

## “If you wish to contemplate God”: Pseudo-Dionysius on will and love

Dr. Elena Ene D-Vasilescu, University of Oxford

The notion of human will as an expression of longing for the divine is especially present in Dionysius’s *Mystical theology* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.<sup>1</sup> He also makes direct remarks about God’s will (*θεῖα θελήματα*) in his treatises *Divine Names* (here he uses the word *θελήματα* – the plural)<sup>2</sup> and in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (where he has the word in the singular, *θέλημα*).<sup>3</sup> Pseudo-Areopagite describes the latter as the cause of everything that exists (hence including the human will), and in the same paragraph (DN 848B) he employs both the word *θελήματα* and *βούλεσαι* to render it. In DN 849A Dionysius refers to the same notion in terms of *θείῳ θελήματι* and *θεαρχικὰ θελήματα*.<sup>4</sup>

The thinker of presumed Syriac origin mentions the yearning of people to be united with (or “assimilated to”)<sup>5</sup> God when he addresses one of his friends (in Dionysius’s recreated apostolic environment he was one of the priests around Paul), thus: “If you **wish** (*ἠύχθω*) to contemplate God through a mystical experience, my dear Timothy, I advise you to be aware and prepare yourself”.<sup>6</sup> Additionally to *θέλημα* and the other above-mentioned expressions used to designate the human will Dionysius also employs, in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, the term *ἐπιθύμησομεν/ἐπιθύμια* (desire) to express it; for him the word does not render “bad passions” such as lust (this was acquired much later), but a longing for spiritual things.<sup>7</sup> The most suitable expression for the way “the Areopagite” conceives reality is perhaps his statement that “all things are moved by a longing for the Beautiful and Good to accomplish every outward work and form every act of will”.<sup>8</sup> There is an intimation here that the human will aligns itself to the divine one and that it happens because of real love for God, because it is Love (one of the ‘titles’ Dionysius gave to the Supreme Being) that underpins all human attempts to encounter God. Suggestions that human will and love are instrumental

in the redemption of the souls exist in some of Gregory of Nyssa's writings, and as we shall see further, the Syrian might have been inspired by these in his treatises. In addition he was enthused by scriptural references; he mentions Paul's letters, and these indeed speak about the pair will-love vis-à-vis God.

One of the instances in which Dionysius explains how the human will is instrumental in salvation is that in which he lists the rituals a person needs to undergo when becoming a Christian, or rather a better Christian. He does so in his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*: "A postulant who wishes [ἐνωσις] to enter the spiritual life has a sponsor who presents him to the hierarch" and he/she "is moved by the desire of salvation".<sup>9</sup> Another framework in which the Syrian father speaks about the will is when he presents his theodicy. While doing so, Dionysius not only elaborates on the longing for God peculiar to various elements of creation, but he also relates the divine and human wills.<sup>10</sup> All major discussions that characterized Patristic, medieval, and modern Theology were concerned with the relationship between the two, and such preoccupations are still current; the Pelagian dispute of the fourth century marked the beginning of a long-lasting argument. When touching on the notion of will in the context of introducing his view about the existence of evil, the Pseudo- Areopagite avers that the latter has neither "inherence in things that have being"<sup>11</sup> nor "substance" or "place" because "its origin is due to a defect rather than to a capacity".<sup>12</sup> In this he might be indebted to Gregory of Nyssa (c. 332 - after 385),<sup>13</sup> who articulates the same opinion: "vice has no inherent existence".<sup>14</sup> Nyssen also believed that because of the freedom with which human beings were endowed when created, they "could decide in favour of evil, which cannot have its origin in the Divine will, but only in our inner selves where it arises in the form of a deviation from good, and so **a privation of it.**"<sup>15</sup> Dionysius articulates the same thought. He states that evil "comes into being not on its own account" but, paradoxically, "for the sake of the Good"; it exists "as an accident [...] by means of something else".<sup>16</sup> For the

Syrian it means that evil is initially a ‘good’ that weakens, and that even devils desire a proper life. The comprehension of evil in the same manner is not the only communality peculiar to Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius’s creation. Among other similar notions found in their writings the most obvious concerns the three stages through which the soul goes in its spiritual journey: purification, illumination, and perfection. In the case of Gregory, he found them in Origen’s work (as a “pattern”<sup>17</sup>), where they constituted “adaptation of some Stoic and Middle Platonic language.”<sup>18</sup> With respect to evil, in some places the Syrian thinker explains that: “desire for what has no being [in those who sin] is proportionate to [its] lack of desire for the Good. Indeed the latter is not so much a desire as [it is a] sin against real desire”.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Dionysius indicates that there are people who in spite of knowing the content of biblical precepts do not act in accordance with them due to their weak will. In some cases, the “will is so perverse” that people “do not want to know how to do good”.<sup>20</sup> Because of this, among other definitions of evil, one could be that it is “a deficiency of knowledge [...], of desire” or “an error of real desire”;<sup>21</sup> the Areopagite seems to believe that these mean the same thing. Since Dionysius thought, as observed above, that ignorance is one of the causes of evil, it is logical to assume that by understanding things clearly one can turn to the Good.

Ysabel de Andia comments on the above-mentioned passage in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (EH 392A), which concerns the candidate for a deep spiritual life, by noticing that for the Syrian it is precisely up to the human will to accept or not the gift of deification that comes from the “Divine Goodness”.<sup>22</sup> The extent to which this process takes place depends on the individual capacity to receive the “gift”. Paul Rorem describes this state of affairs central to Dionysiac theology by saying that for the ancient author revelation can be “accommodated” through symbols to the capacities of the receivers (and that its outcome needs to be kept secret from the uninitiated).<sup>23</sup>

In the Dionysian treatises, the ultimate reason that someone would wish to practice contemplation in the way describe above is the love for God. This is especially evident in the passage in which the Areopagite addresses Timothy. A steady ascetic effort is involved when wishing to ‘meet’ the Creator, and it is love as well as the desire and “yearning” for the divine that underlines this process.<sup>24</sup> Dionysius conceives of love as an impulse that uplifts the souls, hence as the basis of their union with God. The Areopagite refers to it as *eros* (ἔρως); in this context we should remember that before Dionysius the sense of this word was close to that of *agape* (ἀγάπη), i.e. to what is usually translated in contemporary English through the word ‘charity’ (definitely it had nothing to do with sensual desires, which *eros* only acquired later).<sup>25</sup> In his book *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite*, Charles M. Stang underlines that in the treatises written by the Syrian thinker the two Greek words for love are equivalent.<sup>26</sup> Whatever term he uses at times, for the Areopagite love is ecstatic; it draws the person who is animated by it out of himself/herself.<sup>27</sup> The manner in which the Syrian conceives this “virtue” connects it with his ideas of procession and return, and Paul Rorem’s interpretation of his works associates all these Dionysian notions: “Emanation and return describe respectively divine and human ecstasy”, he affirms.<sup>28</sup>

Andrew Louth comments that love is presented in a particular way in the *Divine Names* (one on which we expounded above) because Dionysius conceived it “as unitive: the lover is united to the beloved, who is, for him, a manifestation of beauty.”<sup>29</sup> “The Areopagite” understood that the relationship between the two leads both of them back to the Good and Beautiful. The concept of ‘return’ is Platonician.<sup>30</sup> But there is a difference between Plato and Dionysius’s ideas: the Greek philosopher connects ‘return’ with the epistemologic aspect of the relationship Divinity-human beings. The fact that the essence manifests itself in the material world makes indeed the ‘return’ possible (elements of the ‘world of the phenomena’ can go back to their real origin, essential in character), but the

process results in a dissipation that negatively affects the human knowledge of it. For Dionysius the “return” is as perpetual as the “procession”. For both ancient thinkers the ontological ground for the “return” is the identification of the transcendent One with the Good.

Going back to the discussion regarding the nature of love in Dionysius’s treatises, Louth rightly emphasizes the “indissoluble fusion”<sup>31</sup> which the Syrian remarks that exists between people who love one another. Nonetheless, we have to keep in mind that Dionysius took great care to stress that “the harmony and the love which are formed between them [the lovers] do not obliterate [their] identity.”<sup>32</sup> Such a dialectic is to be expected since Christianity works in paradoxes. Andia, paraphrasing Dionysius’s notions referring to the “circular movement – viz. an introversion”<sup>33</sup> of the “divine intelligences”<sup>34</sup> (or “Heavenly Minds”<sup>35</sup>), speaks of the “circle of love” in the work of the Syrian as ἐρωζ�.<sup>36</sup> The movement within that circle is still dependent on the capacity of the soul to open to the love it receives, i.e. to develop. The French researcher mentions “une aptitude à recevoir et une synergie de la volonté humaine.”<sup>37</sup> When, in the same passage mentioned above from the treatise *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (EH 396 A) the deigning of God to live among people as Christ is highlighted, this is to make clear that the “move” is an expression of love (of maximal love, one might say). Among the titles the Areopagite gives to God is that of “the Yearning”;<sup>38</sup> Dionysius understands this title to concur with the other we remarked that he often ascribes to God – that of Love. This is because Divinity yearns for and loves creation, and creation yearns for and loves the Divine. People with deep knowledge of sacred things notice how this reality becomes concrete in some of the practical actions that take place within the Church. They would know how and to whom to impart their awareness, hence “Someone *fired by love* of transcendent reality and *longing for a sacred share of it* comes first to an initiate”.<sup>39</sup> Dionysius also elaborates on love within the Trinity and within the hierarchies. Inside the

Trinity it flows equally among its members. With respect to hierarchy, the Syrian claims that it, as “a state of understanding” (*ἐπιστήμη*) and “a sacred order”, allows an “energy”<sup>40</sup> or “activity approximating as close as possible to the divine” (CH 164D) to stream throughout it. Love as well courses through these entities; therefore for the Syrian the hierarchies (both celestial and ecclesiastical) are about love and salvation, and not about oppression, as the existence of a layered structure of power might have led people to expect. This is how the ancient thinker believes human beings find space for the manifestation of their will and love within the structure of the world. Stang appreciates that the manner in which Dionysius sees the hierarchy “is an elaborate reinterpretation of Paul’s notion of the ‘body of Christ’” (*σώμα χριστού*) as the divinely sanctioned and ordered arrangement through which ‘love’ (*ἀγάπη*) should move.”<sup>41</sup>

However, as Andia stresses, love, even though going out, still remains inside God’s being.<sup>42</sup> This is because God itself, in Dionysius’s words, “proceeds to everything while still remaining within himself.”<sup>43</sup> And, as observed, in the same manner (i.e. continuously) in which the love proceeds from, it returns to its source. The texts of the “Areopagite” clearly indicate how God poured out his being in the act of creation. He avers: “the source of All things himself, in his wonderful and good love for all things, through the excess of his loving goodness, is carried outside Himself, in his providential care for all that is, so enchanted is He in goodness and love and longing. Removed from his position above all and beyond all he descends to be in all according to an ecstatic and transcendent power which is yet inseparable from himself”.<sup>44</sup> An example of ecstatic love – which in human terms is actually the maximum possible – given by Dionysius<sup>45</sup> is that manifested by St. Paul, who was the common master of himself and of Hierotheus, his teacher<sup>46</sup> (and also of Timothy); Dionysius cited *2Cor.* 12:2-4 in DN 712A in this respect. Stang concurs with Louth in upholding the above-mentioned idea of ecstatic love and shows that *ἔκστασις* / “ecstasy” derives from

ἐξίστημι (“I stand outside”);<sup>47</sup> it is a negation of one’s self (the Syrian does not make this observation, but perhaps one should keep in mind that this is only possible to a limited extent since the identity needs to be preserved). In the treatise *Mystical Theology* Dionysius apophatically expresses this reality when avowing that the soul surrenders to the unknowable God<sup>48</sup>. In *The Divine Names*<sup>49</sup> he appreciates that, in fact, the soul ascends through negations since it stands “outside everything which is correlative with its own finite nature”; it seems that negations drive the soul out of itself – ἐξίστημι also means ‘going out’ or, by extension “being driven out”. But these negative steps have a positive purpose, which is the attaining of the ‘darkness of the unknown’ where God can be met.

For the Areopagite, ecstasy is an occurrence that entails having one’s life centered on the Good and Beautiful. Rorem thinks that for this ancient man the entire process of being assimilated to God through an “intentional and systematic abandonment” of the “inferior categories” is one ecstatic in nature because, as he explains (in the same way Stang does), it means “standing outside ourselves and our natural, affective use of language about God.”<sup>50</sup> Divine love as conceived by Dionysius is supposed to become central to one’s life because God “has made one with himself all those capable of being divinised” (EH 393A).<sup>51</sup> This is experience (Dionysius uses the term ‘suffering’ for it<sup>52</sup>); as in the case of love between human beings, it can reach such a high degree that the life of the beloved becomes one’s own.

Love represents a virtue for Platonicians and other non-Christian alike. The idea of a divine ‘providential love’ (ἐρωσ πρωτοετήκος) is specific, for instance, to Proclus’s text *In Alcibiadem* (51).<sup>53</sup> But for him Ἔρωσ is one among the gods the Greeks had, and divine ecstatic love does not exist in their world. That is to say, the marked difference between the Platonic, and in general, pagan view about love on one hand and the Dionysiac concept of love, on the other, is that in the Greek tradition love is “utilitarian” (needs to fulfil a need), while for the Areopagite it is “an overflow of divine goodness – it needs nothing, it is the

source of everything.”<sup>54</sup> Louth believes that the Syrian’s position with regard to this affect/virtue “has deeply coloured [his] understanding of reality”.<sup>55</sup> He is right and one can see that this is the case, especially because all the titles Dionysius employs when referring to God amount to that of Love and also because this is what the members of the Trinity enjoy. “The Areopagite” gave thought to the synergy between will and love since he cites the Pauline letters in his treatises and the link between the two is certainly best expressed in Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3: 9) in which people are named “fellow-workers with God”. Stang comments that “the very goal of the hierarchy”, the concept around which the entire creation of the Syrian is built,<sup>56</sup> is the co-operation of creatures with the “works of God”; he uses the term “co-workers with God” for the people.<sup>57</sup> To be able to join Divinity to such a degree means that human beings partake in some aspects of it. Dionysius talks about this participation and asserts that deification means the receiving of the divine energy by people within themselves as much as possible. He mentions this idea, for example, when offering one of his explanations concerning the “goal of the hierarchy”, which is “to enable being to be as like as possible to God.”<sup>58</sup> Obviously, by doing so, he proffers a very favourable position to humanity.

**To conclude:** what needs to be emphasized when speaking about will in Dionysius’s corpus is that the divine will is always informed by love and that the human will is supposed to align itself to it and reflect it. The maximum of the “procession” of love that is so important a concept to Dionysius is ecstasy. This is a way of negating oneself in order to allow room for God within the soul. On the part of Divinity one could perhaps say that the incarnation is a kind of negation, and that God, whom “all things desire”, “yearn for [and] love” (DN 733D),<sup>59</sup> initiated it out of his own ecstasy. Certainly he did so out of his will informed by love. Since human souls participate in God and their actions are made to occur

by the divine energies, it can be said that in their journey to Him they are also moved by a will which love directs.

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<sup>1</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 393A. See also EH 392B and EH 400D. I am using here the following abbreviations for the titles of Dionysius’s treatises: EH (for the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*), CH (for the *Celestial Hierarchy*), MT (for the *Mystical Theology*, and DN (for the *Divine Names*). The quotations will be given as in the critical edition: *Corpus Dionysiacum I (DN)*, ed. Beate Regina Suchla, and *Corpus Dionysiacum II (CH, EH, MT, Letters)*, eds. Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter, *Patristische Texte und Studien*, vols. 33 and 36 (Berlin and New York, 1990-1991). Mostly the translation of the fragments in the article is from *Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem (New York, 1987); where I have translated myself, or have preferred Clarence E. Rolt’s rendering of some passages this fact is mentioned. C.E. Rolt’s translation of *The Divine Names & Mystical Theology*, (London, 1983) is more literal than that effected by Luibheid.

<sup>2</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite; Θέληματα; in the plural: DN 847 and DN 849; *Complete Works* (1987), 201.

<sup>3</sup> EH 573: “αὐ τῆ δὲ ἐπίσημόν Θέλημα μὲν”; *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991); *Complete Works* (1987), 261.

<sup>4</sup> DN 849A, Jean-Paul Migne, PG3 (Paris, 1860). DN 996D mentions the will of God with the sense of ‘what pleases Him.’ [“Ἀλλὰ τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα, ὡς τῷ Θεῷ φίλων.../But be these matters as God wills (pleases)], and also in the same paragraph Dionysius uses the colloquial expression ‘θεοῦ διδόντος’ – God willing, permitting, helping]. These two passages do not exist in the critical edition.

<sup>5</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991), 142 (MT 997B); *The Complete Works* (1987), 135 (Luibheid has translated the fragment in MT 997B as “towards a union with him”). P. Rorem speaks about it in terms of “a union”, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the texts and an Introduction to their influence* (Oxford and New York, 1993), 185. Ἐνωσις can be translated or expressed by either of the two lexes [to be united with” or “assimilated to”].

<sup>6</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, 997B-1000A, my translation. In *Mystical Theology* (1991) the fragment is on p. 142.

<sup>7</sup> *De Coelestia Hierarchia/The Celestial Hierarchy*, PG 3 (1860): CH 157C; G. Heil and A.M. Ritter have not included this fragment in their edition of the Dionysiac work, and it has not been translated by Luibheid and Rorem.

<sup>8</sup> *The Divine Names*, 705D; this translation was made by Clarence E. Rolt, in Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names & Mystical Theology* (London, 1983), 101. See also *The Complete Works* (1987), 79.

<sup>9</sup> EH 392A, *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991), 68; *The Complete Works* (1987), 202.

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<sup>10</sup> *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 177-178; *The Complete Works* (1987), 95-96.

<sup>11</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, “The Divine Names”, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 177-78; *The Complete Works* (1987), 95; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 129; more on 113.

<sup>12</sup> DN 733D, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 177-78; *The Complete Works* (1987), 95.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, for example in “Oratio Catechetica”, PG 45 (1863): 24C; “The Great Cathehism”, in *Dogmatic Treatises, Select Writings and Letters* translated and edited by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF), second series, 14 vols. (Oxford and New York), 1893, V 474.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, “Oratio Catechetica”, 24C (1893); “The Great Cathehism”, 480.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid; “The Great Cathehism”; *ibid.* 479; emphasis added

<sup>16</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, “The Divine Names”, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 177; *The Complete Works* (1987), 94; *The Divine Names* (1983), 128.

<sup>17</sup> Rorem, *A Commentary* (1993), 59.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> DN 733D, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 179; *The Complete Works* (1987), 95.

<sup>20</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, PG. 733A; neither Heil and Ritter nor Luibheid have included this fragment in their editions.

<sup>21</sup> DN 733D, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 179; *The Complete Works* (1987), 96.

<sup>22</sup> Ysabel de Andia, *Henosis: l'union à Dieu chez Denys l'Aréopagite* (Leiden, New York, and Köln, 1996), coll. *Philosophia Antiqua* 71, 290.

<sup>23</sup> Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary* (1993), 54.

<sup>24</sup> DN 709C; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 158; *The Complete Works* (1987), 81. In *The Divine Names* (1983) this is implied for instance in the text on p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> On the love as conceived by Dionysius see, for example, Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford, 2012); Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London and New York, 2001, initially published as *Dionysius the Areopagite* (London, 1989); John M. Rist, ‘A note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 20 (1966), 235-43; Eric D. Perl, ‘The Metaphysics of Love in Dionysius the Areopagite’, *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 6, no. 1 (1997), 45-73; Lisa Marie Esposito Buckley, ‘Ecstatic and Emanating, Providential and Unifying: A Study of Pseudo-Dionysian and Plotinian Concepts of Eros’, *The*

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*Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, 1, no. 1 (1992), 31-61, and Alexander Golitzin, *Et Introibo ad Altare Dei* (Thessaloniki, 1994), especially chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>26</sup> Ch.M. Stang, *Apophysis* (2012), 195.

<sup>27</sup> A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (2001/1989), 94-5.

<sup>28</sup> Rorem, *The Complete Works* (1987), 130, note 266.

<sup>29</sup> Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (1989), 94.

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Plato's *Republic; The Dialogues of Plato*, 5 vols., ed., trans., and Introduction B. Jowett; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. revised and corrected (Oxford, 1875, reprint 1982), III, Book 7; also *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairnes, trans. Paul Shorey, The Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton, 1985).

Concerning Plotinus, see for example "Ennead V", 5, 4, in Plotinus, *The Enneads*, revised by B. S. Page, trans. Stephen MacKenna, the fourth edition, with Foreword by E. R. Dodds; Introduction by Paul Henry, SJ.

(London, 1969), 406. Plotinus also mentions in a few places a movement of the "higher Soul" that "circles about the Divine Mind": for example in "Ennead V", 1,7, or of the fact that the soul "re-ascends", "Ennead V", 2, 2.

With regard to Proclus, in his famous, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. and trans. Eric Robinson Dodds (Oxford, 1963), see prop. 39 where he speaks about "reversion and procession", 40-3.

<sup>31</sup> Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (2001), 94-5.

<sup>32</sup> DN 704C; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 152; *The Complete Works* (1987), 77; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 97-8.

<sup>33</sup> DN 704D-705A; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 153; *The Complete Works* (1987), 77; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 98-9.

<sup>34</sup> DN 705A; *ibid.*; also DN (1983), 98.

<sup>35</sup> DN 705A; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 153; *The Complete Works* (1987), 78.

<sup>36</sup> Andia, *Henosis* (1996), 23.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>38</sup> DN 708A; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 155-56 (in fact the entire fragment of the text from 705A to 708C; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 153-55; *The Complete Works* (1987), 80. See also *The Divine Names* (1983), especially pp. 102-10; emphases added.

<sup>39</sup> EH. 392D; *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991), 71; my translation. Luibheid renders this passage thus: "He [who is] filled with love of God replies in accordance with the instructions given by the sponsor"; *The Complete Works* (1987), 202; emphasis added.

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<sup>40</sup> Stang, *Apophasis* (2012), 195.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Andia, *Henosis* (1996), 21-2.

<sup>43</sup> DN 825B; (1990), 189-90; (1987), 103; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 62.

<sup>44</sup> DN 712 A-B; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 159; *The Complete Works* (1987), 82; also DN (1983), 106.

<sup>45</sup> DN 596D, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 120; *The Complete Works* (1987), 82; also DN (1983), 85.

<sup>46</sup> Hierotheus was supposed to have written a treatise known in literature as the *Book of the Holy Hierotheos*/the *Ktābā d-Irotē'os*. But now that text is attributed to Stephen Bar Sudayli, who lived in early sixth century. This piece is a theological epic about the hidden mysteries of the Divine, and constitutes a commentary made by Gregory Bar 'Ebraya (also seen as Bar Hebraeus, 1226–86), who was a Syrian Orthodox bishop and a Syrian mystic. The work is associated with Origenism, Dionysius's treatises (both Origenist tradition and Dionysius have been credited with attempts to reconcile Platonism and the Scriptures), and with Evagrius of Pontus's writings.

<sup>47</sup> Stang, *Apophasis* (2012), 195-96.

<sup>48</sup> MT 1001A, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 144; *The Complete Works* (1987), 137; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 67.

<sup>49</sup> DN 981B; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 230; *The Complete Works* (1987), 130; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 67.

<sup>50</sup> Rorem, *A Commentary* (1993), 186, and part 4 of this book.

<sup>51</sup> EH 392A; *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991), 70; *The Complete Works* (1987), 201.

<sup>52</sup> Dionysius, *The Divine Names & Mystical Theology* (1983), 73.

<sup>53</sup> See Proclus, *In Alcibiadem* 51, ed. L. G. Westerink (Amsterdam, 1954), 22f. - fn. 31 in Proclus; see also Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (2001/1989), 95.

<sup>54</sup> Louth, *Denys* (1989) 94-5.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, 95.

<sup>56</sup> Both Rorem and Stang state that the Areopagite coined the term, but actually it is a Neoplatonic concept. For the representatives of Neoplatonism 'a hierarchy of beings' had a different structure than that peculiar to Dionysius's two hierarchies. Rorem, *A Commentary* (1993), 3; Stang, *Apophasis* (2012), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Stang, *Apophasis* (2012), 195.

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<sup>58</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, the “Celestial Hierarchy” 165A, *The Complete Works* (1987), 154; *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991), 17-8; see also 165B; *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (1991), 18-9. Dionysius repeats this idea in various forms in his treatises and letters. For instance, in DN 981B Dionysius speaks about the fact that “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”; *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 230; *The Complete Works* (1987), 130; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 67.

<sup>59</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (1990), 180; *The Complete Works* (1987), 95; see also *The Divine Names* (1983), 129, especially footnote 3.