

## The Place of *The Mystical Theology* in the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus

Paul Rorem

The Pseudo-Dionysian corpus still contains many disputed questions, including the crucial matter of its overall structure. Apart from the independent sequence of the epistles, how do the four treatises, *On the Divine Names*, *The Mystical Theology*, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, relate to one another?<sup>1</sup> Is there an overall pattern which unites these writings or should we agree with Jan Vanneste in seeing a fundamental distinction between the negative "theology", as he puts it, of *On the Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*, and the "theurgy" of the two hierarchical treatises?<sup>2</sup>

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1. These works are abbreviated as DN, MT, CH, EH, and Ep. They will be cited from the Migne text (*Patrologia Graeca* III) with occasional adjustments based upon the critical edition forthcoming from the Patristische Kommission der Westdeutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften (Göttingen), edited by A. M. Ritter, Gunther Heil, and B. Suchla. Their work, including the numbering of lines within a column of the Migne edition, is previewed by Heil's text, *La Hiérarchie Céleste, Sources Chrétiennes* 58 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1958). On the sequence of the Pseudo-Areopagite's epistles, see Ronald F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), especially pp. 65-66.

2. Jan Vanneste, *Le Mystère de Dieu. Essai sur la structure rationnelle de la doctrine mystique du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite* (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959), especially pp. 30-36. This work is summarized in "La théologie mystique du pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite," *Studia Patristica*, Vol. 5, part 3 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962): 401-415 (*Texte und Untersuchungen* 80). See also his "La doctrine des trois voies dans la Théologie Mystique du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite," *Studia Patristica*, Vol. 8, part 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966): 462-467 (*Texte und Untersuchungen* 93), and "Is the Mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius Genuine?," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1963): 286-306.

Vanneste's division of the corpus has received only slight rebuttal. See I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The pseudo-Dionysius," *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), pp. 459 and 471-472. Direct opposition to Vanneste is offered by Piero Scazzoso, *Ricerche sulla struttura del linguaggio dello Pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita* (Milan: Società Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1967), pp. 152-165. Scazzoso argues persuasively against the isolation of *The Mystical Theology* but he links it too directly with *The Ecclesiastical*

The case for a unified corpus can be introduced quite simply: each Pseudo-Dionysian treatise, including two lost or entirely fictitious works, is either reviewed or previewed in *The Mystical Theology*. Its third chapter first summarizes three preceding works: "The Theological Representations," *On the Divine Names*, and "The Symbolical Theology."<sup>3</sup> "The Theological Representations" is said to discuss the scriptural doctrines of God, beginning with the ineffable divine oneness and proceeding to the trinitarian distinctions, the creation, and the incarnation. It is mentioned and summarized at the beginning of *On the Divine Names*<sup>4</sup> which itself goes on to consider at some length the intelligible and bodiless names for God in the scriptures, as reviewed in *The Mystical Theology*, chapter three. When *On the Divine Names* concludes, it looks ahead to the next treatise, the non-existent "Symbolical Theology," and to those biblical descriptions of God tied to symbols in the lower realm of sense perception.<sup>5</sup> This treatise is the third to be summarized in *The Mystical Theology*, chapter three, and it helps to reveal the overall pattern.<sup>6</sup>

These works, all presented as interpretations of scripture, are arranged as three successive stages in the same direction, descending from transcendent ineffability down through the intelligible sphere to perceptible symbols. They proceed "down" into plurality regarding both their sequential subject matter and also their increasing length.<sup>7</sup> *The Mystical Theology*, chapter three, presents the works which precede itself as emphasizing a "kataphatic" or affirmative theology, a descending procession of assertions, beginning with the highest and truest affirmations of the divine oneness and ending with the lowest and least true of the perceptible symbols for God.

This procession stands in the larger context of "procession and return," that motif of "*exitus* and *reditus*" so basic to the history of

*Hierarchy* and thus bypasses *The Celestial Hierarchy*. See also his "Elementi del linguaggio pseudo-dionisiano," *Studia Patristica*, Vol. 8, part 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966): 385-400 (*Texte und Untersuchungen* 92), and "Valore della liturgia nelle opere dello Pseudo-Dionigi," *La Scuola Cattolica* 93 (1965): 122-142.

3. MT 1032D 1 to 1033B 22. The formal sequence of the treatises under discussion can be reconstructed from the author's own references. René Roques, "Denys l'Aréopagite," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* III, 257-264.

4. DN 585B 10f., 589D 38 to 592A 17; cf. 593B 15f., 636C 16f., 640B 20-24, 644D 42 to 645A 5, 953B 17-20.

5. DN 912D 38 to 913B 23; cf. 597AB 5-23, 700C 38, 984A 11f.

6. Perhaps the Ninth Epistle is not a summary but a subtle substitution for the fictitious *Symbolical Theology* (Ep. 9 1104B 8f., 1113BC 22-30; cf. CH 336A 3-5).

7. MT 1033B 22-26, 1033C 30-33.

western thought. Systematized by the Neoplatonist Iamblichus, the theme is most accessible in Proclus: "every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and returns to it."<sup>8</sup> The framework of *πρόοδος* and *ἐπιστροφή* of "procession and return," is generally acknowledged as essential to the structure of late Neoplatonism.<sup>9</sup> Stephen Gersh has organized a lengthy study of several Neoplatonists around this dynamic, which he calls the "downward and upward processes."<sup>10</sup> Gersh discusses both the "objective" (metaphysical) and the "subjective" (cognitive) dimensions of "procession and return" in both non-Christian and Christian Neoplatonists. He notes that while both groups saw both dimensions in this motif, the Christians shifted the emphasis from objective ontology to subjective epistemology.<sup>11</sup> This pattern of "procession and return," with the Christian adjustment of the Neoplatonic tradition, is found not only in individual passages of Pseudo-Dionysius but also in the overall organization of his corpus, namely in the sequence of treatises before us.<sup>12</sup> The procession has already been noted. The larger task is to locate the return not just in the ascending sequence of negations summarized in *The Mystical Theology* but also in the anagogical interpretation of biblical and liturgical symbols in *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. After a consideration of the Pseudo-Dionysian concepts of *ἐπιστροφή* and *ἀναγωγή* in themselves, we can return to the formal question of the Areopagite's sequence of treatises.

#### "Return" and "Uplifting" in Pseudo-Dionysius

An examination of the metaphysical terminology of "return" and of the hermeneutical language of "uplifting" will suggest their

8. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), no. 35, p. 38. See also nos. 25-39, pp. 28-43.

9. E. R. Dodds, *The Elements of Theology*, xix-xx and pp. 212-213.

10. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978). Regarding our author, Gersh writes, "As the Christian inheritor of the theory, Pseudo-Dionysius shows a tendency to replace the stereotyped terminology with a wide range of equivalents, although the thought behind the words seems not to differ substantially from the doctrine of [late Neoplatonism]" (p. 46).

11. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, p. 286.

12. Roques has already made the brief and general suggestion that both "procession" and "return" are present in each treatise and that the works in their order are from one point of view entirely a downward procession, and from another point of view, entirely an upward return. *Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 133-134.

fundamental harmony. Of course, these terms and concepts had considerable currency before the Dionysian corpus was ever written. As mentioned, the later Neoplatonists systematized the pattern of a procession from and a return to the divine realm which is thus the first cause and the final goal. Similarly, Origen and others had already employed the language of ἀναγωγή in scriptural interpretation, and the Neoplatonist Iamblichus inherited and interpreted a theurgical "anagogy" in *The Chaldean Oracles*.<sup>13</sup> Pre-history cannot detain us, however, except for a quotation from Proclus which explicitly compares the concept of "return" with that of "uplifting."

Every uplifting cause among the gods differs from both the purifying and the returning kinds. . . . It has a more specific order than the returning kind, for that which returns returns either to itself or to something higher, while the effect of an uplifting cause is [always] characterized by the return toward the higher, as lifting up to the more divine that which is being returned.<sup>14</sup>

For the Areopagite, there is no such alternative within ἐπιστροφή and therefore no such distinction between "return" and "uplifting." There is only one cause, and every return is toward the higher, toward God. Thus for Pseudo-Dionysius, "return" and "uplifting" have the same divine goal: ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἀναγωγή καὶ ἐπιστροφή.<sup>15</sup> The two expressions indicate one and the same movement insofar as there is but one goal, God. The author's various synonyms for God are all applied equally to this one movement whether the terminology is ἐπιστρέφω or ἀνάγω.<sup>16</sup> The return to the divine is the same movement as the uplifting to the

13. A helpful survey of the term ἀναγωγή is provided by Wolfgang A. Bienert, "Allegoria" und "Anagoge" bei Didymus dem Blinden von Alexandria (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), pp. 56-68. Unfortunately, Bienert omits any mention of *The Chaldean Oracles*. See Hans Lewy, *The Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy* (Cairo: L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1958), Chapter Three: "Theurgical Elevation," pp. 177-226, and Excursus Eight: "On the Designation of the Theurgical Sacrament of Immortality as Elevation (ἀναγωγή)," pp. 487-489. Rorem, "Iamblichus and the Anagogical Method in Pseudo-Dionysian Liturgical Theology," forthcoming in the proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, September, 1979.

14. Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, no. 158, p. 138.

15. CH 260B 16f., cf. 240A 2-8 and 333B 24.

16. CH 340A 12f., EH 400C 36f., 504C 26, DN 913C 33f., 916D 43f. There are several other terms, such as ἀνατείνω, which express the same upward movement: CH 208D 46, 240C 35, Ep. 9 1108A 14f.

divine.<sup>17</sup> Yet there is an important difference. While both terms indicate a movement toward God, a typical statement of a “returning” motion mentions no agency in this ascent while an “anagogical” formulation provides more detail.<sup>18</sup> When expressed in terms of ἐπιστρέφω the elevating motion receives a stark metaphysical expression, such as “from the many to the one”<sup>19</sup> or “toward that which truly is.”<sup>20</sup> The philosophical statements that God as the good (or as light, the cause of all, or pantocrator)<sup>21</sup> returns all things to itself contain no further explanation of *how* this process takes place.<sup>22</sup> When ἀνάγω is used, the same ascending movement, with God as both the active subject and the final goal, is described more fully. Often specified quite clearly are the intermediary agents and an uplifting not of all things in general but of “us” in the human hierarchy.

This second [rank of angels] is uplifted proportionately by this [first rank], and the third by the second, and our hierarchy by the third, according to the regulation of a harmonious principle.<sup>23</sup>

The most important difference is that ἀναγωγή specifies the first half of the overall return and its provisional goal, namely an “uplifting through the perceptible to the intelligible.”<sup>24</sup> The perceptible symbols of the Bible and of the liturgy are not shunned as unbecoming to God or to the mind, but are honored as the images of the divine,<sup>25</sup> and are employed as a guidance and a path upward.<sup>26</sup> “Our hierarchy,” he writes, “is variegated into perceptible symbols, and by means of them it is sacredly uplifted to the divine.”<sup>27</sup> The uplifting or anagogical movement is not worked by the symbols *per se* in any sense of their own efficacy or their magical manipulation, but rather by their interpretation.

. . . it is not possible for our mind to be raised towards that imitation of the heavenly hierarchies and immaterial contemplations, unless it uses the material guidance according to itself, understanding the visible beauties as representations of the

17. EH 477D 45; CH 180B 22, 180C 37f., 181A 3f., 208B 28f., 240B 15f., 260C 31f., EH 501D 45f.

18. See the examples of DN 913C 33f. and 825A 2-4, respectively.

19. DN 980C 32-34, cf. EH 440A 6f., DN 705A 6f., and 948D 9f.

20. DN 701B 20.

21. DN 700B 24f., 708AB 13-16, 937A 1f.

22. DN 700A 10, cf. 700B 17f., 705D 42f., 712C 42f.

23. CH 272D 11 to 273A 5.

24. CH 124A 12f., EH 377A 4f., cf. DN 708D 43-45.

25. Ep. 9 1108C 34-37, cf. 1117C 12f.

26. EH 397C 29f.

27. EH 501D 44-46, cf. 373B 15f.

invisible comeliness, the perceptible fragrances as impressions of the intelligible distributions, the material lights as images of an immaterial gift of light. . .<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, the "ascent through negations"<sup>29</sup> must not be separated from anagogical interpretation, for the process of interpreting symbols incorporates negative theology within itself. Every symbol from the most becoming to the most incongruous is both like and yet also unlike the heavenly realm which it symbolizes. A given image is, to use the Areopagite's oxymoron, "a dissimilar similarity."<sup>30</sup> "For the very same things are both similar and also dissimilar to God."<sup>31</sup> Determining precisely how a perceptible symbol is a dissimilarity to be negated, and how it is simultaneously a similarity to be affirmed beyond sense perception, is the process of interpretation, namely the task of biblical hermeneutics and of liturgical exposition. René Roques has summarized the close relationship between negations and the interpretation of symbols: "La théologie négative apparaît ainsi comme le centre et la clé de tout symbolisme."<sup>32</sup>

The process of this "apophatic anagogy" reaches its goal in the intelligible meanings of the biblical or liturgical symbols. *Ἀναγωγή* concludes when these "noetic" contemplations are attained.<sup>33</sup> But this is not the last word in the Pseudo-Dionysian metaphor of ascent. The overall "return" rises still higher in that all conceptions, even the loftiest contemplations and most appropriate divine names,<sup>34</sup> ultimately fall short of God and must be abandoned.

### *The Anagogical Treatises*

Besides reviewing the affirmative or descending works which preceded itself, *The Mystical Theology* also previews the "apophatic" and anagogical movement in the treatises yet to come. The advice to "Timothy", the example of Moses' ascent, and the condensed list of sample negations are not the entire expression of the Pseudo-Dionysian "apophatic" ascent but rather its preview

28. CH 121CD 35-43.

29. DN 981B 16f.

30. CH 137D 44 to 140A 1, 141C 37, 144A 5, 145A 14, 337B 25.

31. DN 916A 8, cf. CH 141C 37-39.

32. *Structures théologiques*, p. 172, a reprint of "Symbolisme et théologie négative chez le pseudo-Denys," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume-Budé* 1 (1957): 97-112.

33. CH 121C 36f., 140A 11, 141C 35f., 165D 42-45, 304C 25, 328A 2; EH 373B 14-16, 397A 2, 424C 6-10, 428C 32.

34. DN 981AB 10-22.

and guide. Just as negative theology is incorporated into the interpretation of symbols, so *The Mystical Theology* and the second chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy* must be understood together. The former treatise foresees an ascending sequence of negations, beginning with the last things most different from the divine, namely the lowest or most obviously false statements based on sense perception.<sup>35</sup> *The Celestial Hierarchy* is the start of this ascent, beginning with a discussion of the most "incongruous" of comparisons. The wisdom of the scripture writers descends down to the incongruous dissimilarities not only to conceal divine truths from the profane but also and indeed primarily to accommodate itself to the capacity of the faithful and to jolt their dull minds upward.<sup>36</sup> Lest the novice be misled, the anagogical journey begins with absurdities which cry out for interpretation and are thus more uplifting.<sup>37</sup> *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter two, has certain characteristics of a pedagogical introduction: the consideration of a misguided alternative, affirming its intentions but then reducing it to the absurdity of "mooed" angelic hymns and a celestial menagerie, the frequent examples, the periodic repetitions of the key points, and in conclusion the teacher's personal testimony.<sup>38</sup>

Once introduced, the interpretive method of negating and transcending the surface meaning of the symbolic can move up to the more attractive depictions and yet not succumb to their exterior charms. The experienced interpreter needs few further reminders of the role of negative theology in understanding symbols. Negations and incongruities are no longer emphasized, therefore, in the author's own exegesis in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter fifteen. But the same principles still apply. Except for space limitations, he says, he would interpret all the bodily shapes ascribed to the angels "according to the dissimilar similarities."<sup>39</sup> The notion of incongruity, which contains negative theology within itself, becomes an assumed and natural part of the interpretive process and needs few illustrations. "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."<sup>40</sup>

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35. MT 1033C 36-45; cf. CH 141A 3-7.

36. CH 140AB 7-18, 141B 21-31, 145A 8-10, EH 376D 36 to 377A 5, Ep. 9 1105C 36-45, 1108A 7-20.

37. CH 141A 11-14.

38. CH 137C 26 to 140A 1, 145B 15-23.

39. CH 337B 21-25.

40. CH 337C 31-34.

The remaining treatise is *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and its complete lack of explicit negative theology seems to pose a problem. Not only are liturgical symbols never called incongruous or dissimilar, a silence striking by itself, but they are explicitly considered "precise" and "ascribed with appropriateness."<sup>41</sup> Did the author fail to apply to the liturgy his own principle that even the loftiest images are insufficient and need an interpretation which transcends the perceptible form? If so, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* does not fit into the overall pattern traced so far. But an alternative to this charge of inconsistency deserves a further hearing.

First of all, the formal sequence of these two hierarchical treatises is clear from the author's own hand: *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* follows *The Celestial Hierarchy*.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, there is a fundamental unity to the Pseudo-Dionysian interpretation of symbols, whether biblical or liturgical. Here we can only report on the results of our research<sup>43</sup> by citing two typical and strikingly parallel texts. First, concerning the exegesis of the biblical descriptions of the angels:

We should next praise the angelic hierarchy and behold with super-natural perception its sacred formations in the scriptures, so that we might be uplifted by means of the secretive representations to their most god-like simplicity.<sup>44</sup>

Second, concerning the interpretation of the sacrament of myron:

Therefore after we have observed its parts in sequence according to the sacred images, we shall be thus uplifted in hierarchical contemplations by means of the parts to its oneness.<sup>45</sup>

When the overall similarity of Pseudo-Dionysian biblical exegesis and sacramental interpretation is granted,<sup>46</sup> the apparent absence of negative theology in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* can be re-evaluated. If the role of negations in the interpretation of biblical symbols is stated fully only in the methodological introduction of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and is then barely mentioned in that work's

41. EH 401C 35f., 404B 12f.

42. EH 372C 31-42.

43. "Biblical and Liturgical Symbols in Pseudo-Dionysius," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1980.

44. CH 177BC 4-8.

45. EH 472D 9-12.

46. The author himself intertwines the two realms of symbols quite explicitly in Ep. 9 1105D 45 to 1108A 7. Walther Völker, *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1958), p.



concluding chapter, then the next treatise in the formal sequence, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, should also be seen in this light. Since chapters one and three of *The Celestial Hierarchy* clearly introduce both of the hierarchical treatises,<sup>47</sup> it is not unreasonable that chapter two and its discussion of incongruity in the interpretation of the symbolic should also apply to the liturgical symbols of *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. That discussion, so clearly stated in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter two, and then largely assumed in the rest of that treatise, seems taken completely for granted in the next work, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. In the ascent by means of perceptible symbols, whether scriptural or liturgical, incongruous or more precise, anagogical interpretation transcends and thus implicitly negates the lower level of sense perception.

Thus *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* occupies a slightly "higher" position than *The Celestial Hierarchy* in several ways. First, the arena of ceremonial symbolism requires an advanced and more discerning interpreter, for it does not include helpfully obvious and startling dissimilarities. Second, the liturgical tradition is said to be "more immaterial" than the biblical tablets in that it is "free from writing."<sup>48</sup> Third, the ritual symbols chosen for emphasis by the author are more immaterial not only in form but also in content. The exegetical emphasis of Pseudo-Dionysius is on the physical appearances of the angels. *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter fifteen, is concerned for their apparent extension in space.<sup>49</sup> The emphasis of his liturgical interpretation, on the other hand, is quite different. Liturgical objects, whether the architecture, the vestments, or the sacramental materials and their vessels, are never interpreted for their physical forms or colors but only for their role in ceremonial movements. The Pseudo-Areopagite concentrates on the ritual gestures, on a symbolic extension not in space but in time, in the chronological sequence of ritual activities such as the censuring procession or the fraction of the bread.<sup>50</sup> The two passages

117. René Roques, *L'Univers Dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Aubier, 1954), pp. 225-234.

47. For example, CH 121C 28 to 124A 5.

48. EH 376C 27-34. The sequence of *The Celestial Hierarchy* and then *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is mirrored in the liturgy itself: first the introductory scripture readings and then the more exclusive, sacramental portion of the rite.

49. The author first proposes to consider the angelic ranks in general (CH 121A 6-11) but then specifies his interest in their alleged physical forms (121C 31-33, 124A 13f., 136D 8 to 137A 3, 177BC 15-17). The de-emphasis of the angelic movements is most striking in the absence of Jacob's ladder of descending and ascending angels.

50. The censuring "procession and return": EH 425B 21-25, 428D 21 to 429A

quoted above can exemplify the two contrasting emphases: the spatial forms ascribed to the angels and the temporal sequences observed in the liturgy.

Although in Neoplatonic terms the dimension of time is superior to that of space, both belong to the lowly realm of sense perception. Similarly, although *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* might thus be said to stand slightly higher than *The Celestial Hierarchy* on the Pseudo-Areopagite's literary path of "return", both hierarchical works concern an uplifting by means of the perceptible to the intelligible. Both are thus previewed in *The Mystical Theology*, chapter four, which concerns the negation of sense perception. All interpretations are still to be abandoned in the further ascent when even the loftiest of noetic conceptions must be negated, as summarized in *The Mystical Theology*, chapter five. Lest the reader led on this spiritual odyssey be tempted to linger over negations as capturing the divine, *The Mystical Theology* concludes by leaving even them behind in the last approach to the ineffable.<sup>51</sup> The plurality of words sharply decreases during the ascent from the many discursive interpretations to a few terse negations to complete silence.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion

We propose, therefore, that *The Mystical Theology* is a methodological parenthesis in the overall flow of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, summarizing the preceding material and pointing the way to the anagogical treatises and spiritual uplifting yet to come. Granted, the pattern of "procession and return" is not a simple temporal sequence, nor can it be so easily divided and exclusively distributed to the various writings. The trajectory we have traced does not fully explain the agenda of any one treatise, much less of the whole corpus. Nevertheless, the sequence of Pseudo-Dionysian treatises does present an evolution at least of emphasis along the lines of "procession and return." This is not meant to imply that the definitive structure of the corpus is simply Neoplatonic; the pattern here proposed is rather an example of the Christian adaptation of "procession and return" as discussed by

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2, 476D 38-45; the pluralization and gathering of the synaxis: 444A 6-14, 444C 28-30, and especially 429A 8-15. The author de-emphasizes not only the sacramental objects, which are the body's communion and not the soul's contemplation (565B 23-27), but also the liturgical texts, which are never interpreted nor even divulged (565C 30-34).

51. MT 1048B.

52. MT 1033B 26-30, 1033C 33-36.

Gersh. Our conclusion does suggest, however, that the entire question of a Pseudo-Dionysian “mystical” ascent should be re-examined within the context of the anagogical interpretation of the scriptures and especially of the liturgy.<sup>53</sup>

*Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies,  
Toronto*

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53. For example, the texts describing the “mystical” experiences of Carpos (Ep. 8 1097BC 21-26), Hierotheus (DN 648AB 10-20, 681C 41 to 684A 3), and Moses (MT 1000CD 34-43) are all permeated by a liturgical vocabulary and context.