

On the Significance of the Manuscript Parisinus graecus 437. The *Corpus Dionysiaca*, Iconoclasm, and Byzantine-Carolingian Relations

The donation of a manuscript containing a set of philosophically informed theological texts, the so-called *Corpus Dionysiaca*, by the Byzantine Emperor Michael II the Stammerer to the Carolingian Emperor Louis the Pious in 827 ranks among the most influential events in 9th-century intellectual history as well as in the history of medieval Latin philosophy and theology in general¹. This collection of four treatises – On the divine names, On the celestial hierarchy, On the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and On Mystical Theology² – and of ten letters was composed during the late 5th or early 6th century by an author who assumed the persona of Dionysius the Areopagite, the convert of Saint Paul, and were believed by subsequent generations to have been the actual work of Dionysius himself. The treatises transpose the Pagan Neoplatonism of Proclus into a Christian context³. In the present contribution, I would like to discuss the ideological context of this diplomatic gift offered by the Byzantines and its background in the intellectual history of the 9th century. This will show that cultural exchanges or transfers are rarely independent of the social and political context of their actors. I will first start with a summary of the events.

The context of the embassy of 827

The reign of Louis the Pious (813-840) was a time of recurrent contacts and frequent embassies between the Byzantine Empire and the Frankish Kingdom. Louis the Pious is even said by Thegan of Trier to have learned some Greek⁴. On the Byzantine side, the Emperor, Michael II the Stammerer (820-829), was consolidating the restoration of official iconoclasm, initiated under Leo V. Michael is often described as a

moderate iconoclast; his convictions were nevertheless strong enough to appoint the main iconoclast intellectual, John the Grammarian⁵, as a tutor for his son, the future Emperor Theophilos.

Rome, notably during the reign of Pope Paschal I, was a refuge for monks fleeing the iconoclast persecution and, under various popes, inclined to sympathize with the iconophile position⁶. Theodore of Stoudios, in a letter to Pope Paschal I, describes Rome as a «city of refuge» for iconophiles (ὕμεις ἡ θεόλεκτος πόλις τοῦ φυγαδευτηρίου τῆς σωτηρίας)⁷. Paschal himself wrote a letter to Emperor Leo V the Armenian, delivered to Constantinople by a papal embassy between 817 and 819, which proclaimed the orthodoxy of image veneration⁸. Paschal I also commissioned artists to adorn churches in Rome with mosaics⁹ and include in their iconographic programme the image of Christ *pantokrator*. Excellent illustrations of Paschal's artistic projects, which also function as a response to Byzantine iconoclasm and as an iconophile manifesto, are the churches of Santa Prassede, Santa Cecilia and Santa Maria in Domnica in Rome.

To diffuse his iconoclast policies and to prevent supporters of icons in Byzantium from finding support in Rome, Michael II attempted to undermine the iconodule position of the pope by sending embassies to Louis the Pious. In 824, on the 10th of April, Michael sent a letter to Louis asking him to intervene with the pope to obtain a condemnation of icon veneration¹⁰. Michael II, then, sent an embassy to the Franks. Louis received it at Rouen on 17 November 824. The Byzantine imperial legates discovered then that Denys's relics were venerated there, but that the writings included in the *Corpus Dionysiaca* were largely unknown to the Carolingians.

1 As an illustration of the influence of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* on Latin medieval thought, see de Andia, Denys. – Boiadjev/Kapriev/Speer, Dionysius-Rezeption. – Dondaine, Corpus.

2 The treatise On Mystical Theology is not included in the Byzantine manuscript offered to the Franks, in its current status of conservation. According to H. Omont, this absence is due to an accident in the transmission not to a deliberate choice of the Byzantines not to include this treatise, see Omont, Manuscrit 235-236.

3 On the philosophical content of the *Corpus Dionysiaca*, see for example Perl, Theophany. – Schäfer, Philosophy. – Klitenic Wear/Dillon, Dionysius. – The dependence on Proclus was first proven by H. D. Saffrey, in two articles: Saffrey, Lien. – Saffrey, Nouveaux.

4 Theganus, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris* c. 19 (Trempp 200). This remark should probably not be taken too seriously.

5 On John the Grammarian, see Gero, Grammarian. – Magdalino, Patriarche.

6 Cf. Englen, Difesa.

7 Ep. 272 (Fatouros 402, 26).

8 The letter is edited in Mercati, Lettera. – A description of its content is given by Noble, Images 257-259.

9 Cf. Goodson, Rome.

10 The letter is published in Michael/Theophilos, Epistola (no. 44A).

In 825, Louis gathered a meeting (*conventum*) of the Frankish bishops in Paris to investigate the questions of images¹¹. It is almost certain that Hilduin (c. 785 - c. 860), abbot of Saint-Denis in Paris and archchaplain to Louis the Pious, attended the discussions and took an active part in the debate.

After the return of the 824 embassy, a copy of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was commissioned from scribes of the best monastic scriptorium in Constantinople. This copy would be brought to *Francia* at the next diplomatic mission. The iconoclast Emperor Michael II sent an embassy to offer the manuscript in 827¹². The embassy was led, as the former embassy of 824, by Theodore Krithinos¹³, an staunch iconoclast – a position he would never abjure – who would later become bishop of Syracuse and was at the time *oikonomos* of the Great Church, which meant that he was responsible for the possessions of the main church of Constantinople, Hagia Sophia. Hilduin acknowledges as a great treasure (*pro munere magno*) »the genuine writings of Dionysius written in Greek« (*autenticos [...] eosdem libros, Graeca lingua conscriptos*)¹⁴. On the basis of this manuscript, Hilduin brought to fruition his pioneering Latin translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*¹⁵. Hilduin will later compose a life of St Dionysius in prose and verse¹⁶.

Book as diplomatic gift

Books were never the most obvious or usual diplomatic gifts, but were nevertheless always a possibility. Textiles, objects in precious metal and relics were preferred – as was the case for the embassy of 824, which brought expensive clothes and precious textiles as gifts¹⁷. According to Paul Magdalino, we do not have any mention of a book sent to Byzantium by a foreign court, and only twelve recorded instances of books given by Byzantine emperors. This includes a manuscript of Euclid sent by Constantine V to the Caliph al-Mansur and the book of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians sent by Leo IV to al-Mahdi¹⁸.

To the list established by Paul Magdalino (106-7), we may add a testimony about an exchange of gifts between the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn, who reigned from 813 until his death in 833, and the Byzantine emperor. It is a paragraph found in the Book of the Categories of Nations (*Ṭabaqāt al-umam*) written by the 11th century scientist Ṣā'id al-Andalusī. The text classifies the »nations« according to their contribution to science and distinguishes between those which

»cultivated science« (i. e. the Indians, the Persians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Arabs and the Hebrews) and those which »did not contribute enough to science to deserve the honour of association or inclusion in the family of scientifically productive nations« (i. e., among others, the Chinese, the Turks, the Khazars, the Kazakhs, the Slavonians, the Bulgarians, the Russians, the Ethiopians, etc.). In a description of the contribution of the Arabs, there occurs a passage which reads as follows:

»Later when 'Abd Allāh al-Ma'mūn ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd ibn Muḥammad al-Mahdī ibn Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr became the seventh caliph, he tried to complete what his grandfather, al-Manṣūr, had started. He searched for knowledge and extracted it from its proper sources. Because of the strength of his character and the nobility of his soul, he was able to befriend the Roman (Byzantine) emperors, shower them with precious gifts, and ask them to provide him with the books of philosophy that were in their possession; they provided him with copies of the books of Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Euclid and Ptolemy as well as those of other philosophers. He hired the ablest translators and charged them to do their best in translating these books, which they did. Then he encouraged his people to read and study them, as a result of his efforts, a scientific movement was firmly established during his reign.«¹⁹

Nicolas Drocourt has suggested that the Byzantine emperor who agreed to the request was very probably Michael II²⁰. An argument in favour of this solution is that Emperor Theophilos is described, notably by the author of the *Theophanes continuatus*, as not very keen to share the rich knowledge of the Byzantines with the Arabs. It is said that Theophilos refused to send Leo the Philosopher to court of the caliph al-Ma'mūn who asked for Leo's presence, »judging it to be out of place and unreasonable to give one's own advantage to others and to betray to foreigners the knowledge of existing things, whereby the nation of the Romans is admired and honoured by all.«²¹

The manuscript

The manuscript²² offered by Michael II to the Louis the Pious in 827 – which is now in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ms. gr. 437) – is a medium-sized codex (250 mm × 175 mm) of 216 parchment folios. It is a beautiful manu-

11 The acts of the *conventum* are published under the inaccurate (as well noted by T. Noble) title of *Libellus Synodalis Parisiensis* (no. 44B). – A summary of the *Libellus* is offered in Noble, *Images* 268-278.

12 See Dölger/Müller/Preiser-Kapeller/Riehle, *Regesten* no. 413.

13 See, Gouillard, *Figures*.

14 Hilduinus, *Epistola ad Chludowicum* 4 (Dümmler 330).

15 This translation is edited in Hilduinus, *Corp. Diony.* – On Hilduin as translator, see also Théry, Hilduin.

16 This text is edited and translated in Hilduinus, *Passio*.

17 Cf. *Libellus Synodalis Parisiensis* (Werminghoff 475-480).

18 Magdalino, *Dons*. – See also, Lowden, *Book*. – Signes Codoñer, *Diplomacia*. – Schreiner, *Geschenke*. – Prinzing, *Austausch*.

19 Salem/Kumar, *Science* 44-45.

20 Drocourt, *Diplomatie* 73.

21 Theophanes, *Chron.* IV 27 (Featherstone-Codoñer 270, 108-11; transl. 271).

22 It is important to note that this manuscript is one of a massive tradition. In her edition, Beate Suchla lists not less than 120 manuscripts containing all the works constituting the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. The number amounts to 157 if one also includes the manuscripts containing only one or some of the texts of the *Corpus*. See *Corpus Dionysiacum* I 14-35.

script written in sloping ogival majuscule («maiuscola ogivale inclinata»²³), without scholia. The striking point of the visual appearance of the manuscript is that it is entirely devoid of decoration, focusing all the attention on the text alone. According to Jean Irigoien²⁴, this underscores the fact that the manuscript was ordered by and copied for an iconoclastic milieu: »L'extrême sobriété de la décoration et l'allure massive de la page rappellent que le livre a été confectionné en pleine reprise de l'iconoclasme. Michel le Bègue n'avait-il pas envoyé à Louis le Pieux, trois ans plus tôt, en 824, une lettre où il lui demandait d'intervenir auprès du pape pour faire condamner les abus du culte des images? Ainsi s'explique la simplicité apparente du cadeau impérial.« The sobriety and simplicity of the book were perhaps motivated by the wish to make it appear as ancient as possible. This could have been a way to insist on the apostolicity of Dionysius, incarnation of the combination of Paul (representing Christianity) and Athens (representing philosophy), as well as the role of Byzantium as the heir of this centuries-old patrimony, especially before an audience of Frankish theologians sometimes tempted by innovations. The absence of decoration should nevertheless not be overestimated. There was no need for decoration. A portrait of the author may have been integrated, but otherwise the nature of the text does not require illustrations. Contrary to a cosmological text (like the Manual Tables of Ptolemy in the Vaticanus graecus 1291), a botanical or pharmacopoeial writing (like Dioscorides's *De Materia Medica*) or some logical text, the highly speculative theological matter discussed by »Dionysius« is neither propitious to nor in need of illustration.

Motivation

Explaining the motivation behind an act is always a risky move for a historian, as it is often closer to speculation than to demonstration. In our case, though it is impossible to reach a definitive conclusion, it is still relevant to ask why the Byzantines, out of all the Greek texts then unavailable in the West, should have privileged precisely the *Corpus Dionysiaca*. The activities of the two embassies are known from Frankish sources, so the question of the choice of this precise gift can not be solved by means of Byzantine documents. Three main reasons in support of this particular set of texts may be advanced to explain the Byzantine decision.

The first reason is indeed the (fictive) identification of three figures: 1) Dionysius the Areopagite, a member of the Athenian judicial council, the Areopagus, who according to the Book of Acts was converted instantly by St. Paul; 2) the author of the *Corpus* (which was composed between the lifetime of Proclus [† 485] who was a decisive influence on the author of the corpus, and 518/528 when it is quoted

for the first time by Severus of Antioch) who assumed the persona of Dionysius; and 3) the martyr of Gaul, Dionysius, the first Bishop of Paris. This is the reason advanced by Raymond Loenertz: »La présence d'un manuscrit des œuvres du pseudo-Aréopagite parmi les présents que fit l'empereur d'Orient à son collègue d'Occident n'est pas un effet du hasard. C'est une attention délicate, due au fait qu'on savait à Byzance, au moment où l'on choisissait les cadeaux, que les écrits dionysiens feraient plaisir à la cour franque, pour la raison évidente qu'elle identifiait leur auteur avec le patron du sanctuaire national«²⁵.

The second reason is the role played by propaganda, as has been recently masterfully claimed by Paul Magdalino. An objective of the embassies was to promulgate iconoclasm. Dionysius was perceived as being favourable to the iconoclastic view. Did John the Grammarian, advisor to Michael, together with Theodore Krithinos, suggest picking this text to show that Dionysius was also reluctant to worship images and that his authority, highly respected by the Franks, should be followed on this as well?

This hypothesis has in its favour the absence of decoration in the manuscript, the fact that the embassy was headed by Theodore Krithinos, and finally the fact²⁶ that two passages including the word *eikôn* are omitted in the manuscript (*De coelesti hierarchia* XV 2: Ἔστι δὲ καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον ὡς οἶμαι τῆς σωματικῆς ἡμῶν εἰκόνας ἐναρμονίου ἐξευρεῖν; *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* IV 2: καὶ δεῖξει τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐν τῷ ὁμοιώματι καὶ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι, καὶ ἐκάτερον ἐν ἐκατέρῳ).

Paul Magdalino has good reasons to conclude: »Tout porte donc à croire qu'il [=Theodoros Krithinos] prépara sa deuxième mission en France avec l'intention de poursuivre son discours contre les icônes, et de rendre l'iconoclasme encore plus orthodoxe aux yeux des évêques carolingiens. Le cadeau qu'il allait apporter devrait contribuer à ce but. Ainsi, de concert avec Jean le Grammaire, conseiller intime de Michel II, il aurait recommandé à celui-ci et commandé ensuite une copie de l'œuvre de Denys l'Aréopagite pour l'amener à Paris, non seulement comme une contribution au culte du martyr parisien, mais aussi comme une preuve de l'orthodoxie, c'est à dire la méfiance, de ce père de l'église envers les icônes. Revenu auprès de Louis le Pieux, à Compiègne, avec le manuscrit, Théodore n'aurait pas manqué d'expliquer comment il fallait lire et interpréter le texte en relation avec la querelle des images.«²⁷

One may say that if propaganda was the main motivation, the Byzantine moderation in altering Dionysius's text could seem surprising²⁸. One would expect more interventions (changes, suppressions or additions) in the text copied, as highly selective reading and forgery were common during the iconoclast debate. Why not make the writings of »Dionysius« more obviously iconoclast, when the Franks have nothing to

23 On the »maiuscola ogivale inclinata«, see Cavallo, *Ricerche* 118-121.

24 Irigoien, *Manuscrits* 21.

25 Loenertz, *Légende* 232.

26 Noted by P. Magdalino, *Dons* 114.

27 Magdalino, *Dons* 114.

28 I am very grateful to Christian Gastgeber for this remark.

compare the received texts with in order to check their exactitude and have no conception of what to expect?

It is also possible to mention a third explanation, namely that the choice of this gift was suggested by the Franks themselves, or at least that they played a role in the story. It is possible that it was a request of the archchaplain, Hilduin, in order to increase the prestige of his abbey. This does not contradict the »iconoclast« explanation, as any possible request by Hilduin would have had to be approved by the iconoclast authority, notably John the Grammarian, in order to be granted. Hilduin was probably as much interested in the content of the texts (as attested by the quick start of the translation process) as in acquiring for his abbey a manuscript which could be venerated like the relics of Dionysius himself, as suggested by the later insistence of Hilduin in a letter to Louis the Pious²⁹ on the miracles – 19 healings! – accomplished by the manuscript during its first night in the Abbey.

Could »Dionysius« really be invoked in support of iconoclast views?

If the iconoclast conviction of the members of the embassy is clear, it is not so obvious from the reading of the texts that »Dionysius« could or should have served as an ideal authority for the iconoclasts.

The author of the *Corpus Dionysiaca* is not obviously interested in the veneration of icons. We do not find there any statement about the value of the veneration of images, nor any condemnation of practices related to icon veneration. »Dionysius« often speaks about images, but focuses on their educative purpose: they lead the viewer from the realm of the senses up to the realm of the invisible. This thesis was accepted by – at least some – thinkers of both camps. As well summarized by Andrew Louth: »Denys as an *ambiguous* witness: he is full of images, but his attitude to them is ambivalent. He prefers images that are *unlike* their archetypes«³⁰. This last point about unlikeness would have been welcome to a reader with iconoclast convictions as it avoids the identification between the sensible object and the symbolised reality.

Due to the absence of texts by iconoclast authors³¹, it is impossible to see how they might have used »Dionysius« in their arguments. One can observe, on the other side, that »Dionysius« was quoted by the iconophile theologians as an authority for their own position. These quotes are indeed not about veneration, but more generally about the relation between visible images and intelligible realities.

The main example of an iconophile use of »Dionysius« is the theologian John of Damascus. John refers several times to »Dionysius« in his three treatises in favour of image veneration. When he produces a florilegium of supporting patristic authorities, he includes four passages from the *Corpus Dionysiaca*³². I follow the order of Kotter's edition³³, citing the titles of the respective texts from the *Corpus*:

- III 43: Letter 10 stating that visible things are truly clear images of invisible things (ἀληθῶς ἐμφανεῖς εἰκόνες εἰσὶ τὰ ὄρατὰ τῶν ἀοράτων)
- I 18 / II 24: Letter 9 about clear images of ineffable things (εἰκόνας ἐμφανεῖς τῶν ἀπορρήτων).
- I 30 / II 26: On the Divine Names 1, 4 about how the intelligible is enveloped in the sensible and the supra-essential in being (αἰσθητοῖς τὰ νοητὰ καὶ τοῖς οὐσι τὰ ὑπερούσια).
- I 32 / II 28 / III 44, On the ecclesiastical hierarchy 1 about sensible symbols (τῶν αἰσθητῶν συμβόλων) as a way towards deification (τὴν ἐνοειδῆ θέωσιν) and the fact that through sensible images we are led to divine contemplations (ἡμεῖς δὲ αἰσθηταῖς εἰκόσιν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας, ὡς δυνατόν, ἀναγόμεθα θεωρίας).

These four quotations assert that visible images reveal the invisible or that, through images, one can ascend to the Divine.

As well noted by P. Van den Ven³⁴ and A. Louth, »Dionysius« was not used as an authority at the Seventh Ecumenical Council held at Nicaea in 787. Andrew Louth notes »It makes one wonder [...] whether the Fathers of Nicaea knew Denys at all well [...] What the evidence so far seems to suggest is that Denys was much better known in Palestine than in the Queen City [i.e. in Constantinople]«³⁵.

Theodore the Stoudite, one of the two principal defenders of the veneration of icons at this time, considers »Dionysius« to be opposed to iconoclasm, as it appears from his Letter 380³⁶. Theodore says that if we accept the reasoning of the iconoclasts, then the image of the cross is vain, the form of the lance is vain, the form of the sponge is vain and to speak in a Dionysian manner, all other sensible images are vain (μάτην δὲ ἡμῖν ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ τοιᾷδε προτάσει καὶ ἡ σταυροειδῆς εἰκῶν, μάτην καὶ ἡ λογχοειδῆς, μάτην καὶ ἡ σπογγοειδῆς (ἐπεὶπερ καὶ ταῦτα μιμήματα, κἂν οὐκ ἀνθρωπόμορφα), μάτην καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα αἰσθηταῖς εἰκόσι, Διονυσαϊκῶς εἰπεῖν, παραδέδοται ἡμῖν, δι' ὧν ἐπὶ τὰς νοητὰς κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, φησὶν, ἀναγόμεθα θεωρίας).

This brief survey offers a contrasting picture and, at least, the impression that »Dionysius« was not an authority avoided by the iconophiles.

29 Hilduinus, Epistola ad Chludowicum (Dümmler 330, 3-11).

30 Louth, Denys 329.

31 For example, »the extensive writings of the Patriarch John Grammatikos were destroyed by the iconophile victors, although it is clear that he remained active for some years«: Brubaker/Haldon, Byzantium 226.

32 Even if the florilegium is by John of Damascus, it is quite possible that it has been altered afterwards.

33 Ioannes v. Damaskos, Contra imaginum calumniatores (Kotter 144-5).

34 Van den Ven, Patristique.

35 Louth Denys 332.

36 Fatouros 516,163-517,168.

A sole manuscript?

The last question which I would like to raise is whether the manuscript containing the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was the only manuscript given by the embassy at the time. The sources do not mention other codices – a fact which could easily be explained by the special place occupied by Dionysius in the Frankish pantheon–, but there is one reason to consider the question as relevant. The Paris manuscript of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* would be used by John Scotus Eriugena a few decades later for a new translation commissioned by Charles the Bald in 862. Charles, who could rightly be characterized as a Byzantinophile, was deeply impressed by Byzantine imperial practice and attracted to Greek culture³⁷. He encouraged the Irish scholar to make a new translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Eriugena was himself fond of Greek learning. He wrote that, for him, Greeks have a double superiority over the Latins: they have a more acute mind and they are able to express themselves more effectively (*Graeci autem solito more res acutius considerantes expressiusque significantes*³⁸).

We know that Eriugena had also translated Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua ad Iohannem* and *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* and Gregory of Nyssa's *de hominis opificio*, this latter work under the title of *De imagine* (this Cappadocian text had already been translated into Latin by Dionysius Exiguus). The Greek manuscripts used by Eriugena for his translations have not been identified. In the case of the model for his translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου*, Édouard Jeuneau has, on the basis of several passages, suggested that the manuscript may be of the same tradition as the Parisian manuscript BNF Coislin 235³⁹. I would like to add the following element: Eriugena has translated the text under the title *De Imagine*. The best explanation for this seems to me that the manuscript used by Eriugena should have had the following Greek title: *Περὶ εἰκόνοσ ἀνθρώπου*. Such a title is mentioned in several manuscripts still preserved (notably Monacensis gr. 192 and gr. 206, Vindobonensis theologicus gr. 113 and Madritensis 4861).

Different channels could explain the transmission of the Greek manuscripts. It is well possible that Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who recommended to Eriugena the study of Maximus⁴⁰, provided him with manuscripts. An origin in Southern Italy, thanks to a community of Greek speaking monks, is also

possible. However, I would like to explore another possibility. Could we postulate the same origin for the other manuscripts as for the *Corpus Dionysiacum*?⁴¹ Could these manuscripts have also been given by the Byzantines during the embassy of 827 or later on under the auspices of a similar diplomatic context? The hypothesis should not at all be excluded. A good reason for this is that Maximus is often considered to be an excellent complementary text to be used with Dionysius. If the *Ambigua* are intended to solve difficult passages by Gregory of Nazianzus, they are also very useful for understanding the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Eriugena himself recognises in his dedicatory preface that Maximus often sheds light on obscure Dionysian passages⁴². As has been noted by several scholars, the manuscript of Dionysius is devoid of the scholia generally present in manuscripts of Dionysius. Andrew Louth has suggested that »perhaps the Byzantines did not imagine that anyone in the West could read them!«⁴³ Another explanation could be that Maximus's explanations were also part of the diplomatic gift, so there was no need to include them in the margins.

One more element has to be taken into consideration. Both Johannes Dräseke⁴⁴ and Maïeul Cappuyns⁴⁵ have claimed that Eriugena knew the Greek text and translated, at least partially, Epiphanius of Salamis's *Anchoratus*. This text, quoted by Eriugena as the *Liber de fide* or *Ἀγκυρατός*, is quoted several times in the *Periphyseon*, and some lengthy passages are analysed⁴⁶. Greek terms are often quoted as well. Epiphanius was nothing if not a favourite iconoclast authority. According to Ernst Kitzinger, Epiphanius seems »to have been the first cleric to take up Christian religious images as a major issue. The exact scope of the campaign depends on whether certain writings attributed to Iconoclasts of the 8th century are accepted as genuine. References to actual worship of images by Christians occur in certain passages which some scholars do not accept as authentic. But even the most sceptical do not doubt that Epiphanius was an opponent of Christian religious imagery, and at least one of the reasons for his hostility becomes clear from a passage in one of his undisputed writings: »When images are put up the customs of the pagans do the rest.« [*Panarion haer.* 27, 6, 10]⁴⁷. Epiphanius's belief that Christianity was an extension of Judaism includes an adherence to the law which forbids graven images and idol worship. If the diffusion of icono-

37 See Jeuneau, Grec.

38 Eriugena, *Periphyseon* V 955a (Jeuneau I. 4272-3).

39 Jeuneau, *Erigène* 65-67.

40 See Jeuneau, *Maximus* 140-3.

41 This hypothesis has already been mentioned by C. Laga and C. Steel in the introduction to their critical edition of Maximus's *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*: »Il n'est pas exclu qu'un manuscrit contenant les textes de S. Maxime ait été apporté en France par la même délégation byzantine qui a offert le *codex dionysien*.« (Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones* CVII).

42 Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua*, Prooemium (Jeuneau 3, 15-25): *Fortassis autem qualicumque apologia defensu non tam densas subierim caligines, nisi uiderem praefatum beatissimum Maximum saepissime in processu sui operis obscurissimas sanctissimi theologi Dionysii Ariopagitae sententias, cuius symbolicos theologicos que nuper, Vobis similiter iubentibus, transtuli, introduxisse mirabili que modo delucidasse intantum ut nullo modo dubitarim diuinam clementiam,*

quae illuminat abscondita tenebrarum, sua ineffabili prouidentia hoc disposuisse ut ea quidem nobis quae maxime obstrusa in praedictis beati Dionysii libris ac uix peruia sensus que nostros fugere uidebantur aperiret, sapientissimo praefato Maximo lucidissime explanante.

43 Louth, *Greek* 131.

44 Dräseke, *Scotus* 33.

45 Cappuyns, *Erigène* 178-9.

46 See the references given by E. Jeuneau in Eriugena, *Periphyseon*: for the *Anchoratus*: chapter 21-22 (*Periphyseon* book II, lines 2263-73). 21 (II 2320-23). 54-58 (IV 3273-79. IV 3937-40). 62 (II 1871-74. IV 3279-83. 3282-85). 67 (IV 10-22). 69 (IV 163-83). 83-84 (V 1813-55). 91 (V 1893-1904). 92-94 (IV 120-165). 118 (2534-37); for the *Epistula ad Ioannem episcopum* 51, 5 (II 1871-74) and for the *Panarion haer.* 7, 1, 4 (II 729); 64, 4, 9 (II 1871-74); 64, 21, 1-2 (II 1871-74).

47 Kitzinger, *Images* 92-3.

clasm was one of the motivations behind the gift of 827, then Epiphanius's writings would also have perfectly well suited the purpose, and could very well have been a part of the diplomatic exchange. It would be surprising, given the stature enjoyed by Epiphanius among the iconoclasts, that the book could have been a Byzantine gift subsequent to the restoration of the cult of images in 843.

Conclusion

The diplomatic gift of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was definitely a great success, but certainly not the one expected by the donors. This set of texts was extremely influential on several points, but not on the question of images. Iconoclasm, even

in a moderate form, was not actively adopted by the Franks. But they soon adopted pseudo-Dionysius as a guide for theological speculation. The reading of Dionysius had a profound influence on Eriugena's thinking. He adopted enthusiastically the Areopagite's main ideas: that God is beyond essence, that the divine names are applied only metaphorically (*metaphorice, per metaphoram*) and not literally (*proprie*) to God, and that we do not know God directly but only through his theophanies or divine appearances.

A significant trend in medieval Latin thought originated from this very manuscript. *On divine names* was soon to become essential reading for negative theology. Just to take one example, the idea that the deity is superior to all discourse, to all knowledge and is beyond intellect and essence was to be far more influential than any consideration about images⁴⁸.

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