Francesca Dell'Acqua/Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi (eds.): Pseudo-Diony-
sius and Christian Visual Culture, c. 500–900. Cham (Schweiz): Pal-
grave Macmillan 2020 (New Approaches to Byzantine History and
Culture). XXIX, 329 p., 33 ill. € 128.39. ISBN: 978-3-030-24768-3.

As the editors state in their introduction, this book is intended to fulfil "the
original scope of the series in which it appears, offering an interdisciplinary
view of specific questions about Byzantine culture and society to a broad
academic and non-academic audience" (p. XIII) and looks at some aspects
of the "question of Pseudo-Dionysius' impact on Christian visual culture"
(p. VI) between 500 and 900.[1]

The introduction by Francesca Dell'Acqua and Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi
(pp. V–XIV) provides a convenient summary of the nine essays gathered in
this volume. It is followed by the contributors' biographies (pp. XVII–XX),
a list of abbreviations (pp. XXI–XXIII), figures and tables (pp. XXV–
XXIX). The volume is completed by a glossary (pp. 321–322) and an index
(of names and concepts, pp. 323–329).

This collection of essays takes up the important question of the Areopagite's
conception of image and hierarchy, and its reception in Byzantine art. Stud-
ies about the reception of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* have multiplied over the
last few years,[2] but the perspective of visual art is interesting and, although
not completely new, not so often encountered, probably because the impact
of philosophy on painting or architecture is difficult to assess. In fact, five
of the essays in the present book deal almost exclusively with texts (Chapters

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1   The following abbreviations are used: *CD = Corpus Dionysiacum*; *CH = De coelesti
     hierarchia*; *DN = De divinis nominibus*; *EH = De ecclesiastica hierarchia*; *Ep. = Epistula(e)*;
     MT = De mystica theologia. Pseudo-Dionysius' text is quoted according to the Göttin-
     gen critical edition: B. R. Suchla (ed.): Corpus Dionysiacum I: *De divinis nominibus*.
     Berlin/New York 1990 (Patristische Texte und Studien 33); and G. Heil/A. M. Rit-
     ter (eds.): Corpus Dionysiacum II: *De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia, De
     mystica theologia, Epistulae*. 2. edition. Berlin/Boston 2012 (Patristische Texte und
     Studien 36).

2   See my review of M. Edwards/D. Pallis/G. Steiris (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of
     Dionysius the Areopagite. Oxford/New York 2022 (Oxford Handbooks). In:
     Plekos 25, 2023, pp. 47–71, URL: https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2023/r-
     dionysius-areopagita.pdf.

1–4 and 7), whereas four venture into art-historical studies (Chapters 5–6 and 8–9).

[1] Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi ("Reassessing the Historico-Doctrinal Background of Pseudo-Dionysius' Image Theory", pp. 1–39) presents both the Cappadocian and Neoplatonic sources of the "symbolic theology" and the "theory of the images" in the *CD*. As far as the Neoplatonic sources are concerned, especially Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Republic*, there is some overlapping with Angelo Tavolaro's contribution [2]. Mainoldi concludes that "the application of these theories to visual arts is not discussed by the Cappadocian Fathers or by Pseudo-Dionysius"; nevertheless, he continues, "the special link that Pseudo-Dionysius drew between image and hypostasis, the implications of his discourse on deification, and his understanding of the role of nature and hypostasis in the Incarnation [...] exerted a lasting influence on the Christian aesthetic thought and visual thinking concerning the divine and the sacred" (p. 24). This assertion may be true, but is not substantiated by any evidence or reference to extant studies. According to the author, the controversy about the worship of images in Byzantium "can be explained as a consequence of the lack of awareness, among many participants in the Byzantine culture, of the paradigm shift brought about by Cappadocians and Pseudo-Dionysius image theory" (pp. 26–27) and "because the opponents of veneration of sacred images failed to recognise the theological rationale for this liturgical and devotional practice, as it was established on the basis of the Cappadocian Fathers and Pseudo-Dionysius" (p. 27). Again, this view might be correct, but is nowhere demonstrated in the article. Perhaps, to be convinced, one should read Mainoldi's other publications, which are amply referred to in the present article.[3] The contention that "by the mid- to late seventh century, imbued with the lesson of the Cappadocian Fathers and Pseudo-Dionysius, art expressed the hypostatic and energetic foundations of the Christian faith, not only as abstract concepts" (p. 27) is rather a philosophical opinion than a scholarly established historical fact.

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3   Especially his book: E. S. Mainoldi: Dietro 'Dionigi l'Areopagita'. La genesi e gli scopi del *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Roma 2018 (Institutiones 6). Regarding the articles by Mainoldi mentioned in the list of references, Mainoldi 2016a does not seem to be quoted in the present article and Mainoldi 2017c (for which incomplete and inaccurate bibliographical data are provided) is, in fact, the same as 2017b.

[2] Angelo Tavolaro ("*Eikon* and *Symbolon* in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*: Scriptures and Sacraments as Aesthetic Categories", pp. 41–75) examines the concepts of "image" and "symbol" in the *CD* against the background of Neoplatonism, especially Proclus's commentary on Plato's *Republic*. The method of comparing texts in this article is, in my opinion, problematic when considered in detail.[4]

Texts, seemingly by Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, are aligned in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 (pp. 52–53), in order to substantiate Tavolaro's argument that they share some common ideas and wordings. On closer inspection, the texts compared are not exact quotations but paraphrases in English, with some Greek terms inserted; the references are vague and one does not know what exactly is being compared. The reader cannot be convinced by such a comparison because it is unfaithful to the authors' wording. As an example, see below what is supposed to be a rendering of *Ep.* IX in Table 2.1 in the left column and the actual text of *Ep.* IX (in fact, only of § 1) in the right column:

Table 2.1 "Ep. IX" (p. 52)[5]	Ep. IX 1[6]
	p. 198.8–12
(1) The impassive elements of the soul (τὸ μὲν ἀπαθὲς τῆς ψυχῆς) is attuned to the simple and interior visions of those images which have the shape of the divine (τῶν θεοειδῶν ἀγαλμάτων). On the other hand, the passionate element of the soul (τὸ δὲ παθητικὸν), as benefits its nature, honors and rises up toward most divine realities by way of the carefully combined elements of the	(1) τὸ μὲν ἀπαθὲς τῆς ψυχῆς εἰς τὰ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἐνδότατα τῶν θεοειδῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἀφορίσαι θεάματα, τὸ δὲ παθητικὸν αὐτῆς συμφυῶς θεραπεύειν ἅμα καὶ ἀνατείνειν ἐπὶ τὰ θειότατα τοῖς προμεμηχανημένοις τῶν τυπωτικῶν συμβόλων ἀναπλασμοῖς, ὡς συγγενῆ τὰ τοιαῦτα πέφυκε παραπετάσματα καὶ δηλοῦσιν [...][7]

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4   The Greek is sometimes poorly written, for example, p. 50: διά τών αισθητών, p. 53: ἀπεμφαιόν (instead of ἀπεμφαῖνον), p. 53: ὁμοιότης, p. 57: τό ἀπλανής.

5   I inserted numbers between brackets for the convenience of referencing. I have added the mentions "[sic]", the other parentheses (round or curved brackets) and the suspension marks are from Tavolaro.

6   Ed. Heil/Ritter (note 1).

7   The translation of passage (1) by C. Luibhéid/P. Rorem (eds.): Pseudo-Dionysius. The Complete Works. New York/Mahwah, NJ 1987 (The Classics of Western Spirituality) is given by Tavolaro on p. 50.

representations. Theses [sic] symbolic
veils are akin (τὰ πέφυκε παραπετάσμα-
τα) [to that part of the soul], as seen by
the example of those who ...

(2) Scriptures expresses [sic] by
παραπετάσματα and τερατείας; it needs
to get rid of childish imaginations
(παιδαριώδη φαντασία [sic]) to get to
the truth

p. 197.3–8

(2) μόνοις δὲ ἀνακαλύπτεσθαι τοῖς τῆς
θεότητος γνησίοις ἐρασταῖς, ὡς πᾶσαν τὴν
παιδαριώδη φαντασίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν
συμβόλων ἀποσκευαζομένοις καὶ ἱκανοῖς
διαβαίνειν [...] πρὸς τὴν [...] τῶν συμβόλων
ἀλήθειαν.

(3) Perceptible symbols (διὰ τών αισθη-
τών συμβόλων [sic]) manifest a mystic
wisdom (ἀπόρρητον σοφία [sic])

p. 193.6–12

(3) Καὶ γὰρ ἀτοπίαν δεινὴν ἐναπομόρ-
γνυνται ταῖς ἀτελέσι τῶν ψυχῶν, ὁπόταν
οἱ τῆς ἀπορρήτου σοφίας πατέρες διὰ δή
τινων κρυφίων καὶ ἀποτετολμημένων
αἰνιγμάτων ἐκφαίνωσι τὴν θείαν καὶ μυσ-
τικὴν καὶ ἄβατον τοῖς βεβήλοις ἀλήθειαν.

Διὸ καὶ ἀπιστοῦμεν οἱ πολλοὶ τοῖς περὶ
τῶν θείων μυστηρίων λόγοις·θεώμεθα γὰρ
μόνον αὐτὰ διὰ τῶν προσπεφυκότων
αὐτοῖς αἰσθητῶν συμβόλων.[8]

The first passage (1) is a quite exact translation, but the other two passages
are difficult to identify. It is unclear where the sentence "Scripture expresses
[itself?] by παραπετάσματα and τερατείας" in (2) comes from. The only occur-
rence of τερατεία in the whole *CD* is indeed *Ep.* IX 1, where Dionysius says:
"For the [forms] outside [the symbolic representation of the holy] aren't they

8   Translation of the passage (3) by Luibhéid/Rorem (note 7): "Among uninstructed
     souls the fathers of unspeakable wisdom give an impression of outstanding absurdity
     when, with secret and daring riddles, they make known that truth which is divine,
     mysterious, and so far as the profane are concerned, inaccessible. That is why so
     many continue to be unbelieving in the presence of the explanations of the divine
     mysteries, for we contemplate them solely by way of the perceptible symbols at-
     tached to them".

full with such incredible and fictitious portentous nonsense?",[9] so he does not speak of the Scriptures. The other sentence in (2), "it needs to get rid of childish imaginations (παιδαριώδη φαντασία [sic]) to get to the truth" is equally problematic: what is the "it" subject of "needs"? The passage in *Ep.* IX 1 containing the expression παιδαριώδης φαντασία (or, in the accusative, τὴν παιδαριώδη φαντασίαν) quoted above, says: "it [τὰ πανίερα, the totally holy] is revealed only to the genuine lovers of the divinity, as they abandon their childish fantasy regarding the sacred symbols and are capable to go through [...] to the [...] truth of the symbols".[10] Regarding the last passage (3), it is a very inaccurate 'summary' of a passage at the beginning of *Ep.* IX 1.

In the same Table 2.1 (p. 52), the rendering of "Celestial Hierarchy II" is equally awkward:

> Scriptures are formed by αἰσθητά εἰκόνα [sic]; are presented as a ποικιλία and are full of absurd images (αἰσχρὰ); they are absurd (ἀπεμφαινούσας) characterized by δυσμορφία and δυσειδέια [sic]; they are described as ἀνόμοιος ὁμοιόσεις [sic]. The ugliness of the images means to: [sic] hide truth from the many (πολλοί); push the higher part of the soul (ἀνωφερὲς τῆς ψυχῆς) towards the above realities. This converts the souls from the sensible things to the ἀληθείας ζήτησις, which is the goal of the biblical images.

What does the sentence "Scriptures are formed by sensible images" mean (notwithstanding the question as to why αἰσθητὰς εἰκόνας, if this is what is intended, is in the accusative)? How could the Scriptures be "formed" by images? The only occurrence of an expression combining the adjective αἰσθητός with the noun εἰκών in *CH* is found in Chapter I 3: "[the benevolent source of consecration] inscribed the super-celestial intellects with sensible images in the scriptural complexities of the *logia*"[11] – this is not really the same.

In the sentence "Scriptures [...] are presented as a ποικιλία and are full of absurd images (αἰσχρὰ)", the adjective αἰσχρός should not be translated as "absurd" like the participial ἀπεμφαίνων below (and why is αἰσχρά in the nominative/accusative neutrum and ἀπεμφαινούσας in the accusative feminine?). I am

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9   Ed. Heil/Ritter (note 1), p. 194.7–8: Τὰ γὰρ ἐκτὸς αὐτῆς, ὁπόσης ἀναπέπλησται τῆς ἀπιθάνου καὶ πλασματώδους τερατείας (my translation).

10   Ibidem, p. 197.3–5 (my translation).

11   Ibidem, p. 9.11–12: [ἡ φιλάνθρωπος τελεταρχία] αἰσθηταῖς εἰκόσι τοὺς ὑπερουρανίους ἀνεγράψατο νόας ἐν ταῖς ἱερογραφικαῖς τῶν λογίων συνθέσεσιν (my translation).

not sure where Pseudo-Dionysius said that the Scriptures "are full of" ugly images. Concerning the ποικιλία, Pseudo-Dionysius (*CH* II 1) writes that: "[let us not imagine] any of the other [forms] that were transmitted to us derived from the *logia* by divine formation in the variety of the revealing symbols".[12]

In the sentence "they are absurd (ἀπεμφαινούσας) characterized by δυσμορφία and δυσειδέια", one supposes that the pronoun "they" refers to the images and not the Scriptures. The substantive δυσείδεια never occurs in the *CD*, but τὸ δυσειδές does (*CH* II 5, ed. Heil, p. 16.9 and *EH* VI 3, Θεωρία, ed. Heil, p. 118.9).

The rest can be found but not exactly in the way expressed by Table 2.1, in *CH* II 3, ed. Heil, p. 13.15–21; II 2, p. 11.5–9 and p. 11.16–20: these passages should have been quoted and translated more accurately.

It is regrettable that the comparisons and renderings of primary sources are so clumsy that it damages the impression of seriousness given by this article.

[3] In a very short article, Filip Ivanović ("Pseudo-Dionysius and the Importance of Sensible Things", pp. 77–87) discusses again the same passages as in Mainoldi [1] and Tavolaro [2], and their use by proponents of the icons, such as John of Damascus, or during the council of Nicaea (787). There is a rather large bibliography on this topic (and also on the use of the *CD* by iconoclasts), which is not quoted here, but perhaps it is in Ivanović's 2010 book,[13] of which the present article seems to be a kind of summary. I could not assess this, however, because I could not find this book in any of the libraries to which I have access in Germany, and, perhaps, rightly so, since it does not seem to be a recommendable read.[14]

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12   Ibidem, p. 10.7–9: καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα πρὸς τῶν λογίων ἡμῖν ἱεροπλάστως ἐν ποικιλίᾳ τῶν ἐκφαντορικῶν συμβόλων παραδέδοται (my translation).

13   F. Ivanović: Symbol and Icon. Dionysius the Areopagite and the Iconoclastic Crisis. Eugene, OR 2010.

14   See the severe and apparently well founded review by E. Muehlberger: Symbol and Icon: Dionysius the Areopagite and the Iconoclastic Crisis (review). In: JECS 20, 2012, pp. 168–172: "While these problems of attribution are disconcerting in their own right, the book's relationship to the work of other scholars has an even larger consequence. Because so much of *Symbol and Icon* is built around passages from previously published books and articles, the book does not have a center. It does not offer its own, new argument about its topic, the role of Dionysian thought in the

[4] The contribution by Evgenios Iverites, a monk of the Monastery of the Ἰβήρων on Mount Athos ("The Relation of Monks to Clergy in the Dionysian Hierarchy and Its Byzantine Reception", pp. 89–131), deals with Pseudo-Dionysius' "understanding of the relation of monastic life to hierarchical authority" (p. 94), especially in *EH*, Chapter VI and *Ep.* VIII, and its reception in later Byzantine authors, first of all, Maximus Confessor. Monk Evgenios (alias Nicholas Marinides) offers, as it were, an insider's view, in line with Alexander Golitsin's work on Dionysius.

[5] After a very general introduction about the conception of the "holy man" in Late Antiquity (pp. 134–141) and about Dionysius' conception of hierarchy (pp. 141–142), Katherine Marsengill examines "the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on artistic production" (p. 142), particularly the representations of holy men in sixth-century Byzantine art ("Images of Holy Men in Late Antiquity in Light of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: Framing Spiritual Ascent and Visualising Spiritual Hierarchy", pp. 133–176). Marsengill argues that the interpretation of sixth-century Byzantine art through an "imperial lens" is "faulty in its presumption of recreating in its presentation of heaven [...] a situation wherein the ruler establishes a two-tiered hierarchy instead of a stepped or gradual hierarchy" (p. 144), the latter conforming more to Dionysius' conception as well as that of "the authors of [those] visual programmes" (p. 145). Taking the examples of the churches of San Vitale and Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna and of the church of St Catherine Monastery in Sinai, Marsengill argues that the iconographic programmes can be better understood as pointing at a continuous progression from the attendants through local bishops or monks up to saints, angels and, finally, Christ. As she states in her conclusion, "[t]his interpretation of the visual evidence is highly conceptual and to a degree conjectural; it cannot be proved to what extent the philosophical and religious concept of hierarchy as outlined by Pseudo-Dionysius had direct or indirect influence in the creation of these programmes" (p. 160).

[6] Vladimir Ivanovici ("Pseudo-Dionysius and the Staging of Divine Order in Sixth-Century Architecture", pp. 177–210) argues that "[w]hat was staged inside churches [...] was a performance of the worldview presented in

iconoclastic controversy. Readers seeking a scholarly treatment of that topic should look elsewhere" (p. 172).

the *Corpus* [*Dionysiacum*] which [...] Pseudo-Dionysius shared with the Imperial Court and bishops of his time" (p. 179). This "worldview" can be summarised as such: "Together, the adoption of hierarchy as a natural principle, the distancing of Christ from humanity through theological speculations, and the consecration of the clergy rendered individual perfection a relative rather than an absolute matter for most believers. Each Christian was a link in the chain of being that united the lowest levels of creation to God" (p. 180). Ivanovici claims that "the intellectual milieu at Justinian's court" shared "the views detailed by Pseudo-Dionysius in the *Corpus*" (p. 183). The author then analyses in this line the architecture of churches whose (re-) building was commissioned by Justinian (Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the church of St Catherine's Monastery in Sinai) or, around the same period (Sant'Apollinare in Classe and San Vitale in Ravenna). Ivanovici, thus, examines the same Christian sanctuaries as in Marsengill's article [5], but with the diverging opinion that their architecture reflects an "imperial style" (p. 196), and without Marsengill's *caveat* that the views developed are hardly provable.

[7] Mary B. Cunningham ("'Visual Thinking' and the Influence of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the Homilies and Hymns of Andrew of Crete", pp. 211–237) examines the quotations of the *CD* in Andrew of Crete's (end of the seventh – beginning of the eighth century) homilies on the Dormition and the use of Dionysian vocabulary in Andrew's other sermons and hymns, concluding that "[t]he influence of Dionysius the Areopagite on Andrew of Crete's liturgical texts [...] is pervasive" (p. 220). Cunningham then raises the issue of Andrew's attitude towards iconoclasm: "his surviving works simply do not provide us with enough evidence to decide this question conclusively" (p. 224).

[8] Francesca Dell'Acqua's contribution ("Pseudo-Dionysius and the Dormition of the Virgin Platytéra ['Wider Than the Heavens']", pp. 239–282) opens with the question of a possible allusion to the Dormition in *DN* III 2. It is a very debated issue and a bit brief to state that "[t]he majority of commentators believes a passage from the treatise on the *Divine Names* [...] to be the earliest authoritative account of Mary's Dormition" (p. 239). It would have been useful to cite István Perczel's important article (2012), in

which he argued, convincingly in my opinion, against this interpretation,[15] which, however, was held by John of Scythopolis, Pseudo-Dionysius' scholiast, at the beginning of the sixth century, and thereafter became widespread.

Dell'Acqua then considers "whether Dionysius the Areopagite had any influence on the development of these Marian celebrations" (p. 241). A "clue" is "the information that, under Justinian, the feast of Dionysius was established on October 3", a date which "falls fifty days after the feast of the Dormition/Assumption and fifty days before the feast celebrating Mary's Entrance into the Temple [...]. Thus some scholars have argued that the date chosen for the feast of Dionysius was intended to emphasise his role in support of the cult of Mary" (p. 241). The main source for this "information" is Basil Lourié's very detailed and learned article published in 2010.[16] In that article, however, Lourié does not take into account Venance Grumel's study about the date of the liturgical feast of Dionysius the Areopagite (1955). According to Grumel there is no trace of a feast of Pseudo-Dionysius before the eighth century, and it is likely that that feast was established after the first iconoclasm, i. e. after the end of the eighth century.[17] Lourié does not explicitly say that Pseudo-Dionysius' feast was established under Justinian; Mainoldi does, but based on a misunderstanding of what Michel Van Esbroeck wrote in an article about the Dormition.[18]

15   I. Perczel: Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Pseudo-Dormition of the Holy Virgin. In: Muséon 125, 2012, pp. 55–97. Also see A. Pirtea: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Dormition of the Theotokos, forthcoming, which, of course, F. Dell'Acqua could not yet have known about (I thank Adrian Pirtea for having shared this article with me prior to its publication).

16   B. Lourié: Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honigmann – Van Esbroeck's Thesis Revisited. In: Scrinium 6, 2010, pp. 143–212.

17   V. Grumel: Autour de la question pseudo-dionysienne. In: REByz 13, 1955, pp. 21–49, especially the conclusion pp. 43–44.

18   Mainoldi (note 3), p. 270, referring to M. Van Esbroeck: Les textes littéraires sur l'Assomption avant le Xe siècle. In: F. Bovon et al. (eds.): Les actes apocryphes des apôtres: christianisme et monde païen. Genève 1981 (Publications de la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université de Genève 4), pp. 265–285, here p. 285 (reprinted in M. Van Esbroeck: Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge. Études historiques sur les traditions orientales. Aldershot 1995 [Variorum collected studies series 472], no. I). In this article, Van Esbroeck writes on p. 285: "le cycle des quatre jours institué par les apôtres à la fin de I 5 [Pseudo-Basilian *transitus* preserved in Georgian] est une création justinienne. C'est cette innovation impériale qui introduit également le cycle de Denys l'Aréopagite". However, by "le cycle de Denys l'Aréopagite", Van

In any event, *DN* III 2 describes an assembly of Apostles (James and Peter are named), including Dionysius and Hierotheus, praying and singing praises – be it during the Eucharist, or at the Dormition, as John of Scythopolis claims. This motive is found, argues Dell'Acqua, in the "earliest extant depiction" of the *transitus Mariae*, i. e. a token (*eulogia*) in clay dated to the sixth century (p. 242). But the motive of Mary on her death bed surrounded by the Apostles is common to several early apocrypha about the Dormition, and, thus, the connection between this clay token and the *CD* is unnecessary. Dell'Acqua states that this is an "approximate chronological coincidence" (p. 242), which, in my opinion, proves nothing.

The passage *DN* III 2 (and its scholia) undoubtedly influenced Andrew of Crete in the eight century (p. 244), but this question is discussed in Cunningham's article in the present volume [7], so a cross-reference would have been enough. Dell'Acqua is correct in pointing out that it is "in the [...] post-iconoclastic period" that "Dionysius became the object of devotion" (p. 245, referring to Natalia B. Teteriatnikov in the present volume [9]), and that his presence at the Dormition became an integral part of his biography, especially through the interpolation of the *Historia Euthymiaca* quoting John of Scythopolis in the second homily of John of Damascus about the Dormition (*CPG* 8062).[19]

The conclusion that "by combining a pious belief in Mary's Assumption into heaven with the evocative language of poetry and the authority of Dionysius, Greek homilists of the late seventh and the early eighth centuries forged a lucid argumentation [...]" (pp. 246–247) is very much exaggerating Pseudo-Dionysius' role in this matter.

Dell'Acqua then relates the expression ὦ μήτρα οὐρανῶν ἁπλώματος πλατυτέρα in the *Gospel of Bartholomew* (third century) with two passages of *DN*.[20] I fail

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Esbroeck means the introduction of Dionysius, Hierotheus, Titus and Timotheus in the story of the Dormition (Van Esbroeck: Les textes littéraires, p. 274), and not the liturgical feast of Saint Dionysius Areopagita.

19   On this, see now Pirtea (note 15).

20   *DN* I 6, ed. Suchla (note 1), p. 119.4–5: ὡς μεγέθει πάντων ὑπερέχοντα καὶ ὡς ἐν αὔρᾳ λεπτῇ, "[they call the cause of everything] the one who surpasses all by greatness and in a subtle breeze"; *DN* IX 1, ibidem, pp. 207.10–208.1: «Μέγας» μὲν οὖν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τοῖς λογίοις ὑμνεῖται καὶ ἐν μεγέθει καὶ ἐν αὔρᾳ λεπτῇ τὴν θείαν ἐμφαινούσῃ σμικρότητα, "Thus God is praised in the *logia* as 'great', and in greatness and in a subtle breeze which shows the divine smallness".

to see how the expression "in a subtle breeze" (ἐν αὔρᾳ λεπτῇ), used in these passages and of Biblical origin,[21] can in any way be related to the idea of the Virgin's womb being "wider than heaven". Yet, Dell'Acqua claims: "Dionysius gave the stamp of apostolic authority and a unique vividness to the image of a virginal womb made wider than heaven by divine intervention" (p. 248). But in which text? Pseudo-Dionysius never uses the term μήτρα or the expression οὐρανῶν πλατύτερος. Never mind, Dell'Acqua continues: "The words of Dionysius – 'he dwells in a light, thin aura' – enflesh what can be defined as a 'textual icon'" (p. 249). The verb "to dwell" is not present in either of the two passages of *DN* quoted above. The question is of what exactly these words are a "textual icon". For Dell'Acqua there is little doubt: "They seem to anticipate the visualisation of the Virgin as *Platytéra tōn ouranōn*, and therefore one wonders if they contributed to the creation of its figural image" (p. 249). Again, I fail to see any link between the expression ἐν αὔρᾳ λεπτῇ used by Pseudo-Dionysius and the iconography of the Virgin πλατυτέρα τῶν οὐρανῶν, holding a disc, of which Dell'Acqua provides a few early examples (p. 249). Nevertheless, Dell'Acqua states "the fact that depictions of the *Platytéra tōn ouranōn* began to appear at more or less the same time that the *Corpus Dionysiacum* emerged and started circulating is probably no coincidence. This has not been previously remarked" (p. 249). But what this chronological proximity proves or means remains unsettled.

Dell'Acqua turns to two Western medieval representations of the πλατυτέρα τῶν οὐρανῶν. Regarding the first one, she admits that "the 'influence' of Dionysius in this specific instance cannot be demonstrated" (pp. 252–254), but "[a]nother figural representation of the *Platytéra tōn ouranōn* may reveal a connection with Pseudo-Dionysian thought through a consideration of specific ideas and words" (p. 254). The figure in question is found in the "Crypt of Abbot Epiphanius (824–842)" in the Monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno (figs. 8.4 and 8.5 on pp. 255–256). The demonstration goes as follows: the programme of the crypt has been shown to have been influenced by the writings of Ambrose Autpert (died 784) (p. 254); according to Dell'Acqua, Autpert "was acquainted, either directly or indirectly, with the Greek patristic tradition, including Dionysius" (p. 257) – how this can be proven is unclear (the main argument seems to be the use of the adjective *ineffabilis*). From this, Dell'Acqua concludes: "Pervaded by a visual vividness and verbal

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21   3 Reg. 19.12 (LXX): καὶ μετὰ τὸ πῦρ φωνὴ αὔρας λεπτῆς, κἀκεῖ κύριος, "and after the fire a voice of subtle breeze, and there was the Lord".

apophaticism of likely Dionysian origin, Autpert's image of the Virgin [...] seems to offer a plausible background" (p. 257). Perhaps, but this has not been demonstrated.

The last part of the article is devoted to the depiction of Dionysius at the Dormition in Western medieval art. This motive also exists in Byzantine art,[22] but this fact is not mentioned in the present article, although it may have been useful to compare these Byzantine representations with Cimabue's depiction of the death of the Virgin in the Basilica di S. Francesco in Assisi (figs. 8.7 and 8.8 on pp. 260–261). Dell'Acqua interprets the thirteenth Apostle standing and holding a scroll as Dionysius rather than as Saint Paul, because Dionysius "was the only apostolic author to have left a written source on [Mary's] funeral" (p. 262), but in the Middle Ages (and certainly in the *Legenda aurea*, which is the main literary source of Cimabue),[23] an account of the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin was attributed to John the Evangelist, who was prominently present at the Virgin's death. In addition, the standing figure seems to be bald (the images I could find are not clear and the fresco is of course damaged), which, in the Byzantine tradition, at least, is not the case of Dionysius, who is also usually represented as a bishop.[24]

This article, although well-informed and scholarly, is, on the whole, unconvincing.

[9] N a t a l i a B. T e t e r i a t n i k o v ("Pseudo-Dionysius and the Post-Iconoclastic Mosaic Programme of Hagia Sophia", pp. 283–319) researches the possible influence of Pseudo-Dionyius' conceptions of hierarchy in the post-iconoclastic (second half of the ninth century) decorative programmes of Hagia Sophia and other churches in the Byzantine Empire. These programmes survived fragmentarily or can be partly reconstructed thanks to contemporary *ekphraseis*. Teteriatnikov discusses a few examples of these churches and concludes that "[a]ll these decorative programmes show an image of Christ as creator of the universe at the centre of the dome, with heavenly beings and holy figures on the lower vaults and walls, each image

22   Ch. Walter: Three Notes on the Iconography of Dionysius the Areopagite. In: REByz 48, 1990, pp. 255–274, here pp. 260–268.

23   J. H. Stubblebine: Cimabue's Frescoes of the Virgin at Assisi. In: ABull 49, 1967, pp. 330–333.

24   See Walter (note 22), p. 265.

placed according to its rank" (p. 293). This is a "new trend" (p. 293), as can be shown through a comparison with Byzantine architecture in Late Antiquity and the iconoclastic period. One typical example of a late antique basilica is Sant'Apollinare Nuovo (Ravenna), "emphasising the processional direction towards the apse" (p. 293). It is unclear why this model was changed into "centrally planned buildings" (p. 295), but additionally "a new, smaller, cross-in-square type emerged [...] sometime at the end of the eighth century" (p. 295). After the "Triumph of Orthodoxy", these different types of domed churches allowed a "hierarchical display of images with Christ at the centre of the dome" (p. 296). The decorative programme of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople was also updated at this period (p. 296). As Teteriatnikov notes, "[t]he question as to how Pseudo-Dionysius' concept of both hierarchies may have contributed to a new model of church decoration during this period remains" (p. 296).

Teteriatnikov argues that "the concepts [of order] of Pseudo-Dionysius began to have more direct influence on the development of Byzantine church decoration [...] during the second Iconoclasm; the iconodule community and particularly the activity of Studite monks and the future patriarch of Constantinople, Methodius, promoted the works of Dionysius the Areopagite" (p. 297). In that period, the interest in Pseudo-Dionysius' work was strong in both the iconoclast and iconodule parties (pp. 298–299). On the iconoclast side, Teteriatnikov claims, this interest "was twofold" (p. 298): at the court "it was limited to diplomatic purposes" (p. 298), whereas scholars interested in astronomy, such as John the Grammarian, "used Pseudo-Dionysius as an authority for the prohibition of depicting the Divine" (p. 299). The first assertion is based upon the fact that the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 437 (Diktyon 50011) containing the *CD* was offered by Emperor Michael II to Louis the Pious circa 825. The second one draws from Paul Magdalino's study on this topic.[25] Regarding the iconodules, Teteriatnikov claims that Theodore the Studite "helped to develop this monastic institution [the Studion monastery] into an important monastic scriptorium responsible for compiling several saints' lives, including that of Dionysius the Areopagite" (p. 299). No source or secondary literature is provided to substantiate this statement, however. In any event, as Teteriatnikov shows, after others, the *CD* was used in the *Life* of the iconodule Patriarch

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25   P. Magdalino: L'Orthodoxie des astrologues. La science entre le dogme et la divination à Byzance (VIIe–XIVe siècle). Paris 2006 (Réalités byzantines 12).

Nicephorus (pp. 299–300). But whether this could have had an influence on the architecture of that period remains uncertain.

Teteriatnikov claims that "[t]he process of re-establishing the (pseudo-apostolic) author Dionysius as Saint Dionysius the Areopagite was initiated by the iconodules" (p. 301), whereas "[t]he cult of Dionysius the Areopagite as a saint was introduced first by the Chalcedonians in the sixth century in Constantinople. See Engberding (1954)" (p. 301, n. 56 [on p. 310]). However, this is not exactly what Hieronymus Engberding says: "Die Aufnahme des hl. Hierotheus wie die des hl. Dionysius Areopagita in den Heiligenkalender erfolgte im byzantinischen Raum und nicht im westsyrisch-monophysitischen".[26] Engberding does not provide a clear conclusion about the time (and the exact place) when a feast of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite was instituted.[27] In a study published one year later, Grumel shows that the Dionysius mentioned in the oldest calendars was Dionysius of Corinth, and that the feast of the Areopagite is probably not much older than circa 830 (also see above).[28]

This issue notwithstanding, it is clear, as Teteriatnikov argues (p. 301), that Patriarch Methodius and Michael Synkellos played important roles in promoting the veneration of Dionysius the Areopagite.

Teteriatnikov then discusses two images of Dionysius "dating to shortly after Iconoclasm" (p. 302): "among the Church Fathers in the lower register of the south tympanum of Hagia Sophia" (p. 302 and fig. 9.10) and in a miniature of the crucifixion in the 'Chludov Psalter', Moscow, GIM, Sobr. A. I. Chludova, 129д (Diktyon 44147), fol. 45v (pp. 302 and 305, and fig. 9.11). Teteriatnikov follows Kathleen Corrigan in interpreting this miniature as inspired by Dionysius' *Ep.* VII and Michael Synkellos' *Encomium Dionysii* (*BHG* 556),[29] but Nicolas Malickij, and after him Christopher Walter, had

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26   H. Engberding: Kann Petrus der Iberer mit Dionysius Areopagita identifiziert werden? In: OC 38, 1954, pp. 68–95, here p. 91.

27   Engberding's article is incomplete (ibidem, p. 95, n. 168) and he does not seem to have published the remaining parts elsewhere.

28   Grumel (note 17).

29   K. Corrigan: Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters. Cambridge 1992, pp. 84–85.

already hinted at another possible source, i. e. the apocryphal 'Autobiography' of Dionysius the Areopagite (or *Narratio de vita sua*, CPG 6633).[30]

Teteriatnikov repeats in the summary of the article (pp. 306–307) that the cult of Dionysius was re-established after the second period of iconoclasm, at a time when new church programmes also appeared. The conclusion that "these church programmes show that the general concept of Dionysius' order was customised by patrons and artisans depending upon the architectural setting and the choice of images" (p. 306) is repeated, p. 307: "Pseudo-Dionysius' hierarchical order of celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies was most likely appropriated by learned patrons in Constantinople, as Hagia Sophia and other Byzantine churches demonstrate". But how can the 'customisation' and 'appropriation' of Dionysian "order" in church programmes of the second half of the ninth century be demonstrated? Such a demonstration is not to be found in the present article.

In sum, this is a rather disappointing book, promising much but offering very little that is new and firmly established.

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30   N. Malickij: Remarques sur la date des mosaïques de l'église des Saints-Apôtres à Constantinople décrites par Mésaritès. In: Byzantion 3, 1926, pp. 123–151; and Walter (note 22). Both articles are mentioned in Teteriatnikov's references list. Also see Ch. Walter: Review of Corrigan: Visual Polemics (note 29). In: REByz 52, 1994, pp. 300–302, here p. 302; and C. Macé: The Lives and Deaths of Dionysius the Areopagite. In: Muséon 135, 2022, pp. 143–207, here pp. 174–175.

Caroline Macé, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen
Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin an der Forschungsstelle Patristik:
Dionysius Areopagita-Edition
caroline.mace@mail.uni-goettingen.de