

HIERARCHY VERSUS ANARCHY?
DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA,
SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN,
NICETAS STETHATOS, AND THEIR COMMON ROOTS
IN ASCETICAL TRADITION

Hieromonk Alexander (Golitzin)

The late Father John Meyendorff did not have much use for Dionysius the Areopagite. The latter seemed to him too much the Neoplatonist, and his influence on the Orthodox liturgy was especially to be regretted.¹ In this context, it was Dionysius' theory of hierarchy that Fr John found particularly objectionable, characterizing it as oscillating between, on the one hand, a "magical clericalism" and, on the other, a failure to distinguish the "objective presence of grace" from "the personal perfection of the initiator."² He felt that there was no difference between the role of the Dionysian hierarch "and that of a charismatic."³ Dionysius thus represented "a tendency in one line of spirituality, linked to Evagrius [of Pontus]," that culminated in Nicetas Stethatos' "conclusion in the eleventh century that the real bishop is the one who has knowledge . . . not the one ordained by men."⁴ Now it happens that Nicetas, for whom Father John also cared rather little, was the lifelong disciple, editor, and promoter of a man for whom he and Meyendorff shared a very high regard: the great Byzantine

¹See *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, D.C.: 1969), 75-84.

²*Ibid.*, 82.

³*Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (London: 1974), 28.

⁴*Christ*, 82, quoting Nicetas' *On Hierarchy* V.32 (SC 81), 340.

mystic, Symeon the New Theologian. Even Symeon, though, was not without his problems. His fierce opposition of "the charismatic personality of the saint to the institution" of the Church drew from Father John the observation that, in this regard, the New Theologian was "reflecting a frame of mind which had existed in both ancient and Byzantine Christianity, in Pseudo-Dionysius and the Macarian tradition."⁵

1. A Paradoxical Relationship?

Aside from the interesting way these observations juxtapose Dionysius and Evagrius with the *Macarian Homilies*, two sets of writings that he normally saw in opposition to each other,⁶ Father John's usual perspicacity does shed a certain light on the problem of a three-cornered relationship—that between Dionysius, Symeon, and the latter's disciple, Nicetas—that has puzzled scholars for some time. Jan Koder, editor of the *Sources chrétiennes* edition of Symeon's *Hymns*, wonders for example how Nicetas could have placed himself in the "paradoxical position of defending simultaneously both the anarchical mysticism of Symeon and the unilateral theoretician of hierarchy," Dionysius.⁷ Why, Koder continues, should Nicetas have sought, as he did in his own introduction to Symeon's *Hymns*,⁸ to assimilate his master to the Areopagite's supposed teacher, Hierotheos?⁹ And why do we find Stethatos' curious treatise, *On the Hierarchy*, trying to postulate the "exact coincidence of each person's hierarchical position with his illumination by the Spirit?"¹⁰ Indeed, why should Nicetas have written such a treatise at all? What possible relation could he have seen his master, the charismatic anarchist, having with the apostle of hierarchical mediation—a system, moreover, bor-

⁵*Byzantine Theology*, 75.

⁶For example, *Ibid.*, 67-69.

⁷From J. Koder's "Introduction" to *Syméon le nouveau théologien: Hymnes* (SC 156), 60-61, note 2.

⁸See Nicetas' "Preface," *Ibid.*, 106-132, with its frequent and copious references to Dionysius' *Divine Names*.

⁹*Ibid.*, 60-64.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 60-61, note 1.

rowed from the pagan Neoplatonism of Iamblichus and Proclus?"¹¹

In reply to these questions, most scholars have held that there is no relation between Symeon and Dionysius, or at least very little. Nicetas, in this view, is quite on his own and, equally, quite in contradiction with his elder. He was a man, they point out, who was very much in the center of church life in the imperial capital, a hobnobber with the city's ecclesiastical and civil elite, and who ended up as abbot of the Studion and thus a very important person on his own right.¹² But, so this thinking goes, he was not a particularly original or even very clear thinker. Hence his "ludicrous" attempt to link two men of radically different persuasion was the result, first, of an effort to show off his own learning that was quite consonant with antiquarian enthusiasm of upper class pretensions and, second, a clumsy effort to clothe the "quite personal system" of his still controversial master with the apostolic mantle of the divine Dionysius.¹³ Others have suggested that perhaps there was a connection between Dionysius and Symeon which the latter handed on, not in his published writings, but in "detailed instruction of a more esoteric nature" to his disciple, and which Nicetas subsequently articulated in his peculiar treatise, *On Hierarchy*.¹⁴

¹¹This, at any rate, is the usual picture of Dionysius since, in particular, the publication of H. Koch's *Pseudo-Dionysius in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (Mainz: 1900), and one may find it faithfully reflected in the most recent book in English on the Areopagite, P. Rorem's *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (Oxford: 1993). One may also find it in such a notable Orthodox scholar as the late G. Florovsky, *Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Writers* (Belmont, MA: 1987), 204-228, esp. 221-228; and, more recently, K. P. Wesche, "Christological Doctrine and Liturgical Interpretation in Pseudo-Dionysius," *SVTQ* 33, 1 (1989), 53-73. My own reply to the latter, "On the Other Hand," *SVTQ* 34, 4 (1990), 305-323, left, as Fr Wesche noted in his "Reply to Hieromonk Alexander's Reply" (*Ibid.*, 324-327), some questions unanswered. I offer this article, originally a paper delivered in honor of Fr John for the Byzantine Conference at Princeton University, November 1993, as a partial response to some of Fr Paul's difficulties.

¹²For a sketch of Nicetas' life, see J. Darrouzès, *SC* 81, 7-10, and I. Hausherr, *Vie de Syméon le nouveau théologien* (Rome: 1938), xv-xxiv.

¹³See Darrouzès, *Ibid.*, 37. The latter does, though, allow for some such possibility as Turner (below) suggests.

¹⁴H.J.M. Turner, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (Leiden: 1990), 116.

While I think that there is something to be said for all these suggestions about Stethatos—Nicetas did occasionally have something of the snob about him, nor is he always perfectly consistent, nor is it unlikely that his master had some private things to say to him—I do not believe that we need to assume either his ego or his confusion, or even secret teachings, in order to see a relationship between the New Theologian and the Areopagite. Father John's emphasis on what we might call the "charismatic principle" is certainly one clue to Symeon's conscious use of Dionysius, but there are others as well. I have in mind particularly the note of "apostolic authority" struck above and, even more importantly (and never mentioned in the literature), the idea of the hierarchy—and so the whole church at worship—as the icon of the inner man. The latter is a notion that has common roots for both Symeon and Dionysius in the Macarian and Evagrian writings, which is to say in just that curious and uncharacteristic juxtaposition that we saw Meyendorff making above, and to which we shall return in the latter part of this essay. For now, the faithful disciple, Nicetas, will help us by supplying clues to the presence of the motifs just noted in two textual pairings taken from the works of the Areopagite and the New Theologian. We shall first examine Dionysius' *Eighth Epistle*, "To Demophilus, a monk," in parallel with Symeon's famous (or infamous) *Letter on Confession* and, second, the opening chapter and third paragraph of *The Celestial Hierarchy* in comparison with Symeon's *Fourteenth Ethical Discourse*.

I. A. Two Epistles: Dionysius' "To Demophilus" and Symeon's "On Confession"

The two letters appear at first as a study in contrast. They advocate positions in diametric opposition. As pointed out by Roland Hathaway, Dionysius' *Eighth Epistle* is a kind of interruption in the sequence of ten letters concluding the *corpus*.¹⁵ The addressees of the first four letters are monks,

¹⁵R. F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the New Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague: 1969), esp. 64-65 and 86-102.

of the fifth letter a deacon, the sixth a priest, the seventh a bishop, while the ninth and tenth are addressed to Timothy, St Paul's disciple and a bishop, and finally the Apostle John in exile at Patmos.¹⁶ The eighth is thus a disruption, and disruption is precisely its subject. An unruly monk, Demophilus ("lover of the mob"), has broken into the sanctuary to discipline a priest in the process of hearing a confession. He has chased the priest out, beaten up the penitent, grabbed the consecrated elements (*ta hagia*), and is standing guard over them in order to prevent their profanation.¹⁷ This scenario provides Dionysius with an occasion to expand on the importance of the divinely established order of the Church. Like someone who presumes to occupy an imperial office without the emperor's writ, Demophilus has been audacious (*tolmeros*).¹⁸ He has forgotten his place and calling, and has intruded upon a function not his in defiance of God and God's hierarchy. First of all, a monk has no place within the sanctuary veils. That is only for the clergy, who alone have the right to stand before the altar. Monks belong at the doors, outside the sanctuary, ahead of but not wholly removed from the rest of the laity.¹⁹ To be sure, Dionysius agrees, the priest who is unilluminated (*aphotistos*) is not a true priest, but that does not give a bossy monk the right to correct him.²⁰ And do not, he adds, quote the example of Elijah to me (a reference, clearly, to the prophetic role assumed by the monastic movement from its first appearance).²¹ It is Demophilus' task instead to establish order (*taxis*) in his own house, and this means giving the proper place (*ta kat' axian*) to appetite,

¹⁶The Migne text of the ten letters is in PG III, 1065A-1120A. The critical text of Dionysius is the *Corpus Dionysiacum* I (the *Divine Names* edited by B. M. Suchla) and II (everything else, edited by H. Ritter and G. Heil), published by de Gruyter (Berlin: 1990/1991). The letters are in volume II, 156-210. In future citations I shall give only the PG column number and, in parentheses, the page and line numbers (where necessary) of the critical text.

¹⁷*Epistle* VIII 108A-1100D (171-192).

¹⁸*Tolmeros*, *tolmeo* and the reference to the emperor are in 1089B (178:1-6).

¹⁹1088D-1089A (176:9-177:10).

²⁰1092C (181:7-10).

²¹1096C (186:12). On early monastic claims to the mantle of the prophets, see, for example, P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church* (Oxford: 1978), 18-67.

emotion, and reason (*epithymia/thymos/logos*).²² Once he has truly "done his own thing" (*dran to heautou*), then perhaps he may be given authority over home, city, and nation—but not before God has clearly singled him out for it.²³ For the present, however, he is clearly lacking in the virtues necessary for the vision of God, and Dionysius begins his epistle with an encomium on the virtues of humility and compassion which he presents as having been embodied in Moses and David.²⁴ In the meantime, Demophilus is to obey his superiors. Those whom God has given rule distribute His providence to their subordinates.²⁵ As examples of good shepherds, Dionysius points first to "our divine and sacred initiator, Christ."²⁶ Jesus forgives the sinner, but He has no patience with those who seek vengeance. He even, Dionysius adds in quoting *Matthew 7:22-23*, rejects people who have worked miracles in His name if they are lacking the virtues.²⁷ Secondly, the Areopagite turns to the example of a righteous bishop, Carpus, who had known the sight of God (*theoptia*) and, indeed, had never celebrated the liturgy without having had such a vision beforehand.²⁸ When Carpus was at one time tempted by thoughts of vengeance, he had been vouchsafed a sudden (*aphno*) visitation from Christ.²⁹ The roof had opened over him while he was at midnight prayer

²²1093A-C (182:6-183:11).

²³1093B (183:6-10).

²⁴1084B-1085B (171:3-172:10) for Moses and David. Dionysius then adds Job and Abel (172:10-13), the angels (1085C, 173:7-11), and finally Christ (173:11) as examples of love and mercy, and especially of meekness, *praotes* (171:4 and 6). Of some interest, in view of what we have to say below concerning Evagrius' relationship to Dionysius, is the former's use of Moses and David in a very similar way as examples of meekness, and hence as apt for the vision of God. See esp. Evagrius' *Letter 56* in W. Frankenberg's *Evagrius Ponticus* (Berlin: 1912), 605, and for a like use of Moses and meekness, *Letters 25* (583-585), 36 (591), and 41 (595).

²⁵1093A (182:3-6).

²⁶1096A (185:7).

²⁷For Christ is forgiving and patient, 1096B (185:10-187:8). Mercy and vengeance or hatred is the difference between the angels and devils, 1097A (187:10-188:2). It is above, 1098D (179:8-10), that Dionysius quotes *Matt 7*. God does not permit the lawless, *paranomoi*, to approach Him.

²⁸1097BC (188:9-13).

²⁹For the vision, 1096D-1100D (189:10-192:2). For *aphno*, 1100A (190:5).

and the Lord Himself had given him an unforgettable lesson about the virtues of mercy, patience, and long-suffering.

In direct opposition to Dionysius, Symeon's *Letter on Confession*³⁰ is devoted to the defense of the proposition that not only priests, but also—even especially—monks have the right to hear confessions and absolve sinners. Confession, Symeon begins, is a necessity since everyone sins, and sin is death.³¹ The sinner cannot atone of himself, nor recover by his own efforts the things which Christ "came down from heaven—and daily comes down—to distribute" to the faithful.³² One must therefore look for "an intercessor, a physician, and a good counselor,"³³ "a friend of God . . . capable of restoring" him to his former state.³⁴ But such people are rare and, while there are many pretenders, Christ will reject these false authorities even as He will those who cast out demons in His name—and here Symeon quotes *Matthew 7:22-23*.³⁵ To presume upon what the New Theologian calls the "Apostolic rank" (*axioma*) of "binding and loosing" is comparable to the man who "has had the audacity [*tolmeo*] to dare represent himself as the representative of the earthly emperor" without the latter's permission. We must observe the proper rank [*taxis*]. To do otherwise is an act of dreadful presumption [*tolma*].³⁶ Pretenders are rightly and dreadfully punished on earth and so will their ecclesiastical equivalents be at the Last Judgement.³⁷

³⁰The text of the *Letter on Confession* and its ascription to Symeon was established by K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum, eine Studie zum Symeon dem neuen Theologen* (Leipzig: 1898). The *Letter* is on pages 110-127, and was recently reprinted by Orthodox Kypseli, *Tou hosiou patros hemon Symeonos tou neou theologou: Erga III: Hymnoi kai Epistolai* (Thessalonica: 1990), 423-439. Page and paragraph numbers will be from Holl, page and line numbers in parentheses from the reprint.

³¹*Letter 3-4*, 111-113 (424-426).

³²*Ibid.*, 4, 113-114 (425:26-427:12).

³³*Ibid.*, 7, 117 (429:21). The three characteristics of the spiritual father are taken from "The Pastor" in John of Sinai's *The Ladder*. See K. T. Ware, "Forward" to I. Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*, trans. A. Gythiel (Kalamazoo: 1990), vii-xxxiii, esp. xi-xv.

³⁴*Letter 5*, 115 (428:3-5).

³⁵*Ibid.*, 7, 117 (430:14-17).

³⁶*Ibid.*, 9, 118 (431:17-20) for the emperor, and 10, 119 (432:3-8) for *taxis* and *tolma*.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 9, 118-120 and 10, 119 (431:20-24 and 432:9-11).

This brings Symeon to the heart of his argument, that it is permissible for unordained monks to hear confessions. While, he admits, it is true that only bishops used to have the authority to bind and to loose, that original situation has changed because of human corruption. Originally, and here he cites *John* 20:22-23, Christ gave this authority together with the Holy Spirit to His disciples, and they in turn to their successors, the bishops. But this initial situation changed, because:

When time had passed and the bishops became useless, this dread authority passed on to priests of blameless life . . . [and] when the latter in their turn had become polluted . . . it was transferred . . . to God's elected people, I mean to the monks.³⁸

Not to all the monks, Symeon hastens to add, since the devil got to most of them as well. Thus today, he concludes, while the clergy still have the—presumably—unique authority to celebrate (*hierourgein*) the rest of the sacraments:

The grace [of binding and loosing] is given alone to those, as many as there are among priests and bishops and monks, who have been numbered among Christ's disciples on account of their purity of life.³⁹

Only the person who has "been borne aloft to the divine glory . . . [and] become a participant of God," who has seen "the light unapproachable, God Himself," can say to another, "Be reconciled with God."⁴⁰ For Symeon the vision of God is thus the *sine qua non* of authority in the Church and, conversely, authority belongs only to those who have had this experience. These people are recognized by the apostolic virtues that they exhibit, among them "compassion, brotherly love, and humility."⁴¹ They have found within themselves "the intelligible light," and each of them has thus "discovered his own

³⁸*Ibid.*, 11, 120 (432:22-31).

³⁹*Ibid.*, 14:124 (436:10-15, *hierourgein* on line 10).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 15, 125 (437:29-438:3).

⁴¹*Ibid.* (436:27-29).

soul."⁴² Symeon concludes the epistle by citing the example of his own spiritual father, Symeon the Pious, "who did not have the ordination from men," but who had encouraged him to receive it.⁴³

We do not need Nicetas' help to note for ourselves a number of interesting parallels between these two documents. First, the very contrast is itself suggestive. Dionysius is telling a monk to get out of the priestly business of confession while Symeon argues that, properly qualified by illumination, the monk has a divine right—even obligation—to be thus involved. Second, both writers hold in common that illumination is an essential qualification for the true confessor. Dionysius agrees with Demophilus that the unilluminated priest is not a priest, and Symeon speaks of the saint as in the light and glory of God. The list of virtues, third, which accompany this grace are also similar. Dionysius begins with humility as that which enabled Moses to see God, and he concludes with the example of Carpus as an illustration of the same virtue, together with long-suffering and mercy. Likewise, Symeon begins the body of his *Letter* by stressing the observance of the commandments,⁴⁴ denounces like Dionysius the judgement of others uninformed by grace,⁴⁵ and returns at the *Letter's* end to the list of virtues, humility and long-suffering prominent among them, that characterize the holy man. Fourth, both Symeon's saint and Dionysius' holy man, Carpus in this case, are singled out by visions. Carpus never celebrated without one and the charismatic holy man sees Christ within (we might also recall Nicetas' description of his master in the *Vita* as never having presided at liturgy without seeing the fire of the Spirit descending at the *anaphora*).⁴⁶ Fifth, without this divine sanction and its accompanying virtues, even those who work wonders in Christ's name are dismissed

⁴²*Ibid.*, 126 (438:9-12).

⁴³*Ibid.*, 16, 127 (438:28-439:2).

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 4, 112-114 (425:9-427:11).

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 8, 118 (430:18-431:6).

⁴⁶*Vie de Syméon* 30 (40). And, too, Nicetas in *Vie* 33 (44) describes Symeon as a "concelebrant of the celestial hierarchy," offering sacrifice and himself transformed into the fire of the Holy Spirit. The last line's implicit equation of the saint's transformation with the change (*metabole*) of the eucharistic elements recalls the point we observe below concerning Macarius' parallel between the saint and the Eucharist.

with the same quotation from *Matthew* 7:22-23. To presume, sixth, upon the apostolic dignity (*taxis/taxis*) of reconciliation is an act of audacity (*tolmeros/tolmeo, tolma*). Seventh, both writers offer the same illustration of this effrontery, that of pretending to imperial office without having been appointed by the emperor.⁴⁷ We might also point out, eighth, that where Symeon does—grudgingly, it is true—allow that the clergy are still uniquely empowered to celebrate the other sacraments, he is obedient to the Dionysian (and generally traditional) *taxis* and, moreover, uses a strikingly Dionysian term, *hierourgein*,⁴⁸ to describe the clergy's function.

It is difficult to see these parallels as accidental. I think it clear that Symeon had the *Epistle to Demophilus* very much in mind when composing his own *Letter*—just as, indeed, I believe the Areopagite is in general far more important to the New Theologian's thinking than has generally been admitted; and we shall turn to one other such instance in a moment.⁴⁹ For now, though, the one glaring difference between the two letters remains to be explained. This is of course Symeon's thesis of monastic authority and the argument he uses to defend it, that

⁴⁷It is true that the emperor makes frequent appearances in Symeon's writings, a fact usually ascribed to service at the imperial court as a youth (see *Vie* 3, p. 4), but the parallel between this text and Dionysius in *Epistle* III still seems to me to be deliberate.

⁴⁸For *hierourgein* and its relatives in Dionysius, see the "Register: griechische Wörter in *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, 286. I count *hierourgeo* twenty-three times, *hierourgia* thirty-eight, *hierourgikos* four times, and *hierourgos* five.

⁴⁹Appreciation for the Areopagite's place in Symeon's thought has grown somewhat over the years. Holm saw nothing at all, at least in terms of a direct acquaintance on Symeon's part, *Enthusiasmus* 99, note 2. D. L. Stathopoulos, *Die Gottesliebe bei Symeon dem neuen Theologen*, Diss. (Bonn: 1964), 20, declared that Symeon had "keine direkte Kenntnis" of Dionysius. W. Völker, *Praxis und Theorie bei Symeon dem neuen Theologen: ein Beitrag zur Byzantinischen Mystik* (Wiesbaden: 1974), 342 and 359-360, felt there to have been some influence, but "fast alle" in Symeon's *Centuries*, an opinion echoed by A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, CT: 1989), 100 and 117. On the other hand, B. Fraigneau-Julien, *Les sens spirituels et la vision de Dieu selon Syméon le nouveau théologien* (Paris: 1985), 171-180, admits to a considerable influence from Dionysius, especially from the *Mystical Theology* and *Divine Names*. Still, no one to my knowledge has as yet advanced my thesis here, that Dionysius' treatises on the hierarchies were quite as important for the New Theologian as the other works in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

is, the history which he offers of the corruption of the bishop's office and the consequent devolution upon the monks of the authority to bind and loose. It is here that we might look to Nicetas to give us a clue as to the relationship obtaining between our two texts. In his *Eighth Epistle*, accompanying his own treatise *On the Hierarchy*, Nicetas quotes the *Epistle to Demophilus* altogether approvingly on the relative placement within the church building of the clergy (inside the sanctuary), (on the *bema*), and the laity (in the nave). This, Stethatos concludes, is the order given by Christ to the Church and written down by Dionysius, the disciple of St Paul.⁵⁰ In other words, Dionysius' authority, thanks to his pseudonym, is precisely "apostolic." We thus recall Symeon's *Letter* and his admission that the authority to bind and loose was originally given by Christ to the disciples and then to the bishops. Only the latter, he says, used to have it. Given the relationship between his *Letter on Confession* and Dionysius' to Demophilus that we have just noted, and combining it with the uses to which the latter had previously been put by Byzantine ecclesiastical authorities,⁵¹ it is surely here that we find the reason for Symeon's

⁵⁰Nicetas, *Epistle* VIII.1-5 (*SC* 81, 281-286). Dionysius is cited in VIII.3 (286) together with the *Apostolic Constitutions* II.57.

⁵¹Dionysius' hierarchical vision had, I am told by John Erickson of St Vladimir's Seminary, been put into service in the century prior to Symeon by Constantinopolitan church authorities in order to rebuke dissident monks, in particular the inhabitants of the redoubtable Studion monastery who were protesting in schism against the illegitimate marriage of the Emperor Leo IV. Given both Symeon's and Nicetas' ties with the Studion—see *Vie* 4 and 10-21 (6, 18-30)—it is scarcely surprising to find the New Theologian seeking here to interpret a text that had played and continued to play an important role in the relations between hierarchy and monastics. Certainly, in the three centuries following Symeon's death until the hesychast movement (see Gregory of Sinai mentioned below), when we see a very considerable clamping down on monastic charismaticism by ecclesiastical authority (see note 129 below), we also find Dionysius being read in a very "clerical" sense. Thus the use of both *Epistle VIII* and the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* in the texts of John of Ephesus collected by J. Darrouzès in *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie byzantine* (Paris: 1966), 351, and esp. 371:17ff (referring to Carpus), 384:21 (*EH* VIII.7), and 390:31 (*Ep.* VIII, 1088 and 1093). But, as I hope to show, Symeon's relationship to Dionysius rests on more than simply an anxiety to deal with a difficult "authority." His interpretation of the Areopagite is a much more profound affair, both as applies to his own, intensely personal understanding of the tradition, and as witness to a centuries long reading of both Dionysius and his predecessors.

historical theory of episcopal decline and monastic election. Things are not the same, he is arguing, as when the divine Dionysius was writing. There have been changes since the time of the Apostles. Perhaps it is only fair to add that Symeon's historical instincts were not all that far off the mark. The fourth century did see some singular developments along just the lines that he is defending.⁵² What he did not know, of course, was that Dionysius himself may well have been responding to some of the problems (recall the allusion to Elijah) to which those developments gave rise.⁵³ The point in any case is that Symeon's historical excursus fits well within the argument that his *Letter* was written with Dionysius' *Epistle* primarily in mind.

I. B. *The Church as macrocosm and the saint as microcosm: Nicetas and Dionysius on hierarchy and Symeon "On the Feasts"*

Yet for the New Theologian the Areopagite is more than simply an authority who must somehow be gotten round. There are much deeper affinities between the two men. Authority itself as a personal and charismatic endowment is certainly one of these, as we have just seen, but this in turn involves the larger issue of hierarchy *per se* with which we began this essay. Here again we may take a clue from a passing remark in Nicetas' *Eighth Epistle*, together with some other passages from his treatises *On the Soul*, *On Paradise*, and *On Hierarchy*. In this

⁵²See Holl, *Enthusiasmus* 225-330, and H. Dörries, "The Place of Confession in Ancient Monasticism," *Studia Patristica* 5 (1962), 284-311, esp. 291-297.

⁵³See again Holl, *Enthusiasmus* 205-211, and for the [monastic] holy man as locus of supernatural authority in late Roman times, P. Brown's series of studies in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: 1982), esp. 103-105. Some of Dionysius' obvious concern to subordinate unruly monks to duly constituted ecclesiastical authority (John of Ephesus did have a point, after all) might have been shared by the author of the Syriac *Life* of Symeon Stylites, written about the same time as the probable composition of the Areopagite (late fifth century). The *Life* has no less than fourteen appearances of the Eucharist, and six or seven mentions of parish priests—to whom the Stylite invariably lends his unequivocal support. See the English translation by R. Doran, *The Lives of Symeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo: 1992), 101-198.

epistle, as we have noted, he approves Dionysius' ordering of the different ranks of clergy and faithful. He then follows up this approval with an allusion to the phrase from the Divine Liturgy, "The doors, the doors! In wisdom, let us attend," and goes on to observe that the Christian is always to "guard the doors of the intellect [*nous*]," since it is the latter which is "the altar within us" [*to entos hemon thysiasterion*].⁵⁴ The connection of the intellect with the altar, the liturgy, and the ordering of celebrants and believers is not accidental. It points instead to a theme that is central to all three of our writers: microcosm and macrocosm. In Book III of his treatise *On the Soul*, Nicetas brings this out expressly. The human being stands on the dividing line (*methorion*) "of intelligible and sensible,"⁵⁵ "as a kind of other world . . . [at once] visible and intelligible . . . mortal and immortal . . . an angelic contemplator and initiate [*mystes*] of divine and human things."⁵⁶ In Book IV, he tells us that it is in this "other world" that God has established a paradise greater than Eden:

The human being [*anthropos*] is seen indeed as a kind of great [world] in the small . . . God creates together with the soul, in the soul, in the whole of the human being made according to His image, the intelligible and invisible world in order that it may be contemplated here [i.e., in the human person] as neighbor to the perceptible.⁵⁷

The "sun" of this inner and greater world is not a physical luminary, "but the primordial and divine light of the Holy Spirit."⁵⁸ Nicetas will therefore add in his treatise *On Paradise*:

God made the human being in the beginning as a great world . . . thus, as in a greater world, He planted intelligibly in him another divine paradise greatly transcending the perceptible one . . . [which] is il-

⁵⁴Nicetas, *Epistle* VIII.6-7 (288).

⁵⁵*On the Soul* III.4 (76-78).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 16 (78).

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 27 (88-90).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

lumined by the sun of righteousness. This, indeed, is the place of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁵⁹

It is against this background of the perfected human being as the great world and spiritual paradise, together with the eschatological sense of the Eucharist, that we should look for Nicetas' understanding of hierarchy. In the introduction to his treatise on the subject, he tells us that he has been inspired by Dionysius' works on the hierarchies to write about the banquet of heavenly and earthly intellects (*noes*) around the one table and Host, the unique banquet of Christ.⁶⁰ The hierarchy he has in mind throughout the treatise is therefore not the present, canonical order of bishop, priest, deacon etc., but that reality toward which the order of the Church here-below points, and which it—to a degree—embodies: the heavenly and eschatological meal and liturgy of the Messiah Word. Hence Nicetas' infamous addition of the triad, Patriarchs-Metropolitans-Archbishops, to Dionysius' Bishop-priest-deacon, and monks-baptized laity-catechumens and penitents. The nine ranks thus parallel the nine orders of angels,⁶¹ but they also and at the same time parallel the nine orders of saints that Nicetas has mentioned just before: Apostles-Patriarchs-Prophets, Ecumenical Teachers-Martyrs/Confessors-Ascetics, and Holy Rulers-Pious Abbots-Devout Laity, the first two triads of which would have been familiar to him (as they still are to us) from the Byzantine liturgy.⁶² He is not therefore proposing some sort of super clericalism, but simply providing another set of names for the more conventional ranking or taxonomy of saints celebrating the liturgy of heaven. It might seem a little odd to us, and it is perhaps a bit fanciful, but it is scarcely ludicrous.

This banquet is not just a cosmic reality, however. It is also a personal and subjective truth. The eschaton has already

⁵⁹*On Paradise* II.19 (176).

⁶⁰*On Hierarchy* (300).

⁶¹*Ibid.*, III.21-23 (326-328).

⁶²*Ibid.*, 17-19 (320-322). In today's liturgy, at least, the orders of saints in Nicetas' more traditional arrangement are recalled as the priest prepares the gifts in the *prothesis*, and at the prayer following the consecration and immediately preceding the hymn sung in honor of the Theotokos, "It is truly right. . . ." In the case of either arrangement, though, it is clear that Nicetas is portraying the order of heaven, not of earth.

begun in Christ and, in light of the notion of the microcosm sketched above, it is even now present in the spiritual man, the saint. Asking the reader to note Nicetas' allusion to *Ephesians* 4:13, we therefore find him describing the "true bishop" as

The man whose intellect, by unstinting participation in the Holy Spirit, has been purified of every impurity and illumined richly by the Spirit's super-radiant-illuminations, and who has attained to the measure of the fullness of Christ and been perfected into the perfect man.⁶³

Such a person is the true initiate and mystagogue of the hidden mysteries of God.⁶⁴ In this man, "the true bishop," the heavenly liturgy is already discernible.⁶⁵

Jean Darrouzès is certainly correct to point to Gregory of Nazianzus and John Damascene as sources for Nicetas' idea of the microcosm.⁶⁶ Rather curiously, though, he seems to miss Stethatos' more proximate sources in Symeon and, so I would hold, in Dionysius. We can find everything we have just sketched in the New Theologian, too. More often than not, the disciple is simply quoting or paraphrasing his master. The greatest part of Symeon's *First Ethical Discourse* is devoted to the themes of paradise, the mystical sun, the Church, and the heavenly marriage feast that reappear in Nicetas.⁶⁷ The Church as the new and heavenly cosmos appears prominently in *Discourse* II, and

⁶³*Ibid.*, IV.38 (340).

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 39 (342).

⁶⁵See esp. *Ibid.* IV.36 (338). Thus Darrouzès, *Ibid.* 340 note 2, and Hausherr, *Vie* xxxiv-xxxv, miss the boat somewhat by worrying about the lack of an *ex opere operato*. But this is not Nicetas' point. As we noted at the beginning of this essay, Meyendorff is also guilty of something like this misreading.

⁶⁶*On the Soul* VI.27 (88 note 1); and see his "Index analytique" for *kosmos*, 538, Gregory's "great world in the small" in *Oration* 38.11 PG 36, 324A, and in John Damascene, *De fide* 26 (Kotter II: 76 and 79), though John, as Darrouzès observes, reverses Gregory to speak of the human being as the "little world." Nicetas and Symeon both reverse this again in order to go back to Gregory.

⁶⁷*Ethical Discourse* I, SC 122, 170-309. For Paradise, see 172-195; for the Church, 206-241; for the heavenly marriage feast, 241-271; for the mystical sun, see esp. the "Allegory of the Prisoner," 297-305.

this eschatological reality is identified with the Eucharist in *Discourse III*.⁶⁸ *Discourse X* is devoted to the theme of the "Day of the Lord," and the burden of its argument is that this same "Eighth Day" already shines in the heart of the perfected Christian.⁶⁹ Again in *Discourse III*, Symeon assumes a parallel between the individual Christian as the throne of God and the Seraphim and Cherubim, as in the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, who bear aloft the God of Israel present in His Temple—an image that is certainly indebted to the *Cherubikon* of the Byzantine offertory.⁷⁰ The Church, which is the Body of Christ, is mirrored in *Discourse IV* by the "body of virtues" that comprise the Christian who has arrived at the stature of the fullness of Christ and the perfected man⁷¹—and we note the same reference as in Nicetas to *Ephesians 4:13*. We also find Symeon making use here of the same source in Gregory of Nazianzus that we saw Nicetas quoting in his description of the human microcosm: "Each one of us . . . [is] created by God as a second world, a great world in this small and visible one."⁷² Again, the disciple's chain or ladder of beatified souls, the human hierarchy of heaven paralleling the hierarchy of the angels, finds its equivalent at once in Symeon's description of the single, golden chain of saints stretching from heaven

⁶⁸For the Church as the new, heavenly cosmos, see *Discourse II*, SC 122, lines 367-389; and for the Eucharist as the same, eschatological reality, III.421-429.

⁶⁹*Discourse X*, SC 129, lines 258-327, esp. 308-323.

⁷⁰*Discourse III*, SC 122, page 436:649-668.

⁷¹*Discourse IV*, SC 129, 34:364-45:514.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 64:799-801 and, for the sanctified believer as the "new sun and new day," 66:826-68:834.

⁷³*Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques, et pratiques III.4*; SC 51, 81. Compare this passage with Nicetas above, *On Hierarchy III*, 17-21. Symeon says: "The saints, too, are illumined in the same by the divine angels, and as they are bound up and joined together in the bond of the Spirit, they become like their equals [so Nicetas: III,21] and emulate them. These saints themselves come after the ones who preceded them . . . they become just like a golden chain with each one of them a link . . . one single chain in the one God" (trans. P. McGuckin, *Symeon the New Theologian: The Practical and Ethical Chapters* [Kalamazoo: 1982] 72-73). Symeon here also recalls Dionysius. See *Celestial Hierarchy IV.3* 181A and V 196B (Heil/Ritter 22 and 25) for the descent of illumination through the hierarchy of angels, and *Divine Names III* 680C (Suchla 139) for a suggestion, albeit in a different context, of the "golden chain."

to earth in his *Theological Centuries III.4*,⁷³ and in the ladder of virtues, on which the angels ascend and descend, by which the holy man draws near and is united to God,⁷⁴ and through which he becomes the "new paradise" and dwelling place [*oikos*] of the Holy Trinity.⁷⁵

There is therefore nothing in Nicetas' basic picture of hierarchy that cannot be found in Symeon. While the disciple obviously adds some detail to the master's images, the fundamental presupposition, the saint as microcosm in whom the heavenly and earthly liturgies are present and mirrored, is identical. But what about that Dionysius to whom both men refer, the disciple directly and the master—as is his wont in virtually all of his borrowings from the Church Fathers⁷⁶—indirectly? I think we can find the same theme at work here, too. Everyone admits that the Areopagite was deeply impressed by late Neoplatonism, although I must add that I do not think that Proclus was Dionysius' only source, or even the primary one—but more of that later on. Now it is a feature of all Neoplatonists, from Plotinus to Damascius, that the *motif* of microcosm and macrocosm plays an important, not to say central role. We are, says Plotinus, all of us a *kosmos noetos*, existing here-below and yet linked to the spiritual.⁷⁷ According to Stephen Gersh, the Neoplatonist vision of reality is at once an analysis in detail of the "great chain of being" and a dissection of the individual human being as reflecting the structures of both the phenomenal and intelligible worlds.⁷⁸ I am convinced that the same applies to Dionysius, but with a very important difference. Dionysius' world is the "new creation" of the Church—an insight, by the way, that is foundational for René Roques' magisterial study,

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, III.70-71; pp. 101-102.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, III.72; p. 102 for the "new paradise," and I.79; p. 64 for the "dwelling place of the Trinity."

⁷⁶Darrouzès, *Ibid.* 33, remarks that in Symeon's "infrequent citations of the fathers . . . it is not the thought of someone else that he is seeking, but it is an echo of his own inner life that he is discovering." See also Völker, *Praxis und Theorie*, 72-74 on the infrequency of Symeon's direct citations.

⁷⁷*Enneads III.4.3* (Loeb, 248-250).

⁷⁸S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriuegena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: 1978), 27-120.

L'univers dionysien.⁷⁹ In addition, the obverse also applies. The human being, specifically the man or woman redeemed and renewed in Christ, is this new world in miniature. The outer hierarchy mirrors and is the model for what should obtain within. We have already come across a hint of this in summarizing Dionysius' *Epistle VIII*. Demophilus has upset the God-ordained *taxis* of the Church because his own, inner being was also out of true, and Dionysius therefore admonishes him to put his house in order, and to "give what is proper [or deserving] to appetite, emotion, and reason." The hierarchy of the soul, here in terms taken from Plato's *Phaedrus* (though long familiar to the Christian ascetic tradition since at least Evagrius, if not Clement of Alexandria),⁸⁰ must reflect the harmony and peace of *taxis* obtaining in the Church, and that means in the liturgy.⁸¹ Only thus may one see God, as Dionysius tells his turbulent monk, and then perhaps be granted authority over city and nation. Nicetas' and Symeon's picture of the holy man as the "true bishop," the very "place" of the Kingdom of God and spiritual paradise, is surely then indebted in good part to Dionysius' description of the hierarch as "the inspired and divine man learned in all sacred knowledge, in whom his own hierarchy [*he kat' auton hierarchia*] . . . is both perfected and made known."⁸² Likewise, both later writers must have found

⁷⁹R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien: structure hiérarchique du monde selon le pseudo-Denys* (Paris: 1954), esp. 36-131.

⁸⁰The soul as the chariot steered by reason (*logos*) as the charioteer governing the two steeds, irritability (*thymos*) and appetite (*epithymia*), dates to the *Phaedrus* 246. For Evagrius and the tripartite model of the soul, see his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, PG 28, III.35; IV.73; and VI.13 and 85.

⁸¹See, for example, Dionysius' handling of the powers or activities of purification, illumination, and perfection as applied to the angelic hierarchy in *CH VII 205B-D* (27:4-18:12), to the individual intellect whether angelic or human in *X.3 273C* (40:23-41:6), and to the orders of the Church (clergy, monks, laity) in *EH V.1 500D-501A* (104) and esp. 504A-C (106:4-23), wherein the actions and physical placement are those which obtain during the celebration of the services.

⁸²*EH I.3 373C* (66:5-6); see also *CH XII.3 292B* (43:12-19) on "holy men" as like angels, receiving the title or divinity by participation. My reading in the first citation of *he kat' auton hierarchia* takes the *kat' auton* as distinct from the *he kath' hemas hierarchia* ("our hierarchy") of a few lines above (65:24-25), Dionysius' usual phrase for the Church. The *kat' auton* suggests to me the bishop's (or holy man's) own, inner ordering of the soul, his "interior" hierarchy, i.e., exactly what we saw out of order above in Demophilus. I know of no other scholar who has

a more than sympathetic chord being struck in Dionysius' description of the divine man (presumably again the hierarch) in *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* as one who, wholly in conformity with God, has become "at once an attendant and temple [*naos*] . . . of the divine Spirit," and thus, "by virtue of the dispassion [*apatheia*] of his own state of mind [*hexis*] . . . is beheld a physician to others."⁸³ The references to "temple," with its echo of church and liturgy,⁸⁴ and to the "condition of mind [*hexis*]" of the saint, bring us to our second set of textual pairings.

We begin with the passage from Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy I.3*:

It would not be possible for the human intellect [*nous*] to be ordered with that immaterial imitation of the heavenly hierarchies [i.e., angels] unless it were to use the material guide that is proper to it [the liturgy, thus:], reckoning the visible beauties as

read this phrase as I do, though I still believe the reading works quite well. Indeed, I think that the simultaneous application of, so to speak, macrocosmic and microcosmic readings works in the case of virtually every single one of Dionysius' definitions of hierarchy. Thus, for example, he defines a hierarchy as a "sacred order (*taxis*), knowledge (*episteme*), and activity (*energeia*)" in *CH III.1 164D* (17:3-4), its aim as "the likening to and union with God so far as possible" in *2 165D* (17:10-11), and later on as a "certain sacred arrangement and image [*eikon*] of the divine beauty" in *165A* (18:11). Granted that these are definitions of the, as it were, "collective entity," the same expressions can still quite as easily be applied to the "individual" ordering of the soul or intellect, a point that seems to be borne out by the fact that in the last passage quoted Dionysius goes on to say that hierarchy makes its members "divine images [*agalmata*—recall *eikon* above] and most transparent mirrors" of God (18:2-3) and, a little below, that hierarchy establishes each member as a "co-worker of God" showing forth "in himself the divine activity" (18:16-17). One may find a similar set of definitions in, again, *EH I.3*; hierarchy has as its goal "love," "knowledge" and "divine participation" (66:13-19), and in *II.1 392A* (68:16-17) where its goal is the "likening to and union with God." Everything, in short, said about hierarchy as a whole can be applied to the individual. The same terms are consistently used throughout the *corpus* in reference to both the individual and the collective.

⁸³*EH III.3.7 533CD* (86:7-16).

⁸⁴For *naos* in *Malachi* 3:1 and its importance for the reading of Dionysius' use of *exaiphnes* in *Epistle III* (1069B, 159), see my article, "The Mysticism of Dionysius Areopagita: Platonist or Christian?," *Mystics Quarterly* XIX,3 (1993), esp. 108-109.

reflections of the invisible splendor, the perceptible fragrances as impressions of the intelligible [*noetos*] distribution, the material lights an icon of the immaterial gift of light, the sacred and extensive teaching [of the scriptures] [an image] of the mind's intelligible fulfillment, the exterior ranks of the clergy [an image] of the harmonious and ordered habit of mind [*hexis*] which leads to divine things, and [our partaking] of the most divine Eucharist [an icon] of our participation in Jesus.⁸⁵

The text speaks first of all about the earthly liturgy as an imitation and revelation of the one in heaven. Secondly, though, it also states that our hierarchy, specifically the ranks and order of the clergy, is an image of that inward state or condition of the *nous* which allows for the vision of God—in other words, just what we found out of order in Demophilus. The visible liturgy and outward church are an icon of the liturgy celebrated in the perfected soul. In short, there are as it were three “liturgies” going on here, three “churches”: the heavenly, the earthly, and the “little church” of the soul. The first two meet in the third, in the perfected soul of the “hierarch”—as we saw above—but this is not to say that the middle term of earthly cult is unnecessary. It is instead essential. It mediates and reflects the eternal and unseen presence of heaven in the saint. Everything here-below is icon or symbol of a pervasive and invisible reality which is discovered, at the end of the passage, in the Eucharist and in Jesus. The image of the church outside reveals and enables the reality present both in heaven and within the soul, but the soul does not and cannot become aware of this reality, cannot find the indwelling presence of Christ, without the “material guide” given from above.

In his fourteenth *Ethical Discourse*, Symeon wonders about the true meaning of great and elaborate liturgical solemnities. “How,” he asks, can the man who has “seen the Master” and who knows himself as naked and poor “take pride in beauty, or pay great attention to the multitude of candles and lamps, or fragrances and perfumes, or an assembly of people, or a

⁸⁵CH. I.3 121C-124A (8:18-9:6).

rich . . . table?”⁸⁶ The wise man, he replies, does not look to the visible, but to the eschatological “events which are present in the rites being celebrated,” and he will therefore celebrate the feast “in the Holy Spirit with those who celebrate in heaven.”⁸⁷ This does not mean that Symeon discourages the visible liturgy—“God forbid! On the contrary, I both advise and encourage you to do these things”—but he does want to point out what the things done “in types and symbols really mean.”⁸⁸ In explaining the latter, he displays his debt to the Areopagite. The function, he says, of the lamps in church is “to show you the intelligible light” (Dionysius’ “immaterial gift of light”).⁸⁹ The perfumes and incense (Dionysius’ “perceptible fragrances”) suggest the “intelligible perfume of the Holy Spirit”; the crowds reveal “the ranks of the holy angels,” friends and dignitaries “the saints,” and the refreshments laid out for the people “the living bread . . . Who comes to you in and through what is perceptible” (Dionysius’ “most divine Eucharist”).⁹⁰ The comparisons follow fairly closely the sequence of the text from the *Celestial Hierarchy*. The order is a little different from Dionysius’, with lights preceding perfumes and the crowds and dignitaries instead of the order of the clergy, but the overall debt Symeon owes the Areopagite in these passages seems to me to be clear. So is the general idea. For both men the earthly church at worship is the image of the new man transfigured in Christ. It reflects both heaven and the saint and, more, connects the latter to the former. Neither for Symeon nor for Dionysius is the icon, here preeminently the Eucharist, a mere pointer or empty memorial. Rather, it conveys the presence which it signifies. Dionysius tells us in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* that the Eucharist is the “sacrament of sacraments” (*telete teleton*) which first illumined his own perceptions, and by whose light he was “led up in light to the contemplation of the other sacred things.”⁹¹

⁸⁶*Discourse XIV (SC 129)*, 424:26-35.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 35-44.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 428:87-92.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 93-94 and following.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 430:106-432:139 for the fragrances, 432:140-153 for the crowds; and the Eucharist in 436:211-458:223. The sequence, light, fragrances, crowds is repeated in 436:194-438:223.

⁹¹*EH III.1 424C (79:3)* for *telete teleton*, and 425B (80:2-4) for Dionysius’ personal witness.

It is in the same spirit that Symeon addresses his reader at the end of *Discourse XIX*. If, he says, you truly celebrate the feast and partake worthily

... of the divine mysteries, all your life will be to you one single feast. And not a feast, but the beginning of a feast and a single Pascha, the passage and emigration from what is seen to what is sensed by the intellect, to that place where every shadow and type, and all the present symbols, come to an end.⁹²

II. *The roots of an image:*

Evagrius, Macarius, and the Liber Graduum

The tri-cornered relationship between Dionysius, Symeon, and Nicetas is therefore no paradox, and certainly not the fault of sloppy thinking on Nicetas' part. At this point I should like to take a look at the roots that all three, and particularly the Areopagite, have in the ascetic literature of the fourth and fifth centuries. Here I have especially in mind the two authors, Evagrius and the anonymous source of the *Macarian Homilies*, with whom we saw Father John linking, respectively, Dionysius and the New Theologian. Now, it is also typical of Meyendorff to place the Evagrian and Macarian traditions somewhat in opposition—or at least contrast—to each other. According to this schema, Evagrius, the Origenist, is “intellectualist” in his approach, placing his primary emphasis on the intellect (*nous*) as the place of encounter with God while, for Macarius, it is the “biblical” notion of the heart (*kardia*) that serves to indicate the center of the human being and locus of meeting.⁹³ I would like first of all to express some reservations about this opposition. The contradistinction of “mind” and “heart” reflects the

⁹²*Discourse XIV*, 443:280-290. In this eschatological context, see Dionysius, *DN I.4 592BC* (Suchla 114:1-115:5) with its sequence “now,” i.e., in this world, “but then,” that is in the world to come, and my article, “On the Other Hand,” 310-316.

⁹³See note 5 above and, for another place where Father John lays the opposition out very clearly, *Saint Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, trans. A. Fiske (Crestwood, NY: 1974), 20-29.

Medieval Western opposition between “intellective and affective” mysticisms a little too much for my comfort.⁹⁴ Evagrius is not an Eckhardt, nor is Macarius a Bernard of Clairvaux, and neither should any of our first three writers be placed in either camp. Then, too, the contrast implicit in this distinction between a “biblical” and a “platonizing” Christianity strikes me as very questionable.⁹⁵ Plato and company were quite as much involved in first century Palestine as they were anywhere else in the Greco-Roman world, and the “Greeks” thus had a say in the formation of both Christianity and rabbinic Judaism.⁹⁶ I do not, in short, believe that Evagrius' *nous* and Macarius' *kardia* are all that different from each other.

For both Evagrius and Macarius, however, the theme of the microcosm plays an important role, and that in ways which contributed significantly to the three men whom we have been discussing. Evagrius inherits and makes important use of Origen's myth of a pre-cosmic fall—and here, by the way is the real

⁹⁴See, for example, the sketch of Dionysius' reception in the West provided by A. Louth, “The Influence of Dionysius Areopagita on Eastern and Western Spirituality in the Fourteenth Century,” *Sobornost* 4 (1982) esp. 187-193. The “affective” reading of Dionysius is taken up by the Victorines and emphasized, through the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux, by Thomas Gallus in the thirteenth century. For the same, though in a way that treats Dionysius as exclusively “intellectualist,” see P. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (Oxford: 1993), 217-225.

⁹⁵“Biblical” versus “Platonist” echoes altogether too clearly the reaction of Roman Catholic and Orthodox scholars earlier this century to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century thesis of a “Hellenized”—and therefore corrupted—Christianity associated in particular with Adolph von Harnack. People such as Jean Cardinal Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, or indeed Vladimir Lossky fought Harnack a little too hard. While we all owe a great debt to these men, among whom Father John is certainly to be included, this does not mean that we are obliged to accept distinctions that do less than justice to the texts and thought of the ancients, or—worse—subject them often uncritically to the concerns of philosophies and movements that are quite alien to them. Modern existentialism comes to mind in this connection. A Daniélou, for example, might have had an ear cocked to what was being said over the absinthe at Café les Deux Magots, but we need not. It is simply past time to have done with the exploded myth of a pure Hebrew, or “Semitic,” tradition over and against a subversive “Hellenism.”

⁹⁶See, for example, M. Hengel, *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: 1980), esp. his conclusions on Palestine in the Roman period, 125-126.

problem that he would pose to later writers such as, I would maintain, the Areopagite.⁹⁷ In part as the result of this inheritance, though the idea has deep roots, he reads the phenomenal world as, in effect, the human being writ large.⁹⁸ To borrow a phrase from David Evans' summary of the Evagriian scheme, the present human realities of body, soul, and *nous* represent "moments in the knowledge of God."⁹⁹ The universe

⁹⁷The issue of Dionysius' relationship to Evagrius turned up in the discussion between me and Fr Wesche. See his "Christological Doctrine" 72, and my "Other Hand," 316 note 34. Hence the following digression. I maintain that Dionysius has Evagrius in mind both as source and as target. Touching on the latter (we will come to the former below in this essay), earlier criticism of Evagrius had turned especially around his anthropology and cosmology. As A. Guillaumont points out in *Les "Kephalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre le pontique* (Paris: 1962), 109, notes 129-130, Theophilus of Alexandria's *Festal Letter* of 402 A.D., cited by Jerome (*Epistle* 98, *CSEL* 54: 196-197), focused particularly on Evagrius' lack of a permanent place in his universe for variety (*kosmos*, we might say), for permanent differences in rank and order (*taxis*), or for change and development (motion, *kinesis*). Similar criticisms were voiced a century later by Philoxenus of Mabboug. See G. Harb, "L'attitude de Philoxène de Mabboug à l'égard de la spiritualité savante d'Évagre le pontique" *Parole d'Orient* (1969), esp. 142-145, 149, and 155. If we turn to Dionysius we find exactly these elements: the world as cosmos and order in continual motion. The *DN* gives particular attention to the *kinesis* of angels and people in IV,8-9, 704D-705B (153-154), and indeed states that movement is to be *eternally* into God (701A, 149:19). The variety of the universe is pictured chiefly in *DN IX*'s meditation on the divine "peace" and "salvation" (954D-956B, 217-223), while *taxis* comprises a constituent element of Dionysius' hierarchies (see Roques, *L'univers*, 36-59). As opposed to the ultimate dissolution of the body proposed by Evagrius, Dionysius is careful to devote significant space to the consideration and defence of the body's resurrection *EH VII* 552D-556B (120-122), and its transformation is signaled again in *DN I.4* 592BC (114:7-115:5). John of Scythopolis, incidentally, stresses the latter passage as directed precisely against "those who think that the resurrection is without the body" (*PG IV* 197C)—a point I overlooked in my reference to John's views on this text in "On the Other Hand," 316. These adjustments, such as the clear borrowing of Gregory of Nyssa's *epektasis*, also render permanent the importance of the Incarnation. Jesus is not simply the way, but also the *telos*. Thus see Dionysius' *Epistles* III and IV, and again *DN I.4*, with its use of the Transfiguration as model of the eschaton, an image perhaps owing to the *Macarian Homilies* (see note 126 below). For a consideration, regrettably without too much documentation, of many of these points, see H. von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit: eine theologische Aesthetik* II (Einsiedeln: 1962), 147-214.

⁹⁸The notion of the microcosm is at least as old as Plato's *Republic*, the city as the rational man writ large, and particularly emphasized in the Stoa. For the Neoplatonists, see again Gersh, note 78 above.

⁹⁹D. B. Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium* (Washington, D.C.: 1970) esp.

created to house the fallen *noes* is thus a kind of giant school-book or lesson plan, and ultimately a sacrament. For the person who contemplates it, it carries the knowledge of one's soul, of Christ who created the soul's temporary housing, of the eternal realm of the intellects and, at the last, leads to the "essential knowledge" of the Trinity.¹⁰⁰ One does one's lessons by ascending the three stages of the ascetic life, moving from mastery of the passions crowned by *apatheia* and love, then to illumination with regard to the *logoi* investing both the visible and invisible worlds, and finally to the vision of God.¹⁰¹ The world as icon, as in a way "church" and "sacrament," therefore fulfills a function analogous to the one that we have seen the visible church serving for Dionysius, Symeon, and Nicetas. It points the way toward, and communicates, the reality that is already present within the believer. But the imagery of church and liturgy, especially as expressed in the Old Testament language of *Exodus*, particularly chapters 19 and 24, is important for Evagrius, too. The account of the theophany at Sinai, itself influenced by the Temple liturgy and paradigmatic in turn for subsequent descriptions of God's manifestation in both public cult and personal experience,¹⁰² serves Evagrius well in a number of key texts. He is, indeed, one of the first—if not the first—to internalize it. Hence his description on several occasions of the "place of God" within the *nous* as "like a

89-111. For Evans'—as well as everyone else's—source, see Guillaumont, *Les "Kephalaia Gnostica,"* 15-43 for an analysis of Evagrius' doctrine and, for the text of the *Kephalaia* that Guillaumont established and edited for *Patrologia Orientalia* 28, see *Ibid.*, 200-258.

¹⁰⁰For the *praktike* as pre-condition, see *KG II.6-9*; for the physical universe as (temporary) sign, *III.57* and *70*; for the (again temporary) necessity of the body as sign, *IV.60* and *62*; for motion as original sin *III.22*; for Christ as the maker and meaning of the (temporary) physical world, but not the Word and the *telos* of creation, *III.2-3*, *24*, *57*; *IV.8-9*, *60-62*, *80* and *VI.14*; for the "essential science" of the Trinity as beginning and end of the cycle, *III.6* and *15*; *IV.18*; *V.60*, *77-88*; and especially *VI.10*.

¹⁰¹For the *Praktikos*, see *Traité Pratique (SC 171/172)* and Guillaumont's "Introduction," *SC 171:38-62* and *113-124*. For Evagrius' own words, *Prak.* 1-3 (498-501) and, on *apatheia*, 63-70 (646-657). For the contemplation of the *noeta*, see *KG II.19* and *VI.55*. On "essential science," note 100 above.

¹⁰²On *Exodus 19/24* and its relation to the liturgy of tabernacle and temple, see M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: 1962), 11-17, and R. E. Clements, *The Temple* (Philadelphia: 1965), 17-27 (esp. 22,

sapphire," a clear borrowing from the account of the Shekhinah, the divine presence, that Moses and the elders encounter on the Mountain in *Exodus* 24:10.¹⁰³ In a passage from the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, he also makes explicit use of temple imagery in order to describe the innermost reality of the human soul as the "place" of encounter with the Trinity:

The intelligible temple is the pure intellect which now possesses in itself the "Wisdom of God, full of variety";

note 3) and 100-122. As paradigmatic, see in the Old Testament *I Kg* 8, *Is* 6, and *Ezk* 1-2, each one of them referring back to the Sinai theophany, and the Transfiguration accounts in *Mk* 9:3ff and parallels, together with *II Cor* 3 and *Rev* 4-5 in the New Testament. For a discussion of Moses in *II Corinthians* see Carol Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor 3:1-4,6* (Rome: 1989). For comment on *Rev*, see J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: 1979), 41-42 and 113-132, and E. Petersen, *The Angels and the Liturgy*, trans. Walls (London: 1964), ix-x and 1-12. Sinai was a set image of the encounter with God in Philo, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, e.g. the latter's *Life of Moses* (*SC* 1), and no less for Dionysius in *Mystical Theology* I.3 1000C:1001A (143:17-144).

¹⁰³See the sixty chapters supplementary to the *Kephalaia Gnostica* whose Syriac translation was edited and retranslated into Greek by W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* (Berlin: 1912) esp. chapters 2, 21, and 25 (Frankenberg 425, 441, and 449). See also *Letters* 29 (587), 33 (589) and esp. 39 (593). In the latter, Evagrius identifies the vision of God within the *nous* with both Sinai and Zion, and calls it "another heaven" (recall Nicetas and Symeon above). For the Zion motif, an implicit reference to the Temple, see also *KG* V.88 and VI.49 and Frankenberg, chapter 28 (453). A Guillaumont has offered a fascinating commentary on these texts of Evagrius (together with others of his in *PG* 40 1224AB and 79 1221B) in "La vision de l'intellect par lui-meme dans la mystique évagrienne," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph* L,1 (Beirut: 1984) 255-262. Of particular interest is the apparent linkage he establishes between Evagrius here and the "sudden" vision of the One in light described by Plotinus in *Enneads* V.317; 5.7; and VI.7.36 (thus see Dionysius' *Epistle* III 1069B, 159: 3ff). A disciple of Guillaumont, N. S'ed in "La Shekinta et ses amis araméens," *Cahiers d'Orientalisme* XX (1988) 133-142, followed this up by noting Evagrius' relation to the tradition of the Aramaic Targums and the Syriac *Peshitta*, particularly in their handling in *Exodus* and *Chronicles*, of the theme of God's "footstool" and the Shekhinah, what the Septuagint calls the *topos theou* in *Ex* 24:10. Hence S'ed's verdict, 240-242, that Evagrius appears to have been the first to "internalize" this tradition, i.e., for him the *topos theou* or spiritual Sinai is within the *nous*. There the Shekhinah makes its appearance. Thus see *MT* 1.3 and the mind's ascent to the *topos theou* beneath God's "footsteps" on the heights, beyond which Moses is called to ascend (1000D, 143:3-5)—a note echoed nearly nine hundred years later by Gregory Palamas in his *Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts* II.3.52 (Christou 584).

the temple of God is he who is a beholder of the sacred unity, and the altar of God is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity.¹⁰⁴

Thus again, as in the three later writers, we find our theme of the holy man as the true temple and altar of the divine presence.

The equation of the inner man with, specifically, the liturgy and even the hierarchy of the Christian Church appears in unmistakable form in a remarkable passage from the *Macarian Homilies*, though it is one that is not in the usual collection of fifty homilies, but in the longer version edited by H. Berthold for GCS some twenty years ago.¹⁰⁵ The text in question is *Homily* 52 of the longer collection, and it begins on a note which by now should be quite familiar to us:

The whole visible arrangement [*oikonomia*] of the Church of God came to pass for the sake of the living and intelligible being [*noera ousia*] of the rational soul [*logikes psyche*]... which is the living and true Church of God... For the Church of Christ and Temple of God and true altar and living sacrifice is the man of God.¹⁰⁶

Thus, he continues, just as the Old Dispensation was the shadow of the New, "so is the present and visible Church a shadow of the rational and true inner man."¹⁰⁷ Neither does Macarius mean by this that the present Church and its liturgy is "mere symbol" in the sense of a transparency without any substance in itself. Its substance is nothing less than the abiding of the Holy Spirit: "The Savior granted through the Apostles that the Comforter Spirit should be present and take part in all the liturgy of the Holy Church of God."¹⁰⁸ The same Spirit

¹⁰⁴*KG* V.84. For the *nous* as temple and altar, see also Frankenberg, chapters 37 and 45 (459 and 461).

¹⁰⁵*Makarios/Symeon. Reden und Briefe: Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*, ed. H. Berthold (Berlin: 1973), II.138-142. For the complete text in English, see our "Appendix" below.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 138:1-8.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 139:7-9.

is truly communicated to faithful believers in the sacraments, though It stays "far away from the unworthy."¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, however, which is to say in the perspective of the eschaton:

The living activity of the Holy Spirit is to be sought from God in living hearts, because all visible things and all the [present] arrangements [of the Church] will pass away, but hearts alive in the Spirit will abide.¹¹⁰

Macarius concludes this section with a repetition of the theme of the church as icon [*eikon*], noting that the Savior came and that the icon of the Church was formed [*diatyposis*] in order that "faithful souls might . . . be made again and renewed and, having accepted transformation [*metabole*], be enabled to inherit life everlasting."¹¹¹ The reference to change or transformation is quite in line with the parallel between the liturgy and the Christian soul. The term *metabole*, after all, carries the distinct echo of the eucharistic change at the liturgy's consecratory prayer.¹¹² The consecration of the sacred elements is an anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the believer and of the world.

It is therefore to the service itself that Macarius turns his attention next. He begins by restating his points above in a way that should alert us still more clearly to the themes in Dionysius, Symeon, and Nicetas with which we have been occupied:

Because visible things are the type and shadow of hidden ones, and the visible temple [a type] of the temple of the heart, and the priest [a type] of the true priest of the grace of Christ, and all the rest of the sequence [*akolouthia*] of the visible arrangement [a

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 26-27. Recall Symeon above in *Discourse XIV*, together with his emphasis in the *Letter on Confession* on the necessity of the holy man's being illumined. So, too, Dionysius in *Epistle VIII* and the *aphotistos hierous*.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 27-29.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 139:30-140:2.

¹¹²See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: 1961), 850 for *metabole* and 848 for *metaballo*. The sources cited for the former begin as early as Justin Martyr.

type] of the rational and hidden matters of the inner man, we receive the manifest arrangement and administration [*oikonomia kai dioikesis*] of the Church as an illustration [*hypodeigma*] of [what is] at work in the soul by grace.¹¹³

By sequence (*akolouthia*) and arrangement (*oikonomia*) Macarius means, respectively, the sequence of the liturgy and the hierarchical ordering of the faithful and of the sacramental ministers. Beginning with the first, he observes that the two parts of the eucharistic liturgy, the *synaxis* ("liturgy of the word") and *anaphora* (offertory, consecration with the *epiklesis* of the Spirit, and communion), are incomplete without each other. The whole rule (*kanon*) of the first must be completed in order for the consecration to follow and, conversely, the *synaxis* is "incomplete and in vain" without the sacramental communion.¹¹⁴ Just so, he argues, is it the case for the individual Christian. The latter must have the full complement of "fasting, vigil, psalmody, asceticism and every virtue" for the "mystical activity of the Spirit" to be "accomplished by grace on the altar of the heart."¹¹⁵ This interior order, *kosmos*, of the Spirit's activity (*energeia*) corresponds to the visible order and glory of the sacrament.¹¹⁶

Turning to the order of the Church's hierarchy, Macarius' remarks bring very sharply to mind what both Dionysius and Nicetas, each in his respective eighth epistle, had to say about the physical place of each of the respective ranks of the Church. Those believers, Macarius says, who "do not sin and who make progress . . . come to the priesthood, and they are transferred from some outer place [*apo topou tinos exoterou*]"—

¹¹³*Makarios/Symeon* 140:3-8.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 8-19.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 21-23.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 141:1-2. Note the use of *kosmos*, and recall Nicetas and Symeon above.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 13-15. Recall Dionysius in *Ep. VIII*, esp. 1088D-1089A (176:9-177:8), on the physical placement of clergy, monks, and laity, and likewise Nicetas' *Epistle VIII* 280-286, esp. 8.3 283.

¹¹⁸See Ignatius' *Letter to Polycarp* 6, as well as to *Ephesians* 6, *Magnesian* 6-7, *Trallians* 1-2, *Philadelphians* 4, *Smyrnans* 8. Lampe 406 cites *edraïoma* for the bishop's throne, and indicates *Polycarp* 6 for *paredroi*, 1030.

presumably referring to the narthex or nave—"up to the altar [*epi to thysiasterion*] so that they may be God's ministers and assistants [*leitourgoi . . . kai paredroi*]."117 The latter term suggests the throne, *edra*, of the bishop who, as Ignatius of Antioch wrote, occupies the place of God.¹¹⁸ This spatial arrangement of clergy and laity—"according to this example"—is then taken and applied to the "Christians who are moved by grace."¹¹⁹ Whoever sins must confess and repent in order to come again under the oversight—*episkopes*, an evident play on *episkopos*, bishop—of the Spirit.¹²⁰ As for the soul that makes continual progress in the struggle for the virtues:

It is made worthy of transference [or promotion, *metathesis*] and of spiritual dignity [*axiomatos*], and of being transferred from divine to heavenly mysteries [i.e., from the sacraments here-below to the Kingdom] . . . and thus, having reached the perfect measure of Christianity through both its own freely willed ordeal and with help from on high, the soul will be inscribed in the Kingdom among the perfect workers and with the blameless ministers and assistants [*leitourgous kai paredrous*] of Christ.¹²¹

The spatial ordering of clergy and faithful is the icon of both the *taxis* of heaven and of the illumined soul. We are back, in short, to the version of hierarchy that Nicetas would offer us in greater detail seven hundred years later. In between stand his elder, Symeon, and, for both master and disciple, the *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

Some might feel that Macarius' argument here, so heavily dependent on the categories of type and antitype, outer and inner, visible and invisible etc., is much too Platonist in tone to be the work of the "real" author of most of the *Homilies*. I would certainly agree that the cast of thought owes enormously to Plato, but then I find it difficult to think of a single major patristic writer who does not. Given this text alone, and reckoning it as of the same late fourth century provenance

¹¹⁹*Makarios/Symeon* 141:16.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 142:1.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 142:9-16.

as the other *Macarian Homilies*,¹²² we can surely take it as shedding new light on Dionysius' supposed "originality." It allows us to see the Areopagite as something other than the lonely meteor crossing the night sky of patristic thought that some have taken him for, and gifted moreover and in consequence of his pseudonym with an otherwise inexplicable authority.¹²³ *Homily 52* by itself shows up Dionysius as part of an already extant tradition.¹²⁴ But the homily is not alone, either in the *Macarian corpus* or even in a wider context. The whole thrust of the *Macarian writings*, in the words of Father Georges Florovsky, is "the soul as throne of God."¹²⁵ The famous first *Homily* in the more familiar and widespread collection of fifty opens with the vision of God from *Ezekiel 1*, itself of course with deep roots in the Temple cult, and goes on to speak of the soul as the true resting place of the divine glory.¹²⁶ In this same vein, and scattered throughout the rest of the homilies, in whatever collection, we can find references to the soul as temple or as "little church."¹²⁷ *Homily 52* is in-

¹²²If, as no one questions, the *Homilies* are by the same author as wrote the *Great Letter*, they can be no later than Gregory of Nyssa's *On Christian Perfection*, and therefore the 380s stand as the *ad quem* in dating their composition. For a brief survey of the question and of Macarius' alleged "Messalianism," see G. Maloney's "Introduction" to *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: 1992) esp. 7-11. For Macarius as clearly a product of the Syrian tradition, see C. Stewart, "*Working the Earth of the Heart*": *The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to A.D. 431* (Oxford: 1991), esp. his conclusions, 234-240. Nyssa thus appears to have adapted a typically Syriac expression of the Christian faith for Greek sensibilities. The *Homilies*, besides being the victim of a case of cross-cultural miscommunication (hence much of the smoke of the Messalian controversy), are thus clearly fourth century.

¹²³This is the usual explanation for Dionysius' reception in the East. The pseudonym, together with the traditional and "christological correctives" supplied by John of Scythopolis and—in particular—Maximus the Confessor, enabled the *Corpus Dionysiacum* to pass muster. For an example of this view, see J. Pelikan, "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality," in C. Liubheid, and P. Rorem's translation, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: 1987), 11-24. Yet one of the striking things about Scythopolis' commentary, aside from an admitted reference to some challenges to Dionysius' orthodoxy (20AB), is his overall effort to present the Areopagite as on the Chalcedonian side. That is to say, he is fighting much less to defend him than to lay claim to him, just as it seems that Severus even earlier was struggling to enlist him for the non-Chalcedonian party (for the latter point I am indebted to a paper delivered by J. Lamoreaux for the North American

deed peculiar for its exclusive concentration on this theme, but there is nothing in it that is foreign to the Macarian *corpus* as a whole.

The theme of the "little church," though, is not confined to the Macarian writings. Taking its start from St Paul's *logia* in *I Corinthians* 3:16 and 6:19-20 that the Christian is the "temple of the Holy Spirit," we discover that this *motif* is well established in the Syriac-speaking, Christian tradition from at least the same time as Macarius. We find it chiefly in the mysterious Syriac work known as the *Liber Graduum*. Thought by some scholars earlier this century to have been the Messalian *Ascetikon* condemned at Ephesus in 431,¹²⁸ the *Liber* appears in fact to be the work of a writer, perhaps somewhat embattled by ecclesiastical authorities, who is at pains to distance himself and his community from the charge of neglecting the visible church.¹²⁹ The work as a whole does not breathe the atmosphere of sectarianism, and its account of the relation between the inner and outer church bears striking resemblance to what we have just seen in Macarius, as well as to the themes we picked out in Evagrius—under whose name, interestingly enough, it seems often to have circulated.¹³⁰

Patristics Society at Loyola, Chicago, in June 1993). Why were both sides fighting for him if he was in fact as dubious a commodity as he is usually presented? The pseudonym would have been of no help if his contemporaries had felt his theology to be truly amiss, a point raised—or at least a question strongly implied—by Georges Florovsky in *Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Writers* (Belmont, MA: 1987), 204: "It hardly seems possible that the patent anachronism of the document could have remained unnoticed... historical memory at the time was not *that* weak." Moreover, as I look forward to seeing demonstrated by P. Rorem's forthcoming translation of the *Scholia*, John was thoroughly conversant with late Neoplatonism and thus surely could not have been fooled by some rascal disguising a doubtful agenda behind an apostolic facade. "Christological correctives" just do not reply to this problem. See also the critique of Fr John's similar position regarding "correctives" by J. Romanides, note 172 below.

¹²⁴See my article, *Mysticism*, 105-106.

¹²⁵*Ascetic and Spiritual Writers* 154: "And it is there," Florovsky adds, "that a certain secret light flashes out." The light is Christ, and this sudden flash recalls to me, once again, Dionysius' *Ep. III*: "suddenly," there is Christ.

¹²⁶*Homily* I, 1-3 and 9, in *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, eds. H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, M. Kroeger (Berlin: 1964), 1-5 and 10. For English, see *Pseudo-Macarius* (Maloney), 37-38 and 42. For the Transfiguration in Macarius as both foreshadowing the body's eschatological

I would like first of all to point to the hierarchy of believers which the book presumes throughout: those being purified, the righteous (laymen), and the perfected (ascetics).¹³¹ This triad certainly seems to echo at least the lay orders of Dionysius' own hierarchy, as well as having established roots in the Syriac tradition.¹³² Secondly, though, and more importantly for our argument, there is the picture drawn in the *Liber's Discourse XII*, "On the Ministry of the Hidden and

transformation and as an image for the soul's inner reality even now, see *Homily VIII*, esp. VIII.3 (Dörries 78-80, Maloney 21-82), and XV,38 (Dörries 149-150 and Maloney 122-123). Again recall *DN I.4*. For the *nous* (here instead of *kardia!*) as the throne of God, see, for example, VI,5 (Dörries 68-69, Maloney 77).

¹²⁷See the references collected and cited by R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: 1975), 269-271, and C. Stewart, "Working," 218-220.

¹²⁸A thesis advanced in particular by M. Kmosko in the latter's "Praefatio" to his edition of the *Liber Graduum* in *Patrologia Syriaca* III (Paris: 1926). A. Vööbus replied to the contrary in *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvain: 1958), Vol. I:178-184, and was seconded more recently by A. Guillaumont, "Situation et signification du 'Liber Graduum' dans la spiritualité syriaque," in *Symposium Syriacum 1972, Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 197 (Rome: 1974), 311-325.

¹²⁹Thus Murray, *Symbols* 263-269. We might note that "Messalianism" is apparently one of the charges that John of Scythopolis does not want sticking to Dionysius, 169D-172A. Could this be the reason why he does not pick up on the "little church" theme present in *CH I.3* in his commentary in 33BC, but instead tries to define *hexis* as pertaining exclusively to the angels? We might note, too, that "Messalianism" proved a useful stick with which to beat adherents of a spirituality very akin to Symeon in the decades after the latter's passing. See in this context the articles by J. Grouillard, "Constantine Chrysomallos sous la masque de Syméon le nouveau théologien," *Travaux et Mémoires V* (1973), 313-327, and especially "Quatre procès de mystique à Byzance (vers 960-1143)," *Revue des études byzantines* 36 (1978), 5-81.

¹³⁰Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I:184, note 31.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 190-193, though the *Liber* concentrates on the second two, the just (layfolk) and the perfect (ascetics). See also A. Persic, "La Chiesa di Siria e i 'gradi' della vita Christiana," in *Per Foramen Acus* (Milano: 1986), 208-263, esp. 214ff.

¹³²The idea of a kind of triad can be found in Ephrem, too. See S'ed, "La Shekinta," 238-239, working esp. from Ephrem's *Hymns on Paradise*. See also M. Schmidt, who underlines this and moreover draws an explicit connection with Dionysius, "Alttestamentliche Typologien in den Paradieshymnen von Ephräm dem Syrer," *Paradeigmata*, ed. F. Link (Berlin: 1989), 78. Her remarks, 64-65, on ties between Ephrem's and Dionysius' use of Moses are also of interest. With respect to the negative theology in Ephrem and Dionysius, see also her article, "Die Augensymbolik Ephräms

Manifest Church."¹³³ The writer is anxious to insist on the necessity of the visible church and its liturgy. The Lord Himself, he tells us, "established this Church, altar, and baptism which can be seen by the body's eye," and He did so in order that,

By starting from these visible things, and provided that our bodies become temples and our hearts altars, we might find ourselves in their heavenly counterparts . . . migrating there and entering in while we are still in this visible church.¹³⁴

The latter's "priesthood and its ministry," as we just saw in Macarius, act "as fair examples for all those who imitate there the vigils, fasting, and endurance of our Lord."¹³⁵ To despise this visible church, however, means that our body

. . . will not become a temple, neither will our heart become an altar . . . Nor shall we have revealed to us that church on high with its altar, its light, and its priesthood, where are gathered all the saints who are pure in heart.¹³⁶

The Church in heaven is shown forth in the "likeness" which is the earthly church,¹³⁷ and it is the latter which makes of each believer "that body and heart where the Lord dwells . . . in truth a temple and an altar."¹³⁸ As we noted above in discussing *Celestial Hierarchy* I.3, there are therefore "three churches, and their ministries possess Life."¹³⁹ The earthly

und Parallelen in der deutschen Mystik," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie*, ed. M. Schmidt (Regensburg: 1982), 285. For Dionysius' distinctions between the "purified," "illumined" and "perfected" orders of believers (catechumens/penitents- layfolk-monks), see *EH* VI.1-3 592D-553A (114-116).

¹³³Kmosko, *PS* III 285-304. The translation is by S. Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer* (Kalamazoo: 1987), 45-63.

¹³⁴Brock, 46, 2 (Kmosko 288:23-289:1).

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 46 (289:2-4).

¹³⁶*Ibid.* (289:14-22).

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 48 (292:13-16).

¹³⁸*Ibid.* (292:7-10).

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 49,4 (294:23-24).

church enables the Christian to "find himself in the Church of the heart and in the Church on high."¹⁴⁰ All three churches, all three liturgies, are necessary and all three are necessarily coordinated, though only the second (the heart) and the third (the heavenly original) will abide in the eschaton.¹⁴¹ There, "on the mountain of the Lord" which is the Church in heaven, "shines the light of the countenance of our Lord," and there alone is He "seen openly."¹⁴²

Although *Homily 52* and *Discourse XII* of the *Liber* are the outstanding examples of this theme in the Syrian tradition, we can also find other and later instances. In the fifth-century homily by the Pseudo-Ephrem, "On Hermits and Desert Dwellers," the anonymous writer sums up the ascetics, living in utter poverty, with words and ideas now familiar to us:

They stay very late at service, and they rise early for service. The whole day and night, their occupation is the service. Instead of incense, which they do not have, their purity is reconciliation. And instead of a church building, they become temples of the Holy Spirit. Instead of altars [they have] their minds. And as oblations, their prayers are offered to the Godhead, pleasing him at all times.¹⁴³

The body of the holy man is the Church in its fulness where the sacrifice to God is accomplished. A similar picture is offered us, though the theme is indicated in the images employed—Sinai, Thabor, altar and eucharist—rather than in express statements, in the mid-fifth century, *Syriac Life* of Symeon Stylites,¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.* (296:8-10).

¹⁴¹Thus recall, again, *DN* I.4.

¹⁴²Brock 7, 42-43 (301:15-304:11). Note the "Mountain of the Lord" (304:17-20), citing *Ps* 24:3-5, and adding: "This is the heavenly church," and recall Sinai in *MT* I.3 together with our observations concerning Evagrius in note 103 above.

¹⁴³Text quoted from the translation by J. Amar in *Ascetic Behavior in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed. W. L. Wimbush (Minneapolis: 1990), 79:481-496. See also 72:181-184 and 73:229-232. Amar's "Introduction," 67-68, touches on the Evagrian influence in this poem, though not in ways of interest to our theme.

¹⁴⁴See Doran, *Lives of Symeon Stylites*, and the *Syriac Life's* notes of

which is to say in the decades immediately prior to the probable composition of the *Areopagitica*. Roughly contemporary with Dionysius, that is early sixth century, we find the sermon of the Chorepiscopus Balai on the consecration of the church at Qenneshrin and, once more, precisely the same themes. R. Murray has provided us a near complete translation in his *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*. Let us take up the thread at stanzas 21 and 22:

Three [gathered] in Thy name are [already] a church . . . for they have toiled on the church of the heart and brought it to the holy temple, built in Thy name. May the church that is inward be as fair as the church that is outward is splendid. Mayst Thou dwell in the inner and keep the outer, for [both] heart and church are sealed by Thy name.

The poem moves to the figure of the priest of the church in stanzas 24 through 26. Here we may discern the outlines of the Dionysian hierarch, the holy man of illumined heart:

May his soul surpass in hidden beauty the visible adornment which the house displays. Since his heart carries the temple of his Lord . . . this visible house proclaims concerning the mind of him who built it, that the inward heart is illumined and fair.¹⁴⁵

Still later, in Constantinople around mid-sixth century, the addition of the *Cherubikon* to the rite of the capital strikes a distinctly Dionysian note.¹⁴⁶ Almost simultaneously, at distant

mountain, incense, and sanctuary at the beginning and end: *Life* 4:105-106 and 116:185-186. For elucidation of these themes, together with the role of the prophetic archetypes of Moses and Elijah and the *motifs* drawn from Sinai and Thabor, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "The Sense of a Stylite: Perspectives on Symeon the Elder," *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988), esp. 381-386.

¹⁴⁵Translation by R. Murray, *Symbols*, 271-274. Stanzas 21-27 are on pages 272-273. Note the similar theme behind the poem by Bishop Babai on the consecration of the cathedral at Edessa, translated and commented by K. McVey, "The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1983), 91-121. The references to *Exodus* are especially interesting, trans. 95 and comment 96-98. McVey, 120-121, remarks on the parallels with Babai's hymn, but observes

Mount Sinai, longtime haunt of Christian hermits, we find the construction of St Catherine's monastery and, within its central church, artisans from the imperial city are putting together, in the apse above the altar, the mosaic image of Christ transfigured on Mount Thabor. Sinai and Thabor, the mountains of theophany, meet, in a land of ascetic saints, above the altar of the Eucharist. The mosaic itself, featuring the brilliant figure of Christ set amid a mandorla of deep blue, its darkness receding with progressively lighter-hued bands of color as one moves away from the center, seems to me markedly suggestive of Dionysius' *Epistles*.¹⁴⁷ Might we not take this image and its setting as together a kind of summary of the Dionysian—and more than Dionysius' own—themes we have been discussing?¹⁴⁸

Certainly, the Dionysian *corpus* fits well within the continuum of (especially Syrian) ascetic literature interpreting the

that the note of the "inner church" is absent in Babai's. Yet the church on earth, even the physical building, as microcosm of the universe and ultimately of the heavenly church is itself of interest to those of us who are dealing with the Dionysian universe (above note 79). The idea of the ecclesiastical microcosm (in whatever sense) certainly seems, on the basis of these two poems alone, to have been "in the air" in Syria around and just after 500 A.D.

¹⁴⁶E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* 2d ed. (Oxford: 1961), 106, and for Dionysian influence generally, 57-60. Recall Symeon's use of the *Cherubikon* in *Discourse* III above and note 70.

¹⁴⁷For the date of the mosaic, see V. Benesevic, "Sur la date de la mosaïque de la Transfiguration au Mont Sinai," *Byzantion* 1 (1924), 145-172, and for an analysis of this image as breaking new ground for the depiction of the Transfiguration, E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (Cambridge, MA: 1977) 99-104. The contrast with Ravenna's contemporary portrayal of the same event is particularly striking, and it was the Sinai image that would prove the prototype for subsequent Byzantine iconography.

¹⁴⁸I am reminded especially of the sequence beginning in *Ep. I*, the darkness, *Ep. II* on the gift of deification followed by *Ep. III*'s "suddenly" Christ, moving to *IV*'s gift through Christ of the *theandrike energeia*, and concluding with *V*'s equation of God's darkness with his "unapproachable light." Thus with the Sinai image, as one moves into the mystery (the progressively darker bands of blue) one reaches the unfathomable depths of the darkest hue and there, suddenly and brilliant, one meets Christ, who yet "when spoken remains ineffable, and when conceived unknowable" (1069B, 159:9-10). The mosaic, to me at least, appears as virtually an illustration of Dionysius. The territory, Sinai at the base of Palestine, and the time, mid-sixth century, both seem right as well. It would certainly not have been impossible for the monks who commissioned that image to have had access to the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Sinai, Thabor, light and dark, the prophets Moses and Elijah, the initiated apostles, the mystery of the God-man, the eschaton and the altar: it all fits.

inward meaning of the Church's liturgy. And it continued, for example in the *Mystagogy* of Maximus the Confessor, which takes these same themes and expresses them in a slightly different though clearly related manner. For Maximus the church is at once a series of several images or icons, representing God, the world, the human being, and the soul.¹⁴⁹ The same continuum also runs from Dionysius through the Syriac-speaking mystics of Eastern Mesopotamia, notably, Isaac of Nineveh and John of Dalyatha. S. Brock has recently published some of their prayers.¹⁵⁰ In Isaac we find the following in reference to Christ:

O glorious God who dwells in ineffable silence. You have built for my renewal a tabernacle of love on earth where it is your good pleasure to rest, a temple made of flesh . . . Then you filled it with your holy presence so that worship might be fulfilled in it . . . an ineffable mystery. . . In wonder at it angelic beings are submerged in silence, awed at the dark cloud of this eternal mystery and at the flood of glory which issues from within this source of wonder, for it receives worship in the sphere of silence. . . .

We note the terms ineffable, temple, dark cloud, glory and silence, themes familiar to the Dionysian *corpus*. Isaac then moves to our particular theme:

You have made my nature a sanctuary for your hiddenness and a tabernacle for your Mysteries, a place

¹⁴⁹See *Mystagogy*, PG 91 664D-688B, and in English, *Maximus Confessor*, trans. G. Berthold (New York: 1985), 186-197. Maximus' treatment of the ecclesiastical and liturgical symbols is usually held to be quite different from Dionysius', e.g. in R. Bornert's *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris: 1966), 66ff., reprised most recently by P. Rorem, *Commentary*, 121-122 and 130, note 32. Yet this position tends to ignore both the eschatological component of Dionysius' thought (e.g., Rorem 122) and the role of the human being or soul as microcosm. Maximus is much closer to the Areopagite than is usually allowed.

¹⁵⁰Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, Isaac 349-350 and John 362. For the latter's remarkable anticipation of central themes in fourteenth-century Byzantine hesychasm, see R. Baeulay, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha* (Paris: 1990), esp. 440-464.

where you can dwell, and a holy temple for your divinity.

Here again we find the recollection of the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle and temple, and the themes of microcosm and hiddenness. In John of Dalyatha, we find the same notes of hiddenness, temple, cloud and glory—echoes of Sinai:

You who are hidden and concealed within me, reveal within me your hidden mystery; manifest to me your beauty that is within me; O You who have built me as a temple for You to dwell in, cause the cloud of your glory to overshadow inside your temple, so that the ministers of your sanctuary may cry out in love for you: "Holy."

The tradition carried on to Symeon and Nicetas and, indeed, past them to the fourteenth century hesychasts, for example Gregory of Sinai. Two passages from Gregory's *Chapters in the Philokalia* are worth citing here. Chapter 112 speaks of the "spiritual priesthood" as the "sacred working [*hierourgia*]" of the intellect within the "altar of the soul." Chapter 43, however, is even more to our point:

According to the Mosaic Law, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a tabernacle pitched by God, possessing the age to come behind two veils. And while all who are priests of grace shall come into the first tabernacle, into the second [shall enter] only as many as have hierarchically celebrated [*hierarchikos leitourgesantes*] the Trinity here-below in the darkness [*gnophos*] of theology; who before all else possess Jesus as [their] consecrator and hierarch [*teletarchen kai hierarchen*] with respect to the Trinity. Entering into the tabernacle which He has pitched, they are the more manifestly illumined by His radiance.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹*Philokalia ton neptikon pateron* IV (Athens: 1961, rep.), 37 and 51. The Dionysian language, hierarch, teletarches, hierourgia, etc. is particularly striking.

These themes from Dionysius and his predecessors continue even in contemporary monastic authors writing, in particular, from Mount Athos—for example, in Archimandrite Vasileios' recent book.¹⁵² It is an unbroken tradition in the Orthodox world and that, I would suggest, is the case because it has even older roots than the ones we have indicated here. We mentioned St Paul and the temple texts from *I Corinthians*, but to those we might add the Transfiguration accounts, together with the indwelling and vision of the divine glory that Christ promises His disciples in *John* 17:22-24—the same glory that the Evangelist tells us earlier has “tabernacled among us” and which we have seen (*John* 1:14-15).¹⁵³ Likewise, Ignatius of Antioch, one of the earliest defenders of “objective” sacramental realism and advocate of the authority of the Church's bishops, saw the Church's Eucharist fulfilled in his own immolation as martyr.¹⁵⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons, no less, said that “The glory of God is man . . . and the receptacle of all His wisdom and power is man”; and, in a striking anticipation of the Transfiguration motif so important for Macarius, Dionysius, and Gregory Palamas, Irenaeus remarked that the Word of God was made flesh so that all things “might behold their King, and that the paternal light might meet with and rest upon the flesh of our Lord, and come to us from His resplendent

¹⁵²See, for example, virtually the whole of his *Hymn of Entry*, trans. E. Briere (Crestwood, 1984), but especially “The Divine Liturgy as a Theological Rite” 57-59, and the evocation of the Dionysian “suddenly,” 106. See also the essays by Archimandrite George (Capsanis), *The Eros of Repentance*, trans. A. Golitzin (Newbury, MA: 1992), esp. 50-51, and Archimandrite Aemilianos of Simonospetras, “The Transfiguration in the Life of the Athonite Monk,” in *The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain*, trans. A. Golitzin (forthcoming, St Tikhon's Seminary Press).

¹⁵³Recall N. S'ed and above, notes 102 and 103.

¹⁵⁴See Ignatius, *Romans* 2, 4, and 7, with their recollections of, respectively, the Eucharist (2 and 4) and Baptism (7): “A libation to God while there is an altar ready”; “I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread [of Christ] . . . a sacrifice to God,” and “there is no fire of longing in me, but only water that lives and speaks in me.” From J. B. Lightfoot's translation, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: 1980, 11th rep.), 76-78. See also the *Martyrdom of St Polycarp* 14-15 (*Ibid.*, 113-114) with its evocations of eucharistic *anaphora* and incense offering. For a similar theme in the New Testament, see *Rev.* 6:9, and for comment, Sweet, *Revelation* 142. For the theme of martyr as sacrifice extending back into Maccabean times, see W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Garden City, NY: 1967), 22-57.

flesh.”¹⁵⁵ Clement recalls the theme of light, while Origen takes up Philo of Alexandria's interiorization of the sacred history of Israel in order to present the journey of God's people through the desert to the Promised Land as recapitulated in the history of the individual Christian soul.¹⁵⁶ Both Clement and Origen also speak of the “true bishop” as the enlightened Christian gnostic, or the wise *didaskalos*¹⁵⁷—and Origen, be it noted, had even greater difficulties with Bishop Demetrius than Symeon would have later on with the Patriarch and Stephen of Nicomedia.¹⁵⁸

These different lines—temple, glory, martyr and enlightened one—all meet in the portrayal of the ascetic saint of the fourth century. It was quite natural that the scriptural and early patristic themes of Sinai and Thabor, temple, altar and revelation of the glory, should appear in the assimilation of the righteous ascetic to the martyr once the age of martyrdom had come to a close. We have only to recall Antony stepping out of his fortress hermitage like “an initiate and Godbearer from a kind of sanctuary,” and then promptly—and throughout the rest of the *Vita Antonii*—demonstrating the gifts of the indwelling Spirit through healings, clairvoyance, and counsel as the “physician of Egypt.”¹⁵⁹ Abba Longinus recalls the martyrs with the often quoted saying: “Give blood, receive the Spirit.”¹⁶⁰ The Abbas Joseph, Silvanus and Sisoës shine with the divine glory, while Abba Arsenius is glimpsed within his cell wrapped about with the fire from heaven.¹⁶¹ Thus another saying recalls these different themes by noting that “The cell of the monk

¹⁵⁵*AH* III.xx.2 for man; IV.xx.2 for the “paternal light.” A little below, xx.5, Irenaeus adds: “As those who see the light are in the light and partake of its brilliance, even so, those who see God are in God and receive of his splendor.”

¹⁵⁶See Clement's *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 4-5 (*SC* 23:58-63) for the light of Thabor. For Origen and the interiorization of Israel's history, see esp. the flight from Egypt to the Promised Land in *De Principis* II.1.3 and IV.3.9-12 (*SC* 252:238-240 and 268:374-392).

¹⁵⁷See the references in Holl, *Enthusiasmus* 225-239.

¹⁵⁸As recounted briefly by Eusebius, *HE* VI.23.4. For Symeon's difficulties, see *Vie* 72-79 (98-136).

¹⁵⁹*Vita Antonii* 14 (*PG* 26 864C).

¹⁶⁰Longinus 5 (*PG* 65 257B).

¹⁶¹Joseph of Panephris 7 (229CD); Silvanus 3 and 12 (409A and 412C); Sisoës 14 (396BC); and Arsenius 27 (96BC).

is the furnace of Babylon where the three youths found the son of God, and the pillar of cloud from which God spoke to Moses."¹⁶² Even St Ephrem, out of his own native Syrian ascetic tradition, adumbrates what we have touched upon in this essay in his *Hymns on Paradise*, especially in the parallels he offers in *Hymns* II and III between the Paradise Mountain, Sinai, the Temple of Jerusalem, and the human soul.¹⁶³ It is left, though, primarily to Evagrius, the *Liber Graduum*, and Macarius, all writing at roughly the same time, to bring these elements together in one, powerful synthesis—the latter two in rather more balanced and sacramental a way than the first.

Some Conclusions

This is the tradition that Dionysius took up and elaborated, while transposing it into the language of late Neoplatonism, in particular through the not unrelated concerns of Iamblichan theurgy.¹⁶⁴ It is, though, still the scriptural and patristic theme

¹⁶²Text and French translation in *Les Apophthegmes des Pères*, ed. J.-C. Guy, SC 387 (Paris: 1993), 376-378.

¹⁶³See his *Hymns on Paradise*, trans. S. Brock (Crestwood: 1990), esp. II:10-13 and III:1-17 (88-96). See also the chart of these parallels that Brock supplies on page 53, together with S'ed above, note 132, and another article by the same, "Les Hymnes sur le paradis de Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives," *Le Muséon* (1968), 455-501, esp. 461-464 and 470-484.

¹⁶⁴Dionysius' relationship to Iamblichus and theurgy is amply documented, above note 11. In a very interesting article, "Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul," in *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought* ed. H. J. Westra (Leiden/New York: 1992), 136-161, J. R. Rist suggests that Dionysius saw Christianity as supplying something lacking in Iamblichus. The latter, Rist argues, was moved to theurgy in order to assure access to the divine for the human soul which, in Iamblichus' view as opposed to Plotinus', is too weak to lift itself up by its own powers. But how to tell if the *Chaldean Oracles*, the charter for Iamblichus' theurgy, were the true revelation? Dionysius, in this view, responds with the surety of the Christian revelation and the Church's liturgy. It seems to me this account could usefully be enhanced by taking into account the notion of the microcosm that was also basic to Neoplatonism (above, notes 77-78) and to Dionysius. The soul is thus not only supported outwardly, but "braced" inwardly. It finds in the liturgy its own deepest truth. That Iamblichus, Evagrius, the *Liber Graduum*, and Macarius are all fourth century (the *Liber* could even be roughly contemporary with Iambli-

of the soul as church that provides the key for the explanation of all of his treatises, from the introductory *Celestial Hierarchy* all the way to the *Mystical Theology* and the latter's speechless encounter, patterned on Moses' ascent of Sinai, with the "dazzling darkness" of the divine presence.¹⁶⁵ I would apply this even to the *Divine Names*. The latter is couched in liturgical language, as a hymn.¹⁶⁶ The strange picture of the world that it presents, so calm and harmonious,¹⁶⁷ can perhaps be explained, first of all, by the fact that this treatise is, in its stated purpose, a meditation upon the scriptures.¹⁶⁸ The same scriptures, Dionysius tells us in chapters III and IV of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*,¹⁶⁹ find their allotted and proper place in the readings of the *synaxis*, i.e., within the world as it has been re-created in Christ, in the new creation which is the Church.¹⁷⁰ It is therefore the world of the Church that we meet in the *Divine Names*, Dionysius' true "world" as reflected in the microcosm of the church building and the ecclesial assembly.¹⁷¹ We might then, in addition, see the treatise on the *Names* as playing the role of the *synaxis* to the *anaphora* of the *Mystical Theology*, in a way rather like what we saw above in Macarius' fifty-second homily. Everything in the Dionysian

chus) and moreover, writing from within the same general area of Syria-Palestine, is further suggestive of a relatively widespread current of thought, out of which we then find Dionysius emerging a century later. Once again, matters appear to have been far more complex than a simple "Platonist" vs. "Biblical" schema would allow.

¹⁶⁵For the "dazzling darkness," *MT* I.1 997B (142:104) and 1000A (142:10); for the silence, I.1 997B (142:2) and 2 1000C (143:11); and III 1033C (147:13-17); and for the list of negations: V 1048A (149-150).

¹⁶⁶On the frequency of *hymneo* and its derivatives, see *Corpus Dionysiacum* II, "Griechisches Register: Wörter" 293. I count *hymneo* 107 times, *hymnitikos* once, *hymnologa* eight times, *hymnologos* once, *hymnos* ten times, and *hymnodos* once: one hundred thirty-two times in all.

¹⁶⁷Thus Fr Wesche's remarks in his "Reply" 326: "Everything [in Dionysius] is good and real and alive just by virtue of being, and there seems to be little to suggest the doctrine of a Fall... [fallenness is therefore] a fall into materiality." Dionysius does address the Fall, incidentally, esp. in *EH* III.3.11 440C-441A (90:16-91:8), and so far as I can tell in terms fully congenial with the tradition. Fr Wesche's remarks are probably directed in particular to the Dionysian presentation of "peace" and "salvation" in *DN* XI.

¹⁶⁸See *DN* I.1 585B-588A (107:4-109:2).

¹⁶⁹See *EH* III.3.3-4 428D-432A (82-84) and IV.3.3 477A (97:23-98:10).

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, IV.3.12 484D-485A (103:4-12).

¹⁷¹See McVey, "The Domed Church" and note 145 above.

corpus turns around and moves into the altar, the altar which in turn doubles for the inner sanctuary of the soul, and which is, ultimately, the presence of Jesus Christ.¹⁷² Maximus, Symeon, and Nicetas recognized this central motif (since they, too, had read their Macarius and Evagrius), and they simply continued it.

To return at last to the point where we began, Father John was both correct and quite wrong. He was absolutely right to see Symeon and Nicetas carrying on a tradition inherited from the Areopagite. He was right, furthermore, in seeing the understanding of hierarchy as linked to the notion of the charismatic ascetic. He was wrong, however, in failing to note the eschatological character of this linkage, and in reading Dionysius' hierarchy as "standing between the individual Christian and God," and thus as carrying over into Christian language the rigid system of Neoplatonist mediation.¹⁷³ The Areopagite's hierarchy does not stand between—in the sense of blocking—anything, save in the way that we saw the earthly church "standing between" heart and heaven in Macarius and the *Liber Graduum*. It is the necessary and, through Christ, divinely given image of both heart and heaven, the icon, in the sense of *Hebrews* 10:1, as opposed to the "shadow" of the Law.¹⁷⁴ On this issue, as so often happens to all of us in academia, Father John was following the scholarly consensus, and the consensus with regard to the *Areopagitica* was, and largely continues to be, insensitive to important elements in the tradition out of which Dionysius came. The monks, I think, have always known better.

As for the issue of ecclesiological (and sacramental) "sub-

¹⁷²Along these lines, see Father John's treatment of Dionysius in his *Introduction to Gregory Palamas*, trans. G. A. Lawrence (London: 1964), 187-192 and 204-209. According to this account, Palamas is constantly applying a "Christological corrective" to the Areopagite's "closed system." For a critique of this analysis of Gregory's reading of Dionysius, see J. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* VI (1960) and IX (1963/64), esp. the latter, 250-262.

¹⁷³See Dionysius on the relationship of the "Legal" to the "Ecclesiastical Hierarchy" in *EH* III.3.5 432B (84:15-21) and esp. V.1.2 501B-D (104:15-105:21).

¹⁷⁴Murray, *Symbols*, 275-276, makes the same point regarding Macarius and the *Liber Graduum*.

jectivism" that Father John raised with respect to all three of our authors, there indeed he has pointed to a real problem. I have no intention of trying to maintain that Dionysius—or Symeon or Nicetas for that matter—has solved it. The notion of hierarchy as I believe we find it in the Areopagite oscillates or, perhaps better, shimmers somewhere between objective and subjective realities. If we push Dionysius too hard in either direction, then, certainly, we do end up in difficulties. It is clear, empirical fact that clerical office holders are not always, or even often, holy men. I cannot believe that Dionysius did not know that. On the other hand, if we were to push the "charismatic" option to its limits, as Symeon almost does, then we would end up dissolving the visible structures of the Church quite entirely. The key, though, is that "almost." Neither the New Theologian, nor his disciple, nor Dionysius do push their logic to the limits. They are content with ambiguity, and they are thus very wise. Wise, too, is the Orthodox tradition, because it has never sought to resolve an ambiguity that constitutes, in fact, one of the fundamental antinomies of Christian existence *in statu via*. The tension between charisma and institution, or *Geist* and *Amt*, does not appear to admit of any resolution this side of the eschaton. Interestingly, the fact of this strain between the pneumatic and institutional facets of the Church's life was one of Father John's own favorite themes. He upheld it, together with its resulting ambiguities, consistently and approvingly.¹⁷⁵ It is one of the lessons that I received most gratefully as his student, and that I hope I have served to illustrate in this essay, offered as a tribute to the man who introduced me to the Fathers, who was also patron and friend, and whom I look forward to greeting—God being merciful to me, a sinner—in the liturgy of heaven.

Lux perpetua luceat ei.

¹⁷⁵See, for example, his two essays, "The Holy Spirit as God," and "St Basil, the Church, and Charismatic Leadership," in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood: 1982), 153-165, esp. 162-165 and 197-215, esp. 204-215 respectively.

APPENDIX

The following is my translation into English of H. Berthold's edition of *Homily 52*, pages 138-142 in *Makarios/Symeon. Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*, GCS (Berlin: 1973). The reader will note certain themes in common with both the *Liber* and Dionysius that I did not touch upon in the essay above, e.g., in the first paragraph the issue of names and of a struggle with the literal-minded.

MACARIAN HOMILY: 52

The whole visible arrangement of the Church of God came to pass for the sake of the living and intelligible being of the rational soul that was made according to the image of God and which is the living and true church of God. And for this reason things which are bodily and without soul or reason were honored with names similar to the beings which are rational, living and heavenly: in order that the infant soul might be guided through the shadow [and] attain to the truth. For the Church of Christ and Temple of God and true altar and living sacrifice is the man of God, through whom the things sanctified bodily obtained the invocation of the heavenly. For just as the worship and mode of life of the Law [were] a shadow of the present Church of Christ, just so is the present and visible Church a shadow of the rational and true inner man. Thus, indeed, the whole visible arrangement and ministry of the mysteries of the Church pass away at the conclusion [of the age], while the rational and intelligible being of the inner man abides. [It is] for the sake of this [rational being] that the whole arrangement and ministry of the heavenly mysteries of God's Church ought to be accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that, having been truly established by the living action of the Spirit as a holy temple of God and church of Christ, one may become an heir of life everlasting. [It is] for this reason that many who are nurslings in the knowledge of the truth oppose us as withdrawing [or: changing utterly] in an alien way from the true scriptures. For the sake of the similarity and statutes of names and of worship, they have complete confidence in the temporary [present] arrangement and trust alone in statutes of the flesh. Having neglected the seeking according to the inner man and the renewal of the soul, and not having received knowledge of the new creation of the intellect, they slander us out of ignorance. For the soul which loves truth seeks out the root itself of things. It does not think that Christianity is [all] on the surface [or: is superficial], nor [does] it rest content with the outward types of statutes and of

worship, but by the power of the Holy Spirit it takes it upon itself faithfully to receive that assurance according to the inner man which is the true Christianity.

So for this reason God gave His Holy Spirit to the holy and catholic Church, and arranged that It [i.e., the Holy Spirit] be present in the holy altar and the water of holy baptism, and the Savior granted through the Apostles that the Comforter Spirit would be present and take part in all [the] liturgy of the holy Church of God, according to what was said by the Lord Himself: "And behold, I am with all you always, even unto the end of the age," so that, from Baptism and the altar of the Eucharist of bread and from all the mystical worship which is in the Church, faithful hearts might be energized by the Holy Spirit with all power and with the virtues of heavenly fruits, and thus might be renewed and refashioned by the power of grace and be shown forth as living a true life according to the mind of heaven, having put off the material and earthly mind by the power of the Spirit. For if in the Ark according to the Law the Spirit was shadowed forth—rather, indeed, was present—then how much the more is It not [present] at the altar and in the Church and in all the mystagogy of Holy Baptism? Yet just as when the Israelites were in sin the Spirit did not act, although It was present with the Ark of God. For behold, sometimes for the sake of the people's sins even the ark itself was betrayed to the gentiles, and it helped the latter not at all who were unworthy of it because of their many transgressions, though the Spirit demonstrated the same activity and meaning because it was present with the Ark of God in order to be a sign of God at that time to the gentiles. Thus, now as well, the Spirit of God is present with the holy Church of God and the holy altar and in all the visible arrangement. Among the worthy and the faithful It acts with different gifts, while It remains far away from the unworthy. For the living activity of the Holy Spirit is to be sought from God in living hearts, because all visible things and all the [present] arrangement passes away, but hearts alive in the Spirit will abide. Wherefore the Savior came, wherefore indeed the formation of the icon of the Church, in order that the intelligible being of faithful souls might, through the activity of grace, be made again and renewed and, having accepted change, be enabled to inherit life everlasting.

And because visible things are the type and shadow of hidden ones, and the visible temple [a type] of the temple of the heart, and the priest [a type] of the grace of Christ, and all the rest of the sequence of the visible arrangement [a type] of the rational

and hidden matters according to the inner man, we receive the manifest arrangement and administration of the Church as an illustration of [what is] at work in the soul by grace. Therefore just as, according to the visible Church, unless first the readings and the psalmody and the synaxis of the people and all the sequence of the Church's ordinance be completed, the priest does not complete the divine mystery itself of the body and blood of Christ, and the mystical communion of the faithful does not occur. The mystery is not consecrated and the Church's ordinance is not accomplished. The worship is rather lacking when the divine mystery has not been consecrated upon the altar by the priest. And again, just as when the mystery of the offertory is not offered unless first the entire rule of the Church has been completed—and the former is indeed incomplete and in vain without the consecration of the mystery—neither is the latter accomplished unless the former has been completed beforehand. Just as [there is] a certain order and glory to the mystery, so there is for the Christian. Unless he has fasting, vigil, psalmody, and all asceticism and every virtue, the mystical activity of the Spirit in all perception and spiritual refreshment is not accomplished by grace on the altar of the heart. [On the other hand], the whole sequence of [his] asceticism is lacking and practically in vain without its head, the rejoicing of the Spirit mystically at work in the heart by grace. Once again, the love of the Spirit, [which is] the heavenly mystery inebriating the soul in the rejoicing of grace, is not simply at work indifferently in [people who are] prodigal and dissolute, but only in a heart [which is] faithful and devout and [which] keeps a strict asceticism and way of life. For these are the order and rest of the activity of the Spirit.

To the degree then that the soul is found in strict asceticism and great humility and meekness and a virtuous way of life, so much does the grace of the Spirit take its rest in it with all power and activity. The soul, however, which has the way of life, but does not yet perceive the activity of the Spirit in itself with all assurance, is lacking the sanctification of the heart. Therefore let it seek; let it mourn; let it cry out to the Lord, in order that it may possess, as a splendid world, the sanctification of the Spirit in a virtuous way of life, and [know] the activity of grace by means of ineffable contemplations in [its] intellect, so that it may possess perfect in itself the mystery of Christianity, in accord with the parable of the Church given above. But, just as in the Church, while those who sin in the body are put out by the priest and, once having returned, are made worthy again of communion, and those, on the other hand, who do not sin make blameless progress and

come to the priesthood, and are transferred from some outer place to the altar so that they may be God's ministers and assistants; so, too, according to this example, are Christians moved by grace and brought to rest by the advocacy of the Spirit in the heavenly delight of the Spirit's mystical communion, concerning which the Apostle has said: "The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit," and so on. Pay exact attention to what is said, and you will find the holy and adorable Trinity indwelling in the purified man through the assistance that is from on high and through his own noble way of life—I say indwelling, though, not as He is in Himself (for there is no room for Him in all creation), but rather to the degree that the man who is well-pleasing to Him is capable of making room for and receiving Him.

If therefore the faculty of choice should transgress something in the way of life according to conscience, being subordinated invisibly to certain injurious passions, and in this regard grieve the Spirit, the intellect is cast out and separated from spiritual joy, grace and love and every virtuous and good activity contracting [and withdrawing from it], and it is given over for tribulations and trials to the evil spirits until such time as, the soul having converted again, it walk upright toward pleasing the Spirit in all humility and repent in confession. Then will it again be made worthy of the oversight of the Spirit's grace, and will receive the heavenly joy more greatly [than before]. If, on the other hand, it does not embitter grace and grieve the Spirit through an evil and dissolute conduct, but rather pleasingly follows the dominical statutes and of its own free will musters itself with all seriousness and perfect struggle in battle array against evil thoughts, and with all its faculty of choice glues itself at all times to the Lord, and welcomes grace, then indeed such a soul justly and in consequence progresses and is made worthy of both wonders and gifts. It is made worthy of transference [promotion?] and of spiritual rank, and of being translated from divine mysteries to heavenly mysteries, and from glory to glory, and from rest to a yet more splendid and perfect rest, that its intellect may find itself [lit. "be"] in the highest degrees, and in great freedom, and in the rich glory of grace, and thus having reached the perfect measure of Christianity through both its own free-willed ordeal and help from on high, the soul will be inscribed in the Kingdom among the perfect workers and with the blameless ministers and assistants of Christ. Because it has proven [its] good conscience and much zeal for the good, it inherits the Lord forever and ever. Amen.