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UNITY IN DIVERSITY – ANTI-ORIGENISTIC EVIDENCE IN THE *CORPUS AREOPAGITICUM*

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Abstract

Corpus Dionysiacum's allegiance to the Origenist camp is a new research track in the unceasing effort of the scholars to discover its mysterious author. This approach has already provoked a heated debate between its supporters and appellants, each party claiming to possess indisputable evidence on its side. Unfortunately, this is nothing unusual in our times to see *Corpus Dionysiacum* associated with the non-Christian philosophy or with heresies, although the Fathers of the Church have reiterated constantly the Orthodoxy of these pieces of writings. For a long time ago (since the Reformation) it has been suggested that ‘Dionysius the Areopagite’ is a pseudonym used with obscure aims to deceive the uninformed readers, through an apostolic authority. The author was suspected of either covering elements from the Neoplatonic Tradition in his *Corpus* or of promoting a non-Chalcedonian Christology. The present article evaluates the divine name of ‘peace’ as convincing evidence for the Christian view of the *Corpus*, a quasi-anti-Origenist attitude, to call it so.

Keywords: apokatastasis; deification, Evagrius; identity; Neoplatonism; Origenistic controversy;

1. INTRODUCTION

This article includes a succession of arguments for an anti-Origenist reading of the divine name ‘peace’ mentioned in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, a theme which at the first sight could have provided the ground for the dissemination of the Origenist theories – such as the depersonalizing union with God, the ontological equality of the human beings with Christ in the afterlife and the doctrine of apokatastasis – common ideas at a time when this set of writings, known also as *Areopagitica*, came to light (5th century). Deeply rooted in Origen’s allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, in the Greek philosophy, wherefrom the Alexandrian exegete nourished some of his theological opinions, and in the *Chaldean Oracles*, these heretical ideas gained final form and meaning at the disciples of Avva Evagrius Ponticus (345–399 AD) and their followers, and troubled the Church from the dawn of the 5th until the middle of the 6th century, being condemned in two distinct steps, initially by a council from Alexandria (400 AD) and then, fully and definitively, by one from Constantinople (543AD).



2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Charges of Origenism on the *Corpus Dionysiacum* are of recent date although the philosophical appetite of its author could have raised the suspicions of the scholars much earlier. Apart from the common charges of a Neoplatonised Christianity, stated since the Reformation, the first who expressed a hypothesis on a heterodox tendency in the *Dionysian* works, other than monophysitism, was David B. Evans who advanced the idea that “[the Dionysian] Christology is not conventionally orthodox at all but to the contrary manifestly related to such heretical doctrine as that of the Origenist monk Evagrius of Pontus: the identity of Jesus Christ lies not in the Son or Word of God but in an essentially created *nous*.” (Evans, 1980) In Evans’s opinion, Leontius of Byzantium would have known the author of *Corpus Dionysiacum* and purposely counterattacked his accusations present in the *Corpus Dionysiacum* regarding Leontius’s own (controversial) Christology (Daley, 2017, pp. 163-177).

Over a decade since Evans’ note, Hieromonk Alexander Golitzin, stressing the origin of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in a Christian milieu, highlighted its indebtedness to the Origenist tradition, “especially Evagrius’ elaboration and sharpening of Origen’s general vision of the creation as providential” (Golitzin, 1994, p. 345) which may characterize his style as a “Neoplatonized Origenism”. It is not an Origenism in the sense of the Origenist controversy mentioned by Evans, but in the line of a dialogical tradition between Christianity and the Platonic philosophy, begun in Alexandria and later refined by the Cappadocian Fathers. This does not exclude from the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* “an intimate knowledge of both Evagrius and the Evagrian current (as well as a certain amount of sympathy for them)” (Golitzin, 1994, p. 341) occasioned by his acquaintance with the monastic-ascetic tradition of Syria-Palestine at the end of the fifth century.

Further remarks on the implications of *Corpus Dionysiacum* in the Origenist controversy, as a witness of its central themes, were expressed at the beginning of the 2000s by Isván Perczel (Perczel, 1999A, 1999B, 2000, 2001A, 2001B, 2004, 2008) and Emiliano Fiori. (Fiori, 2010, 2011; Pinggéra, 2008) Situated on opposite sides, the expert scholars, both on the base of the Syriac translation of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* by Sergius of Reshaina (d. 536) – the oldest extant manuscript of *Areopagitica* – tried to prove its subtle Origenist creed (Perczel) or, on the contrary, its anti-Origenist attitude (Fiori). While the Italian scholar conditioned the end of the debate by the time of the publication of a critical edition of the Syriac text (Fiori, 2014), the Hungarian one postponed his answer to the refutation made by Fiori for a later time (Perczel, 2020, p. 274).

At this stage of the debate, any contribution is welcomed, as long as it is based on the text analysis and not on a preconceived opinion. The present article points out the significance of the ‘peace’ notion (divine name) in *Corpus Dionysiacum* compared to its possible Origenist understanding.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1. In What Way Does the *Corpus Dionysiacum* Use the Philosophical Notion of ‘Peace’?

Firstly, the present research starts contextualizing the significance of the term ‘peace’ in its religious, philosophical, and esoteric background. With deep roots in Judaism and Christianity, this notion was also used in Greek literature and philosophy, as well as in the *Chaldean Oracles*.

In *Tanakh*, ‘shalom’ (שָׁלוֹם, ‘peace’) denotes completion, the achievement of a state of wholeness, the blessing promised with benevolence by God to the people of Israel as a reward for loyalty (Numbers 6: 24). In *Psalms*, it is related to the observation of the Law: “Great peace have those who love Your law; nothing can make them stumble.” (Ps. 119: 166). It also means the restoration of a relationship, the recovery of unity. With almost 250 occurrences in 213 different verses, the notion of ‘peace’ covers a large range of nuances, from the basic, political ones: security, agreement, to the more personal and spiritual ones: success, prosperity, well-being, welfare, friendship, harmony, tranquillity, fulfillment, completion, maturity, soundness, wholeness.

The use of ‘εἰρήνη’ (peace) in the *New Testament* remains firmly based in the Hebrew traditions. It can describe both the message and the aim of the Church since the content of Apostles’ kerygma is synonym with the Gospel of Peace (Ephesians 6:15). There are 91 occurrences, of which almost a quarter (24) can be found in the Gospels. Saint Apostle Paul names God frequently with this specific attribute (1

Corinthians 14:33; Romans 15:33; Hebrews 13:20) in line with Jesus Christ's words: "My peace I give you" (John 14: 27). Thus, we can distinguish two types of 'peace': one of the world and one of the divine (John 16:33). This latter is an essential characteristic of the Kingdom of heaven, synonym with redemption (Ephesians 2:17).

Poorly represented in Ancient Greece, the notion of 'peace' is used more with its denotative sense, in contrast with its antonym, 'war'. Greek efforts to achieve peace by avoiding endemic inter-communal war and overcoming civil strife (*stasis*) must be understood "in the context of a long-standing discourse on the peace that we can trace from the early epic poets through the tragic and comic poets and the historians of the fifth century [B.C.]" (Raaflaub, 2016, p. 126) Homer and Thucydides highlight the contrasting poles of peace and war from a poetical and historical point of view, whereas the Greek playwright Aristophanes names with this name, *Ειρήνη* (*Peace*), an entire play, produced just a few days before the end of the Peloponnesian War (421 B.C.). The philosopher Plato, in his work *Nomoi* (*Laws*), enunciates the view that the establishment of peace and friendship constitutes the highest duty of both the citizen and the legislator, and in the work *Symposium*, articulates the idea that it is love which brings peace among individuals. For him "the social peace within the State and the fight against tyranny ... can be realized by harmonizing the life of the State to the idea of 'community' used as a model. We have a community when different parts – but compatible with each other – make a single unity. This principle of order reflects a model of universal natural right that sets the soul, the State, the nature, and the supernatural in a single proportional geometrical law." (Mino, 2016, p. 161) A similar atmosphere will be suggested over time, in an ecclesiastical and spiritual context, by the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, with his conception of hierarchical order and conformity of the existences with their natural law.

The Neoplatonists, in their turn, place 'peace' in the 'psychic triad', alongside wisdom and power (Schäfer, 2006, p. 44) enriching it with a more profound sense. Although the idea of 'peace' as silence is not missing from the *Chaldean Oracles* (a 2nd century AD central source of inspiration of the Neoplatonists) – i.e. fragment 16: "in the god-nourishing silence of the Fathers" (Majercik, 1989, p 55) – the development of this theme began with Plato's commentators, especially Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius. Plotinus uses the platonic expression "ἡσυχίαν ἄγει" (cf. *Tim.*, 30a 5; *Parm.*, 162e 2) to describe the divine intellect – quiet in itself, impassible to what is exterior to it – and the state of the soul united with its unitive principle, no longer seeking anything outside of it (cf. *Enneads*, III, 8, 6.12; V, 3, 12.35) (Vlad, 2018, 135, note 485). Proclus, also, writing about the Divine "Calm," the "Silence, Nurturer of the Divine" (Cory, 1832, p. 242), in all probability had the *Chaldean Oracles* in mind. The "Paternal Silence" he mentions requires from the part of the philosopher a similar quietness. In his view, amplified later by Damascius (Vlad, 2015), the unsurpassable unity of the Father requests silence where words fail. The mind must be silenced to know it – that is, to "accord with" it (Mead, 1994).

A similar but not identical understanding may be found in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. The notion of 'peace' is well outlined here. The author seems to follow more philosophical than a biblical way of argumentation, which denotes his familiarity with Platonism. It could be Neoplatonism, too, or a Christian tradition, going back to Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius of Pontus, or both cases. There are a total of no less than fifty occurrences from the semantic field of this term with a large palette of nuances, from the 'divine peace' as providential support of the existences, producing, conserving, and sustaining them, to the circular (in conformity with their nature) and spiral (ascendent) way back to God.

'The principle of peace' (εἰρηναρχία) or 'the peace itself' (αὐτοειρήνη) is 'the divine peace' (θείαν εἰρήνην) in its relation with the finite existences, as power or energy. Although in its transcendence it remains inexhaustible (infinite), through its divine will, it brings in existence, providences, and communicates peace to any being. 'Partaking the divine peace' (Τῆ μετοχῆ τῆς θείας εἰρήνης), the existences achieve completeness (ἡ παντελῆς εἰρήνη), a process which implies an inner seating: their conformity with the ontological seeds planted inside them. Thus, in a peaceful state, existences can reach *synaxis*, the peace between them (πρὸς ἑαυτὰ εἰρηνεύοντα), a synonym word for liturgy in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Besides, Christ's peace-giving love for human beings (τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν εἰρηνοχότου φιλανθρωπίας), central in *Areopagitica*, finds its concrete form in Eucharist, the meeting point between God's descent and rational beings' hymns of peace (ὕμνοις εἰρηναίοις).

As seen, in the economy of the dionysian hierarchical system, 'peace' plays an important role. It is not only the aim the members of the hierarchy can reach following the Good, but the divine energy

itself or the providential expression of the divine principle, which assures the integrity of each element, preventing their ontological confusion during the qualitative progress or regress. Similar to the name 'good', 'peace' is the uncreated divine weft in which all the determining essences of the existences are harmoniously interwoven.

3.2. How an Origenist Understanding of the Term 'Peace' (DN XI) Affects the Overall Reading of *Corpus Dionysiicum*?

Secondly, the question that arises is that if an Origenist reading of the term 'peace' could be sustained by the general framework of *Corpus Dionysiicum*.

Yet an undeciphered mystery, the Origenist problem received multiple solutions. One of them sees in the Origenist side, "a faction of Chalcedonian monks, centered in Palestine that followed an esoteric understanding of Christology, based on the writings of Origen (d. 254-4 C.E.), Didymus the Blind (d. 398 CE), and particularly Evagrius (d. 399 C.E.), as well as Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus." (Treiger, 2016, p. 53) This Nestorian party recognized *two subjects* in Jesus Christ, one of the divine nature (the Logos), the other of the human nature (Christ), the latter being assimilated as an intellect along with the other intellects (angels, human beings, and demons) all together forming initially a single "unity" (*henad*), before the fall from the unity with the Logos. In this understanding, Salvation would imply a triadic perspective, being addressed to the three degrees of rational existences, Christ (the only intellect who avoided the fall) acting in each level as one of them with the final goal of "restoring" (*apokatastasis*) everyone in the original henadic state. The other hypothesis exempts the Origenists from the Nestorian Christology, preserving only their interest in interpreting Christianity in dialog with philosophy, perceived as an instrument of knowledge.

Regardless of the path chosen in decoding the Origenistic controversy, a common idea gets central: Evagrius and his predecessors were Origenians, more than Origenists; radical Origenists such as Stephen Bar Sudhaili were the real target of the pronounced anathemas by emperor Justinian I. Although problematic in its expression, the cosmology and soteriology of the Origenians were of a different kind than the Manichean dualism and the dualism of the Ancient philosophy (which considered matter as a source of evil). Moreover, the "reading of Origenian thought through the lens of the radicalized, and distorted Origenism – as though Evagrius's ideas, like Origen's and Didymus's, were those of the Origenists condemned under Justinian – also explains the loss of many of his works in Greek, even though Evagrius, like Origen and Didymus, was perfectly 'orthodox' in Trinitarian matters, as is clear from his Letter on Faith as well as in his other works, including the *Kephalaia Gnostika*." (Ramelli, 2015, p. XXV)

With these general remarks on the Origenistic controversy, we may consider the question above in its real context. The notion of 'peace' as *apokatastasis* would mean that *Corpus Dionysiicum* should sustain the restoration of all the intelligences in an original *henadic* state and the cancellation of any punishment. It would also mean that after this restoration Christ should be perceived as an equal to all rational beings and that all the differences between the rational beings (intellects) – regarding identity, name, and nature – would disappear in an impersonal dissolution.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Although difficult to be defined from lack of systematic works preserved until us, the Origenist creed can be deduced from the fifteen anathemas expressed against it. (Bruns & Price, 2015, pp. 452-455) From this perspective, I intend to underline the fact that the *Corpus Dionysiicum* sustains a precise anti-Origenist theology. This position is tenable and can be proved in an analysis of the term 'peace', a delicate point concerning eschatology and the union with God. *Areopagitica* affirms regarding 'peace' the non-confusing unity of the rational beings in harmony with each other and the unaltered preservation of their identity, name, and nature. These considerations and many others are strong evidence against the idea of general 'restoration' (*apokatastasis*), although a common belief for both Origenians and Origenists.

5. RESEARCH METHODS

In recent times, *Corpus Dionysiacum* was the target of many charges about its possible linkages with the Origenistic controversy. To argue such opinion scholars made references to the first translation of *Areopagitica* available in Syriac language, considering its greater antiquity than the Greek extant text. This is a tremendously difficult way to construct an argumentation since it is a fact that any translator is a greater or lesser traitor.

Taking into account that before the Reformation, there was a general agreement on the normativity and Orthodoxy of the *Corpus* – a favorable consensus achieved on the evaluation of its content more than of its apostolic authorship – I considered more indicated to make a content analysis study on the original Greek text. This method along with the theological one can bring new clarifications to the non-Origenistic formation of the author of *Areopagitica*.

The case study of *Divine Names*, chapter XI, helps us recognize the inheritance of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* to the Origenian tradition but interpreted on Cappadocian bases, a characteristic which brings the theology of the *Corpus* closer to the balanced one of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. From the first, it took the trinitarian theology, while from the second the apophatic ascent of the souls on different qualitative levels.

6. FINDINGS

Three Reasons Why *Corpus Dionysiacum* Is an Anti-Origenistic Text

6.1. Oneness of Mind vs Henadic Union

The second anathema from 553 A.D. states clearly: “If anyone shall say that the creation (τῆν παραγωγήν) of all reasonable things includes only intelligences (νόας) without bodies and altogether immaterial, having neither number nor name, so that there is unity between them all by identity of substance, force and energy, and by their union with and knowledge of God the Word ... let him be anathema.” (Bruns & Price, 2009, p. 281) It resumes the first two anathemas (Bruns & Price, 2009, p. 284) pronounced ten years before against similar cosmological issues. These reiterated condemnations were aiming to remove a pre-Christian exegesis of the current state of the (fallen) world.

Cosmology has represented a difficult yet exciting task since Ancient times. Following Plato, Origen considered the universe of rational beings as anterior to the material world, its preexistence being reasoned on its qualitative superiority. Almost an axiom, the preeminence of the spiritual world over the material one is inherited from the dualist philosophy of the pre-Christian Antiquity (which localized the source of evil in the matter). In contrast to the pessimistic opinion of the ancients regarding materiality, Christian theologians suggested a different cosmological perspective, which valued matter by assigning it a providential function. It was an adaptation of the old way of seeing cosmology, to the Revelation of the Old Testament. As Origen and later Evagrius put the problem, matter and bodies must not be considered the results of some fall of the spiritual beings from the contemplation of the divine beatitude, but part of the ‘primordial’ creation and a shock absorber of the effects produced by our ancestors’ original sin. In other words, even if matter initially was more transparent (to human beings) than in its post-Edenic state – as that a Christian speech could (still) mention the idea of an ‘embodiment of the fallen souls’ – this was understood already as its transition from an illuminated state to one of obscurity.

Corpus Dionysiacum, whose ‘publication’ is contemporary to this context, approaches the theme in an ecclesial and eschatological framework. In *Divine names*, chapter XI, discussing ‘peace’ as a name of glorifying God, its author shifts the perspective from the cosmological to the mystical plane: “With reverent hymns of peace, we should now sing the praises of God’s peace, for it is this which brings all things together. This is what unites everything, begetting and producing the harmonies and the agreement of all things. All things, therefore, long for it, and the manifold and the divided are returned by it into total unity.” (DN XI, 1; PG 3 948D; SBR 217)

It would seem that we have before our eyes exactly the old theme of the unifying-restore process of all intellects in an impersonal henad, with the exception that here the author refers to ‘all things’, not to all the rational beings. A few lines below, a new striking passage seems to allude to the same Origenistic view. “From this [one simple nature of that peaceful unity] comes the fact that the divine intelligences are at one with the workings and the objects of their intelligent activities, and they rise up to meet with what

is beyond knowledge and mind. So too with souls. They bring together their various powers of reasoning and they concentrate them in one act of pure intelligence.” (DN XI, 2; PG 3 949C-D; SBR 218-219)

In short, this passage seems to present the (Origenistic) unifying process of angels [“divine intelligences”] and souls in a henadic mind (“in one ... pure intelligence”). However, as we shall see, this is not the case. *Areopagitica* indeed talks about spiritual beings, but not in a cosmological view, but from a mystical perspective. Thus, what the author wants to transmit is the unifying process of the divine (energy of) peace which synergically rises rational beings to an altruistic stature, a loving ecstatic state towards God, and the other categories of existence. This unity does not imply confusion or loss of individuality as in the Origenistic ‘creed’, but on the contrary: “[Perfect Peace providentially ensures] that all things are quiet and free of confusion within themselves and from without, that all things are unshakably what they are and that they have peace and rest.” (DN XI, 3; PG 3 952C; SBR 220).

One could question if this “peace and rest” is not an allusive way to the core of the Origenistic doctrine – *apokatastasis*, the restoration of all fallen intellects into the original henadic harmony. As already seen this probability is little, but I shall prove it further in detail.

6.2. Divine Providence vs Apokatastasis

‘Apokatastasis’ is a dear theme to the Fathers of the Church if we can put it so. They pray for the redemption of the entire creation and weep so God to overflow His mercy even on the demons. From theologians to saints (Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Avva Evagrius of Pontus, and Isaac of Niniveh), apokatastasis is a leitmotif, although not easily understood. It can be said at a superficial analysis that the Christian view on this theme is similar to the Origenistic one – condemned in the first and the fifteenth anathemas (Constantinople, 543 A.D., 553 A.D., respectively), but one important exception should be highlighted. To make it clearer, let’s adduce here a saying from *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Asked one day by a demon who are the goats and the sheep mentioned by Christ in the Gospel, an elder answered concisely: “The goats – it is I; God knows who the sheep are.” (Wortley, 2012, pp. 267-268)

This is, comparatively, the belief of the author who wrote *Corpus Dionysiicum*, too. In his opinion, evil is an accident, a wrong direction chosen by rational beings to achieve completeness and peace. “For everything loves to be at peace with itself, to be at one, and never to move or fall away from its own existence and from what it has.” (DN XI, 3; PG 3 952B; SBR 220). Acting contrary to their original (essential, best) aim willed by God, these existences would invariably head towards non-existence, which would mean the lack of Divine Providence on one hand and the incompleteness of their freedom will on the other. If God would tolerate such an ending for His creation, this would question His love, omnipotence, and the creation of the rational beings ‘in the icon of God’ (personal and for eternal life). A similar lack could be invoked about God, as unjust (as one who does not do justice) and disrespectful to human will. As can be seen, neither of these charges emerge from *Areopagitica*. The author of the *Corpus Dionysiicum* has a well-balanced discourse on this issue. Revealing just a few extracts from the *Divine Names*, chapter XI, “Concerning peace...”, it can be successfully proved that the Divine Providence of the author can not be assimilated with the Origenistic apokatastasis. Not only does the author affirm the preservation and the sustaining progress of each creature in its willed (good or bad) state, but he also rejects any absence of God’s presence and power. This latter statement must be understood as God’s never-failing love for His creation, regardless of its receptivity. In this respect, apokatastasis becomes useless or an act of violation of human freedom.

“God is the subsistence of absolute peace, of peace in general, and of instances of peace. He brings everything together into a unity without confusion, into an undivided communion where each thing continues to exhibit its own specific form and is in no way adulterated through association with its opposite, nor is anything of the unifying precision and purity dulled.”

“This Cause reaches out in its unsundered unity to everything, nailing down, as it were, the severed parts, giving to all things their definitions, their limits, and their guarantee, allowing nothing to be pulled apart or scattered in some endlessly disordered chaos away from God’s presence, away from their own unity and in some total jumbled confusion.” (DN XI, 2; PG 3 949C; SBR 218)

Unlike the apokatastasis professed by the Origenists, the Divine Providence of *Areopagitica* is presented as the direct action of God Who acts for the good of the creation without hindering its freedom. “If all moving things wish never to be at rest but aim always for their own appropriate movement, this too is because of a wish for that divine Peace of the universe which keeps everything firmly in its own place and which ensures that the individuality and the stirring life of all moving things are kept safe from

removal and destruction. This happens as a result of the inward peace which causes the things in a movement to engage in the activity proper to themselves.” (DN XI, 4; PG 952C-D; SBR 220)

In the support of these affirmations, the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* brings forward “the loving-kindness of Christ”, the peak and the guarantee of the Divine Providence, the third evidence of his anti- or, at least, non-Origenistic theology.

6.3. Jesus Christ – Providence Itself vs Christ-Intellect of the Origenists

Soteriology of *Areopagitica* was criticized as decorative by a part of the scholars convinced that Dionysius ‘the Areopagite’ intended, with his extant and lost treatise, to sell us a well-thought forgery. It was suggested that the Christology, the Cross, and Trinity are not so bold in the theology of this mysterious author. Despite these statements, most of them dimmed over time, it can not be denied the non-Origenistic profile of Christ, as stylized as it may seem, in these writings.

The anti-Origenistic anathemas inform us indirectly of a philosophical debate on Christological issues. Most of the anathemas condemned teachings that were professing a mixture of heretical doctrines already rejected by the Church, such as that of Apolinarius, Arius, Nestorius, and the monophysites. But there were still many others, of philosophical origin, which permeated the consciences of some Christians for their esoterical and abyssal exegesis of the Bible. One of these philosophical themes was that which sustained the division in the person of the Son of God (Logos) incarnated in two distinct entities, professing that Christ is one of us (angels, human beings, and angels) who never fell from the unity with the Logos, so that He assumed the process of restoration of all the rational (spiritual) existences, in a threefold activity: embodiment/incarnation - soteriology - and restoration/apokatastasis. This was, in other words, the better-known philosophy of Plato in a Christian adapted form for the need of the dialog between the Church and the Hellenic world on philosophical grounds. Origen as a pioneer promoted it, his ‘disciple’ over time Avva Evagrius led it to perfection. It is obvious that in 400 A.D., one year after his death when Evagrius's direct or indirect disciples tried to continue his philosophical theology promoting it as an alternative to the Christology already defined by the Ecumenical Councils, such an attitude had become unacceptable. It was even more ‘outdated’ over a century when Emperor Justinian the Great closed the School of Philosophy from Athens (529 A.D.) and, even, dangerous once Church’s Triadology and Christology became imperial law.

Apart from these short overview, it is of interest to see which is the Christology present in *Corpus Dionysiacum*, a set of writings from this period. As surprising as it may seem, the author of *Areopagitica* is one step ahead of this monastic-philosophical theology. Although we can still recognize from *Areopagitica* his interest in translating the Gospel in an “accessible” language for his pagan contemporaries, his theology has already been updated at the level of his time. Regarding Christology, the author made a consistent leap. Christ is no more some intellect, but the Divine Providence Itself, “ ‘who works all in all’, making that Peace which is ineffable and was foreordained from eternity, reconciling us to Himself and in Himself to the Father.” (DN XI, 5; PG 953A-B; SBR 221)

This can be proved in more detail if we take a look in the *Corpus* for the content of the *Theological Representations* where its author affirms to “have said enough about these supernatural gifts” (i.e. Soteriology, the gifts received by humanity through Jesus Christ). In *Divine Names*, chapter III, it is written as follows: “In my *Theological Representations*, I have praised the notions which are most appropriate to affirmative theology. I have shown the sense in which the divine and good nature is said to be one and then triune, how Fatherhood and Sonship are predicated of it, the meaning of the theology of the Spirit, how these core lights of goodness grew from the incorporeal and indivisible good, and how in this sprouting they have remained inseparable from their co-eternal foundation in it, in themselves, and in each other I have spoken of how Jesus, who is above individual being, became a being with a true human nature.” (MT III; PG 1032D-1033A; SBR 146)

This summary of *Theological Representations* informs us about one critical aspect regarding the Christology of *Areopagitica*. Contrary to the Origenists, the author names Jesus as “super-essential” (ὑπερούσιος) (i.e. God). The term “ὑπερούσιος”, in either its Neoplatonic use or in that of Athanasius the Great being a word used for the God. “Absent from Plotinus, the term is used by Proclus, as well as by his master, Syrianus (see, for example, the *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics* 11:21: “the super-essential one”: τὸ ὑπερούσιον ἔν). Athanasius of Alexandria, *Liber de definitionibus*, PG 28, 536.25: πάσης οὐσίας αἰτία ὑπερούσιος = God is the super-essential cause of each essence)” (Vlad, 2018, p 263, note 4).

7. CONCLUSION

As much as this article's space permitted, I have illustrated a few more pieces of evidence in the support of the anti/non-Origenistic theology of the *Areopagitica* proposing as a case study the chapter XI of *Divine Names*, especially the part concerning 'peace'. A large theme, 'peace' becomes in these writings an opportunity for hymning a doxology towards God. The author is profoundly convinced that "peace itself" or the omnipresent energy of God "is the subsistence of absolute peace, of peace in general, and of instances of peace" (*DN XI, 2; PG 949C; SBR, 218*), another expression of the Divine Providence, incarnated in divine-human person of Jesus Christ.

Such an optimistic perspective could raise some questions regarding the cosmology and soteriology of the author, who shows a 'strange' appetite for philosophy and Origenian-Evagrian theology. The idea of possible Origenistic writing comes first in mind, but this charge can easily be overcome from at least three internal arguments: a non-Origenistic unity of the rational beings with God; an Orthodox soteriology which avoids the apokatastasis; and an anti-Origenistic profile of Christ. This later proof needs further research since the author's Christology may reveal more evidence on his anti-Origenistic views.

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