

ARTICLES

In Defense of the Authenticity of the Dionysian Corpus (I)

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Abstract: Analyzing hitherto neglected passages in Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint Jerome, we argue that the Areopagitic corpus was known in the late fourth century AD. A close textual comparison of Dionysius with the works of Proclus, including an important comment in the latter's *Commentary on the Parmenides*, reveals that Proclus is dependent on Dionysius and not the other way around. Furthermore, close lexical parallels between Dionysius and the Alexandrian philosophical school, together with a host of internal details, all point to a date of composition before the third century. We conclude by discussing implications of this thesis for the study of early Christianity.

Keywords: Dionysian Corpus,

There is little debate over the authenticity of the body of works ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite. There is even a scholarly consensus against the idea to the point where the pseudonymity of the work is taken for granted,¹ given its alleged “dependence...on Proclus”² and “Neo-Platonic character.”³ Recent schol-

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¹ Debate has shifted to whether the Dionysian corpus was “intended” as a forgery or was a “masterfully managed literary device.” See Vladimir Kharlamov, *The Authorship of the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus: A Deliberate Forgery or Clever Literary Ploy?* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 4. This is in response to the evaluation of others that there can be no doubt that the work was a deliberate forgery, whose “fiction” is “the cornerstone of the CD [*Dionysian Corpus*].” See Istvan Perczel, “The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius,” *Modern Theology* 24/4 (2008), 558. Similar to Kharlamov, Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar argued that Pseudo-Dionysius was not outright forging a work, but partaking in a spiritual kinsmanship with the original Dionysius (similar to the theories of “Deutero-Isaiah”) and can legitimately lay claim to the saint’s name and person. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Denys,” in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Volume 2*, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1984), 144-210.

² Balthasar, “Denys,” 144.

³ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, tr. George Lawrence, (London: The Faith Press, 1964), 191.

arship tends to push the corpus' dating increasingly later into the 520s⁴ and concludes that one can never "know who Dionysius was...barring new evidence."⁵ Yet a couple of respected Orthodox scholars opposed such ideas. Fr. Dmitru Stăniloae, in defending the corpus' authenticity, asserted that Dionysius' writings contain no signs of theological anachronisms that betray Christological concerns from the fourth and fifth centuries, but manifest a philosophical interest in first and second-century Platonism.⁶ In an off-hand comment, Fr. John Romanides criticized how "modern theologians call St. Dionysius a 'pseudo' as if he is a liar or deceiver, which they make him out to be."⁷ While Romanides' remarks are less official than Father Dmitru's comments and open to interpretation,⁸ one can observe that as late as the 1990s, Orthodox scholarship of the highest order expressed skepticism over the scholarly consensus.

Picking up where the previous defenders of authenticity left off, this article will make the case that the scholarly consensus concerning the authenticity of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* (herein referred to as *CD*) is incorrect. The case will be made in the following order. First, two early authorities explicitly quote from, or allude to the existence of, the *CD*. Second, the arguments in favor of dependence upon works of Proclus are self-refuting as it is Proclus who manifests dependence upon the Dionysian corpus. Third, the long list of strict lexical parallels, particularly from Alexandrian-educated writers both pagan and Christian beginning

⁴ See Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clanderon Press, 1998), 9-11 (which dates the corpus to approximately 528 AD) and Beate Regina Suchla, *Dionysius Areopagita: Leben, Werk, Wirkung* (Vienna: Herder, 2008), 21-2. This relatively late dating of the Dionysian corpus has even led scholars to speculate that Severus of Antioch's citations of the work are interpolations, scholarship concluding that "Severus was not party to the deception" and was probably initially unaware of the corpus, thereby reticent to use it. To maintain that Severus never cited Dionysius would make every citation ascribed to the latter an interpolation in the manuscript record. This obviously pushes back the date of the *CD*. See Rosemary Arthur, *Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist: The Development and Purpose of the Angelic Hierarchy in Sixth Century Syria* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 104-9. There is no consensus on such a late dating, as scholarship sometimes in passing comments still dates the corpus to the late fifth century. As an example, see Panagiotis G. Pavlos, "Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity*, eds. Panagiotis G. Pavlos, Lars Fredrik Janby, Eyjolfur Kjalar Emilsson, and Torstein Theodor Tollefesen (New York: Routledge, 2019), 153.

⁵ Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, ed. Bogdan G. Bucur (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), xxxiv.

⁶ Dmitru Stăniloae, *Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul Opere Complete: Si Scolile Sfântului Maxim Mărtuistorul* (Bucharest: Paideia, 1996), 7-13.

⁷ Orthodox Christianity: Then and Now, *The Dionysian Authorship of the "Corpus Areopagiticum" According to Fr. Dumitru Staniloae*. <<https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2009/10/apostolic-authorship-of-corpus.html>>, October 13, 2009.

⁸ It is possible that Romanides is inferring some sort of legitimate, mystical connection such as Balthasar (see fn 1 above).

in the second century, points to the textual origin of a text that was both found in Alexandria and chronologically precedes all of these. Fourth, alleged theological and historical anachronisms are in fact false presumptions as a plethora of pre-Nicene, and particularly first and second-century sources, reveal that the Dionysian corpus fits details from the era it is reputed to be from. Fifth, plausibly authentic internal details are considered. Lastly, this study will identify the remaining chief unresolved difficulties that require further research, namely the content of the *Clementine Homilies* in the second century and the origin of the term *theurgy*. Taking into account the preceding, the sheer weight of evidence decisively points to the authenticity of the *CD* with the secondary possibility of the corpus being a third-century *pseudepigraphon* originating from Alexandria.

1. Explicit Citations of the *CD* Preceding Proclus

Perhaps the most convincing evidence which on its face demands a pre-Proclean dating of the *CD* is the existence of early authors who cite a text for which the only extant source that meets the criteria is the *CD*.

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, in *Oration 38.8*,⁹ cites the opinion of a certain “predecessor” (ἄλλω τινι τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν) with reference to the Seraphic hymn in Isaiah 6:3 (“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord Sabaoth”). Paraphrasing the “predecessor’s” interpretation, Gregory speaks of how the Holy of Holies is “concealed [συγκαλύπτεται] even from the Seraphim and is glorified with a triple sanctification coming together in one lordship and Godhead.”¹⁰

The idea that God is essentially “hidden” and the association of the triple hymn with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is found explicitly in the *Celestial Hierarchy* (hereafter *CH*).¹¹ Now, it is true that other ancient commentators provide a trinitarian exegesis of the Seraphic hymn.¹² However, none of these sources

⁹ PG 36: 317B; *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 38-41*, ed. and trans. Claudio Moreschini and Paul Gallay. *Sources Chrétiennes* 358 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1990), 118-20. The *Oration* was delivered on the occasion of Christmas 380 or Epiphany 381. The same passage is reprised word-for-word in *Oration 45.4*. See NPNF 7:424.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* All translations from the Greek or Latin, unless otherwise stated, are our own.

¹¹ *CH* 4.3, 6.4: “No one hath seen, nor ever shall see, the hidden [κρόσιον] of Almighty God as it is in itself...Some of [the] members [of the first angelic rank]...cry aloud that frequent and most august hymn of God, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, the whole earth is full of His glory’...teaching briefly this...that God is Monad and Unit tri-subsistent.” For translations of the *CD* into English, we have generally followed the version by John Parker, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, 2 volumes (London: James Parker and Co., 1897-99) with slight modifications for accuracy. The Greek text can be found in PG 3: 119-1120. Critical edition by Beata R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum*. 2 volumes. (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1990-91).

¹² See Athanasius, *In illud*, 6 (PG 25: 220A), *On the Incarnation and Against the Arians*, 10 (PG 26: 1000B); Basil, *Against Eunomius* 3.3 (PG 29: 661A); Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 1.23 (PG 45: 348B); Didymus the Blind, *On the Trinity* 3.10 (PG 39: 857A); Epiphanius of Salamis,

contain the precise lexical correspondences we find with the *CD*.¹³ By way of illustration, shortly before invoking the “predecessor,” Gregory writes:

For in Himself [God] comprehends [συλλαβών] and contains all Being [τὸ εἶναι], having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future, like some great Sea of Being, limitless and unbounded [πέλαγος ἄπειρον καὶ ἀόριστον].¹⁴

Compare this to Dionysius, who calls God “not relatively a being, but simply and unboundedly [ἀπεριορίστως], having comprehended [συνειληφώς] and anticipated all Being [τὸ εἶναι] in Himself”¹⁵ and speaks of how “we also have emerged to that limitless and bounteous sea of divine light [ἄπειρόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον πέλαγος].”¹⁶ Immediately following the “predecessor” passage, Gregory goes on to explain that “since goodness [ἀγαθότητι] was not content to be moved [κινεῖσθαι] solely by the contemplation of Itself [ἑαυτῆς θεωρία], but the Good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself to multiply the objects of Its beneficence [εὐεργετούμενα], for this was essential to the highest Goodness [ἄκρας ἀγαθότητος], He [viz. God] first conceived the heavenly and angelic powers.”¹⁷ The very same words and ideas occur in the *CD*:

The heavenly beings...having been illuminated from this the supremely Divine goodness [θεαρχικῆς ἀγαθότητος]...transmitted [the knowledge of the Trinity] to those next after [them].¹⁸

For Love itself, the benefactor [ἀγαθοεργός] of things that be, pre-existing superabundantly in the Good [τᾶγαθῷ], did not permit itself to remain unproductive in itself [ἄγονον ἐν ἑαυτῷ], but moved [ἐκίνησε] itself to creation, as befits the abundance which is generative of all.¹⁹

The dependence of *Oration 38* on Dionysius is further corroborated by Saint Jerome, as we will see shortly below. Nor is this the only text of Saint Gregory’s that seems to be indebted to the Areopagite. In his *Dogmatic Poem on the Holy Spirit*, Gregory writes the following, citing the writings of “God-bearing men:”

Ancoratus, 10 (PG 43, 33D-36A). Of these, only Saint Athanasius’ *In illud* explicitly relates the Seraphic hymn to the unity of the divine nature and speaks of the Godhead being invisible.

¹³ Additionally, the expression “one of those who came before us” seems to point to an author who lived *before* the fourth century.

¹⁴ *Oration 38.7* (PG 36: 317B); NPNF 7:346-7.

¹⁵ *Divine Names* (hereafter *DN*) 5.4.

¹⁶ *CH* 9.3.

¹⁷ PG 36: 320C; *Sources Chrétiennes* 358, 120.

¹⁸ *CH* 6.4.

¹⁹ *DN* 4.10.

Should we hear some things said of the Son or the Good Spirit in the holy Oracles and the God-bearing men [θειοφόροισιν ἀνδράσιν], that they come second after God the Father, thus do I wish you to understand the words of profound wisdom: they refer to the root [ρίζαν] without beginning and do not cleave the Godhead, that you might have one Power to honour, not many. From Unity is the Trinity, and from Trinity is there Unity in turn; neither stream, nor fount [πηγή], nor a great river flowing singly (can truly express it)...for God's nature is not unstable or in flux... In Three Lights [φάεσσι] has One Nature been established.²⁰

The *CD* employs language that in some sense places the Son and the Holy Spirit “second after God the Father.” Dionysius says that “the Father is *fontal deity* [πηγαία θεότης], but the Lord Jesus and the Spirit are, if one may so speak, *God-planted shoots* [βλαστοὶ θεόφυτοι], and, as it were, *flowers and supersubstantial lights* [ἄνθη καὶ ὑπερούσια φῶτα] of the God-bearing Deity.”²¹ Elsewhere, he explains “how from the immaterial and indivisible Good the *lights* [φῶτα] dwelling in the heart of Goodness sprang forth and remained, in their *branching forth* [ἀναβλαστήσει]”²² and compares the Trinity to three lamps (λαμπτήρες) shining together in one chamber with a single radiance (μίαν αἴγλην).²³ Not only does the *CD* conceptually match Gregory’s reference, it even contains the specific metaphor of “fount,” “plants” and “lights” that Gregory invokes. Without another extant source providing such close parallels, one is hard pressed to conclude Gregory had anyone other than Dionysius in mind when speaking of “the God-bearing men.”

A final parallel occurs in *Oration 20*, where Saint Gregory speaks of how man must bear the “divine images [τὰς θείας ἐμφάσεις] within himself...always becoming like a spotless mirror [ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον] of God and divine things.”²⁴ This closely parallels the *CH*, where Dionysius writes that the purpose of hierarchy is to become “divine likenesses [ἀγάλματα θεῶν], mirrors most clear and spotless [ἔσοπτρα διειδέστατα καὶ ἀκηλίδωτα], receptive of the primal light.”²⁵ While this passage lacks an explicit reference to preceding authorities as the others do, the lexical parallels suggest dependence on the *CD*.²⁶

²⁰ *Dogmatic Poem on the Holy Spirit*, lines 54-71 (PG 37: 412A-13A).

²¹ *DN* 2.7.

²² *Mystical Theology* (hereafter *MT*) 3.1.

²³ *DN* 2.4

²⁴ Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration* 20.1 (PG 35: 1065A).

²⁵ *CH* 3.2.

²⁶ Both Gregory and Dionysius appear to be citing Wis 7:26 for the expression ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον, but drawing an identical application (that man is the “spotless mirror”) as opposed to

If one is to claim that the Pseudo-Areopagite was drawing from Gregory, it would be necessary to infer that the former saw that twice some unknown authority was being cited without attribution in the latter's corpus, and seized the opportunity to arrogate the words to himself. He then purposely borrowed more terminology from Gregory from other passages to imply the same to astute observers. While this is not impossible, it is a more torturous explanation than simply to infer that Gregory had read the *CD* and was citing Dionysius from memory.

Saint Jerome, who was studying under Gregory in Constantinople when the latter delivered *Oration 38*,²⁷ likewise exhibits familiarity with the *CD*. Writing to Pope Damasus in the 380s, Jerome exegetes Isaiah 6:2-4 and recalls from memory:

A certain Greek [quidam Graecorum], a man exceedingly learned in the Scriptures, explained that the Seraphim are certain powers [virtutes] in the heavens, which praise God as they stand before His tribunal and are sent forth to various ministries, especially to those who require purification and, to a certain extent [aliqua ex parte], deserve to expiate their former sins through punishments [suppliciiis].²⁸

that found in the Scripture, where Wisdom (i.e. the Word) is the said mirror. Theophilus of Antioch also speaks of the soul as a "burnished mirror" (ἔσοπτρον ἐστλβωμένον) in *To Autolytus* 1.2 in ANF 2:89 (PG 6: 1026A), suggesting that the metaphor was of ancient usage.

²⁷ Saint Jerome refers to this period in his later *Commentary on Isaiah*, Book 3, Chap 6 (PL 24: 91C-92A).

²⁸ Jerome, *Epistle 18A.9* (PL 22: 367); *Letters of Saint Jerome: Volume 1*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow. *Ancient Christian Writers No. 33* (Westminster, MA: The Newman Press: 1963), 88. The next sentence continues: "'That the lintel was raised,' he says, 'and the house was filled with smoke is a sign of the destruction of the Jewish temple and the burning of all Jerusalem.'" This reveals that the same person Jerome cited exegeted Is 6:4. This interpretation is not found in the *CH*, but it should be noted that no other extant work preceding Jerome exegetes this passage in a similar fashion *and* gives the specific teaching on angels that Jerome's source provides.

^{For example,} Origen's *Homily 1 on Isaiah*, which Saint Jerome translated, cites Col 1:16 when speaking of angelic orders. See Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *Origen: Homilies on Isaiah* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 41. But it mentions nothing of the Seraphim fulfilling ministries such as purification or punishment. In fact, Origen explicitly says that "the Seraph who was sent cleansed the lips of the prophet but did not cleanse the lips of the people." See *Ibid.*, 47. Similarly, Eusebius' commentary, though linking the lifting of the lintel to the destruction of Jerusalem, mentions nothing about punishment. See Johnathan J. Armstrong, *Commentary on Isaiah: Eusebius of Caesarea* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 29-32. Theodore Zahn (1892) suggested that Jerome was citing Severian of Gabala, since there is a fragment of Severian preserved in a scriptural catena on Isaiah which offers an allegorical reading of Is 6:4. See Angelo Mai (ed.), *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae*, Vol. 6 (Rome: Typis sacri Consilii propagando christiano nomini, 1852), 239. Upon closer inspection, though, the interpretations do not really match: Severian interpreted the "smoke" as the destruction of the synagogue and the "sound" as the preaching of the Apostles, whereas Jerome's source interpreted the "smoke" as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and omitted a reference to the "sound." It is also unlikely that

This exact interpretation is present in the *CH*. In fact, Dionysius explains at length “why we are accustomed to call all the angelic beings together heavenly powers [δυνάμεις],”²⁹ devotes a whole chapter to expounding the Seraphim’s role in purification,³⁰ and relates that the Cherubim (a related class of angels) are sent forth from God to the world to punish men, but only the guilty.³¹ The convergence of these details renders it highly probable that Jerome was recalling the teachings of *CH*. Indeed, what are the odds that Saint Jerome and Saint Gregory, writing *at the same time and in the same city*, both referred to a learned predecessor who spoke of Isaiah 6 and whose interpretations not only recall what we find in the *CD* but even contain strict lexical parallels to this work—only for this source *not* to be Dionysius? Positing an unknown written source is not justifiable when the simpler explanation is to presume upon one that is extant.

In his treatise *Against Jovinian* (written in 393, after his time in Constantinople), Jerome seems to presume upon *CH*’s teaching in passing:

Why do we say that in the kingdom of heaven there are Archangels, Angels, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Cherubim and Seraphim, and “every name which is named, not only in this present world, but also that which is to come?” [Eph 1:21] A difference of name is meaningless where there is not a difference of rank [diversitas meritorum]. An Archangel is of course an Archangel to other inferior angels, and Powers, and Dominions have other spheres over which they exercise authority. This is what we find in heaven and in the administration of God.³²

In his *Apology Against Rufinus*, Jerome lists all the nine orders of angels spoken of by Dionysius: “Cherubim and Seraphim, Thrones, Principalities, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Archangels and Angels.”³³ While other Fathers before

Jerome is referring to Saint Gregory himself as “some Greek,” given that he always mentions his former teacher by name and with obvious respect. For example, in his *Commentary on Ephesians*, he calls him “Gregory of Nazianzus, a very eloquent man exceedingly learned in the scriptures” (PL 26: 535D; NPNF 3:489) and in his *Apology Against Rufinus* 1.13, he calls him “that most eloquent man Gregory; who among the Latins is his equal?” (PL 23: 407C; NPNF 3:489). There are two possibilities: either (i) Jerome was referring to Dionysius’ lost *Treatise on the Divine Hymns* mentioned in *CH* 7.4 (which allegedly covered Is 6), or (ii) he was summarizing a lecture on the angels given by Saint Gregory, who was himself drawing on Dionysius and mixing in some observations of his own. Franz Hipler seems to be of this latter opinion. See *Dionysius der Areopagite: Untersuchungen über Aechtheit und Glaubwürdigkeit der unter diesem Namen vorhandenen Schriften* (Regensburg: Druck und Verlag von Georg Joseph Manz, 1861), 125.

²⁹ *CH* 11.1.

³⁰ *CH* 13.

³¹ *CH* 8.2, which cites Ezekiel 9:5-6.

³² Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 2:28 (PL 23: 325B). See NPNF 6:410.

³³ *Ibid.*, *Apology Against Rufinus*, 2:12 (PL 23: 435C-D; NPNF 3:507). Cf. *CH* 7-9.

Jerome had spoken of nine orders, the canonical number was far from settled.³⁴ The fact that Jerome specifically lists nine orders and speaks of “a difference of rank” points to the *CH* as his source, considering he elsewhere cited a “certain Greek” on this point.

In sum, while one can claim that Gregory and Jerome were citing a now lost work other than the *CH*, such an inference is the *less likely* explanation of the evidence. As the next section shows, this hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that it is Proclus who exhibits dependency upon Dionysius, not the other way around.

2. Proclus' Dependence Upon the *CD*

Because dependence upon Proclus is taken as a given by academics almost entirely due to the arguments advanced by Stiglmayr, Koch, and Saffrey,³⁵ the assertion that such dependence is the other way around is at first glance surpris-

³⁴ Saint Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 2.30.3 in ANF 1: 404) and Origen (*On First Principles* 1.5.1, 3 in ANF 4: 256-7) refer to five orders, echoing the Pauline account (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16). Saint John Chrysostom mentions six (*Fourth Homily Against the Anomoeans*, PG 48: 729). Saint Basil refers to seven (*Hexaameron* 1.5, PG 29: 13A-B; *On the Holy Spirit* Chap 16, PG 32: 136A). Saint Gregory of Nazianzus speaks of eight, including “Splendours, Ascents, Intelligent Powers or Intelligencies” (*Oration 28.31*, PG 36: 72B). The number nine appears in Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lecture* 23.6, NPNF 7:154) and John Chrysostom (*Homily 4 on Genesis*, PG 53: 44). The *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book 8.12) provides two lists, one of nine, and another of ten (including “Aeons”). See Richard Henry Cresswell, *The Liturgy of the Eighth Book of “The Apostolic Constitutions:” Commonly Called the Clementine Liturgy* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1900), 55; 60.

³⁵ The thesis was first advanced by Josef Stiglmayr in: “Der Neuplatoniker Proklus als Vorlage des sogenannten Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Übel,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895), 253–73, 721–48; also by Hugo Koch, “Proklus als Quelle des Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen,” *Philologus* 54 (1895), 438–54. Koch later devoted a full monograph to proving the alleged relationship between Dionysius and Neoplatonism: *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (Mainz: Franz Kirchheim, 1900). For the purposes of this article, we will be relying primarily on the summary of Stiglmayr and Koch’s thesis by Christian Schäfer, “Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr on Dionysius and Proclus,” *Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2022), 568-83. See also Stiglmayr’s 1909 article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* entitled “Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite,” available on < newadvent.org.>

³⁶ Since Stiglmayr and Koch’s time, Henri-Dominique Saffrey has advanced what are supposedly “objective links” between the *CD* and Proclus. See: “Un lien objectif entre le pseudo-Denys et Proclus,” *Studia Patristica* 9 (1966), 98–105; “Nouveaux liens objectifs entre le pseudo-Denys et Proclus,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 63 (1979), 2–16; both articles reprinted in: *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990), 22-48. These links can be summarized as follows: Dionysius uses the rare word “theandric” (θεανδρικός) to refer to Christ’s divine-human activity, and it just so happens that an Arabian god worshiped by the Neoplatonists was called “Theandrios” (Θεάνδριος); Dionysius refers to the names of God as “divinely-named statues” (ἁγάλματα θεωνυμικά) and the Neoplatonists practiced magic rituals which were supposed to animate statues with the pagan gods; Dionysius uses the technical Neoplatonic

ing. Without, however, taking as dogma the Proclean-dependency hypothesis, a critical re-evaluation of the evidence actually shows that it is far more likely that it is Proclus who borrowed from the *CD*.

It should be noted at the outset that while Proclus contains verbiage that matches the *CD* throughout five of his treatises,³⁶ the said verbiage is confined almost entirely to a single book of the *DN*.³⁷ What is more likely: that Dionysius arbitrarily condensed all of Proclus' thought in mainly one chapter of one book; or that Proclus had a copy of the *DN* and made frequent use of just one part that interested him? Furthermore, as Stiglmayr and Koch themselves conceded, the "Proclean" passages of the *DN* are closely integrated within the wider treatise, making it unlikely that they were adapted from an external source.³⁸

Stiglmayr and Koch assert that Dionysius is always the one who paraphrases Proclus,³⁹ but this is demonstrably false, as there are many instances of parallel

terms "henads" and "theurgy" and refers to the persons of the Holy Trinity as "flowers," which is identified as a Chaldean expression.

¹ⁿ response to the first argument, Christians do not need to borrow the name of an obscure pagan deity to know that Christ is both human and divine. Prior to Proclus, Origen had called Christ a θεάνθρωπος (*deus homo*, see *On First Principles*, 2.6.3; ANF 4:282). A creative writer like Dionysius was able to coin the word θεανδρικός. Second, the use of the term "statues" to refer to the divine names has precedents in Philo of Alexandria, who calls the golden Cherubim overshadowing the Ark of the Covenant "figures" (μιμήματα) and "symbols" (σύμβολα) of the divine powers. He even refers to human beings as "the most godlike of statues" (ἀγαλμάτων τὸ θεοειδέστατον). See *De Plantatione* 100, *Questions on Exodus* II.62, and *De Opificio Mundi* 137 respectively. For the Greek text of Philo, see *Philo in Ten Volumes*, published by Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library). Saint Irenaeus, another ancient Father, refers to the theophanies as "similitudes of the Lord's glory [*similitudines claritatis Domini*]," "figures [*figuras*]" and "characters [*characteres*]." See *Against Heresies* 4.20.11 in ANF 1:491-2 (PG 7: 1039C-1040A). Saffrey's final three "links" will be addressed in the subsequent pages.

³⁶ *On the Existence of Evils, Elements of Theology, Platonic Theology, On First Alcibiades, Commentary on the Parmenides*. For ease of reference, the parallel passages have been collected in: Anthony Pavoni and Evangelos Nikitopoulos, *The Life of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite* (Montreal: Scriptorium Press, 2024), 2nd edition, 54-110, 268-74.

³⁷ By way of illustration, *DN* 1.5, 2.8, 7.2, and 11.1-2, 6 have parallels in Proclus' works. Compare this to *DN*'s fourth chapter: 4.7, 4.10, 4.19, 4.20, 4.22, 4.23, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28, 4.29, 4.31, 4.32, 4.33. There is a partial collation in Carlos Steel, "Proclus et Denys: De l'Existence du Mal," in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident: Actes du colloque international, Paris, 21-24 septembre 1994*, ed. Ysabel de Andia (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1997), 105-116. We believe that parallels to the *Celestial* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* have not been conclusively demonstrated.

³⁸ Schäfer, "Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr on Dionysius and Proclus," 573. Stiglmayr and Koch were specifically addressing the possibility that these sections were later interpolations in an authentic early version of the *CD*, but their remarks can just as well support the point we are making.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 572. According to Steel, "il s'agit de mauvais résumés, de passages tautologiques, de phrases d'une grande banalité et sans intérêt philosophique." See "Proclus et Denys: De l'Existence du Mal," 92.

passages in the *CD* and Proclus where it is Proclus who manifestly abbreviates Dionysius and disrupts internal parallels.⁴⁰ Below are three salient examples:

Dionysius	Proclus
<p>Now, this is the exceeding greatness of the power of the Good, that It empowers, both things deprived, and the deprivation of Itself, with a view to the entire participation of itself. And, if one must make bold to speak the truth, even the things fighting against It, both are, and are able to fight, by Its power... For example, the licentious man, even if he have been deprived of the Good, as regards his irrational lust, in this respect he neither is, nor desires realities, but nevertheless he participates in the Good, in his very obscure echo of union and friendship. And, even Anger participates in the Good, by the very movement and desire to direct and turn the seeming evils to the seeming good. And the very man who desires the very worst life, as wholly desirous of life and that which seems best to him, by the very fact of desiring, and desiring life, and looking to a best life, participates in the Good. And, if you should entirely take away the Good, there will be neither essence, nor life, nor yearning, nor movement, nor anything else. (<i>DN</i> 4.10)</p>	<p>Privation derives its power from [the] nature [of which it is a privation] through its being interwoven with it, and only thus can it establish itself as something contrary to the good... Indeed, there is no form of life so bad that the power of reason is completely extinguished. Some reason remains inside, expressing itself feebly; though surrounded by all kinds of passions, understanding never leaves the upper part of the soul. (<i>On the Existence of Evils</i>, 63)</p>

⁴⁰ For instance, see Proclus' treatment of demons, which is notably shorter than Dionysius' in *De malorum subsistentia*. See *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, ed. Victor Cousin (Paris: Apud Aug. Durand, 1864), col. 214-5; *On the Existence of Evils*, trans. Jan Opsomer and Carlos Steel (New York: 2003), 69-70. Cf. *DN* 4.23.

<p>By all things, then, the Beautiful and Good is desired and beloved and cherished; and, by reason of It, and for the sake of It, the less love the greater suppliantly [ἐπιστρεπτικῶς]; and those of the same rank, their fellows brotherly [κοινωνικῶς]; and the greater, the less considerately [προνοητικῶς]; and these severally love the things of themselves continuously; and all things by aspiring to the Beautiful and Good, do and wish all things whatever they do and wish. Further, it may be boldly said with truth, that even the very Author of all things, by reason of superabundant Goodness, loves all, makes all, perfects all, sustains all, attracts all; and even the Divine Love is Good of Good, by reason of the Good. For Love itself, the benefactor of things that be, pre-existing abundantly in the Good, did not permit itself to remain unproductive in itself, but moved itself to creation, as befits the abundance which is generative of all. (DN 4.20)</p>	<p>Therefore, the gods also love the gods: the senior love the inferior, but considerately [προνοητικῶς]; and the inferior love the senior, but suppliantly [ἐπιστρεπτικῶς]. (On First Alcibiades, 153)</p> <p>This power does not want to remain in itself, but as it were, brings forth that which the gods are allowed to engender, that is to say, all beings. (On the Existence of Evils, 65)</p>
<p>For, not as learning existing things from existing things, does the Divine Mind know...not approaching each several thing according to its kind, but knowing and containing all things, within one grasp of the Cause; just as the light, as cause, presupposes in itself the notion of darkness, not knowing the darkness otherwise than from the light. The Divine Wisdom then, by knowing Itself, will know all things;</p>	<p>The gods know evil, since they possess a unitary knowledge of everything, an undivided knowledge of divisibles, a good knowledge of evils, a unitary knowledge of plurality. (On the Existence of Evils, 104)</p>

<p>things material, immaterially, and things divisible, indivisibly, and things many, uniformly; both knowing and producing all things by Itself, the One. (<i>DN 7.2</i>)</p>	<p>Every god knows partible natures impartibly, temporal natures without time, things which are not necessary necessarily, mutable natures immutably; and, summarily, all things in a manner more excellent than the order of things known. (<i>Elements of Theology</i>, Proposition 124)</p>
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All three passages on Dionysius’ side form coherent wholes, not coming across as patchworks of other sources, whereas Proclus’ side consists of truncated accounts or cherry-picked sentences. In the first, Dionysius begins by saying that the Good empowers contrary things “with a view to the participation of Itself.” This echoes similar sentiments he makes in his other treatises about the nature of hierarchy, whose purpose is “the assimilation and union, as far as attainable, with God”⁴¹ and the “elevat[ion of] the inferior towards things in advance.”⁴² This idea that God strives to draw inferior things towards Himself is conspicuously absent from Proclus’ text. Next, Dionysius gives various examples of how vice is simply a debased form of virtue: lust is a perversion of friendship, anger a perversion of righteous zeal, and profligacy a perversion of desire. This same point can be found in Origen in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, where the latter says that vice is a perversion of the divine love of God away from its proper object.⁴³ Once again, this whole discussion is absent from Proclus, who simply says that the soul retains some goodness even when “surrounded by all kinds of passions.” The insight offered by Dionysius’ text is completely drained, and the connection with the initial statement is obscured.

⁴¹ *CH 3.2.*

⁴² *EH 1.2.* There are other internal parallels: in *DN 11.2*, Dionysius speaks of the divine peace “passing through” (διήκει) everything, even to the last (ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἀποπερατώσεσι), recalling *DN 4.20*, which says that the Good “extends itself to the most remote” (ἄχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων). At *DN 11.5*, Dionysius says that even those things that are “inimical to peace” possess “obscure images of a peaceful aspiration.” This again harkens back to *DN 4.20*: “the very man, who desires the very worst life, by the very fact of desiring, and desiring life, and looking to a best life, participates in the Good.”

⁴³ *PG 13: 71A-B.* Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, trans. R.P. Lawson (New York: 1957), 36: “Everyone who has reached the age that they call puberty loves something, either less rightly when he loves what he should not, or rightly and with profit when he loves what he should love. But some people pervert this faculty of love, which is implanted in the human soul by the Creator’s kindness. Either it becomes with them a passion for money and the pursuit of avaricious ends; or they go after glory and become desirous of vainglory; or they chase after harlots and are found the prisoners of wantonness and lewdness; or else they squander the strength of this great good on other things like these.”

In the second parallel text, *DN* speaks of God's love as the sustaining cause of the universe and then transitions to an explanation of how God created the world out of the abundance of this very love (similar to Gregory's *Oration 38*, which says that God created the angels so He could share His beneficence with other creatures). Furthermore, Dionysius envisions love as having a three-fold motion (from superior to inferior, inferior to superior, and equal to equal). This doctrine likewise finds expression in the same commentary by Origen, where "the charity of God" is said to possess three directions: "towards God, from Whom it takes its origin, and...towards the neighbor."⁴⁴ This triadic structure accords fully with the other three-fold structures that appear throughout the *CD*.⁴⁵ By contrast, Proclus invokes only a two-fold movement of love (between gods and lesser gods). This "pick and choose" methodology is also what we find in the final passage. That Dionysius scoured Proclus' treatises and effortlessly interwove independent quotations only sentences apart, fixing broken parallelisms in the process is highly improbable.

Furthermore, the idea that the *CD* is conceptually indebted to Proclus' philosophy is disproved by concrete antecedents to the same ideas being found in Christian writers preceding Proclus. This is most evident in Dionysius' doctrine of evil as *parhypostasis*.

The term *parhypostasis*, used by both the *CD* and Proclus, expresses the notion that evil is not a thing in its own right, but a subsidiary or parasitical reality that depends on the good, just like darkness depends on light and is a privation of it. Stiglmayr and Koch based their thesis of Proclean priority mainly on this point, claiming that the term *parhypostasis* was specific to Proclus and hence betrayed Pseudo-Dionysius' dependence on him.⁴⁶ In reality, the term occurs multiple times in the works of Saints Gregory of Nyssa⁴⁷ and Basil,⁴⁸ who wrote several decades before Proclus was even born. Furthermore, the doctrine of evil as a privation is abundantly attested in earlier Christian writ-

⁴⁴ PG 13: 70A. *The Song of Songs*, op. cit., 34.

⁴⁵ Dionysius holds that both the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies possess three levels: the purified, the illuminated, and the perfect. Moreover, each of the three angelic orders has three grades and both laymen and clergymen possess three respective orders.

⁴⁶ Schäfer, "Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr on Dionysius and Proclus," 571-2.

⁴⁷ παρϋφίσταται, *Homily 5 on Ecclesiastes* (PG 44: 681C); παρϋφισταμένη, *On the Making of Man* (PG 44: 164A); παρϋπέστη, *Homily 4 on the Our Father* (PG 44: 1168A); παρϋφίσταται, *Against Eunomius*, Book 9.4 (PG 45: 824A). Eugenio Corsini also acknowledges the weakness of Stiglmayr and Koch's *parhypostasis* argument, citing the fact that "both the term and the concept" (e il termine e il concetto) occur in earlier patristic literature and that Proclus seems to be borrowing the idea from somewhere else. See *Il trattato De Divinis Nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide* (Turin: G. Giappichelli, 1962), 32.

⁴⁸ παρϋποστήναι, *Hexaemeron* 1.7 (PG 29: 17C); παρϋπέστη, *Hexaemeron* 2.5 (PG 29: 41B).

ers like Origen,⁴⁹ Novatian,⁵⁰ Methodius of Olympus,⁵¹ Adamantius,⁵² Gregory of Nyssa,⁵³ Basil,⁵⁴ and Augustine.⁵⁵ By contrast, the mainstream Platonic tradition, as expressed by Plutarch,⁵⁶ Atticus,⁵⁷ Numenius,⁵⁸ and Plotinus,⁵⁹ held to exactly the opposite belief, namely that evil was *not* a privation of the good but an independent substance.⁶⁰ The Platonists also believed that demons were evil by nature,⁶¹ whereas the Christians believed that all demons were by nature good,

⁴⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.5.2 in ANF 4:290; *Commentary on John 2.7* (PG 14: 136C-137A) in ANF 9:330-1.

⁵⁰ Novatian, *On the Trinity*, Chap 4. See *Novatian: The Trinity; The Spectacle; Jewish Foods; In Praise of Purity; Letters*, trans. Russell J. DeSimone (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1972), 31; PL 3: 892C.

⁵¹ Methodius of Olympus, *Concerning Free Will*, PG 18: 256B, 264A-B.

⁵² Adamantius, *Dialogue on the True Faith in God*, trans. Robert A. Pretty (Peeters: 1997) sections 3.9, 4.9; PG 11: 1800B, 1821A.

⁵³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily 7 on Ecclesiastes*, PG 44: 725B.

⁵⁴ Basil, *Homily: That God is not the Source of Evils*, PG 31: 341B-C.

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love*, Chap 11-2 in NPNF 3:240.

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *On the Failure of Oracles*, sec. 34 (428B); *Isis and Osiris*, sec. 54-6 (373A-F).

⁵⁷ Atticus, *Fragment 23*, in George Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017), 121.

⁵⁸ Numenius, *Fragment 52*, in *Ibid.*, 124; 247.

⁵⁹ *Enneads* 1.8.15.

⁶⁰ The one exception is Porphyry, who seems to have held beliefs more in line with the Christian position. See his *Sentences*, section 43 (where he calls matter a privation of form) and Porphyry apud John Philoponus, *De Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum*, ed. Hugo Rabe (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899), 164-5 (where he says that matter comes from God). A passing comment by Simplicius suggests that Iamblichus also believed that evil was a privation. See Karl Kalbfleisch, *Simplicii in Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1907), 418. But as this doctrine is not attested in Iamblichus' surviving writings, it is impossible to comment further. In any case, if Iamblichus did believe this, he probably inherited the idea from his master Porphyry. Some have also attributed this doctrine to the first-century philosopher Moderatus of Gades. However, the latter was a Pythagorean, not a Platonist, and as his works are likewise fragmentary, so there is much debate over their correct interpretation. Porphyry held to other unorthodox beliefs as well, such as the idea that man could be freed from the cycle of reincarnation, that matter was created, and by admitting plurality in the One. See Porphyry, apud Augustine, *City of God*, 10.30 in NPNF 2:201; apud Proclus, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. Ernst Diehl (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), Book 2.300; apud Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus*, ed. Maria Minniti-Colonna (Naples: Salvatore Iodice, 1958), 45; Salvatore Lilla, "Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius," in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité*, op. cit., 122-24.

⁶¹ The Chaldean Oracles, Porphyry, and Iamblichus all taught that some demons were evil by nature. See Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (New York: 1989), 83; 85 (Fragments 88, 91, 149); Porphyry *On Abstinence*, Book 2, Chap. 38-40; Iamblichus, *The Mysteries*, 2.7, 3.31, 4.13. The latter two are available in the open-source translation by Thomas Taylor.

a doctrine which Proclus embraced *in conscious opposition* to his Platonist forebearers.⁶² As such, to the extent that there was any conceptual ‘influence,’ its direction seems to have been from Dionysius to Proclus, not the other way around.

Lastly, and most crucially, there are two instances where Proclus all but admits his dependence on Dionysius. In the introduction to *On the Existence of Evils* (the treatise which contains the greatest number of parallels with the *CD*), Proclus writes that all the arguments he will be making will but “summarize” (*scribere breviter*) what “some of our predecessors” (*eorum qui ante nos*)⁶³ have already said on the subject. Later on, Proclus speaks of the gods as “flowers and supersubstantial lights and everything like that.”⁶⁴ The phrase “and everything like that” suggests that Proclus is quoting someone. And as we have already seen, this is the exact expression used by Dionysius to refer to the persons of the Holy Trinity.⁶⁵ Proclus reprises this expression in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, but there he says that the gods “are supersubstantial and, *as one has said* [ὡς φησί τις], flowers and summits.”⁶⁶ In other words, he admits that he is borrowing the expression from someone else.

Opsomer⁶⁷ and Dillon⁶⁸ have suggested that Proclus is citing a lost verse from the Chaldean Oracles here. Now, the words “flower” and “summits” do indeed occur in the Chaldean Oracles,⁶⁹ but the adjective “supersubstantial”

⁶² “But is it in demons, then, that evil exists for the first time?...Well, there are people who claim that demons even have passions....Others claim...that some demons are base and evil...One should ask these philosophers at least the following question—for the fathers of these arguments are divine, too...” Proclus then proceeds to refute the opinion of these “divine fathers” in *De malorum subsistentia*, 214 and *On the Existence of Evils*, 69.

⁶³ Proclus, *De malorum subsistentia*, 196; *On the Existence of Evils*, 57.

⁶⁴ Proclus, *De malorum subsistentia*, 209; *On the Existence of Evils*, 66.

⁶⁵ *DN* 2.7 as quoted above.

⁶⁶ Ὑπερούσιοι γὰρ αἱ ἐνάδες αὐταί, καί, ὡς φησί τις, ἄνθη καὶ ἀκρότητες. See Proclus, *Proclii Philosophi Platonici opera*, Volume 6: *Commentarii in Parmenidem Platonis*, ed. Victor Cousin (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1827), 16; *Ibid.*, *Procli in Platonis Parmenidem Commentaria III*, ed. Carlos Steel (Oxford: 2009), 1049. In one of the manuscripts that contains Proclus’ *Commentary on the Parmenides*, the scribe has even added a marginal note at this point: “Mark you: it is from the Great Dionysius” (Σημείωσαι: τοῦ Μεγάλου Διονυσίου). See Parisinus graecus 1835, folio 258r; *Proclii Philosophi Platonici opera*, Volume 6, 16 (fn 3).

⁶⁷ *On the Existence of Evils*, 66, fn 65.

⁶⁸ *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton: 1987), 408, fn 16.

⁶⁹ Several verses in the Chaldean Oracles speak of the “Ideas” as the “flower” (ἄθος) of God’s mind (Frag. 1.3; 35.5; 37.15), but these Ideas are not directly identified with the gods; rather, the gods are depicted as the mediators between God’s Ideas and creation. Cf. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, Frag. 49: “For [Eternity] alone, copiously plucking the flower of mind from the strength of the Father, has the power to perceive the Paternal Intellect and to impart Intellect to all Sources and Principles...” and Frag. 37: “But the Ideas were divided by the Intelligible Fire and al-

(ὑπερούσιος) and its derivatives is entirely absent.⁷⁰ By contrast, the word appears a startling 117 times in the *CD*. Moreover, the image of the Son and Holy Spirit as “plants” or “lights” is an ancient Christian metaphor, attested in writers preceding Proclus including Tertullian,⁷¹ Gregory of Nyssa,⁷² Gregory the Theologian (as we saw above),⁷³ and Synesius of Cyrene (who uses the same expressions as Dionysius, including “supersubstantial”).⁷⁴ Employing Occam’s razor, it is far easier to believe that Proclus was adapting the metaphor from an existing Christian source. Another reason to suppose that Proclus is not citing the Chaldean Oracles is that when he does so, he invariably prefaces the quote with “as the theologians [θεολόγοι] say” or “according to the oracle [λόγιον],” not “as one has said.”⁷⁵

This is not the only Christian expression one finds in Proclus. In his discussion of demons, Proclus writes that “every single one of them [viz. the demons] always remains in its own rank.” This seems to be a direct response to the scriptural verse which Dionysius quotes in the corresponding section of the *DN*: “they kept not their own estate” (Jude 1:6).⁷⁶ Proclus also speaks of “those who stand in front of temples and stop every defiled person outside the precinct,” a clear echo of the Christian practice of excluding the catechumens from the divine liturgy.⁷⁷

We know from Proclus’ biographer Marinus that Proclus was an eclectic thinker who believed that philosophers should not confine themselves to one specific devotion but should be “hierophant[s] of the whole world in common.”⁷⁸ It

lotted to other Intelligibles... which pluck in abundance the flower of fire from the acme of sleepless Time.” For the occurrence of “summits” (ἀκρότητες), see Frag. 76.3; 82.3; 84.2.

⁷⁰ Saffrey acknowledges this but attributes the discrepancies to Proclus’ creative paraphrase (“*libre combinaison proclienne*”) in “Nouveaux liens,” 13.

⁷¹ *Against Praxeas*, Chap 8 in ANF 3:603.

⁷² *Against Eunomius* 3.4 in NPNF 5:144-6.

⁷³ Gregory Nazianzus, *Dogmatic Poem on the Holy Spirit*, PG 37: 412A-413A.

⁷⁴ μία ρίζα, ὑπερούσιον βλαστάν, ἀγητὰ φέγγη. *Hymn 5 [2]*, lines 25-38 in Christian Lacombrade, *Synésios de Cyrène. Tome I: Hymnes* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978), 81 (PG 66: 1592). The lexical parallels with Dionysius are so strong that we should not be surprised if Synesius had read the Areopagite. Cf. καρδιαῖόν τε λόχευμα... τὰ τ’ ἐνοουσίῳν προλάμπει... φέγγη (*Hymn 5 [2]*, lines 29, 37-38) / τὰ ἐγκάρδια τῆς ἀγαθότητος ἐξέφου φῶτα (MT 3). Synesius also employs the extremely rare word ἐναπομόργνημι (to impart), which is attested only in Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and Eutychius of Constantinople (the latter two likely borrowing it from Dionysius).

⁷⁵ See also the discussion in fn 192 below. [Adjust footnote number accordingly, being that it may have changed splitting the article into two parts]

⁷⁶ *DN* 4.23.

⁷⁷ In the corresponding passage of the *CD*, Dionysius speaks of “the priests who shut out the profane from the divine mysteries” (*DN* 4.22).

⁷⁸ Marinus, *Life of Proclus* (open-source translation by Kenneth S. Guthrie), sec. 19.

is known that Proclus studied for a time in Alexandria,⁷⁹ an intellectual hub where Christians and pagans exchanged ideas. And we also know that Proclus cites another Christian (Origen) by name four times in his extant treatises, and seems to have been extensively influenced by his doctrines.⁸⁰ This makes it probable that Proclus read the *DN* in Alexandria, became interested in its theodicy, and cited it in his works. This explanation has the benefit of preserving the integrity of each text, rather than reducing Dionysius to some sort of mysterious plagiarist.⁸¹ It would also account for why the parallels with Proclus are restricted to the *DN* and are not found in the *CH* or in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (hereafter *EH*), as these latter treatises are explicitly Christian in content and so would have been of less interest to a pagan philosopher like Proclus.

⁷⁹ *Ibid. Life of Proclus*, sec. 8-9.

⁸⁰ One of the quotations occurs in Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, Book II.4. See the critical edition by Henri-Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, *Théologie platonicienne*, Volume 2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974). Proclus also quotes Origen's allegorical interpretation of the myth of Atlantis in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (*Procli Diadochi*, ed. Diehl, 1.77) and refers to Origen's opinions in 1.31 and 63 of the same treatise. There is some controversy over whether the Origen cited by Proclus is indeed the Christian Origen or an unknown "pagan Origen," but the weight of the evidence seems to point in the former direction. See Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009), 217-63; *Ibid.* "Origen and the Platonic Tradition," *Religions* 8/2 (2017): 21; Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *A Threat to Public Piety: Christians, Platonists, and the Great Persecution* (Ithaca/London: Cornell UP: 2012), 49-71. Porphyry wrote that the Christian Origen was the student of Ammonius, the teacher of Plotinus (see Eusebius, *Church History* 6.19) and Eusebius confirms that many pagans quoted Origen (*Church History* 6.18-19); see NPNF 1:264-7. For the general influence of Origen on Proclus, see: Ilaria Ramelli, "Some Overlooked Sources of the Elements of Theology: The Noetic Triad, Epistrophé, Apokatastasis, Bodies, God 'All in All' and the Possible Reception of Origenian Themes," in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes, Volume 3: On Causes and the Noetic Triad*, ed. Dragos Calma (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2022), 406-75.

⁸¹ At *DN* 2.2, Dionysius explicitly says that he rejects any authority which opposes Scripture: "If there is anyone who has placed himself entirely in opposition to the Oracles, he will be also entirely apart from our philosophy; and if he has no care for the divine wisdom of the Oracles, *how shall we care for his guidance in theological science?*" It seems very inconsistent for him to remark this and then, only a few chapters later, to import entire passages from a pagan philosopher who was an infamous opponent of Christianity. If a given expression occurs in two authors, one of whom admits that he borrowed it, and another who says that it is original, the simplest explanation is that the former took it from the latter.