

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION IN PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITE'S THEOLOGY

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Abstract. For Dionysius, the world is a theurgy; therefore, the world belongs to God. The cosmos in its reality is a hierarchic and triadic order. This order is a sacred one. Its essential function is of mediation for deification. The whole creation reveals God although God cannot be seen.¹ The universe as theophany and place of God's manifestations, silently and mystically speaks of the divine majesty, sovereignty and glory and by its very existence is a praise of God. All divine attributes: Cause, Source, One, Beauty, Good, Power, Love, Measure, etc. are related to creation. It is in relation to cosmology that he develops his doctrine of God.

Keywords: Creation, God, man, Cause, Good, Theosis, cosmology, being, soteriology

*"Silence is the language of the coming ages."
St. Isaac the Syrian*

*"Limba nu e aceea care-o faci
Singura limbă, limba ta deplină
Stăpână peste ape și lumină
Este aceea-n care știi să taci!"*

*"Language is not that which one creates
The only language, one's own total language
Dominating over waters and light
Is the language in which one knows to be silent."
Lucian Blaga*

1. Preliminaries

1.1. *The Man*

Dionysius is a controversial personality both in respect to his biography and to his thought. He lived during the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth. It is not clear why he wanted to have an apostolic authority in his writings choosing the name of the supposed disciple of St. Paul; some scholars think that because of his modesty, of his meekness; others think that he was

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¹ R. Roques, "Preface" to *Pseudo-Dionysius; The Complete Works...*, p. 6.

conscious of the novelty and the boldness of his teaching and with this pseudo-name, he wanted to prevent a marginalization of his writings or even a condemnation. Whatever the reason, he was very inspired in choosing the pseudo-name.

Here we have one of the explanations for the reason of his pseudonymity: it is said that he was "un de ces chrétiens platonisants, un élève, peut-être un ami de Proclus, aussi fervent dans sa croyance religieuse que fidèle à ses doctrines philosophiques, excité par le désir de pacifier son âme en mettant d'accord sa foi et sa raison, conçu la pensée chimérique, mais noble dans sa naïveté, de pacifier du même coup le monde intellectuel de son temps, et il écrivit les livres que nous avons étudiés."¹

It was the medieval humanist Lorenzo Valla who first raised the problem of the authenticity of Dionysius' name. Valla was followed in his affirmations by Erasmus of Rotterdam and other scholars, especially from the Protestant Tradition. An important point that leads to the denial of his identity is the fact that Dionysius and his works were not mentioned by the Early Church Fathers, theologians or historians.

There were many attempts to identify Dionysius with several authors of the first christian centuries. Perhaps the most recent one is that of Gh. Dragulin and Augustin Gh. Dragulin who, on the basis of a comparative theological and historical study, thinks that Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite was, in fact, Dionysius Exiguus.²

There is no doubt about the Platonic and neoplatonic influences in Dionysius' writings. As the quotation from L. Montet indicates, Dionysius is supposed to have been a friend or disciple of Proclus. The philosophical influences he received from outside the Church are most visible in the general pattern of his understanding of creation and existence as descent and return. However, he was not the only Christian writer influenced by the Greek philosophy. Origen himself was considered to be even a founder of neoplatonism.³

Dionysius had other influences from the Christian theology that preceded him. D. Rutledge, at this point, mentions especially St. Gregory of Nyssa.⁴

As for those who succeeded him, the Areopagite had the chance to be believed in his assumed identity and to enjoy a great authority and credit in the Church. An important, rather decisive contribution in his accreditation as a

¹ R. Roques quotes L. Montet in his article on Pseudo-Dionysius in "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique", Vol. III, Beauchesne, Paris, 1957, col. 246.

² Pr. Dr. Gheorghe Drăgulin and Prof. Augustin Gh. Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei lui Dionisie Exiguul și îndeosebi asupra celei necunoscute până acum" ("Researches on the work of Dionysius Exiguus and especially on that unknown until now"), in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, Nr. 5, 1988, Craiova, pp. 24-68.

³ See R.A. Greer in *Origen*, transl. and introd. by R.A. Greer, Preface by H.U. von Balthasar, Paulist Press, New York, 1979, p. 5.

⁴ Dom Denys Rutledge, *Cosmic Theology, The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Pseudo-Denys: An Introduction*, Rutledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1964, p. 13.

theological authority had Maximus the Confessor who, as Olivier Clément says, "a su l' équilibrer par une tradition plus ancienne, progrement existentielle et par un sens aigu de la liberté personnelle et de sa tragédie."¹

Although it is said that he lacked greater accent on Christology and on the theology of love, these fields may not be the most developed by him but they are not marginal in his theological system. J. Leclercq says that "Dionysius' ideas were frequently abstract and had little basis in Sacred Scriptures"²; however, Dionysius' writings contain not less than 1000 Scriptural quotations or references. For the amount of work we have from him, this is not little.

In order just to mention the great influence, at times overwhelming, Dionysius had on the Theology of the Church, I just reiterate J. Pelikan's information who said that only St. Thomas Aquinas quoted Dionysius 1700 times!³

1.2. Method

The Cosmology of Dionysius encompasses a wealth of concepts. It refers to the divine paradigms, to the invisible and visible world, to the continuous creation of the world by its renewal in the framework of the divine Providence, it refers also to its final reintegration in the mystical communion with God.

In this paper, my focus will be on the visible world although I will have to make several references to the invisible world.

I will develop my presentation in the general framework of the Protology, Soteriology and Eschatology of Dionysius. These three general headings will relate to the Dionysian main cosmological structure, the Procession and the Return (through Purification, Illumination and Union). The Procession comes in the line of Protology and the Return in the lines of soteriology and Eschatology of Dionysius. The three general headings will be developed in sub-chapters and will give the structure to this paper.

As I mentioned above, Dionysius' thought often seems to be contradictory. Although I will make a few comments from time to time on that, however, it is not the purpose of this presentation to enter this domain. I will finish it with a few general conclusions.

¹ O. Clément, "Situation de la Parole Théologique selon la Tradition Orthodoxe", as a preface to the book of Christos Yannaras, *De l'absence et de l'inconnaissance de Dieu*, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1971, p. 20.

² See his introduction to *Pseudo-Dionysius, the Complete Works*, transl. by Colm Luibheid, foreword, notes, and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem, Preface by René Roques, introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq and Karlfried Froelich, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, p. 31.

This is the book that I will use for this presentation in relation to Dionysius' works. My references to these works will be made under the following abbreviations: DN = *The Divine Names*; MT = *The Mystical Theology*; CH = *The Celestial Hierarchy*; EC = *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; Ep. = *The Letters*.

³ J. Pelikan, see his *Introduction to Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works...*, p. 21.

1.3. Dionysius' apophatism

One of the most well-known characteristics of Dionysius' theology is its apophatism. It does not mean, however, that he is not kataphatic in the development of his thought. Nevertheless, the *via negativa* is his way of doing theology. For Dionysius, no words can reach or express the inexpressible Good, the One, the unapproachable Light, the Light, the Source of all unity, the Supra-existent Being, the Mind beyond Mind.¹

God, the supreme Cause, the Areopagite says, "is not soul or mind...nor is it speech or understanding...it is not number or order, not immovable, moving or at rest... it has not power, it is not power or...life...or light...or substance... or eternity or time... It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness... It falls neither under the predicate of nonbeing nor of being...It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion...it is also beyond every denial."²

The ineffability of God is visible throughout the dionysian works even from the style of the writings. The repetitions, the pleonasm and the tautologies present everywhere stress, in fact, the apophatic character of theology, of the speech or God; they are the sign of the impossibility of finding the right word, the sign of weakness of expression, of the humility of the word, they are the sign of the consciousness of lack of means, of the inadequacy of the language in presenting the reality of God. That is why the highest level of knowledge is the denial of any knowledge; as he speaks of Moses: "But then he (Moses) breaks free of them, away from what sees and is seen, and he plunges into the truly mysterious darkness of unknowing. Here, renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, he belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united by a completely unknowing inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing."³

2. Dionysius' Cosmology

For Dionysius the Areopagite, the universe is a Theurgy, the work of God, this is why the world belongs to God.⁴ The universe in its totality is a sacred order

¹ *DN*, p. 50.

² *MT*, p. 141.

³ *MT*, p. 137.

⁴ This is the leitmotif of W.C.C. draft document in preparation for the next General Assembly in Canberra, Australia, 1992, entitled: *Towards an Ecumenical Theological Affirmation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, First Draft for the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation of the World Council of Churches, Genève, 6-12 March 1990.

In my footnotes, I will make a few references to this document in order to signal the surprising actuality of the dionysian cosmology, the coincidence between the way he understood it and the way in which the churches today express their need for an adequate theological concept

ruled by hierarchical triadic¹ mediations both in the sense of *descent* of the divine illumination and *ascent* for deification.² His cosmology is on the line of the Greek philosophical understanding but without being tributary specifically to a certain philosopher; on the contrary, his cosmology is an attempt to harmonize the Greek philosophical vision on the world with the Biblical concept of creation; he anchors this harmonization on the ground of the sacramental life of the Church. Harmony, order and measure are key-words in Dionysius thought, as R. Roques notices: "Unité sans confusion, dans l'ordre, dans la mesure et dans l'harmonie: telles sont déjà les caractéristiques fondamentales du monde dionysien."³

As I mentioned above, in Dionysius, Cosmology includes Protology, Soteriology and Eschatology. The act of creation, for him, is not limited only to the created universe but is extended to its destiny in time and to its final eschatological accomplishment, because for Dionysius, God is not only Creator but Saviour, at the same time.⁴

2.1. Protology

In this part of the paper, through the sub-chapters, the presentation of Dionysius' thought will include his doctrine of procession of all things from God.

2.1.1. What does the World tells us about God?

For Dionysius the Areopagite, the world is *locus Dei*, it is as well a *locus teologicus*, a place that speaks about God. From the beauty of all created things, he deduces that the Creator is Beauty; in the same way, God is Light, Good, Life, etc. Also, Dionysius speaks about the harmony of creation and as the ultimate cause of every thing is invisible and beyond the caused thing, he deduces that God is the cause of the harmony and the splendor of everything.⁵ As he says: "The ordered arrangement of the whole visible realm makes known the invisible things of God."⁶ God is "the foundation of everything, he preserves and embraces all the world, he founds it, he makes it secure, he holds it together, he binds the whole universe totally to himself."⁷ Because of this, God is omnipotent and this omnipotence is here kataphatically understandable. Starting from this premise, the

concerning the cosmos, the world, in our contemporary situation. This may suggest a special extensive work on precisely this subject: the value and the actuality of Dionysius' understanding on the cosmos for our world today.

¹ R. Roques, "Preface" to *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works...*, p. 5.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Idem, *L'Univers Dionysien; Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, Ed. Montaigne, Aubier, 1954, p. 67.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

⁵ *DN*, p. 76.

⁶ *Ep.* 9, p. 284.

⁷ *DN*, p. 119.

Areopagite progresses in deductions in order to emphasize God's "almightiness": God "generates everything as from some omnipotent root and returns everything back to himself like to some omnipotent storehouse."¹ As Cause and as omnipotent God has the power to summon all things into being.² As holding the Irenaeus concept of Recapitulation, Dionysius understands God as the almighty Cause not only because he brings forth everything that exists but also because he has the power of recapitulating everything, of bringing everything back to him; he does this through the Word. Since all things came into being by Word, through God's Command, the Word, at some degree, remains in them and it becomes the basis, the ground, of their reintegration in God's final communion.

Recognizing Him as the creative Source and Providence, with all the names fittingly derived from all things he brought into being, the entire creation elevates songs of praise to God.³

2.1.2. *The nonbeing*

Trying to explain the absolute inexpressible preeminence of God, when he speaks about the Good and the Beautiful, Dionysius says that the Good that is unconfined by any form but the creator of all forms, transcends everything to such an extent that in it, nonbeing is an excess of being and "one might even say that nonbeing itself longs for the Good which is above all being."⁴

The nonbeing, as J. Jones reads Dionysius, is exactly the extension of the Good/Beautiful to non be-ing and in that, the Good establishes its priority over being.⁵ In this sense, one can say that the nonbeing is potentially implied in the Good or in the being of the Good.⁶ Also, in this sense, Dionysius speaks of the nonbeing as the transcendence of being: "Even that which is not wishes for a place in it,"⁷ in the Good and the Beautiful,⁸ "nonbeing is said to be transcendently in it."⁹

Indeed, the problem of non be-ing in Dionysius' works is a frustrating one because, as J. Jones observes, we are "never given any systematic discussion of the various senses that this phrase has" and he finds five senses in which

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, transl. from the Greek with an Introductory study by John D. Jones, Marquette Univ. Press, Milwaukee, WI, 1980, p. 60.

⁶ With respect to this distinction, Dionysius seems to be ambiguous because, at times, he understands the Good as Being or the Being as the Good and at times, he speaks of these two divine realities apart as if Good and Being are not one and the same reality but as if they are united together in the same reality.

⁷ *DN*, p. 84.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Dionysius uses the concept of nonbeing: being in no manner whatsoever, or simply the lack of being;¹ the evil in beings; that which comes to be (which in Dionysius has two meanings: in some way this is be-ing and in some other way it is non be-ing); the divinity itself as beyond beingly be-ing; the denial of the beyond beingly being, or the denial of causality.²

In the sense in which the nonbeing is ready for being, even longs for it, one can say that in the dionysian thought there is a creative collaboration between being and nonbeing.³

When, in the context of his assertions on nonbeing, the Areopagite speaks on the denial of divinity itself, he refers to the divinity as it can be understood in our categories; through this denial, Dionysius, in fact, wants to establish an uncategorizable preeminence of divinity over everything, and this is precisely what he means when teaching on the meonic character of God, especially in his *Mystical Theology*.

2.1.3. *The invisible cosmogony*

As I specified in the beginning of the paper, although I will not discuss the invisible world, however, I have to make a few references to it, not only because it is a part of God's creation, but also because its hierarchical order is the general model of the hierarchical order of the visible world.

Indeed, there is an intrinsic relationship between the two worlds,⁴ or as Rutledge writes, in Dionysius' thought, the visible and the invisible interpret each other; they are inextricably united.⁵

J. Vanneste understands the dionysian invisible world even as "this world". There is no dualism, there is just one world, one creation that contains, first of all, the Ideas, and then the angels, the human beings, the sensible world.⁶

For Dionysius, the heavenly beings, as having a thinking process, "imitate

¹ D. Rutledge, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

² J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

³ Nicolas Berdyaev seems to have been much influenced not only by Jacob Boehme, but also (or through Boehme) by Dionysius. Developing his concept of meonic freedom, Berdyaev, as Dionysius does as well, speaks of nonbeing as if it would be a reality but only of an opposite order from that of being. That is how Berdyaev writes of a meonic freedom which does not depend on God and which consents freely to the creation of the world; meonic freedom, although belonging to nonbeing, freely accepted the being (Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1937, pp. 24-29.) That is why for him real freedom is creativeness (*Ibid.*, pp. 147-148) and this is its cosmogonic fundamental implication. This is the sense in which A. Mallet speaks of freedom commenting on Bultmann: "Seule la liberté a d'histoire; elle est capable d'un changement radical, elle peut être ce qu'elle n'est pas." (André Malet, *Mythos et Logos: La Pensée de R. Bultmann*, Labor et Fides, Genève, 1962, p. 9.)

⁴ R. Roques, *L'Univers Dionysien...*, p. 54.

⁵ D. Rutledge, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁶ J. Vanneste, *Le mystère de Dieu*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1959, p. 25.

the divine. They look of the divine likeness with a transcendent eye. They model their intellect after him. Being so close to him, they receive an undiluted enlightenment in order to have a life of total intelligence."¹ It is interesting that Dionysius believes that the angels are immortal, they receive immortality and incorruptibility from God; however, they are not immortal. More precisely, he introduces a distinction in the concept of immortality. For him, the real immortality belongs to God because God has it by himself; the angels are immortal but this quality in their case belongs to another category because their immortality was given to them, they do not have it, like God, by themselves.² The heavenly beings are not separated from the visible world, not only in that they represent a model for the sensible world by their hierarchical order, but they come in touch with this world, and they have different functions in it, especially in the framework of their mediation between God and our world.

2.1.4. *The origin of creation*

The world has a temporal and an atemporal dimension in the Dionysian cosmology. As temporal, it is properly called creation and the Areopagite presents in his writings a doctrine of creation, but as atemporal, the world seems to be spoken in terms of emanation, too. It is not surprising to find in Dionysius these emanationist tendencies, taking into consideration his philosophical influences. However, what he called an emanationist theory in his cosmogony is not incompatible with the doctrine of creation because when he uses emanationist language he does not refer to the material level but to the spiritual one.

For instance, he teaches that God anticipates all things in himself, embracing everything in his transcendent infinity.³ The real factor of creation is yearning; it creates all the goodness of the world. This yearning "pre-existed superabundantly within the Good and did not allow it to remain without issue. It stirred him to use the abundance of his powers in the production of the world."⁴ It is not clear here if Dionysius associates this yearning with the divine energies or if the yearning is the power of God itself, or something distinct from it. Moreover, it seems that Dionysius distinguishes in the Good, the yearning, its object and the Good itself, while in other places he only distinguishes the yearning and the Good: "Both", he says, "the yearning and the object of that yearning belong to the Beautiful and the Good. They preexist in it and because of it, they exist and came to be".⁵

J. Vanneste reads Dionysius in emanationist terms: "Il est (God) la cause

¹ *CH*, pp. 156-157.

² *DN*, p. 103.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

universelle; tout *émane* (my underlining) de Lui et tout se ramène à Lui."¹ And again: "L' émanation apparaît ainsi, si l' on identifie le Bien et L' Un, comme une ramification ontologique en plusieurs espèces d'êtres, mais unifiés à mesure qu'ils s' éloignent davantage de leur source."²

However, R. Roques defends Dionysius of any accusation of emanationism while acknowledging ambiguities in the Dionysian thought in this respect: "Malgré quelques équivaques dans ses métaphores (surtout DN 4, 693 B), on ne peut pas accuser Denys d'émanatisme, quelle que soit la nuance que l'on attache à ce term."³ The same thing can be said of Ch. Yannaras. He does not read Dionysius in emanationist terms at all: "Le monde créé", he says, "n'est pas une émanation, ni une effusion, ni une projection de l' Essence divine; les êtres, comme résultat de la volonté divine, sont donc quelque chose de séparé, de différent, *defini* par rapport à l' Etre...ne provenant ni de la nature divine, ni de rien qui soit hors de la nature divine."⁴ Ch. Yannaras wants to accent the idea of creation and of the creation of something new, as reflected in Dionysius' works, although even Yannaras does not explain exactly the meaning of his words with respect to the dionysian specific context to which they refer.⁵

2.1.5. *The all-transcending Cause*

For Dionysius, the cause and the Good and the Source are sometimes synonymous and sometimes not. He can speak of the transcending Cause *as* (my underlining) source and destiny of all things,⁶ or that "the Good *is* (my underlining) the cause even for the sources and the frontiers of the heavens."⁷ The Good as Cause "brought into being *the silent and circular movements of the vast heavens*, (my underlining) the fixed order of starry lights decorating the sky, and those special wandering stars, particularly those *two rotating sources of Light*" (my underlining).⁸ But he also can speak of the Pre-existent as the Source *and* the Cause⁹ of all things.

The Good is the only truly existence that gives being to everything;¹⁰ as it was in the case of identity and distinction between Good and Cause,¹¹ so is the

¹ J. Vanneste, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

² *Ibidem*, p. 26.

³ *Se Dictionnaire de Spiritualité...*, col. 251.

⁴ Christos Yannaras, *D l'absence et de l'inconnaissance de Dieu...*, p. 100.

⁵ In trying to establish whether Dionysius is or is not an emanationist, one should have necessarily in view the way in which Dionysius uses the concept of connaturality, between creation and God.

⁶ *DN*, p. 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹¹ Of a good help in the problem of vocabulary in Dionysius' works is *Dionysiaca, Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traductions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopage*, Tome I, II,

case of identity or, in the following example, distinction between Good and Being: The Good is Source of everything and "from it came Being itself and every kind of being."¹

The divine causality, as eternally generator of being, is erotic and ecstatic,² it is the "life of the living, the being of beings, the source and cause of all life and of all beings; it *commends* (my underlining) all things to be and it keeps them going."³ Here in this text, Dionysius seems to imply the creation by Word and the work of the Providence in creation.

"It *commends*" implies a rational mind and therefore, a rational commend with rational effects, a fact that makes the whole creation able of God's communion at God's level. This is compatible with the dionysian theology of freedom of creation and love. As R. Roques notices, for Dionysius, the freedom and the order in creation are not contradictory; one can say they are complementary: "Bien que présenté surtout sous le signe de l'ordre, l'univers dionysien se conquiert et s'unifie en permanence sous le signe de la liberté."⁴

Love, for Dionysius, is implied in the act of creation. According to his theology, man and the whole creation are not cast into being, as Heidegger would say, or cast into time as in E. Cioran's skeptical Anthropology, but through Providence, God is a loving and caring presence in the world that belongs to him.

In this respect, O. Clément said that God as "créateur et re-créateur devient volontairement cette ouverture où le céleste et le terrestre se déploient et se symbolisent l'un l'autre, il se fait donation aimante d'être et de sens."⁵

2.1.6. *The Beautiful*

The Good and the Beautiful are synonymous for Dionysius. Therefore, Beauty is also the origin of creation, the cause of harmony, sympathy, communion. As Cause, the Beauty has a protological meaning, it refers to "from out of which" in J. Jones' terms:⁶ "Beauty unites all things and is the source of all things," Dionysius writes; "it is the great creating cause which bestirs the world and holds all things in existence by the longing inside them to have beauty."⁷ But Beauty is also the Goal of everything. In this sense, it has an eschatological meaning, it refers to "in which". Dionysius again: "Beauty is Goal as the Beloved, as the Cause *toward which* (my underlining) all things move since it is the longing

Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1937.

¹ *DN*, p. 100.

² J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

³ *DN*, p. 51.

⁴ R. Roques, *L'Univers Dionysien...*, pp. 54-68.

⁵ O. Clément, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁶ J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁷ *DN*, p. 77.

for beauty that actually brings them into being."¹(!)

Besides the fact of being Source and Goal, the Beautiful is equaled with Providence; it is for the sake of the Beauty that things came to be and it is in it that they continue to exist. All these three aspects of the Beauty are mentioned in one phrase: "All being drives from, exists in, and is returned toward the Beautiful and the Good; all things look at it."²

2.1.7. *The Creative Power*

What has been said about the Good and the Beautiful in relation to the created order, can be said about the Power of God, too. Although Dionysius has different slight nuances to emphasize these divine attributes, even if not always, generally they can be understood in the same way.

The power of God makes fashions, keeps things into existence. The divine power is ubiquitous: "Nothing in the world lacks the power of God because what lacks this power has no existence, no individuality nor a place in the world."³ The power has a providential role, as in the case of Beauty. Dionysius expresses that in wonderful words. He says that the divine power "fashions the unquenchability of fire and the ceaseless moisture of water.(!) It keeps the atmosphere fluid, founds the earth upon the void making its labors endlessly fruitful. It *preserves the shared harmony of linked elements* (my underlining) in their distinctiveness and their separateness, it keeps each creature in being."⁴

In relation to the divine power, as another providential means for creation, Dionysius speaks of measure. Therefore, God is One, Cause, Source, Beauty, Good, Power, Love, Measure. He is Source and measure of the ages⁵ and of all things.⁶ But because God is one and he is measure for the whole plurality of things, he is their common measure, *sýmetria*.⁷ In that, the measure, the symmetry is a principle of order and harmony in creation.

2.1.8. *The coming into being*

¹ *Ibid.* Here Dionysius does not explain: the longing for Beauty brings the things from nonbeing to being. What kind of nonbeing is that in which there is a longing and things and in which the longing, as a dynamic reality, reaches the things and brings them out into being as if from a state into another state? Or, if there is nonbeing, can there be a longing or whatsoever in the nonbeing? This question appears out of an attempt to understand the mystical theology of Dionysius logically; however, it is possible to understand that if one adopts the dionysian language. With respect to nonbeing, Dionysius does not speak logically but paradoxically, mystically, imaginatively. (DN, p. 73).

² *Ibid.*, 79.

³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶ R. Roques, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

As a transcendent deity, out of Goodness, God brought everything into being.¹ Once the world was created, it was endowed with the laws and possibilities that allowed it to evolve and develop itself: "the single existence is said to be manifold by virtue of the fact that it brings so many things to being from itself."² But this is not without God's will as principle of unity, harmony and subsistence. "The One," Dionysius teaches, "if you take it away, the creation would collapse, nothing would survive, neither whole nor part."³ In that, the sovereignty of God is incontestably stated.⁴

But being *brought into* existence, the creation was endowed with all it has. The being itself, for creation, is a gift. The being and the having are not the same but, by the fact of being brought into existence, the creatures were at the same time endowed with gifts: "No creature has anything that it has not received through the line of communication, and this includes, startling as it may seem, its whole being in all its aspects, its actions, its whole history, its life with all its details."⁵ By opposition to the concept of connaturality, present in various ways in in Dionysius' thought, Ch. Yannaras understands Dionysius' cosmogony in no relation to the divine nature. He says: "God appelle à l'existence des êtres qui sont *en dehors* de Sa nature. En ce sens, l'existence du monde et de l'homme émerge du chaos, de l'inexistence, du néant; les êtres existent, non comme essences ou comme existences, mais seulement comme vérité, - a-lèthéia - ils ex-istent, et leur existence implique la distance, l'*endehors* de l'essence divine."⁶

Here is strongly emphasized the creatural aspect of the world, by opposition to any emanationist understanding of creation. However, the creatural dimension of the universe does not exclude a true relationship between creator and creature. But this is not ontologique, not on the basis of connaturality, but it is an anagogical relationship: "Il y a donc une relation analogique entre le Dieu Créateur et les créatures, mais cette relation suscite une représentation par l'image et non une définition."⁷ The image relation between creation and Creator does not exclude the possibility of communion. As R. Roques mentions, the universe of Dionysius is a spiritual one, where the rational beings can unify themselves with God. The image relation supposes not only the possibility of a cosmic progression towards God in

¹ CH, p. 156.

² DN, p. 66.

³ DN, p. 129.

⁴ This is exactly what the churches today want to emphasize in their effort for and as part of a new model of society: "We affirm God as the true sovereign over every human form of power." (*Towards an Ecumenical...*, Part II, 115, p. 25); and again: "We affirm that the creation belongs to God (Ps. 24). Not humanity but God is the source, the centre and the culmination of all creation. The whole of creation is ordered to the glory of God" (Rev. 1:18), (*Ibidem* Part II, 122, p. 27).

⁵ D. Rutledge, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶ Ch. Yannaras, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 82. In relation to this text, it would be necessary to see in detail the meaning of "Image" in Dionysius' thought.

a unilateral way, but also God's presence in the world. In this sense, as J. Vanneste says, "Toute la création est une théophanie."¹

2.1.9. *The Light*

Pseudo-Dionysius is not very clear and systematic when he speaks about light. For him, at times, Light is equaled to and functions like the Good or the Power, at times, it is just the image of the Archetype, it only comes from the Good.² Sometimes the light is the *unshaped* (m.u.) light of the first three days of creation and this one is the measure and enumerator of all our hours, days, of all our time. Other times, the light is that of the sun which is a distant image or echo of the Good.³ He says also that God is the time in which things happen; in this quality, God does not cease to be eternity beyond being. God is time, eternity, essence, being light, etc. but at the same time, he is the source of all these.⁴ As a Source of Light, he gives light to everything that is *capable of receiving it* (my underlining).⁵ Dionysius writes that the light is the visible image of God that draws and returns all things to itself,⁶ that means "all things that see, that have motion that are receptive of illumination and warmth, that are held together by the spreading rays. Thus, it is the *sun* for it makes all things a *sum* and gathers together the scattered."⁷

2.1.10. *The unity of creation*

In Dionysius' thought, the unity of creation has a protological character but

¹ J. Vanneste, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

² *DN*, p. 74.

³ *Ibidem*.

Speaking of the *unshaped* light, Dionysius does not explain not only *HOW* the *unshaped* light is measure of time but he does not explain how the light – shaped or unshaped – is measure of time. Was there one kind of time before the fourth day of creation and another type of time after that?

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

I underlined the expression that is one of the stereotypes of Dionysius' style and a leit-motive of his care not to commit any crime against the majesty of God; this as well as guard to make sure that the creation will always be interpreted and understood as creature and not more than that. The expression was used by Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, too.

⁶ This means that in this context Light is identical with God, otherwise, it would bring all things not to itself but to God.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

It is implied in the text that all things long for light but not all are capable of receiving it; and if it is received differently according to the capacity of things, can there be things of such a low level that would not be able at all of receiving light? In this case, who is responsible for the lesser capacity or total incapacity – which is supposable in a hierarchical order of creation – of some things for receiving light? Also, it is said that God gives light to all things.

Then, how is light compatible with the supposed existence of *some* beings incapable of receiving the light? If they do not participate in being, then, are they out of being or are they just illusory? Or what kind of being would they have?

also the unity can be seen from the soteriological and eschatological point of view. The unity is protological in the sense that by the fact of creation itself, the universe relays its existence on the unifying power of the One. Along the line of St. Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of the unifying power of God, Dionysius also sees the unifying presence of God in all creation. Gregory said that "une solide liaison entre les choses ainsi créées fut instituée dans la nature par l'industrie et la puissance divines qui tenaient les rênes de l'univers."¹ And Dionysius writes: "the transcendent God *reaches* (m.u.) from the highest and most perfect forms of beings to the very lowest."² This protologic and ontologic unity is not uniformity. Dionysius stresses in a special way the positive character of distinctiveness of things. The hierarchical structure of the universe is not incompatible with the unity. There is even a longing of God for unity, as the Areopagite shows: "The divine longing is *Good seeking good for the sake of the Good*" (my underlining).³

In making this bold affirmation, Dionysius does not mean that the universe has a mechanical order where reified things with a suppressed freedom are manipulated by God for God's own sake or interest. Dionysius affirms clearly the freedom of creation and the love of God for his creation; this is a superabundant love out of the divine goodness that holds all things together for the perspective of the final communion, as they are already together on the basis of their common source.⁴ Although the Areopagite speaks of scattered things, it is implied in his affirmations that they have in themselves the principle of unity. As it will be seen again later, the world of Dionysius is not an isolated one but a world in which the dialogue between things and that of all things with God is essential and saving relationship.⁵ This dialogue is made possible and necessary by the specificity of every created thing, by their gifts and qualities given by God. Here again Dionysius is along the line of St. Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory teaches that "tout est possible à la puissance divine, aussi bien de donner l'existence à ce qui n'existe pas, que de donner à l'être des qualités convenables."⁶ Dionysius holds the same idea: "The righteousness of God is truly righteousness in that it gives the appropriate and deserved qualities to everything and that it preserves the nature of

¹ Grégoire de Nysse, *La Création de l'homme*, Introd. par Jean-Yves Guilleumin et A.G. Hamman, trad. par Jean-Yves Guilleumin, col. "Les Pères dans la Foi", Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1982, p. 35.

² *DN*, p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ This is another desideratum of our churches today. Conscious that we live in the crisis of an irrational exploitation of nature, the churches call people for a new understanding of the relationship man-cosmos in which neither one be humiliated: "Christians need a recovery of their faith in God as Creator, in the world as belonging to God, and in a reconciled relationship, through Christ, between humanity and the created world" (*Towards an Ecumenical...*, Part I, 53, p. 13).

⁶ Grégoire de Nysse, *La Création de l'homme...*, p. 127.

each being in its due order and power."¹

For Dionysius, the Incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ is the supreme sign of the creative power of God as a unifying providential presence in creation. The Incarnation as theurgy is something totally new² in the universe. It is compatible with the creation because, for Dionysius, as J. Jones shows, the nature of things is understood as logos: "the nature or the logos of a being is what determines the being to be what it is."³ The Incarnation of the Logos as unifying power and love in the world, expresses the radical character of God's care for the world, in the fact that Incarnation is understood as the most radical and complete divine ecstasis.⁴

2.2. Soteriology

In the general framework of soteriology, I will present Dionysius' doctrine on the return of all things to their Creator through purification and illumination. Union, the last stage of the ascent, will be presented in the framework of eschatology. The three stages of the ascent as return will be implied in the material which follows about various dionysian cosmological concepts.

2.2.1. The divine Providence

Although I related here the Providence as that which leads things to their final accomplishment in God, to the soteriology, in Dionysius' thought the Providence has a much larger understanding. Generally speaking, it includes not only the return but the procession too.⁵ First, we have the definition: Providence is "something in something but in a transcendent way; in no way is it nothing in nothing."⁶(!)

D. Rutledge says that Dionysian cosmology does not refer only to origination of the world through the divine power, but also it refers to the achievement of the world's purpose and its final destiny in God's communion.⁷ In this sense, Providence is related to all creation in all its aspects and dimensions. It is the center of everything, everything has it for destiny; Providence proceeded the creation and, as he said about Logos and Good and Beautiful, etc., Dionysius asserts that it is in Providence that things hold together. "Because the Providence is there, the world has come to be and exists."⁸

¹ *DH*, p. 113.

² *Ep.* 4, p. 265.

³ J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

⁵ *DN*, p. 83.

⁶ *Ep.* 9, p. 286.

⁷ D. Rutledge, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸ *DH*, p. 54.

If in St. Justin the Martyr's theology the *Logos spermatikos* can be understood as having a providential function, in Dionysius' theology, the Providence as Logos functions too; One can see

Providence for Dionysius implies divine care for creation, for the spiritual growth of everything. This caring character of the Providence is stressed analogically by Dionysius when, giving an answer in a conflictual situation, he says: "Those who do not know must be taught, not punished. We do not hit the blind. We lead them by the hand."¹

In the sense in which all creation is summoned up in the communion with its primary Cause, as the Providence exists before creation, the Areopagite teaches that "in some way everything partakes the Providence that flows out of the transcendent Deity."²

2.2.2. *The longing for God*

For Dionysius, all things *must* desire, *must* (my underlining) yearn for the Beautiful, for God, for their Cause.³ This is compatible with their nature; they have the yearning in their nature; moreover, their nature is yearning. Not to desire is to run counter-nature. The longing as the dynamic of return has an anomnetical dimension and it is universal: "all things long for it (Cause); the intelligent and rational long for it by way of knowledge, the lower strata by way of perception, reminder by way of the stirrings of being alive and in whatever fashion befits their condition."⁴

The longing implies the unity of creation. One of the ways of realizing this unity, as it was mentioned, is knowledge, perception: "all things *are returned* (my underlining) to it (Cause) as their own goal; all things desire it. Everything with mind and reason seeks *to know* (my underlining) it, everything sentient yearns to perceive it, everything lacking perception has a living and instinctive longing for it, and everything lifeless and merely existent turns, in its own fashion, for a share of it."⁵

The final communion with God, is, in Dionysius' teaching, a synergetic work. In the text quoted above the double contribution is visible of this work: that of God, because things *are returned* and that of creation through the ardent, permanent, consuming desire.

The longing as connatural to beings, in relation to the Cause which is origin and final destiny of things, gives to the Cause the threefold dimensions: Protological, Soteriological, Eschatological.

in Dionysius a Logos Pronikos, .

¹ *Ep.* 8, p. 278.

² *CH*, p. 156.

³ *DN*, p. 79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵ *Ibid.* This ardent and restless desire for the ultimate communion with God remembers St. Augustin: "Fecistis nos ad Te Domine post imaginem et similitudinem Tuam et inquietur est cor meum donec requiescat in Te."

2.2.3. *The ascent as return*

The whole life in the world is conceived by Dionysius as a progress to true being, through the reception of the light in an increasing fullness.¹ The ascent needs purification and illumination and leads to union or perfection,² it is accomplished through the help of hierarchies, in a hierarchical order.³ As J. Vanneste reads Dionysius, "le Bien, dans sa fonction ordinatrice qui est d'unifier,"⁴ makes us to come back, and this happens by different means among which we have the analogy and the symmetry, the common measure, which has also the sense of understanding everything in relation to God. The analogy and symmetry are models, reasons, predeterminations offered by God to creation for its progression.⁵

The return has a doxologic character. Because the return is a synergetical work and because without God's help it is not possible,⁶ in its way *back home* (my (my underlining), recognizing the One who is preserver, protector, unifier of all things,⁷ the creation praises him,⁸ it becomes a perpetual epiclesis, a chart of joy in an eucharistic celebration of a cosmic liturgy.

For Dionysius, the Procession, implies Return, because for him, like for Origen, the beginning and the end are one.⁹

If the return of all things,¹⁰ is to be understood as a restoration of all things, then, it refers to the totality of creation, it embraces all the events of the History and their continuation in Eschaton, therefore, it includes the Resurrection of the dead, the Parousia; in this sense, the return is a kinship idea with that of Recapitulation.¹¹

For Dionysius, in respect to the return of creation, God is the call: "come back."¹² But it is obvious throughout all his works that, as Paul Evdokimov would say, "one can never invent God, for one can never go toward God if one does not start from God."

2.2.4. *Togetherness and salvation*

¹ D. Rutledge, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

² *EH*, p. 235.

³ J. Vanneste, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ R. Roques, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

⁶ *DN*, p. 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹ Origen, *On First Principles*, Ed. by G.W. Butterworth, Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith, 1973, p. 53.

¹⁰ *DN*, p. 75.

¹¹ Irenaeus of Lyon, *Contre les Hérésies* I, 2, ch 10, 1, Ed. critique par A. Rousseau et L. Doutreleau, Ed. du Cerf, "Sources Chrétiennes", Paris, 1979, p. 157, and tom III, ch. 11,8; 16,6; 21,9; 21,10, Ed. critique par F. Sagnard, Ed. du Cerf, "Sources Chrétiennes", Paris, 1952, pp. 203, 293, 371.

¹² *DN*, p. 51.

The theme of togetherness of all things here, is in relation with that of unity of creation presented above. Although the idea in principle is common, there it was presented in protological perspective whereas here, it is developed in eschatological perspective.

Dionysius teaches that in God all things hold together, in him all is perceived and preserved.¹ "Each being looks at its source as the *agent of cohesion* (my underlining) and as an objective." Again, the Good is beginning and end; in it, "all things hold together and are maintained and preserved as if in some almighty receptacle."²

The togetherness of things is a key idea in Dionysius' cosmology. But he never forgets to explain that the togetherness is in God and accomplished by God. God holds things together because God sees them all and fills them with himself although he transcends everything.³ The same idea was developed by St. Gregory of Nyssa⁴ who wrote also that God as Theos sees all things everywhere, penetrates all, that is why we call him Theos, Seer of what is to be seen.⁵ The return viewed this way in Dionysian works, actually equals salvation. What he says about salvation is not foreign to what he says about return. Salvation is, Dionysius writes, the preservation of all things in their proper places without change, conflict or collapse toward evil, to keep them in "peaceful and untroubled obedience to their proper laws," it is to keep the proportion of everything in things and among them, not to turn anything into conflict or disorder or in its opposite.⁶

It would seem that here salvation has a static dimension but Dionysius teaches that this cosmic harmony of which he speaks here is related to the idea of growth,⁷ of completion. "The nature of every thing in creation preserves what is due for that thing and what is necessary for it to attain its *completion*" (my underlining).⁸

One can see that the cosmology of Dionysius does not refer only to the origin of things and their destiny in Time as they go toward their final accomplishment in Eschaton, but he speaks as well about the inner structure of Things, about their interrelatedness and the laws that keep them in harmony. According to Dionysius, in every thing exist intrinsically the existential laws that lead them naturally to

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴ See the note nr. 4.

⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, "Answer to Eunomius' Second Book", in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, V, transl. preface, Prolegomena and explanatory notes under the editorial supervision of Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Eerdmann Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Reprinted ed. 1988, p. 309.

⁶ *DN*, p. 114.

⁷ *Ep.* 9, p. 288.

⁸ J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

completion, to the final unity in God, to salvation. But, in the case of human beings, these inner laws are to be obeyed, applied actively in life and in this sense, again, salvation has a dynamic character, not a static one. Also, it can be said that in Dionysius' thought, salvation is a preocean and a goal as well.

2.3. *Eschatology*

All the subchapters in this part of the paper, in the framework of Eschatology, are related to the concept of union with God as the third stage of the spiritual ascent. Although they still may refer partially to the process, nevertheless, they refer in principle to the goal. Some of the ideas of this part were already presented above but whereas, there they were treated in a protological or soteriological sense, here they have in view the final goal of creation, Theosis.

2.3.1. *Participation*

Gregory of Nyssa taught about the kinship (parenté) of things.¹ Continuing this idea in his teaching, Dionysius writes that all beings are deiform, that is why their participation in God is a natural necessity to them. Like salvation, the participation is a process and a goal at the same time. As a process, it leads to deification, but as a goal, it is deification. At that point the deiformity will be at its full although, this fullness will be in function of the capacity of subject's receptivity.²

As Pre-existent, as Cause of time and eternity and of all beings, God opens himself to participation by all creation. Dionysius even has the bold affirmation that "none among beings falls away"³ from this participation. There are different levels of participation, according to the hierarchical order of creation. Of course, the first and most diverse participation in Deity is that of the angels.⁴ Then, the intelligent beings participate in God in many ways and even the lower levels of existence, things without life, participate in Him because He is the existence of everything.⁵

Participation is a synergy. For example, knowledge of God is a participatory experience but this experience is not to be understood without the help of the divine energies.⁶ Christos Yannaras reads in Dionysius that the Incarnation, the theandric person of Jesus Christ in the supreme foundation for the deifying participation.⁷ This experience takes place in the Church as Christ's body where, with his nature regenerated by the communion with Christ, man becomes capable

¹ R. Leys, *L'Image de Dieu chez St. Grégoire de Nysse*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1951, p. 47.

² R. Roques, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

³ *DN*, p. 99.

Here he does not explain about the fallen angels and their possibility or impossibility of participation.

⁴ *CH*, pp. 156-157.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Ch. Yannaras, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

"de réfléchir la lumière."¹ Participation in the remedy of sin, of the broken relationship.²

2.3.2. *Perichoresis*

By participation in Beauty, all things are in harmony with each other, in interrelationship of love. This interrelationship does not eliminate the identity of each of them.³ This is perichoresis: unity in diversity, communion without confusion; confusion; not egalitarian, uniforming, depersonalizing collectivism but rich share in distinctiveness. Dionysius writes that God penetrates unhindered in and through all things, energizing them.⁴ This is perichoresis related to God. But there is one related to creatures and this is possible only through their participation in God. In fact, nothing could exist without a share in the being and in the Source of everything, teaches the Areopagite.⁵ Perichoresis as the deepest possible form of relation when, to use Vl. Lossky's expression, "Tout est immanent à tout," supposes the connaturality of things, it supposes leur "parenté": "Le monde ne peut subsister dans l'ordre et dans la beauté que par une certaine parenté de ses éléments."⁶

2.3.3. *Unity in diversity*

This is already a part of the perichoretical relation between things. It speaks about the inner togetherness of every thing of which D. Bonhoeffer liked to speak also, about the communitarian ontologic dimension of every creature.

Dionysius emphasizes the intrinsic unity of every thing which is due, he says, to the peace, because "everything loves to be at peace with itself. This inward peace of things preserves the unity of each thing from any confusion or separation within themselves or from one another."⁷ The peace not only maintains

¹ *Ibidem*.

² I quote again the WCC document *Towards an Ecumenical...* in order to once again stress the value of Dionysius' theology as an appropriate answer for the needs of our day: "We need a new concept that provides healing of relationship between human beings, between cultures, and between humanity and all creation...We need to begin by understanding ourselves as a part of the wholeness of God's creation" (Part I, 82, p. 18). And also: "Creation is not simply an initial act of God the Creator, but the liberating place of God's presence and ongoing activity, providing, sustaining, and protecting life. We are called to participate responsibly in this ongoing divine activity" (Part I, 71, p. 16).

"Further, the integrity of creation implies that *every creature is related to every other creature* (m.u.) as part of one interdependent community. It is particularly important for human beings to learn this truth, for we have thought of ourselves as apart, above, separate from the rest of the creation. But we are part of the totality, sharing with the other parts of the creation a common dependence on the Creator. Nor are we strangers to the material world; we too are 'flesh' (Is. 40:11); we too receive our life, daily, at the hands of our Maker (Ps. 104:29-30)", (Part I, 85, p. 19).

³ *DH*, p. 77.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

⁵ *CH*, p. 156.

⁶ R. Roques, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁷ *DN*, p. 123.

maintains the inner unity of each thing but produces the harmony, the communion, the agreement of all things and returns them to the total unity.¹ This peace which grants identity to the elements through the qualities they have,² and keeps them *inseparably* (my underlining) together, with no confusion, is divine power.³ Following Plato and Origen,⁴ Dionysius the Areopagite holds that the exemplars of everything pre-exist as a transcendent unity in God.⁵ This idea is consistent with all his understanding of God as a Source or Cause. The unity in diversity is the harmony of creation and this is due to the manifestation of the divinity itself in every nature.⁶

2.3.4. *Theosis*

The deification of creation in Dionysius' theology is bound to the sacramental life in the church. This is the sacrament or sacraments that bring about the purification, the illumination and the perfection.⁷ The Eucharist especially is the sacrament of union, it dignifies human being and in that, the whole creation. In that, man leads the entire creation to spiritualization stage in which it will be resumed into the spirit.⁸

It seems that using so many expressions like "all things", "everything", "all creation", Dionysius would hold the concept of *Apokatastasis* of Origen, in the sense of a final restoration of the total creation, even of the evil angels.

R. Roques says that Dionysius does not hold this doctrine except for the fact that he uses two times the word *Apokatastasis* but in a pure cosmological sense (in DN 6976 and 892 d).⁹

However, even if Dionysius does not use this doctrine in Origen's complete meaning, there are enough reasons to consider that the Areopagite held it. He did not explain much on that in a special way as Origen did, but even when he uses the word *Apokatastasis* in a cosmological sense, this implies precisely the whole creation and in that, it is a reason to consider that this doctrine was not foreign, nor even marginal in Dionysius' thought.

It is clear that the perspective of deification, through sacramental participation,¹⁰ and especially through Eucharist,¹¹ in the divine life, is for the

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 121, 123.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 122.

⁴ Origen taught that the creation ever existed in God's mind in form and outline and there was never a time when the prefiguration of those things did not exist in God (*On First Principles...*, p. 42).

⁵ *DH*, p. 102.

⁶ J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁷ *EH*, p. 248; also *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité...*, col. 279.

⁸ D. Rutledge, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁹ *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité...*, col. 251.

¹⁰ *EH*, p. 217.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 209.

whole of creation and it was shown that creation, in Dionysius' thinking, encompasses both visible and invisible world. He believes that man is indeed divine¹ and has the *right* (my underlining) to commune the divine realities.²

The deification is also a process and a goal. As a process, it is facilitated by the hierarchical orders; this is the aim of hierarchies: to help for deification, for the assimilation in God. It is understood that first, in the process of deification, are those made godlike³ and then, through them the whole creation. Ultimately, theosis is founded on the power of God⁴ and his generous self-giving⁵ out of love for the whole creation.

2.3.5. *The Mystery*

All things that so far have been presented here as a kataphatic approach to God, in their final development, according to Dionysius, turn into apophasis. All things in creation long, tend toward unity in God. If the first two stages of the spiritual ascent imply some accumulations, like of knowledge for instance, the unity as the third stage implies total detachment. Detachment of any knowledge, abandonment of being, going away from everything, ek-stasis. This is the culmination, the realization of mystical unity, through ek-stasis, when one enters the darkness of unknowing.⁶ This divine darkness which is actually the unapproachable light⁷ is equivalent with an "inebriation" in God. Dionysius, in his his apophatic theology, speaks also about God's "inebriation" or "drunkenness" in the sense of the total transcendence of any possible understanding. "God is beyond being itself. As 'drunk', God stays outside of all good things, being the superfullness of all these things."⁸

In its ultimate reality, for Dionysius every thing is a mystery; man⁹ as well as as all creation. Einstein understood that when he said that the most incomprehensible thing in the world is that the world should be comprehensible. Also, any relation between things and between creation and God is mystery; everything is a silent but clear witness of "l'infinie transcendance de l'absolue

¹ For the divinity of man, but from a different perspective, see N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, Victor Gallanz Ltd., London, 1955, p. 146.

² J. Vanneste, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³ *DN*, p. 112.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁶ *Ep* 1, p. 263 and J. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁷ *Ep* 5, p. 265.

⁸ *Ep* 9, p. 287.

⁹ Man cannot know himself; this is evident also in Theophilus of Antioch's answer given to an atheist: "Montre-moi ton homme et je te montrerai mon Dieu"!

Incognoscibilité."¹

3. Conclusions

For Dionysius, the world is a theurgy; therefore, the world belongs to God. The cosmos in its reality is a hierarchic and triadic order. This order is a sacred one. Its essential function is of mediation for deification. The whole creation reveals God although God cannot be seen.² The universe as theophany and place of God's manifestations, silently and mystically speaks of the divine majesty, sovereignty and glory and by its very existence is a praise of God. All divine attributes: Cause, Source, One, Beauty, Good, Power, Love, Measure, etc. are related to creation.

It is in relation to cosmology that he develops his doctrine of God. In doing so, he does not marginalize or neglect the biblical revelation; this is visible in the abundance of his scriptural references. However, it can be said that Dionysius' way of developing his theology and cosmology lets us hear what the world has to say about God. One of the emphasis of his cosmology is related to the Cause and the way in which the Creator is present in creation. Sometimes, there may be noticed contradictions or seemed contradictions in his thought and as well antiquities or dualisms. In fact, most of the time, these all constitute precisely the dynamic and the dialectic of his apophatism. For instance, when at one time, he says that God is Light, Good, Beauty and at another time, that God is not these things but their Source, (a fact which seems to be a contradiction or at least, a dualistic way of thinking), actually he is using the kataphatic and the apophatic way together, in the making of a mystical theology.

The reason for which sometimes, apparently he speaks separately of God as Being, Cause, Source, Beauty, etc. is not because he would let it be understood that there are separations and divisions in the Deity but it can appear so because of the method he uses to structure his books, especially *The Divine Names*.

He even specifies, to avoid any misinterpretation, that what he affirms about a name is also valid for the other names and all affirmations together are applied to the same one and eternal God.

Dionysius the Areopagite presents to the world a dignifying understanding of creation, a doctrine in which human beings, history and the universe have value. This makes his cosmology and theology be valuable and contemporary to use. The way it is conceived and developed, his teaching is an encouragement and an answer to the search of our people today to find and build a new type of relationship, to reinvent the communion, to find man's right position *coram mundo* and *coram Deo*, as it is significantly illustrated in the recent WCC

¹ J. Vanneste, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

² R. Roques, "Preface" to *Pseudo-Dionysius; The Complete Works...*, p. 6.

document on the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation: "Creation has a value of its own. Humanity and the rest of the creation need a new and redressed relationship...The integrity of creation reaffirms the biblical and credal truth that 'all things', whether visible and invisible, have God for their Maker. This not only implies the entire dependence of the creation upon its Creator, but also connotes something about the worth and dignity of the creation itself, whose life is thus sustained and held dear by God to whom it belongs."¹

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¹ *Towards an Ecumenical...*, Part I, 51, pl. 12 and also Part 1, 84, pp. 18-19.