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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PSEUDO-DIONYSIOS THE AREOPAGITE¹

Summary: This article addresses the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite. It begins by advancing four principles upon which the interpretation of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus ought to be based: e. g., the work of Pseudo-Dionysios is formally a fraud, so that the author's intentions in the work can be understood only if the motives of his fraud can be discovered. One of his motives in his fraud is to conceal a heretical Christology. The article then briefly describes that Christology. It argues that the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios is triadic in character. Dionysios's Jesus is a principle within the Trinity distinct from any member of the Trinity. This principle, it suggests, Pseudo-Dionysios derives from his adaptation of the principle *being* τὸ ὄν or οὐσία in the metaphysics of Proklos (e. g., in *The Platonic Theology*, III), the product of the union of "the Limit" (τὸ πέρας) and the "Limitless" or "Infinite" (τὸ ἄπειρον). The article concludes by describing briefly the differences between the teaching of Proklos himself and the doctrine which Pseudo-Dionysios derives from it.

Key words: Christology, Pseudo-Dionysios, Areopagite, Trinity, Proklos.

This paper addresses the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite. It advances an hypothesis concerning the metaphysical identity of Pseudo-Dionysios's Jesus and suggests that Pseudo-Dionysios produced this doctrine by adopting and adapting the teaching of the pagan Neoplatonic philosopher Proklos. This argument, however, I set in a frame or context: a more comprehensive hypothesis concerning the interpretation of the *corpus dionysiacum*; an hypothesis which for the moment I advance only as a series of four propositions which (in the fashion of medieval professors) I am prepared to defend.

¹ This communication was originally addressed to the International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, UK 1995). The preparation of the reading draft for publication was delayed for personal and practical reasons. Accordingly, the final draft of the communication could not be included in the publication of the papers delivered at the conference. To expedite its publication now (spring 2001), I have left the paper in the form in which it was presented in 1995. Nonetheless, the reader is asked to take note of one change and one addition. First, in January 1996 I formally retired from the Department of Theology of St. John's University, Flushing, New York USA. Second, since the draft of this article was completed in the fall of 1995, there has appeared an important article on the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios: Theresia HAINTHALER, "Bemerkungen zur Christologie des Ps.-Dionys und ihrer Nachwirkung im 6. Jahrhundert" in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident* (Actes du Colloque International / Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994; édités par Ysabel de ANDIA; Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 269–292.

I. THE FRAME OF THE ARGUMENT

First, then the frame or context of my argument: four brief propositions or hypotheses which, in my judgement, ought to guide our attempts to interpret the *corpus dionysiacum*:

First, that the *corpus dionysiacum* is a fraud, and should be addressed as such.² On lines laid down by Wolfgang Speyer in his *Die Literarische Fälschung im Altertum*, our task is to determine the motive of that fraud; and more exactly, to answer the question, just what is his fraud attempting to conceal?³

My *second* hypothesis: it is impossible to understand the *corpus dionysiacum* without recognizing its borrowings from the pagan Neoplatonists and describing the ways in which Pseudo-Dionysios transformed them. – Was then the motive of the fraud of Pseudo-Dionysios to conceal his borrowings from pagans? My answer: *no*. To be sure, he does indeed veil his dependence upon, e. g., Proklos. Nonetheless, Pseudo-Dionysios's primary intention is not, strictly speaking, to transform classical Christian doctrine into a more or less Christian but essentially Neoplatonic *theologia*. His borrowings from Proklos are only means to a quite different end.⁴

What then was the purpose of Pseudo-Dionysios? and why did he try to conceal it? My *third* hypothesis: the true meaning and purpose of the *corpus dionysiacum* (and the motive of his borrowings from, e. g., Proklos) lie in his Christology.

² E. R. DODDS (Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* [hereafter *ElemTheol*]; A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary by E. R. DODDS; Second Edition; Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1963, xxvii) describes the *corpus dionysiacum* as a "fraud" which "met with complete and astonishing success" – and then, in his note to the word "fraud", adds, "It is for some reason customary to use a kinder term [*scilicet* than "fraud"]"; but it is quite clear that the deception was deliberate (cf. H. KOCH, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 3)."

³ Wolfgang SPEYER, *Die Literarische Fälschung im Altertum (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, Erste Abteilung, Zweiter Teil; München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970)*, defines a fraud (*Fälschung*) as a literary production constructed by reason of nonliterary motives ('nichtliterarische Motive').

Eine Fälschung liegt dann vor, wenn der wirkliche Verfasser mit dem angegebenen nicht übereinstimmt und die Maske als Mittel gewählt wurde, um Absichten durchzusetzen, die ausserhalb der Literatur, das heisst der Kunst, lagen. Nur wo Täuschungsabsicht, also *dolus malus*, vorliegt, wird der Tatbestand der Fälschung erfüllt (13).

Accordingly, the investigation of motives is the "foundation" (*Grundlage*) of every critical examination of pseudepigraphica: "So bleibt unseres Erachtens die Prüfung der Zwecke eines Pseudepigraphons die Grundlage jeder 'Fälschkritik.'" (104). Earlier, Speyer has used even stronger language: "Der Verzicht auf ein Herausarbeiten der Absichten der Fälscher wäre gleichbedeutend mit dem Verzicht, die Fälschungen zu verstehen. Nur das Motiv erklärt die Fälschung" (9).

⁴ Here I correct such judgements as that of E. R. DODDS (*ElemTheol* xxvif): "The influence which Proclus exercised upon early medieval thought ... would scarcely have been felt but for the activity of the unknown eccentric who within a generation of Proclus' death conceived the idea of *dressing his philosophy in Christian draperies* and passing it off as the work of a convert of St. Paul" (emphasis supplied). Pseudo-Dionysios was certainly a Christian Neoplatonist and beyond doubt a sincere one. Nevertheless, as I shall argue immediately below, we must qualify his Neoplatonism by at least two observations: first, he puts his Neoplatonism (on my hypothesis) into the service of a higher teaching; and, second, he modifies the Neoplatonism of, e. g., Proklos, in order to bring it into conformity with both classical Christian orthodoxy and his own (as I argue, heretical) Christology.

This Christology (and its metaphysics) Pseudo-Dionysios wishes both to propound and to conceal. Why conceal? Because, on my hypothesis, his Christology is, in his times, heretical. The character of his heresy will appear shortly.

My *fourth* hypothesis attempts to identity a party or group in Pseudo-Dionysios' own times who taught a Christology like his. This party I propose to find in the *protoktistoi* (πρωτόκτισται; also called the *tetraditai* [τετραδίται]), one of the two sects into which the monastic party whom their adversaries called "Origenists" split perhaps as early as the 530s⁵. This hypothesis I cannot further develop here.⁶ In any case, the probability of the hypothesis which associates Pseudo-Dionysios with the *protoktistoi* depends wholly upon our ability to demonstrate (on another occasion, alas!) that the Christology of the *protoktistoi* has incorporated the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios. For the moment, however, it is the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios to which we now turn.

So much, then, for the frame of my argument.

⁵ For what is now the totality of our evidence on the schism of the Origenist party, see Kyrillos of Skythopolis, *The Life of Sabas* in Eduard SCHWARTZ, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur; herausgegeben von Walther Eltester und Erich Klostermann; 4. Reihe, 4. Band, 2. Heft = 49. Band, 2. Heft; Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1939), 197.4–198.6ff.* – which (to note only the beginnings of my argument) I interpret in the light of Antoine GUILLAUMONT, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'Histoire de l'Origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), and my own *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology*, cited in note 6 below.

⁶ This hypothesis I first advanced in my dissertation of 1966. David Beecher EVANS, *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies XIII; Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies: Washington, D. C., 1970) 24, n. 6 describes its first, primitive form (developed in this fourth hypothesis below), later articulated in "Leontius of Byzantium and Dionysius the Areopagite" in *Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines* 7 (1980) 1–34. For a briefer, more comprehensive account of the Christology of Leontios of Byzantium, see my "Leontius von Byzanz" in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, XXI, 5–10. My interpretation of the Christology of Leontios was sharply criticized by Brian DALEY, "The Origenism of Leontius of Byzantium", *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1976) 333–369. DALEY returned to Leontios (without mention of my last two articles) in Brian DALEY, "'A Richer Union': Leontius of Byzantium and the Relationship of Human and Divine in Christ", *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993) 239–265. [Added March 2001:] Daley's interpretation of Leontios as, generally speaking, an orthodox (albeit perhaps excessively dyophysite) interpreter of the decree of the council of Chalcedon has been taken up by Alois GRILLMEIER, *Gesù il Cristo nella fede della chiesa* (edizione italiana a cura di Antonio Zani), vol. II/2 (*La chiesa di Costantinopoli nel VI secolo con la collaborazione de Theresia HAINTHALER*; Brescia: Editrice Paideia, 1999), 245–301. I persist in my conviction that Daley's reading of Leontios is tendentious and often negligent, and that his understanding of the spiritual Christology of Evagrius of Pontos (the triadic character of which Leontios reproduces in, e. g., CNE 1.4) is imperceptive. – I have since come to the hypothesis that Pseudo-Dionysios was among Leontios's adversaries, and both confirmed and substantially expanded my analysis of Leontios's Christology in communications delivered to the *Colloquium Origenianum Septimum* (Hofgeismar 1997) and the International Conference of Patristic Studies (Oxford 1999) – which I hope in due course to publish. – Among the firstfruits of the conversations ensuing upon these communications are the studies on the Christology of the Byzantine sixth century now being undertaken by Professor István Perczel of the Central European University (Budapest). See his studies: "Une théologie de la lumière : Denys l'Aréopagite et Évagre le Pontique", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 45 (1999), 79–120 and "Once again on Dionysios the Areopagite and Leontius of Byzantium", *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter*, ed. T. Boiadjev–G. Kapriev and A. Speer, Turnhout: Brepols, 2000, 41–85.

II. THE ARGUMENT: THE CHRISTOLOGY OF PSEUDO-DIONYSIOS

Introduction. We consider first, the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios properly so called: his teaching about Jesus; and second, the derivation of his Jesus from the teaching of Proklos. For the moment, I undertake only to formulate a reasonably unambiguous hypothesis, with only enough documentation and analysis to justify its claim to our attention: brief references to the teaching of the *corpus dionysiacum* and the identification of similar doctrine in Proklos.

1. The Teaching of Pseudo-Dionysios

Pseudo-Dionysios' point of departure, I suggest, is his narrative *Heilsgeschichte*. This narrative I propose to reconstruct – and, so to speak, retell – as follows. In the beginning is God the Trinity. This Trinity produces a world. In order to produce this world, God the Trinity first produces a principle which the Trinity perfectly unites to itself. This perfect unity of the Trinity with the principle constitutes what Pseudo-Dionysios calls the *thearchy*. This principle the Trinity assigns both to create and to deify all beings. Then the human race falls into sin. To save mankind and to resume the task of its deification, the thearchy attaches this principle to the Son and, in the incarnation, sends the principle into the human state as Jesus of Nazareth – so that Pseudo-Dionysios calls him Jesus even in his transcendence before his incarnation. – We expand upon this story both to justify our narrating it in this form and to describe the theological Christology⁷ which Pseudo-Dionysios develops from it.

We take as our point of departure the article of Salvatore Lilla, “Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius”.⁸ Here Lilla, *inter alia*, adduces texts of the *corpus dionysiacum* in which, I observe, Pseudo-Dionysios introduces two kinds of distinctions into the deity⁹. First, as Lilla puts it, “God is one in respect of his substance and triple in respect of his hypostases.”¹⁰ Second, the deity possesses, in

⁷ “Theological Christology”; that is, Christology in the classical patristic sense: the *interpretation* in cognitive, abstract, general and, in general, rational terms of what moderns call a narrative myth; for Christians, the story of Jesus. Such an interpretation of myth by means of λόγος is to be sure what the Greeks after Plato came to call θεολογία. – I make the point because Pseudo-Dionysios certainly derived the cognitive structure of his Christology not only from his patristic sources (e. g., the Cappadocians) but also from Proklos, a pagan Greek who also composed a *theology*.

⁸ Salvatore LILLA, “Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damascius” in *Denys l'Areopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident* (Actes du Colloque International / Paris, 21–24 septembre 1994; [édités par Ysabel de ANDIA; Paris: Institute d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 117–152 – hereafter cited simply as “PsDPorphDam” (1997)). Professor Lilla kindly granted me access to his galley of this article.

⁹ This interpretation of the texts in question, together with my articulation of that interpretation below, is my own, not that offered here by Salvatore Lilla.

¹⁰ S. LILLA, “PsDPorphDam,” (1997) 121, says of “la conception dionysienne de Dieu” that it reflects “la doctrine trinitaire orthodoxe établie par les Pères Cappadociens, selon laquelle Dieu est un en ce qui concerne sa substance et trine en ce qui concerne ses hypostases.” His note 37 lists many supporting texts.

Lilla's words, "the property ... of containing all beings in itself":¹¹ e. g., in DN 4.7, "the good and beautiful are not [something?] to be distinguished in respect of *the cause which comprehends the whole in one*".¹² Of these two distinctions, the first is a distinction within the deity itself. The second distinction is between, on the one hand, the set or group of (let us call them) the ideas of beings created or to be created (that is, *existences*), and, on the other hand, the deity itself – the deity in which nonetheless that set of ideas is somehow immanent. We look now at this set of ideas. Here I propose two hypotheses.

First, I note, this set of ideas cannot be for the *corpus dionysiacum* what it had been for at least some Christian theologians of previous generations: e. g., a set of *logoi* in the mind of the Trinity (or in the Son of God) which, so to speak, God consults when he himself proceeds to create the world. For Pseudo-Dionysios, God (as also Proklos's One) is utterly beyond such ideas. Rather, I suggest, Pseudo-Dionysios locates this set of ideas in a *principle* (ἀρχή), the principle of all the divine processions which produce beings or existences.¹³ This principle is not only the repository of the divine *logoi* but is also the divine power which realizes these *logoi* in beings. In more general terms, this principle executes the divine activity *ad extra*; that is, both in the creation (together with the divine providence and deification) and, later, in the theurgies, including the incarnation. This principle, I suggest – and here I depart from the academic consensus – is distinct from the Trinity as such and so also from any of its members. Nonetheless, it is perfectly united to the Trinity, and together with the Trinity forms the *thearchy* (θεαρχία). – In brief, the deity comprises not only the utterly transcendent Trinity but also the principle of the divine proces-

¹¹ S. LILLA, "PsDPorphDam" (1997), 136 [= galleys 17]: "Dans les *Noms divins*, Denys insiste sur la propriété de l'un de contenir tous les êtres en soi, soit dans sa *monê* – c'est-à-dire avant de les émaner – soit dans les phases les plus hautes de sa *proodos*, représentées par l'être absolu ou rayon et par l'intelligence." – Lilla then goes on to note the parallel between the teaching of Pseudo-Dionysios "de la présence de tous les êtres dans la *monê* de l'un" and the teaching of Damaskios.

¹² DN 4.7 151.2–3 SUCHLA = MPG 3 704 C5–6: τῆς ἐν ἐνὶ τὰ ὅλα συνειληφηνίας αἰτίας. This is the fourth of no less than sixteen (16) passages from DN which Lilla, in "PsDPorphDam" (1997), 136–138, offers in support of his assertion; that is, that the divine μονή contains all beings in itself.

¹³ In DN 2.4, Pseudo-Dionysios makes a distinction between divine "unions" and "distinctions", and defines the distinctions as "both the processions and revelations (befitting the Good) of the thearchy" (126.9–10 SUCHLA = MPG 3 640 D11–12 τὰς ἀγαθοπρεπεῖς τῆς θεαρχίας προόδους τε καὶ ἐκφάνσεις). Next he asserts that "characteristic [properties] of both the ... union(s) and again of the distinction(s) are both certain peculiar unions and distinctions" (τῆς ... ἐνώσεως ἴδια καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς διακρίσεως εἶναι τινὰς ἰδικὰς καὶ ἐνώσεις καὶ διακρίσεις). On this basis, he distinguishes between two classes of "processions," one higher, one lower. In the higher class of processions, the Father produces the Son and the Holy Spirit (that is, distinctions within the highest unity). This class of processions Pseudo-Dionysios twice designates as "the superessential theogony" (ὑπερουσιος θεογονία: DN 2.5 128.10 SUCHLA = MPG 3 641 D4–5; Ep 9 = 194.8 RITTER = MPG 3 1104 C10). (In the second passage, he demythologizes the phrase!) In the lower class of procession the Trinity produces what simpler Christians would call the divine acts of creation (including, of course, the noetic realm of angels); which for Pseudo-Dionysios (as for Proklos before him) seems to incorporate both providence and the primary phase of deification.

We find an analogous distinction between two classes of processions in Proklos. See, e. g., Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne* (texte établi et traduit par H. D. SAFFREY et L. G. WESTERINK; 6 vols.; Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres,' 1968–1997 – hereafter *TheolPlat* SW) 3.8.–9 in III 30.15–40.8 SW – Proklos's construction of the first triad after the One.

sions *ad extra*. In other terms, to which we shall refer later: the deity takes on the characteristics of a quaternity.

Second, I suggest that this principle is none other than Pseudo-Dionysios's Jesus. It is precisely this principle, this Jesus, who later, in union with the Son, descends through the realms of being into human form. In this descent, the divine and transcendent Jesus becomes the locus of union between God and man. In Jesus, the principle becomes a divine "*theanthropic*" person.¹⁴

In sum: Pseudo-Dionysios both appends a principle to the Trinity and identifies him as Jesus. Accordingly he can assert that Jesus is the "cause" of both angels and men (and so *a fortiori* of the whole cosmos),¹⁵ and the "principle and essence and most thearchic power of every ... theurgy".¹⁶

2. Proklos and Pseudo-Dionysios

Finally, this hypothesis will make better sense if we can identify the source from which Pseudo-Dionysios derived it. My argument here: Pseudo-Dionysios models his Jesus, the principle of the divine processions, on Proklos's conception of "the Mixed" (τὸ μικτόν), which, as we shall see, Proklos identifies with *being* (τὸ ὄν) and *ousia* (οὐσία).

a. The Teaching of Proklos: the One and the First Triad

In the third book of his *Platonic Theology*¹⁷, Proklos describes both the One itself¹⁸ and the first triad which proceeds from the One: the Limit (τὸ πέρας), the Limitless (τὸ ἄπειρον)¹⁹ and, finally the Mixed (τὸ μικτόν)²⁰, which he derives from both the Limit and the Limitless²¹. This Mixed he promptly identifies with *being* (τὸ

¹⁴ Ep 4 MPG 3 1072 B10–C5 = 161.2–.10 RITTER.

¹⁵ Of angels: CH 4.4 MPG 3 181 C4–5 = 23.10–.11 HEIL αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς ἡ τῶν ὑπερουρανίων οὐσιῶν ὑπερούσιος αἰτία Of men: Ep 4 MPG 3 1072 A6–7 = 160.4 RITTER αἴτιος ἀνθρώπων Here Pseudo-Dionysios is insisting that "it is not as [being] [the] cause of men that he is therefore called 'man', but as indeed being truly man in [his] whole essence [*or existence*]" (160.4–5 Οὐ γὰρ ὡς αἴτιος ἀνθρώπων ἐνθάδε λέγεται ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸ κατ' οὐσίαν ὄλην ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος ὢν. – That is, Jesus is called "man" only by reason of his descent into the human condition. – I assume that Pseudo-Dionysios does indeed believe that Jesus is indeed the "cause of men," although he insists that it is not for that reason that Jesus is called 'man'.

¹⁶ EH 1.1 MPG 3 372 A10–13 = 63.12–64.2 HEIL αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς, ὁ θεαρχικώτατος νοῦς καὶ ὑπερούσιος, ἡ πάσης ἱεραρχίας ἀγιαστείας τε καὶ θεουργίας ἀρχὴ καὶ οὐσία καὶ θεαρχικωτάτη δύναμις

¹⁷ See *TheolPlat* SW, III, the whole contents of which is the Greek text of Proklos's third book, together with the translation and notes of Saffrey and Westerink.

¹⁸ *TheolPlat* 3.7 28.23–30.13 SW. The purpose of this chapter: 29.7–8 Πάλιν δὴ οὖν ἡμῖν ἐπα-ναληπτέον τὴν περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς μυσταγωγίαν

¹⁹ *TheolPlat* 3.8 30.15–34.19 SW. Topic: 30.15 Τίνες οὖν αἱ δύο τῶν θεῶν διακόσμων ἀρχαὶ μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον

²⁰ *TheolPlat* 3.9 34.21–40.8 SW.

²¹ *TheolPlat* 3.9 34.25–35.1 SW ... μικτόν, ὡς ἐκ πέρατος καὶ ἀπειρίας ὑποστάν.

ὄν)²² and (together with *life* and *intellect*) with *ousia*,²³ and later and more specifically, with “noetic”²⁴ *ousia*. It is the “first being” (τὸ πρώτως ὄν).²⁵ Earlier, as the “first of [things] mixed,” it is “the very first of beings”.²⁶ In this being is immanent the structure of of all subsequent being: that is, not only being, but also life (ζωή) and intellect (νοῦς).²⁷ Then, in a later development,²⁸ Proklos identifies this *being* with “the generative” (τὸ γεννητικόν)²⁹ and as such with “the cause of all beings”³⁰ and so with “potency” (δύναμις).³¹ Moreover, as “potency” it is also “the cause of the generative processions and every multiplicity” (αἰτία ... τῶν γονίμων προόδων καὶ παντὸς πλήθους).³² These “generative processions” are, it seems, to be distinguished from the processions which produced, in order, the Limit and the Limitless and then (from the Limit and the Limitless) the Mixed³³ – so that, to be sure, as the product of the Limit and the Limitless, the Mixed is itself produced at two removes from the god himself (36.20–24).³⁴ – For Proklos, the One together with the first triad proceeding from it forms a group of four, that is, a quaternity;³⁵ the last element of which, the Mixed, is “the unification [ἔνωσις] [producing] the existence of being” (τὴν τοῦ ὄντος ὑπόστασιν).³⁶

²² *TheolPlat* 3.9 35.1–7 SW. The Mixed is 35.6–7 τὸ ἀκρότατον ἐν τοῖς οὐσί καὶ ὃ ἐστὶν αὐτοὺν καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ ὄν.

²³ *TheolPlat* 3.9 35.8–24 SW. For the term οὐσία, here apparently equivalent to τὸ ὄν, see 35.13–15 Ἐκεῖ γὰρ καὶ ἡ οὐσία καὶ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ νοῦς

²⁴ *TheolPlat* 3.9 in III 36.20 SW: Οὐσία τοίνυν ἐστὶ νοητὴ τὸ μικτόν.

²⁵ *TheolPlat* 3.9 38.23 SW; so also earlier in 37.9–10.

²⁶ *TheolPlat* 3.9 35.4–5 SW τὸ πρώτιστον τῶν μικτῶν πρώτιστόν ἐστι τῶν ὄντων. So also 35.27–36.1.

²⁷ *TheolPlat* 3.9 35.7–24 SW.

²⁸ *TheolPlat* 3.9 38.8–40.8 SW.

²⁹ *TheolPlat* 3.9 39.2 SW; so also 39.10 just below.

³⁰ *TheolPlat* 3.9 39.4 SW πάντων αἰτίων τῶν ὄντων.

³¹ *TheolPlat* 3.9 39.4–40.8 SW.

³² *TheolPlat* 3.9 39.11–12 SW.

³³ *TheolPlat* 3.9 38.26–27 SW δευτέρων δὲ ἀπ’ ἐκεῖνων [*scil.* the Limit and the Limitless] προόδων συμφυομένων εἰς τὴν τῆς οὐσίας ὑπόστασιν. Cp 3.8 30.26–31.1; 32.21–23.

³⁴ *TheolPlat* 3.9 36.20–24 SW.

³⁵ *TheolPlat* 3.9 36.26–28 SW: Πρῶτος μὲν γὰρ ἦν ὁ θεὸς ὁ τὰς δύο ἐκφαίνων ἀρχάς, δύο δὲ μετὰ τοῦτον ἀρχαί, τὸ πέρας καὶ ἄπειρον, τέταρτον δὲ τὸ μικτόν. – For the whole setting: III 6.20–37.2 SW, a discussion of the chain of causality producing the Mixed or being as such, in which Proklos argues that as primary cause of being (that is, as the cause at the head of the chain of causality producing being), God (36.24 ὁ θεός) is “the fourth cause” (36.23–24 SW ἡ ... τετάρτη αἰτία). – Proklos’ argument clearly attaches a cause to each element of the chain of causality: the Mixed, the “two principles” (the Limit and the Limitless) and, at the head of the chain, God himself: hence four causes. – A cause of God then? See, perhaps, *TheolPlat* 3.8 III 31.12–13 SW: οὔτε τὸ πρῶτον ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν ἓν, κρεῖττον γὰρ ἐστὶν ... καὶ τοῦ ἑνός, on which note 2 to page 31 on III 121 SW, in which one might perhaps find reflected the teaching of Iamblichos (and, after him, Damaskios) that there are two Ones: one utterly transcendent, the other, it seems, the proper cause of the unities produced in the processions. (Only that in *The Elements of Theology*, proposition 20 22.30–31 DODDS, Proklos seems to reject any such idea: καὶ οὐκέτι τοῦ ἑνός ἄλλο ἐπέκεινα. ταῦτόν γὰρ ἓν καὶ ἀγαθόν· ἀρχὴ ἅρα πάντων, ὡς δέδεικται. – On this vexed question, see, e. g., the brief discussions, with references to the relevant texts, in R. T. WALLIS, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 118, 147, 150, 158; in which, nonetheless, the text from *TheolPlat* 3.8 quoted above is not considered.)

³⁶ *TheolPlat* 3.9 in III 37.4–5 SW: ... ἡ μίξις αὕτη τῶν ἀρχῶν [*scil.* τὸ πέρας καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον] ἔνωσις ἐστὶν εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὄντος ὑπόστασιν (SW “... l’unification qui fait exister l’être”).

b. Proklos and Pseudo-Dionysios: A Comparison

Back then to Pseudo-Dionysios, whose Jesus, on this hypothesis, looks very like Proklos' *being*. Both Proklos and Pseudo-Dionysios distinguish two sets of processions: one before *being* (or Jesus), and one after. Both *being* and Jesus are the principles or "causes" of the processions; and in both cases, those processions represent divine acts of both creation (or, for Proklos, the production of beings) and deification. Both *being* and Jesus are distinct from the absolutely transcendent first principle (that is, from God the Trinity and the One),³⁷ yet each, as source of the processions, belongs to a quaternity. And, of course, both Proklos and Pseudo-Dionysios describe the structure of being as such as being, life and intellect (νοῦς).³⁸

Nonetheless, if the Jesus of Pseudo-Dionysios' theological Christology and the *being* of Proklos's first triad are very like one another, they are not identical. Pseudo-Dionysios has revised Proklos' quaternity to bring it into congruence with classical Christian teaching. First, he has expanded the absolutely transcendent beyond Proklos' One to include the three highest elements of the quaternity, his Trinity; or, in other terms, he has produced his Trinity by detaching the Limit and the Limitless from Proklos' first triad and linking them to the One; that is, the Christian Father, the source or "spring" of the Son and the Holy Spirit.³⁹ Second, although, with Proklos, he locates the principle of the processions in the *monè*, Pseudo-Dionysios detaches that principle (that is, Jesus) from the two elements preceding it, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Proklos, on the other hand, links his principle of the processions (that is, *being*) to the two elements preceding it (that is, of course, the Limit and the Limitless) in order to compete the first triad produced by the One.

Finally, we pause to clarify and briefly describe the method which we have employed here in analyzing the teaching of Pseudo-Dionysios. We have tried, first, to identify a few Christological teachings in the *corpus dionysiacum* which clearly reflect the teaching of Proklos; second, to locate in the corpus of Proklos as it were the specific matrices of Pseudo-Dionysios' borrowings and to describe briefly but carefully the sense and setting of Proklos' argument at those points; and finally, to compare the teachings of the two thinkers and to determine in what points Pseudo-Dionysios has followed Proklos, and in what points he has corrected him.

³⁷ On Proklos, see *TheolPlat* SW, III, note 2 to page 32 (page 121): "Seul le Premier Dieu a droit à l'appellation de 'dieu', l'intellect n'est pas dieu au sens strict"

³⁸ For Proklos in this context: *TheolPlat* 3.9 in III 35.8–14 SW, cited above; but the idea is omnipresent in the Neoplatonists. (See, e. g., *ElemTheol*, prop 101 90.17ff. DODDS.) The *corpus dionysiacum* echoes it freely; e. g., in this context, indirectly in DN 2.5 644 A4 = 129.1–2 SUCHLA; but openly in DN 5 on the divine name οὐσία, in which nonetheless the triad appears primarily as οὐσία, ζωή and σοφία. Dodds notes that in DN 5.2–3 Pseudo-Dionysios "is at pains to explain that the terms of the triad are not separate θεότητες but separate channels of the divine πρόοδος" (*ElemTheol* 253 Dodds).

³⁹ According to E. R. DODDS in *ElemTheol* 248 Dodds, "The two ἀρχαί [*scil.* the Limit and the Limitless] survive in an attenuated form" in the first sentence of DN 5.10 (the last section of the discussion of the divine name οὐσία) in MPG 3 825 B1–4 = 189.7–9 SUCHLA: Πάντων οὖν ἀρχὴ καὶ τελευτὴ τῶν ὄντων ὁ προῶν: ἀρχὴ μὲν ὡς αἴτιος, τέλος δὲ ὡς τοῦ ἔνεκα καὶ πέρας πάντων καὶ ἀπειρία πάσης ἀπειρίας καὶ πέρατος ὑπεροχικῶς τῶν ὡς ἀντικειμένων. I suggest here, of course, a rather more significant rôle for these two principles in the formation of the teaching of the *corpus dionysiacum*.

So to our conclusion. In short, if indeed we are correct in defining the Jesus of Pseudo-Dionysios' theological Christology as the principle of the processions, then it seems all but certain that he has constructed him on the model of Proklos' *being*: perfectly united to the first principle, but different and distinct from it. This *theologia*, however, Pseudo-Dionysios constructed in order to bring into fuller expression a *Heilgeschichte* in which Jesus was the incarnation of a being other than the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Such a Jesus was, of course, anathema to the early Byzantine orthodoxy of Pseudo-Dionysios' times; and it was, I suggest, precisely to conceal this heresy that the mysterious author of the *corpus dionysiacum* undertook his fraud.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ After this description of the Christology of Pseudo-Dionysios, the next step clearly will be to establish the similarities between that Christology and a reasonable reconstruction of the Christology of the *protoktistoi* or *tetraditai*. This similarity is, of course, the presupposition of the fourth and last of the four propositions with which we began.