32]
- . *De triplici via*. In *Opera omnia*. Quaracchi, 8. [V, n. 34]
- . *Commentaria in quator libros Sententiarum*. In *Opera Omnia*. Quaracchi 1–4. [I, n. 28; V, nn. 32, 35]
- . *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*. Translated by Ewert Cousins. New York: Paulist Press, 1978. [IV, n. 11; V, nn. 33, 36, 37]
- Cabasilas, Nicolas. *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*. Translated by J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty. London: SPCK, 1966. [III, n. 35]
- The Cloud of Unknowing*. Translated by James Walsh, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1981. [V, nn. 12, 25–27, 29, 44–45]
- . *The Pursuit of Wisdom and Other Works by the Author of the Cloud of Unknowing*. Translated by James Walsh, S.J. New York: Paulist Press, 1988. [V, nn. 6, 24, 26, 38–42]
- Cyril of Jerusalem. *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis and the Five Mystagogical Catecheses*. Edited by F. L. Cross. London: SPCK, 1951; rep., Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977. [III, n. 19]
- Dante. *Convivio*. London: Dent, 1940. [II, n. 9]
- . *Paradiso*. Translated by John Ciardi. New York: Norton, 1977. [II, n. 9]
- Durandus, William. *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*. Translated with an introductory essay and notes by John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb. New York: Scribner, 1893. [III, n. 41]
- Eckhart. *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen Werke*. Edited by J. Quint. Vol. 1. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1958. [V, n. 60]
- . *Meister Eckhart: Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*. Edited by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and Bernard McGinn. New York: Paulist Press, 1981. [IV, n. 33; V, nn. 56–58]
- . *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*. Edited by Bernard McGinn. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. [II, n. 16; IV, nn. 8, 15; V, nn. 56–59]
- Ephraem Syrus. "Hymn 31 on the Faith." In *The Luminous Eye*, edited by Sebastian Brock, 43–48. Rome: C.I.I.S., 1985. [IV, n. 8]
- Gallus, Thomas. *Extract*. In *Dionysii Cartusiani opera omnia*. [V, n. 24]
- . *Thomas Gallus: Grand commentaire sur la Théologie Mystique*. Edited by G. Théry. Paris: Haloua, 1934. [V, n. 24]
- Gerson, Jean. *De consolatione theologiae*. In *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 9. Brussels: Desclée, 1973. [I, n. 32]
- Giles of Rome. *Giles of Rome on Ecclesiastical Power: The "De ecclesiastica potestate" of Aegidius Romanus*. Translated by R. W. Dyson. Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Dover, New Hampshire: Boydell Press, 1986. [I, n. 34]

- . *On Ecclesiastical Power*, translated by Arthur P. Monahan. Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen, 1990. [I, n. 34]
- Gregory the Great. *In evangelia homeliae*. PL 76. [II, n. 10]
- Gregory of Nyssa. *The Life of Moses*. Edited by A. J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson. New York: Paulist Press, 1978. [V, nn. 8, 33]
- Honorius. *Clavis physicae*. Edited by Paolo Lucentini. Temi e Testi, vol. 21. Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1974. [V, n. 16]
- Hugh of Saint-Victor. *Commentariorum in Hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagitae*. PL 175. [I, n. 25; II, n. 14; V, n. 21]
- . *De sacramentis*. PL 176:183ff. [V, n. 21]
- Iamblichus. *Mystères d'Egypte*. Edited by E. des Places. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966. [III, nn. 25–26]
- Isidore of Seville. *Etymologiae*. Edited by W. M. Lindsay. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911. [II, n. 12]
- . *Sententiarum libri tres*. PL 83. [II, n. 12]
- John Climacus. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Translated by Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell. New York: Paulist Press, 1982. [V, n. 33]
- John of Damascus. *The Orthodox Faith*. Translated by Frederic H. Chase, Jr. New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958. [II, n. 10; IV, n. 21; V, n. 11]
- John of Paris. *On Royal and Papal Power*. Translated by Arthur P. Monahan. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1974. [I, nn. 35, 37]
- . *On Royal and Papal Power*. Translated by J. A. Watt. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971. [I, nn. 35, 37]
- John of Scythopolis. See *Scholia*.
- John Scotus Eriugena. *De predestinatione liber*. PL 122. [V, n. 12]
- . *Expositiones in Ierarchiam coelestem*. Edited by Jeanne Barbet. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. 31. Tournhout: Brepols, 1975. [II, n. 22]
- . *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)*. Translated by I. P. Sheldon-Williams and revised by John J. O'Meara. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987. [I, n. 6; II, nn. 21, 23–24; IV, nn. 22–24; V, nn. 13–15]
- Maximus the Confessor. *The Church, the Liturgy and the Soul of Man*. Translated by Dom Julian Stead. Still River, Mass.: St. Bede's Publications, 1982. [III, n. 29]
- . *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*. Introduction by Jaroslav Pelikan. Translation and notes by George C. Berthold. New York: Paulist Press, 1985. Includes *The Church's Mystagogy*. [I, n. 11; III, nn. 29, 31–32]
- Narsai. *The Liturgical Homilies*. Translated with an introduction by R. H. Connolly. Texts and Studies, vol. 8, n. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909. [III, n. 23]
- Nicetas Stethatos. *Nicétas Stéthatos, Opuscles et Lettres*. Edited and translated by J. Darrouzès. Sources chrétiennes, vol. 81. Paris: Cerf, 1961. [I, n. 24]
- Peter Lombard. *Sentences*. Florence: Ad Claras Aquas, 1916. Also in PL 192. [II, n. 15]
- Philo. *On the Life of Moses*. In Philo VI, Loeb Classical Library. Edited by F. H. Colson, 276–595. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935. [V, n. 8]

- Photius. *The Library of Photius*, vol. 1. Translated by J. H. Freese. London: SPCK, 1920. Also in PG 103. [I, n. 12]
- Plato. *Cratylus*, vol. 1. In *Opera*. 5 vols. Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903–10. [IV, n. 4]
- . *Republic*. vol. 4. In *Opera*. 5 vols. Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903–10. [V, n. 5]
- . *Symposium*. vol. 2. In *Opera*. 5 vols. Edited by John Burnet. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903–10. [IV, n. 4]
- Plotinus. *Enneades*. 3 vols. Edited by P. Henry and H. R. Schwyzer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964–82. [V, nn. 3, 5]
- . *The Essential Plotinus*. Edited by Elmer O'Brien. New York: New American Library, 1964. [II, n. 3]
- Proclus. *The Elements of Theology*, 2d ed. Edited by E. R. Dodds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963. [II, nn. 3–4]
- Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Celestial Hierarchy*. Translation by The Shrine of Wisdom. Surrey: Fintrey, 1949. [II, n. 1]
- . *The Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies of Dionysius the Areopagite*. Translated by John Parker. London, 1894; repr. Merrick, N.Y.: Richmond Pub., 1976. [II, n. 1]
- . *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translated by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Preface by René Roques. Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. [I, nn. 2, 20; II, n. 11; III, n. 14; IV, nn. 3, 11, 15]
- . *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Edited by Beate Suchla, Gunter Heil, and A. M. Ritter. 2 vols. Patristische Texte und Studien, vols. 33 and 36. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990–91. [I, n. 3]
- . *Die Namen Gottes*. Translated by Beate Regina Suchla. Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur, vol. 26. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988. [I, n. 3]
- . *Dionysiaca: Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traditions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopage*. Edited by Philippe Chevalier. 2 vols. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937–50. [I, nn. 22, 30; V, nn. 24, 27–28]
- . *The Divine Names*. Translated by John D. Jones. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980. [IV, n. 1]
- . *The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology*. Translated by C. E. Rolt. London: SPCK, 1940. [IV, n. 1]
- . *La hiérarchie céleste*. Edited by Gunther Heil, in collaboration with Maurice de Gandillac and René Roques. Sources Chrétiennes, vols. 58 and 58b. Paris: Cerf, 1958 and 1970. [I, n. 3; II, nn. 1–2, 11]
- . *Oeuvres complètes du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*. Edited by Maurice de Gandillac. Paris: Aubier, 1943. [I, n. 3]
- . *Tutte le opere*. Edited by Piero Scazzoso and Enzo Bellini. Milan: Rusconi, 1981. [I, n. 3; II, n. 2]
- . *Über die himmlische Hierarchie, über die kirchliche Hierarchie*. Translated by Gunther Heil, in collaboration with A. M. Ritter and Beate Suchla. Bibliothek

- der Griechischen Literatur, vol. 22. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986. [I, nn. 3, 21; II, n. 2; III, n. 1]
- Pseudo-Eriugena. *Gloss. PL* 122. [V, nn. 28–29, 42]
- Pseudo-Germanus. "An Exposition of the Mass." In *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750: The Conversion of Western Europe*, 2d ed. Edited by J. N. Hillgarth. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986. Pp. 186–92. [III, n. 37]
- Ruysbroeck, Jan van. *Spiritual Espousals: L'ornement des noces spirituelles*, with an introduction by Maurice Maeterlinck. Brussels: P. Lacomblez, 1891 and 1900. [I, n. 1]
- Richard of Saint-Victor. *Selected Writings on Contemplation*. Edited by Claire Kirchner. New York: Harper, 1957. [V, n. 22]
- . *The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979. [V, n. 22]
- Scholia*. Edited by B. Corderius. *PG* 4. Comments on the Dionysian writings by John of Scythopolis, Maximus the Confessor, and others. [I, nn. 5, 9–10, 21; II, n. 8; III, n. 6; V, nn. 3, 10]
- Suger, Abbot. *On the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures*. Edited, translated, and annotated by Erwin Panofsky. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946. [II, nn. 27–28, 33]
- Theodore of Mopsuestia. *On the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments*. Edited by A. Mingana. Woodbrooke Studies, vol. 6. Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1933. [III, nn. 20–22]
- Theodoret of Cyr. *Epitome of Divine Teachings*. In *Compendium of Heretical Fables*. In *PG* 83:440. [IV, n. 21]
- Theologia Germanica*. Edited by Bengt Hoffman. New York: Paulist Press, 1980. [V, n. 61]
- Thomas Aquinas. *De substantiis separatis*. Edited by F. J. Lescoc. West Hartford, Conn.: Saint Joseph College, 1962. [II, n. 16]
- . *De veritate*. Translated by Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954. [IV, n. 11]
- . *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, 4th rev. ed. Translated by Armand Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986. [IV, n. 19]
- . *Expositio super librum Boethii de trinitate*. Edited by Bruno Decker. Leiden: Brill, 1955 and 1959. [IV, n. 19]
- . *Faith, Reason and Theology*. Translated by Armand Maurer. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987. [IV, n. 19]
- . *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*. Edited by Ceslai Pera. Turin: Marietti, 1950. [I, n. 6; IV, n. 14]
- . *Opera omnia ad fidem optimarum editionum accurate recognita*, vol. 15. Parma: Tipis P. Fiaccadori, 1864. [IV, nn. 14, 18]
- . *Quodlibetal Questions 1 and 2*. Translated by Sandra Edwards. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983. [II, n. 16]
- . *Retrahentes*, Parma 15. [I, n. 37]
- . *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. In *Opera omnia* (Parma) 6–8. [IV, n. 26]
- . *Summa contra gentiles*. Rome: Leonine Commission, 1930. [IV, n. 27]

- . *Summa theologiae*. Translated by Thomas Gilby. Vol. 1. London: Blackfriars, 1963. [II, n. 16; IV, n. 13; V, n. 55]
- . *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*. Edited by M. C. D'Arcy. London: Dent, 1933. [IV, n. 14]

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Allard, Guy-H. "La structure littéraire de la composition du *De diuisione naturae*." In *The Mind of Eriugena*, ed. John J. O'Meara and Ludwig Bieler. Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973. Pp. 147–57. [IV, n. 24]
- . ed. *Ioannis Scoti Eriugenae Periphyseon indices generales*. Paris: Vrin, 1983. [V, n. 14]
- . ed. *Jean Scot écrivain*. Montreal: Bellarmin, 1986. [II, n. 20]
- Anderson, William. *The Rise of the Gothic*. Salem, N.H.: Salem House, 1985. [II, n. 29]
- Armstrong, A. H. *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. [II, n. 3]
- . ed. *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 15. New York: Crossroad, 1986. [II, n. 3; V, n. 9]
- Auxentios, Hieromonk, and James Thornton. "Three Byzantine Commentaries on the Divine Liturgy: A Comparative Treatment." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987): 285–308. [III, n. 28]
- Bader, Günter. "Gott nennen: Von Götternamen zu göttlichen Namen: Zur Vorgeschichte der Lehre von den göttlichen Eigenschaften." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 86 (1989): 306–54. [IV, n. 8]
- Bähr, Ingeborg. *Saint Denis und seine Vita im Spiegel der Bildüberlieferung der französischen Kunst des Mittelalters*. Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1984. [I, n. 13]
- Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. Vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, translated by Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil. San Francisco: Ignatius; New York: Crossroad, 1984. [II, n. 18]
- Bareille, G. "Anges." In *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1903–. [II, n. 11]
- Baur, Ludwig. *Cusanus-Texte*. Vol. 3, *Marginalien*, pt. 1. *Nicolaus Cusanus und Pseudo-Dionysius im Lichte der Zitate und Randbemerkungen des Cusanus*. Heidelberg: Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1941. [V, n. 63]
- Bebis, George S. "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Dionysios the Areopagite: A Liturgical Interpretation." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 19 (1974): 159–75. [III, nn. 1, 28]

- Beggiani, Seely J. *Early Syriac Theology with Special Reference to the Maronite Tradition*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983. [III, n. 1]
- Beierwaltes, Werner. "The Love of Beauty and the Love of God." In *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, edited by A. H. Armstrong, 292–313. New York: Crossroad, 1986. [II, n. 18; V, n. 9]
- . " 'Negati affirmatio': Welt als Metapher. Zur Grundlegung einer mittelalterlichen Aesthetik." In *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*, edited by R. Roques, pp. 263–75. Paris: Editions de CNRS, 1977. [II, n. 18]
- . "Negati Affirmatio or the World as Metaphor: A Foundation for Medieval Aesthetics from the Writings of John Scotus Eriugena." *Dionysius* 1 (1977): 127–59. [II, nn. 18, 24]
- . ed. *Eriugena: Studien zu seinem Quellen*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1980. [II, n. 20]
- . ed. *Eriugena Redivivus*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1987. [II, nn. 20, 26]
- Bemrose, Stephen. *Dante's Angelic Intelligences*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1983. [II, n. 9]
- Bernard, Charles André, S.J. "La doctrine mystique de Denys l'Aréopagite." *Gregorianum* 68 (1987): 523–66. [V, n. 1]
- Berschlin, Walter. *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages: From Jerome to Nicholas of Cusa*. Translated by Jerold C. Frakes. Revised and expanded edition. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988. [V, n. 13]
- Berthold, George C. "The Church as Mysterion: Diversity and Unity According to Maximus Confessor." *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 6 (1987): 20–29. [III, n. 32]
- Black, Deborah. "The Influence of the *De divinis nominibus* on the Epistemology of St. Thomas Aquinas." *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference* 10 (1985): 41–52. [IV, n. 14]
- Blum, Pamela Z. "The Lateral Portals of the Western Facade of the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis, Archaeological and Iconographical Considerations." In *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*, edited by Paula Gerson, 199–227. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986. [II, n. 30]
- Boissard, Edmond, O.S.B. "Saint Bernard et le Pseudo-Aréopagite." *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 26 (1959): 214–63. [II, n. 13; V, n. 17]
- Bonnefoy, Jean-Fr. "Une somme bonaventurienne de théologie mystique: Le 'De triplici via.'" *La France Franciscaine* 15 (1932): 227–64. [V, n. 34]
- . *Une somme bonaventurienne de théologie mystique: Le "De triplici via."* Paris: Vrin, 1934. [V, n. 34]
- Booth, Edward. *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. [IV, n. 30]
- . "To hypereinai of Pseudo-Dionysius and Schelling." *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989): 215–25. [IV, n. 33]
- Bornert, René. *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VII^e au XV^e siècle*. Paris: Institut Français d'Etudes Byzantines, 1966. [III, nn. 16, 24, 30, 35]

- . "Explication de la liturgie et interprétation de l'écriture chez Maxime le Confesseur." *Studia Patristica*, vol. 10, pt. 1. Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. 107. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970. [III, n. 32]
- Bougerol, Jacques G., O.F.M. "Bonaventure et le Pseudo-Dionysius." *Etudes Franciscaines* 28, supplement (1968): 33–123. [V, n. 31]
- . *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*. Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964. [V, n. 31]
- . *Saint Bonaventure: Etudes sur les sources de sa pensée*. Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989. [I, n. 27; V, n. 31]
- . "Saint Bonaventure et la Hiérarchie dionysienne." *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 36 (1969): 131–67. [I, n. 27; V, n. 31]
- Bouyer, Louis. *The Christian Mystery. From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*. Translated by Iltyd Trethowan. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990. [V, n. 1]
- Bowman, Leonard. "Bonaventure and the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins." In *S. Bonaventura 1274–1974*. Vol. 3, *Philosophica*, edited by Edward A. Synan et al., 553–70. Rome: Collegio S. Bonaventura, 1973. [IV, n. 34]
- Brock, Sebastian. "Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron." *Oriens Christianus* 63 (1979): 20–36. [III, n. 14]
- . ed. Ephraem the Syrian. "Hymn 31 on the Faith." In *The Luminous Eye*, 43–48. Rome: C.I.I.S., 1985. [IV, n. 8]
- Brown, D. Catherine. *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. [I, n. 32]
- Brown, Stephen F. "Neoplatonism." In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph R. Strayer. New York: Scribner, 1982–1989. [II, n. 3]
- Burghardt, Walter J. "The Testimony of the Patristic Age Concerning Mary's Death." *Marian Studies* 8 (1957): 58–99. [IV, n. 9]
- Burrows, Mark. *Jean Gerson and "De consolatione theologiae" (1418); The Consolation of a Biblical and Reforming Theology for a Disordered Age*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1991. [I, n. 32]
- Cabaniss, Allen. *Amalarius of Metz*. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954. [III, n. 38]
- Callus, D. "An Unknown Commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysian Letters." *Dominican Studies* 1 (1948): 58–73. [V, n. 24]
- Campbell, Thomas L. *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981. [III, nn. 1, 3–5, 7–11]
- Cappuyns, Dom Maieul. *Jean Scot Erigène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée*. Reprint, Brussels: Culture et Civilization, 1969. [II, n. 20; IV, n. 23]
- Carabine, Deirdre. "Apophysis East and West." *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 55 (1988): 5–29. [V, n. 1]
- Caramello, Peter. "Peter Caramello's Introduction to C. Pera's Edition of *The Divine Names* of St. Thomas." Translated by Kevin Doherty. In *The Thomist Reader: Texts and Studies*, edited by the Dominican Fathers of the Province of St. Joseph, 73–93. Washington, D.C.: Thomist Press, 1958. [IV, n. 14]
- Carroll, William J. "Participation and Infinity in Dionysius the Areopagite." *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 2 (1983): 54–64. [IV, n. 11]

- Caspar, Gerard. *Politics and Exegesis: Origen and the Two Swords*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. [I, n. 37]
- Catania, Francis J. "'Knowable' and 'Nameable' in Albert the Great's Commentary on the Divine Names." In *Albert the Great: Commemorative Essays*, edited by Francis J. Kovach and Robert W. Shahan, 97–128. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. [V, n. 47]
- Chenu, M.-D. *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris: Vrin, 1950. [IV, n. 29]
- . "Le plan de la *Somme théologique* de S. Thomas." *Revue Thomiste* 45 (1939): 93–107. [IV, n. 29]
- . "The Platonisms of the Twelfth Century," In M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*. Edited and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, 49–98. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968. [I, n. 25]
- . *The Scope of the Summa of St. Thomas*. Translated by Robert Edward Brennan, O.P., and A.-M. Landry. Washington, D.C.: Thomist Press, 1958. [IV, n. 29]
- . "The Symbolist Mentality." In M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*. Edited and translated by Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, 99–145. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968. [II, n. 18]
- . *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*. Translated by A.-M. Landry and D. Hughes. Chicago: Regnery, 1964. [IV, n. 29]
- Christe, Yves. "Influences et retentissement de l'oeuvre de Jean Scot sur l'art médiéval: Bilan et perspectives." In *Eriugena Redivivus*, edited by W. Beierwaltes, 142–61. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987. [II, n. 26]
- . "Quelques portails romans et l'idée de théophanie selon Jean Scot Erigène." In *The Mind of Eriugena*, edited by John J. O'Meara and Ludwig Bieler, 182–89. Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973. [II, n. 26]
- Combes, A. "Denys l'Areopagite: En Occident. Au 13^e siècle. Gerson." *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [V, n. 62]
- . *Jean Gerson commentateur dionysien*. Paris: Vrin, 1940. [V, n. 62]
- . *La théologie mystique de Gerson*. Rome: Desclée, 1963. [V, n. 62]
- Congar, Yves. "Aspects ecclésiologiques de la querelle entre mendiants et séculiers dans la seconde moitié du XIII^e siècle et le début du XIV^e siècle." *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire au Moyen Age* 28 (1961): 35–151. [I, n. 29]
- Corbin, Michel. "Négation et transcendance dans l'oeuvre de Denys." *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 69 (1985): 41–76. [V, n. 1]
- Corsini, Eugenio. *Il trattato 'De divinis nominibus' dello pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide*. Turin: Giappichelli, 1962. [IV, n. 5]
- Cousins, Ewert. "The Humanity and the Passion of Christ." In *Christian Spirituality*. Vol. 2, *High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by Jill Raitt, 375–91. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 17. New York: Crossroad, 1987. [V, n. 37]
- . "God as Dynamic in Bonaventure and Contemporary Thought." In *Thomas and Bonaventure: A Septicentenary Commemoration*, edited by George F. McLean, 136–48. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1974. [IV, n. 11]

- Crosby, Sumner McKnight. *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from Its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475-1151*. Edited and completed by Pamela Z. Blum. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987. [I, n. 13; II, n. 27]
- . Jane Hayward, Charles T. Little, and William D. Wixom. *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis in the Time of Abbot Suger (1122-1151)*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981. [II, n. 27]
- Crouse, R. D. "'Recurrens in te unum': The Pattern of St. Augustine's Confessions." *Studia Patristica* 14 (1976): 389–92. [IV, n. 17]
- Davis, Michael T. Review of *Saint-Denis, Noyon and the Early Gothic Choir: Methodological Considerations for the History of Early Gothic Architecture*, by Thomas E. Polk II. In *Speculum* 62 (1987): 173–75. [II, n. 31]
- Deneffe, August, S.J. "Geschichte des Wortes 'supernaturalis.'" *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 46 (1922): 337–60. [V, n. 14]
- Des Places, Edouard, S.J. "La théologie négative du Pseudo-Denys, ses antécédents platoniciens et son influence au seuil du moyen âge." In *Studia Patristica*, vol. 17. Oxford: Pergamon, 1987. [V, n. 9]
- Dettloff, Werner. "Himmlische und kirchliche Hierarchie bei Bonaventura." In *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*. Vol. 12, pt. 1, *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*, edited by A. Zimmermann, pp. 41–55. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979. [I, n. 27]
- Dondaine, H. F., O.P. *Le corpus dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIII^e Siècle*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1953. [V, nn. 24, 30, 32, 49]
- Dress, Walter. "Hierarchie, zur Bildung und ursprünglichen Bedeutung des Begriffs: Beobachtungen und Erwägungen." *Theologia Viatorum* 13 (1975-1976): 47–68. [I, n. 21]
- Duclo, Donald F. "Dialectic and Christology in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*." *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 99–117. [IV, n. 24]
- . "Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Eriugena, Nicholas of Cusa: An Approach to the Hermeneutic of the Divine Names," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1972): 260–78. [IV, n. 8]
- Dufeil, Michel-Marie. "Ierarchia: Un concept dans la polémique universitaire parisienne du XIII^e siècle." *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*. Vol. 12, pt. 1, *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*, edited by A. Zimmermann, 56–83. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979. [I, n. 29]
- Dumeige, Gervais. "Denys l'Aréopagite: En Occident. L'école victorine. Richard de Saint Victor." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [V, n. 22; Afterword, n. 1]
- Dupré, Louis, and James A. Wiseman, O.S.B. *Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988. [V, n. 1]
- Durantel, J. S. *Thomas et le pseudo-Denis*. Paris: F. Alcan, 1919. [IV, n. 13]
- Eco, Umberto. *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*. Translated by Hugh Bredin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988. [II, n. 33]
- . *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Hugh Bredin. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986. [II, n. 33]

- . *The Name of the Rose*. Translated by William Weaver. New York: Warner Books, 1984. [II, n. 33]
- Elders, Leo. *Faith and Science: An Introduction to St. Thomas' 'Expositio in Boethii De Trinitate'*. Rome: Herder, 1974. [IV, n. 20]
- . *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990. [IV, n. 13]
- Ewbank, Michael. "Diverse Orderings of Dionysius' *Triplex Via* by St. Thomas Aquinas." *Mediaeval Studies* 52 (1990): 82–109. [IV, n. 14]
- Faivre, Alexandre. *Naissance d'une hiérarchie: Les premières étapes du cursus clérical*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1977. [I, n. 21]
- Foley, Edward B. *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis in France*. Fribourg: University Press, 1990. [II, n. 27]
- . "St.-Denis Revisited: The Liturgical Evidence." *Revue Bénédictine* 100 (1990): 532–49. [II, n. 27]
- Fracheboud, André. "Denys l'Areopagite: En Occident. Les Cisterciens." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [V, n. 17]
- Frangeskou, Vassiliki. "Observations on the Disputed *Hymnus ad Deum*." *Studia Patristica* 18, no. 2 (1989): 9–13. [I, n. 17]
- Froehlich, Karlfried. "Bibelkommentare—Zur Krise einer Gattung." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84 (1987): 465–92. [III, n. 15]
- . "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century." In *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translation by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Preface by René Roques. Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. [I, nn. 2, 15, 36]
- Führer, M. L. "Purgation, Illumination, and Perfection in Nicholas of Cusa." *Downside Review* 98 (1980): 169–89. [V, n. 63]
- Gamba, U. "Commenti latini al *De mystica theologia* del Pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita fino al Grossetesta." *Aevum* 16 (1942): 251–57. [V, n. 47]
- . "'Il lume di quel cero . . . ' Dionigi Areopagita fu l'ispiratore di Dante?" *Studia Patavina* 32 (1985): 101–14. [II, n. 9]
- Gardner, Edmund G. *Dante and the Mystics*. London: J. M. Dent, 1913. [II, n. 9]
- Gersh, Stephen. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978. [II, nn. 5, 14; IV, nn. 11, 23]
- . *Kinesis Akinetos: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973. [II, n. 5]
- Gerson, Paula, ed. *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986. [II, nn. 29–30]
- Gibson, Margaret. "The *Opuscula Sacra* in the Middle Ages." In *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, edited by Margaret Gibson, 214–34. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. [IV, n. 20]
- Gleason, John B. *John Colet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. [I, n. 36]

- Golitsin, Alexander. "On the Other Hand." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990): 305–23. [III, n. 28; Afterword, n. 3]
- Graef, Hilda. *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*. Vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Eve of the Reformation*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963. [IV, n. 9]
- Greer, Rowan. *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian*. London: Faith Press, 1961. [III, n. 21]
- Grillmeier, A. *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. 2, pt. 2. Freiburg: Herder, 1989. [I, n. 8]
- Grodecki, Louis. *Gothic Stained Glass 1200–1300*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985. [II, n. 32]
- Grodecki, Louis, in collaboration with Anne Prache and Roland Recht. *Gothic Architecture*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977. [II, n. 29]
- Haas, A. "The Schools of Medieval Mysticism." In *Christian Spirituality*. Vol. 2, *High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by Jill Raitt, 140–75. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, edited by Ewart Cousins, vol. 17. New York: Crossroad, 1987. [V, n. 46]
- Hadot, Pierre. "Neoplatonist Spirituality I: Plotinus and Porphyry." In *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, edited by A. H. Armstrong, 230–49. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, edited by Ewart Cousins, vol. 15. New York: Crossroad, 1986. [V, n. 9]
- . "Théologie, exégèse, révélation, écriture, dans la philosophie grecque." In *Les règles de l'interprétation*, edited by Michel Tardieu, pp. 13–34. Paris: Cerf, 1987. [I, n. 38]
- Häring, Nikolaus M. "John Scottus in Twelfth Century Angelology." In *The Mind of Eriugena*, edited by John J. O'Meara and Ludwig Bieler, 158–69. Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973. [II, n. 14]
- . "Magister Alanus de Insulis, Regulae Caelestis Iuris." *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 56th year, 48 (1982): 97–226. [I, n. 39]
- Hankey, Wayne J. "Aquinas' First Principle: Being or Unity?" *Dionysius* 4 (1980): 133–72. [IV, n. 30]
- . "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas." In *Atti del Congresso Internazionale de Studi Boeziani, Pavia, 5–8 ottobre, 1980*, edited by L. Obertello, 367–75. Rome: Herder, 1981. [IV, n. 20]
- . *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. [IV, nn. 20, 30–31]
- Happold, F. C. *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1963. [V, n. 1]
- Hardison, O. B., Jr. *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965. [III, n. 42]
- Hathaway, Ronald F. *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1969. [I, nn. 17–18]

- Hayes, Zachary, O.F.M. "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure." *Journal of Religion* 58, supplement (1978), *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage*, edited by David Tracy, S82–S96. [IV, n. 11]
- . *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981. [I, n. 28; IV, nn. 11, 32; V, n. 34]
- Hedwig, Klaus. *Sphaera Lucis: Studien zur Intelligibilität des Seienden im Kontext der mittelalterlichen Lichtspekulation*. Münster: Aschendorff, 1980. [II, n. 28]
- Henle, Robert J. *Saint Thomas and Platonism*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956. [IV, n. 13]
- Henry, Patrick Gillespie. "Emperor, Abbot, Patriarch, Pope: Determining Orthodoxy in the Aftermath of Iconoclasm," *Studia Patristica*, vol. 23 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989), pp. 43–48. [I, n. 31]
- Hillgarth, J. N., ed. *Christianity and Paganism, 350–750: The Conversion of Western Europe*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986. [III, n. 37]
- Hochstaffl, Josef. *Negative Theologie: Ein Versuch zur Vermittlung des patristischen Begriffs*. Munich: Koesel, 1976. [V, n. 8]
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 3d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956. [IV, n. 34]
- Hopkins, Jasper. *Nicolas of Cusa on God as Not-Other*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979. [V, n. 63]
- Horst, Pieter Willem van der. "The Altar of the 'Unknown God' in Athens (Acts 17.23) and the Cult of 'Unknown Gods' in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. Part 2, *Principat*, vol. 18.2, 1426–56. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989. [V, n. 7]
- . "The Unknown God (Acts 17:23)." In *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, edited by R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, 19–42. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988. [V, n. 7]
- Houle, Joseph W. "The Mystical Journey and the Garden Archetype in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine." *Studies in Formative Theology* 9 (1988): 63–77. [IV, n. 17]
- Ivánka, Endre von. "Der Aufbau der Schrift 'De divinis nominibus' des Ps.-Dionysios," *Scholastik* 15 (1940): 386–99. [IV, n. 6]
- . *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter*. Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964. [V, n. 28]
- . "Zur Überwindung des neuplatonischen Intellektualismus in der Deutung der Mystik: Intelligentia oder principalis affectio." *Scholastik* 30 (1955): 185–94. [V, n. 28]
- James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Doubleday, 1978. [I, n. 1]
- Javelet, R. "Thomas Gallus ou les écritures dans une dialectique mystique." In *L'homme devant Dieu, à Henri de Lubac* 2:99–110. Paris: Aubier, 1964. [V, n. 24]
- Jeanneau, Édouard. *Etudes érigéniennes*. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1987. [II, n. 20]
- Judic, Bruno. "L'angelologie de Grégoire le Grand chez Raban Maur." *Studia Patristica*, vol. 23 (Louvain: Peters Press, 1989), pp. 245–49. [II, n. 12]
- Judson, T. Richard, and Carl van de Velde. *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard*, part 21, vols. 1–2: *Book Illustrations and Title Pages*. London: Harvey Miller-Heyden and Son, 1978. [I, n. 16]

- Kannengiesser, Charles. "Divine Trinity and the Structure of *Peri archon*." In *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, edited by Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen, 231–49. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988. [IV, n. 16]
- Kaske, R. E., in collaboration with Arthur Groos and Michael W. Twomey. *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. [I, n. 38]
- Kerr, Hugh T. *The First Systematic Theologian: Origen of Alexandria*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1958. [IV, n. 16]
- Kidson, Peter. "Panofsky, Suger and St. Denis." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 1–17. [II, n. 30]
- Kirchberger, Clare, ed. *Richard of St. Victor: Selected Writings on Contemplation*. New York: Harper, 1957. [V, nn. 22, 28]
- Klein, Sherwin. "Plato's Parmenides and St. Thomas' Analysis of God as One and Trinity." *The Thomist* 55 (1991): 229–44. [IV, n. 31]
- Klünker, Wolf-Ulrich. *Johannes Scotus Eriugena, Denken im Gespräch mit dem Engel*. Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1988. [II, n. 20]
- Knowles, David, O.S.B. "The Influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Western Mysticism." In *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp*, edited by Peter Brooks, 81–94. London: SCM, 1975. [V, n. 6]
- Koch, Josef. "Über die Lichtsymbolik im Bereich der Philosophie und der Mystik des Mittelalters." *Studium Generale* 13 (1960): 653–70.
- Kremer, Klaus. "'Bonum est diffusivum sui.' Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Neuplatonismus und Christentum." In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. Part 2, *Principat*, vol. 36, pp. 994–1032. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987. [IV, n. 11]
- Kuntz, Paul G., and Marion L. Kuntz, eds. *Jacob's Ladder and the Tree of Life, Concepts of Hierarchy and the Great Chain of Being*. New York: Peter Lang, 1987. [I, nn. 21, 27; IV, n. 10]
- Lachance, Paul. *The Spiritual Journey of the Blessed Angela di Foligno According to the Memorial of Frater A.* Rome: Pontificum Athenaeum Antonianum, 1984. *Studia Antoniana*, vol. 29. [V, n. 64]
- Lamberton, Robert. *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. [I, nn. 9, 38]
- Lang, B., and C. McDannell. *Heaven: A History*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988. [II, n. 17]
- Lawrence, Richard T. "The Threefold Structure of the Ladder of Divine Ascent." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 32 (1988): 101–18. [V, n. 33]
- Leclercq, Jean. "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages." In *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translation by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Preface by René Roques. Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich. *Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. [I, nn. 2, 20]

- Lees, Rosemary Ann. *The Negative Language of the Dionysian School of Mystical Theology: An Approach to the Cloud of Unknowing*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Ameristik, 1987. [V, nn. 6, 24, 45]
- Leigh, David J. "Augustine's *Confessions* as a Circular Journey." *Thought* 60 (1985): 73–88. [IV, n. 17]
- Levenson, Carl A. "Distance and Presence in Augustine's *Confessions*." *Journal of Religion* 65 (1985): 500–12. [IV, n. 17]
- Lichtmann, Maria. *The Contemplative Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. [IV, n. 34]
- Lienhard, J., ed. *Ministry*. Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1984. [III, n. 20]
- Lilla, Salvatore. "Dionysius the Areopagite, Pseudo-." In *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 238–40. [I, n. 3]
- . "Note sulla Gerarchia Celeste dello Ps. Dionigi l'Areopagita." *Augustinianum* 26 (1986): 519–73. [II, n. 1]
- Loenertz, Raymond J. "La légende parisienne de S. Denys l'Aréopagite: Sa genèse et son premier témoin." *Analecta Bollandiana* 69 (1951): 217–37. [I, n. 13]
- Louth, Andrew. *Denys the Areopagite*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989; Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989. [I, nn. 3, 8, 24; II, n. 11; IV, nn. 2, 8; V, n. 28]
- . "The Influence of Denys the Areopagite on Eastern and Western Spirituality in the Fourteenth Century." *Sobornost* 4 (1982): 185–200. [III, n. 35; V, n. 64]
- . *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981. [II, n. 7]
- . "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism in Denys the Areopagite." *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 432–38. [III, nn. 12, 27]
- Lovejoy, Arthur Oncken. *The Great Chain of Being*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936. [IV, n. 10]
- Lowry, James M. P. *The Logical Principles of Proclus' "Elements of Theology" as Systematic Ground of the Cosmos*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980. [II, n. 4]
- Luscombe, David. "Conceptions of Hierarchy before the Thirteenth Century." In *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* vol. 12, pt. 1. *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*, edited by A. Zimmermann, 1–19. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979. [I, n. 23]
- . "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages from Hilduin to Lorenzo Valla, *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*. Hannover: Hahn, 1988. Pt. 1, pp. 133–52. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Schriften*, 33.1. [I, n. 13]
- . "The 'Lex Divinitatis' in the Bull 'Unam Sanctam' of Pope Boniface VIII." In *Church and Government in the Middle Ages*, edited by D. E. Luscombe et al., 205–21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976. [I, nn. 26, 33]
- . "The Reception of the Writings of Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite into England." In *Tradition and Change*, edited by Diana Greenway, Christopher Holdsworth, and Jane Sayers, 115–43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. [II, n. 14]
- . "Some Examples of the Use Made of the Works of the Pseudo-Dionysius by University Teachers in the Later Middle Ages." In *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, edited by J. Ijsewijn and J. Paquet, 228–41. Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1978. [I, n. 26]

- . "Thomas Aquinas and Conceptions of Hierarchy in the Thirteenth Century." In *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, vol. 19. *Thomas von Aquin, Werk und Wirkung im Licht neuerer Forschungen*, edited by A. Zimmermann, 261–77. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988. [I, n. 26]
- MacGregor, G. *Angels: Ministers of Grace*. New York: Paragon House, 1988. [II, n. 17]
- Macken, Raymond. *Denys the Carthusian*. Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984. *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 118. [V, n. 63]
- Macquarrie, John. *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism*. New York: Crossroad, 1985. [IV, n. 33]
- Madec, Goulven. *Jean Scot et ses auteurs: Annotations érigéniennes*. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1988. [II, n. 20]
- Maeterlinck, Maurice. Introduction to Jan van Ruysbroeck. *Spiritual Espousals: L'ornement des noces spirituelles*, Brussels: P. Lacomblez, 1891 and 1900. [I, n. 1]
- Mair, John. "The Text of the *Opuscula Sacra*." In *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, edited by Margaret Gibson, 206–13. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981. [IV, n. 20]
- Mâle, Emile. *Religious Art in France, the Twelfth Century: A Study of the Origins of Medieval Iconography*. Bollingen Series, vol. 90, pt. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. [II, n. 32; III, n. 42]
- Mazza, Enrico. *Mystagogy*. New York: Pueblo, 1989. [III, n. 16]
- McCready, Wm. D. *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Fourteenth Century: The "Tractatus de causa immediata ecclesiastice potestatis" of Guillaume de Pierre Godin, OP*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982. [I, n. 30]
- McCulloh, William E. Review of *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, in collaboration with Paul Rorem. *Patristics* 17, no. 1 (July, 1988): 9. [I, n. 3]
- McEvoy, James. *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. [I, n. 14]
- McGinn, Bernard. "Ascension and Introversion in the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*." In *San Bonaventura 1274–1974*, edited by Jacques Guy Bougerol et al. Vol. 3, *Philosophia*, pp. 535–52. Rome: Collegio San Bonaventura, 1973 [V, n. 33]
- . "God as Eros: Reflections of Cosmic Love in the Christian Tradition." Unpublished paper. [V, n. 18]
- . "The God Beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart." *Journal of Religion* 61 (1981): 1–19. [V, n. 57]
- . *The Golden Chain: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac of Stella*. Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications, 1972. [IV, n. 10]
- . "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries." *Church History* 56 (1987): 7–24. [V, nn. 19, 27, 35]
- . "Love, Knowledge, and *Unio mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition." In *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, edited by Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn, 59–86, 185–93. New York: Macmillan, 1989. [V, nn. 19, 35]

- . "Meister Eckhart on Speaking About God." Chapter in *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986. [IV, nn. 8, 15]
- . *The Presence of God. A History of Christian Mysticism*. Vol. 1, *The Foundations of Christian Mysticism*. New York: Crossroads, 1991. [V, n. 6]
- . "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Early Cistercians." In *One Yet Two: Monastic Tradition, East and West. Orthodox-Cistercian Symposium, Oxford University, 26 August–1 September 1973*, edited by M. Basil Pennington, pp. 200–241. Cistercian Studies, no. 29. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1976. [V, nn. 17, 20, 28]
- McGinn, Bernard, and John Meyendorff, eds. *Christian Spirituality*. Vol. 1, *Origins to the Twelfth Century*. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 16. New York: Crossroad, 1985. [III, nn. 16, 28; IV, n. 25]
- McInerney, Ralph. *Boethius and Aquinas*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1990. [IV, n. 19]
- McLelland, Joseph C. *God the Anonymous: A Study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1976. [V, n. 8]
- McVey, Kathleen E. "The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 37 (1983): 91–121. [II, n. 26; III, n. 32]
- Meulen, Jan van der. "Gothic Architecture." In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph R. Strayer. New York: Scribner, 1982–1989. [II, n. 31]
- Meyendorff, John. "The Byzantine Church." Chapter in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982. Also in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph R. Strayer. New York: Scribner, 1982–1989. [III, n. 28]
- . *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. London: Faith Press, 1964. [IV, n. 7]
- Meyendorff, Paul. "Eastern Liturgical Theology." In *Christian Spirituality*. Vol. 1, *Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, 350–63. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 16. New York: Crossroad, 1985. [III, nn. 16, 28]
- . *St. Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984. [III, nn. 33–34]
- Miles, Margaret R. "Staying Is Nowhere: Ascent." Chapter in Margaret R. Miles, *Practicing Christianity*. New York: Crossroad, 1988. [V, n. 33]
- Moran, Dermott. *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. [II, n. 20; IV, n. 23]
- Mortley, Raoul. *From Word to Silence*. Vol. 2, *The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek*. Bonn: Hanstein, 1986. [V, nn. 8–9, 15]
- Mottoni, Barbara Faes de. *Il "Corpus Dionysianum" nel medioevo: Rassegna di studi: 1900–1972*. Rome: Il Mulino, 1977. [I, n. 20; II, n. 13]
- Neidl, Walter M. *Thearchia: Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Gott bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita und Thomas von Aquin*. Regensburg: J. Habel, 1976. [IV, n. 13]
- Newman, Barbara. "The Burial of Christ in Liturgical Allegory from Theodore of Mopsuestia to Amalarius of Metz." Unpublished paper. [III, n. 40]

- Ninci, Marco. *L'universo e il non-essere*. Vol. 1, *Trascendenza di Dio e molteplicità del reale nel monismo dionisiaco*. Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1980. [V, n. 9]
- Norden, Eduard. *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*. Leipzig and Berlin: Verlag B. G. Teubner, 1913. [V, n. 7]
- O'Brien, Elmer, S.J. *Varieties of Mystic Experience*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964. [V, n. 1]
- O'Brien, T. C. "The Dionysian Corpus." In Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 14, *Questions 103–109*, Appendix 3. London: Blackfriars, 1975. [II, n. 16; IV, n. 13]
- O'Connell, Robert J. *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969. [IV, n. 17]
- O'Daly, Gerard J. P. "Hierarchie." *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* no. 113 (1989): 41–73. [I, n. 21]
- O'Meara, John J. *Eriugena*. Cork: Mercier, 1969. [II, n. 20]
- . *Eriugena*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. [II, nn. 20, 26]
- O'Meara, John J., and Ludwig Bieler, eds. *The Mind of Eriugena*. Dublin: Irish University Press, 1973. [II, nn. 20, 25]
- O'Meara, Thomas F. "Grace as a Theological Structure in the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas." *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 55 (1988): 130–53. [IV, n. 30]
- Otten, Willemien. *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991. [II, n. 20; IV, n. 23]
- Ozment, Steven E. *Homo Spiritualis*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969. [V, n. 62]
- Padellaro de Angelis, Rosa. *L'influenza del pensiero neoplatonico sulla metafisica di S. Tommaso d'Aquino*. Rome: Edizione Abete, 1981. [IV, n. 13]
- Pascoe, Louis B. *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973. [I, n. 32]
- Patrides, C. A. "Renaissance Thought on the Celestial Hierarchy: The Decline of a Tradition." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959): 155–66. [II, n. 17]
- . "Renaissance Views on the 'Unconfused Orders Angelick,'" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962): 265–67. [II, n. 17]
- Peghaire, J. "L'axiome 'Bonum est diffusivum sui' dans le néoplatonisme et le thomisme." *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 1, section spéciale (1932): 5–30. [IV, n. 11]
- Pelikan, J. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978. [I, n. 28]
- . "The Domestication of Dionysius." Address to the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 4 September 1979. [I, n. 11]
- . "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality." In *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translation by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Preface by René Roques. Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. [I, nn. 2, 8, 20]
- Pépin, Jean. *La tradition de l'allégorie de Philon d'Alexandrie à Dante*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987. [I, n. 38]

- Petersen, Joan M. *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in Their Late Antique Cultural Background*. Studies and Texts, vol. 69. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984. [II, n. 11]
- . "Greek Influences upon Gregory the Great's Exegesis of Luke 15, 1–10 in *Homelia in Evang.* II, 34." In *Grégoire le Grand*, edited by J. Fontaine, R. Gillet, and S. Pellistrandi, 521–29. Paris: CNRS, 1986. [II, n. 11]
- . "'Homo omnino Latinus'? The Theological and Cultural Background of Pope Gregory the Great." *Speculum* 62, no. 3 (1987): 529–51. [II, n. 11]
- Peterson, Eric. *The Angels and the Liturgy*, translated by Ronald Walls. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964. [II, n. 10]
- Philippe, Paul. "Bonaventure." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [V, n. 32]
- Polk, Thomas E., II. *Saint-Denis, Noyon and the Early Gothic Choir: Methodological Considerations for the History of Early Gothic Architecture*. Frankfurt am Main and Bern: Peter Lang, 1982. [II, n. 31]
- Puech, H.-C. "La ténèbre mystique chez le pseudo-Denys." *Études Carmelitaines* 23, no. 2 (1938): 33–53. [V, n. 6]
- Putnam, Mother Caroline Canfield, R.S.C.J. *Beauty in the Pseudo-Denis*. Philosophical Studies, vol. 190. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960. [II, n. 18]
- Quasten, J. "The Liturgical Mysticism of Theodore of Mopsuestia." *Theological Studies* 15 (1954): 431–39. [III, n. 23]
- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*. Translated by Zachary Hayes, O.F.M. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971. [V, n. 32]
- Rayez, Andre, et al. "Denys l'Aréopagite: En Orient" and "Denys l'Aréopagite: En Occident." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [I, n. 20]
- Reidl, John O. "Bonaventure's Commentary on Dionysius' *Mystical Theology*." In *Thomas and Bonaventure: A Septicentenary Commemoration*, edited by George F. McLean, 266–76. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1974. [V, n. 35]
- Reinhold, H. A. "The Pyrrhic Victory of Florus of Lyons." In *Liturgy for the People*, edited by William J. Leonard, S.J., 206–14. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1972. [III, n. 38]
- Reynolds, Roger E. "Liturgy, Treatises on." In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph R. Strayer. New York: Scribner, 1982–1989. [III, n. 36]
- . "Mass, Liturgy of." In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph R. Strayer. New York: Scribner, 1982–1989. [III, n. 36]
- Riedinger, R. "Akoimeten," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 2 (1978): 148–53. [I, n. 17]
- . Review of *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, by P. Rorem. In *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 79 (1987): 61–62. [I, n. 17]
- Riehle, Wolfgang. *The Middle English Mystics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. [V, n. 39]
- Roberts, Louis. *The Theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1987. [II, n. 18]

- Roques, René. "Denys l'Aréopagite." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932-. [I, n. 3; IV, n. 13]
- . *Libres sentiers vers l'érigénisme*. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1975. [II, nn. 20, 24–25]
- . Preface to *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. Translation by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. Preface by René Roques. Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich. *Classics of Western Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1987. [I, n. 1]
- . *Structures théologiques de la Gnose à Richard de Saint Victor. Essais et analyses critiques*. Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes: Section des sciences religieuses, vol. 72. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962. [V, n. 20]
- . *L'Univers Dionysien*. Paris: Aubier, 1954. [I, n. 3]
- . ed. *Jean Scot Erigène et l'histoire de la philosophie*. Paris: CNRS, 1977. [II, n. 20]
- Rorem, Paul. *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*. Studies and Texts, vol. 71. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984. [I, nn. 4, 7–8; II, nn. 5–6; III, nn. 2, 13, 17, 27; V, nn. 2, 4, 28]
- . "An Influence of Peter Lombard on the Biblical Hermeneutics of Thomas Aquinas." *Rivista de Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 16 (1980): 429–34. [I, n. 38]
- . *The Medieval Development of Liturgical Symbolism*. Grove Liturgical Study, vol. 47. Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1986. [III, nn. 16, 34, 36, 38]
- . "Moses as the Paradigm for the Liturgical Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius." *Studia Patristica* vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 275–79. Louvain: Peeters Press, 1989. [V, n. 2]
- . "'Procession and Return' in Thomas Aquinas and His Predecessors." *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 13.2 (1992): 147–63. [IV, n. 34]
- Rudolph, Conrad. *Artistic Change at St.-Denis, Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth-Century Controversy over Art*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990. [II, n. 30]
- Ruello, Francis. "Un commentaire dionysien en quête d'auteur." *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 27 (1952): 141–81. [V, n. 24]
- Ruh, Kurt. *Meister Eckhart*. Munich: Beck, 1985. [V, n. 56]
- Rutledge, Dom Denys. *Cosmic Theology. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Denys: An Introduction*. Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1965. [III, n. 1]
- Saffrey, H. D. "Neoplatonist Spirituality II: From Iamblichus to Proclus and Damascius." In *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, edited by A. H. Armstrong, 250–65. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 15. New York: Crossroad, 1986. [V, n. 9]
- Schaefer, Mary M. "Latin Mass Commentaries from the Ninth Century through the Twelfth Century: Chronology and Theology." In *Fountain of Life*, edited by G. Austin, 35–49. Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1991. [III, n. 36]
- Schmemmann, Alexander. "Symbols and Symbolism in the Orthodox Liturgy." In *Orthodox Theology and Diakonia*. Brookline, Mass.: Hellenic College Press, 1981.

- Reprinted in *Liturgy and Tradition*, edited by Thomas Fisch, 115–28. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990. [III, n. 28]
- Schneider, Carl. *Geistesgeschichte des antiken Christentums*. Vol. 2. Munich: Beck, 1954. [II, n. 26]
- Schneiderman, S. *An Angel Passes*. New York: NYU Press, 1988. [II, n. 17]
- Schnusenberg, Christine Catharina. *The Relationship Between the Church and the Theatre, Exemplified by Selected Writings of the Church Fathers and by Liturgical Texts until Amalarius of Metz—775–852 A.D.* Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988. [III, nn. 38, 42]
- Schulz, Hans-Joachim. *The Byzantine Liturgy*. Translated by M. J. O'Connell. New York: Pueblo, 1986. [II, n. 26; III, n. 16]
- Schurr, V. *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der 'skythischen Kontroversen'*. Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1935. [IV, n. 20]
- Sheldon-Williams, I. P. "The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius." *Downside Review* 82 (1964): 293–302; 83 (1965): 20–31. [III, n. 1]
- . "Johannes Scottus Eriugena." In *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited by A. H. Armstrong, 518–33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. [II, n. 20]
- Sicherl, Martin. "Ein neuplatonischer Hymnus unter den Gedichten Gregors von Nazianz." In *Gonimos, Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*, edited by John Duffy and John Peradotto, 61–83. Buffalo, N.Y.: Arethusa, 1988. [I, n. 17]
- Simson, Otto von. *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*. 3d ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. [II, n. 29]
- Sinkewicz, Robert E., C.S.B. *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters: A Critical Edition, Translation and Study*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988. [IV, n. 7]
- Southern, R. W. *Robert Grosseteste. The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. [I, n. 14]
- Spiegel, Gabrielle M. "Suger of St. Denis." In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph R. Strayer. New York: Scribners, 1982–1989. [II, n. 31]
- Stoeckle, B. "*Gratia supponit naturam*": *Geschichte und Analyse eines theologischen Axioms*. Rome: Herder, 1962. [IV, n. 12]
- Stoelen, Anselm. "Denys the Carthusian." In *Spirituality Through the Centuries*, edited by James Walsh, S.J., 220–32. New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1965. [V, n. 63]
- Strothmann, Werner. *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weihe in der Schrift De ecclesiastica hierarchia des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*. Göttinger Orientforschungen, ser. I, vol. 15. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977–1978. [III, n. 6]
- Stubbens, Neil A. "Naming God: Moses Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas." *The Thomist* 54 (1990): 229–67. [IV, n. 8]
- Suntrup, Rudolf. *Die Bedeutung der liturgischen Gebärden und Bewegungen in lateinischen und deutschen Auslegungen des 9. bis 13. Jahrhunderts*. Münstersche Mittelalterschriften, vol. 37. Munich: Fink, 1978. [III, n. 38]

- Taft, Robert, S.J. "The Liturgy of the Great Church." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34–35 (1980–1981): 45–75. [III, n. 16]
- Teasdale, Wayne. "Dionysian and Eckhartian Mysticism." *Cistercian Studies* 21 (1986): 228–58. [V, n. 60]
- Théry, Gabriel. "Documents concernant Jean Sarrazin, reviseur de la traduction érigénienne du *Corpus Dionysiacum*." *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 18 (1951): 45–87. [I, n. 14; V, nn. 23–24]
- . *Thomas Gallus: Grand commentaire sur la Théologie Mystique*. Paris: Haloua, 1934. [V, n. 24]
- Thunberg, Lars. *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985. [III, n. 32]
- . *Microcosm and Mediator*. Lund: Gleerup, 1965. [III, n. 32]
- Tomasic, Thomas Michael. Review of *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, by Paul Rorem. *Speculum* 62 (1987): 180–81. [I, n. 7]
- Trapp, J. B. "John Colet and the Hierarchies of the Ps. Dionysius." In *Religion and Humanism*, edited by Keith Robbins, 127–48. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981. [I, n. 36]
- Tugwell, Simon, O. P. *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988. [V, nn. 15, 27, 47–48, 50–55]
- Turbessi, Joseph. "Denys l'Aréopagite: En Occident. Au 13^e siècle. Saint Albert le Grand." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [V, n. 47]
- . "Denys l'Aréopagite: En Occident. Au 13^e siècle. Saint Thomas d'Aquin." *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1932–. [V, n. 55]
- Vanneste, Jan. *Le mystère de Dieu*. Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959. [V, nn. 4, 7, 28]
- Vansteenberghe, E. *Autour de la docte ignorance: Une controverse sur la théologie mystique au XV^e siècle*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, vol. 14. Münster: Aschendorff, 1915. [V, n. 63]
- Vernier, Jean-Marie. *Les anges chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1986. [II, n. 16]
- Völker, Walther. *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1958. [V, nn. 6, 24]
- Wailes, Stephen L. *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. [II, n. 11]
- Wallace-Hadrill, J. M. *The Frankish Church*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983. [III, n. 38]
- Wallis, R. T. *Neoplatonism*. London: Duckworth, 1972. [IV, n. 11]
- . "The Spiritual Importance of Not Knowing." In *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A. H. Armstrong, 460–80. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 15. New York: Crossroad, 1986. [V, n. 9]
- Walsh, James A., S.J. "The Ascent to Contemplative Wisdom." *The Way* 9 (1969): 243–50. [V, n. 38]

- . "The Expositions of Thomas Gallus on the Pseudo-Dionysian Letters." *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 30 (1963): 199–220. [V, n. 24]
- . "Thomas Gallus et l'effort contemplatif." *Revue d'Histoire de Spiritualité* 51 (1975): 17–42. [V, nn. 24, 27]
- Wéber, E. "Éléments néoplatoniciens en théologie mystique au xiii^{ème} siècle." In *Abend-ländische Mystik im Mittelalter: Symposion Kloster Engelberg 1984*, edited by Kurt Ruh, 196–217. Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1986. [V, n. 47]
- . "L'interprétation par Albert le Grand de la Théologie Mystique de Denys le Ps.-Aréopagite." In *Albertus Magnus—Doctor Universalis*, edited by G. Meyer and A. Zimmermann, 409–39. Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald, 1980. [V, n. 47]
- Weisweiler, H. "Sakrament als Symbol und Teilhabe: Der Einfluss des Ps. Dionysius auf die allgemeine Sakramentenlehre Hugos von St. Viktor." *Scholastik* 27 (1952): 321–43. [III, n. 14]
- Wesche, Kenneth Paul. "Appendix. A Reply to Hieromonk Alexander's Reply." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990): 324–27. [III, n. 28; Afterword, n. 3]
- . "Christological Doctrine and Liturgical Interpretation in Pseudo-Dionysius." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989): 53–73. [III, n. 28]
- White, James F. "Durandus and the Interpretation of Christian Worship." In *Contemporary Reflections on the Medieval Christian Tradition*, edited by George H. Shriver, 41–52. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1974. [III, n. 41]
- Wilberding, Erick. "A Defense of Dionysius the Areopagite by Rubens." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52 (1991): 19–34. [I, n. 16]
- Wilson, Christopher. *The Gothic Cathedral*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1990. [II, n. 29]
- Wybrew, Hugh. *The Orthodox Liturgy*. London: SPCK, 1989. [III, n. 16]
- Zinn, Grover A. "Book and Word: The Victorine Background of Bonaventure's Use of Symbols." In *San Bonaventura 1274–1974*. Vol. 2, *Studia*, 143–69. Rome: Collegio San Bonaventura, 1973. [V, n. 20]
- . "Hugh of St. Victor." In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, edited by Joseph L. Strayer. New York: Scribners, 1982–1989. [IV, n. 25]
- . "The Regular Canons." In *Christian Spirituality*. Vol. 1, *Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, 218–28. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, edited by Ewert Cousins, vol. 16. New York: Crossroad, 1985. [IV, n. 25]
- . "Suger, Theology, and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition." In *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*, edited by Paula Gerson, 33–40. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986. [II, n. 30]