INTRODUCTORY

In a massive corpus of philosophic literature, translated and original, current in Medieval Slavic world, the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite occupy a very distinctive place. Along with such texts as treatises by John Damascene,1 Dioptra by Phillipos Monotropos,2 popular selections from various Greek authors,3 the Corpus Dionysiacum, together with the commentaries attributed to Maxumus the Confessor, played an important role in the process of development of Slavonic orthodox theology. In the famous Cyrill book (Кириллова книга), which was compiled in 1644 and contained a list of the books recommended and prohibited for reading by the Orthodox Christians the Corpus is mentioned among the books highly recommended, second only to the Bible.4

Composed by an unknown author in a turning point of Byzantine theological history, marked by bitter Church controversies and one of the most serious prosecutions of the Platonic School which culminated in its close in 528, the Corpus Dionysiacum was predestined for rebirth everywhere theological thought began its evolution in Christian society. It was the writing of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite that attracted the attention of the brilliant thinker of the ninth century, John Scottus Eriugena, who translated it into Latin, composed commentaries and made an extensive use of it in his own theological constructions. Five centuries later, in a similar situation, the Slavonic theologian, Starets Isaiah undertook the translation of the Corpus into Church Slavonic.

This period was a ground breaking one in Slavic theological culture, since at the time of Isaiah the Slavic culture was undergoing quick development, when it finally took Christian shape, incorporating the traditional values of Christendom.

In fact the history of Byzantine literary influences on Slavic thought can be traced back as far as to the time of Constantine and Method’s mission and the period shortly after it, when the Bible and liturgical corpus were translated from the Greek into the newly created Church Slavonic literary κοινή. From that time onward the Byzantine literary heritage was constantly translated form the Greek, commented upon and paraphrased in the Slavonic literature and influenced those original literary genres that come into existence around this time.5

2 Cf. Miklas H. Die Dioptra des Philippos Monotropos im Slavischen (Graz, 1975); Прохоров Г.М. Памятники переводной и русской литературы XIV - XV веков (Ленинград, 1987), the second chapter.
5 Among the earliest texts is the aforementioned Izbornik 1073 года as well as the Izbornik 1076 года, which also included various translated materials as well as an interesting collection of original texts moulded under the Greek
Our main concern in this study – the fourteenth century Church Slavonic version of the CD – is an important and somewhat curious piece of writings. Taken together with translator’s foreword, it captures well linguistic situation in Slavonic theological literature, witnesses about certain very touching political and historical circumstances and allows to trace the way the early Slavonic educators approach Byzantine literary heritage and adopt the Greek theology and philosophy to Slavonic language. As the medieval translator acknowledges it in his foreword, this task was difficult, mainly because of virtual absence of developed Slavonic terminology, which could allow rendering the Greek correctly. Notwithstanding this he faced the challenge bravely and definitely succeeded in his job to a degree that the resulting text, I believe, did not lose its interest even for contemporary reader of Dionysius and therefore is worth investigating not only from the philological point of view (which goes without saying), but also for the sake of a better understanding of the ideas of the Dionysian Corpus as such, as long as it contains things which do not depend upon particular linguistic expressions.

Let us now, after a concise general overview, study historical and philological circumstances of Isaiah’s work and then proceed with an analysis of the central point of Dionysian synthesis – the symbolic theology, paying special attention to the Greek and Church Slavonic terminology used both by the unknown author of the CD and its translator.

II

THE DIONYSIAN CORPUS IN CONTEXT:
A general overview and miscellaneous considerations

To begin with, let us outline the broader context in which our literary event took place. The document we have at hands, the Corpus Dionysiacum, consists of four treatises (De divinis nominibus, De mystica theologia, De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia) and ten Epistulae addressed to different persons. The unknown author of the corpus wrote under the name of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, a convert of St. Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), but the ideas and terminology used throughout the text, its general design, numerous literally parallelism with and even verbatim quotations from later Neoplatonic literature prove that the work was probably written as late as at the turn of the fifth/sixth centuries by an unknown Christian (possibly from Syria or some other part of Asia Minor), strongly influenced by later Greek metaphysics. Though it is no longer believed that the corpus is actually the work of the historical Dionysius the Areopagite, one may only guess now who is the real author of this mysterious document.

The reasons usually given to justify this (already common) opinion can be briefly summarized along the following lines. The corpus came into historical being (was mysteriously ‘discovered’) somewhere in the first decades of the sixth century and immediately started to play an important role in the ecclesiastic polemics which was going on in that time. As a work of apostolic authority it was explicitly appealed to by Severus of Antioch, then by John of Scythopolis and some other Church writers and the monophysite bishops at the Colloquium of 533. Therefore it can scarcely be
composed much after 500. More precisely, except to the earliest extant references to the CD (the first of which being found in the *Dormition of Virgin* dated as early as 451 and the second in the 10th chapter of *Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum* by Liberatus of Carthage, composed before 560-566, which, as researchers argue, must be considered later interpolations, made on purpose in order to confirm the Dionysius’ legend) the writings ascribed to the name of Dionysius were for the first time definitely referred to by Severus of Antioch in his third letter to John Higumenus. Therefor, as R. Roque summarizes it:

> En tout hypothèse, la composition des *Areopagica* doit être fixée avant 528, date à laquelle Paul de Gallinice a déjà traduit en syriaque les deux traités de Sévère (...) Si l’on tient compte des délais de traduction et de composition de ces traités, on peut dire sans témérité que les *Areopagica* ont dû être écrits : soit avant 525, si la 3e Lettre à Jean l’higoumène est de 532 ; soit avant 510, si telle est la date de cette lettre.\(^9\)

On the other hand, provided that the corpus apparently embodies ideas of the later Neoplatonists and those of Proclus (418-485), it appears reasonable to assume that the Corpus was composed no later than at the end of the fifth century. In these circumstances, although it would be interesting to learn the name of the author, it is unlikely that anything more than conjecture will ever be possible and the historical and philosophical interest of the writings is due not to the question of its authorship, intriguing as it were, but to the content, significance and influence of the text itself. In any event, judging from the text itself the unknown author was a learned philosopher, possibly a member of a Platonic School, who most probably came from Syria, Palestine or Egypt in the last decades of the fifth century to participate actively in the polemics of the monophysite Church with the orthodox Chalcedonians which was going on in that time. Who can fit this picture? Having no firm ground for accepting or rejecting this or that possible candidate we should better honestly leave this question open.\(^10\) Whoever Pseudo-Dionysius may have been, he was an admirer of the classical philosophy and much rather a convert of Plato than St. Paul. This makes his dependence on Proclus understandable, because who was Proclus, if not the legal heir of Plato in capacity of the head of the Academy in Athens (in some respects the last great one). Having adopted the Neoplatonic *via negationis* and the theory of analogical and analogical ascent, Pseudo-Dionysius had accomplished what none of the Neoplatonists could do. He connected the metaphysics and theurgy of Neoplatonism with a theory of symbols, inherited from Jewish\(^11\) and Early Christian philosophy, reconciled it with the Christian sacraments, and expressed all this in a politically correct language, having succeeded in turning it in such a way and producing it in such a light that it become compatible with the mainstream of Christian theology.

Interestingly, that already the oldest manuscript tradition preserves the complete corpus in the same form, as we know it today. Consisting of four treatises and ten letters the corpus constitutes certain unity and, despite frequent self-references to other writings by the same author is very consistent and well ordered. This fact alone allows assuming that we deal with a complete work, carefully designed by the author or an editor. It appears that the unknown author or editor wanted to be as persuasive and error free as possible. Quite probably that the prologue and commentary to the

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10. For an extended but still incomplete survey of different opinions held by various researchers about the problem of the authorship of the CD cf.: R. Hathaway. *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague, 1969), pp. 31-35. In addition to the bibliography, given by Hathaway, we can mention two old but clear accounts of the problem: Скворцов К.И. Исследование вопроса об авторстве сочинений, известных под именем св. Дионисия Ареопагита [Skvortsov K.I. *An investigation of the problem of the authorship of the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite*] (Казань, 1871). Донемич С.И. К вопросу о личности Псевдо-Дионисия Ареопагита [On the question of the authorship of the *Corpus Dionysioum*], Византийский временник. Т. 8. Москва – Ленинград, 1956.

11. Did Pseudo-Dionysius know the works of Philo of Alexandria? One may suppose he did, since the monks are called in the CD the *therapeutae*. This fact is duly noticed by the commentator (a scholion to the title of the First Letter), but, as Paul Rorem and John Lamoreaux note, the commentator most probably has acquired this information from Eusebius (John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus. Annotating the Areopagite. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998, p. 250 fn. 1).
corpus, later attributed to Maximus the Confessor, were composed – partially or completely – simultaneously with the publication of the corpus. Is it therefore possible that their author, John of Scythopolis, is an editor or the author of the corpus? Or could Severus of Antioch, the first person to mention and probably to discover the corpus, play this role? In any case he made use of it in his argumentation and was certainly interested in accepting its apostolicity. Immediately after ‘discovery’ of the Greek CD, already in a form of a complete document (the text and a set of commentaries), it was translated into Syriac. The translator Sergius (Sargis) of Resh’aïna (d. 536), a theologian and physician, who possibly came from Alexandria, was also proposed as an alleged editor of the CD.¹²

An accepted chronological sequence of the treatises within the Corpus is DN - MTh - CH – EH.¹³ Besides these writings the author of the CD mentions the following treatises: θεολογικά ὑποτυπώσεις (DN I 1; I 5; II 1; II 3; II 7; XI 5; MTh III, etc.), συμβολική θεολογία (DN I 8; IX 5; XIII 4; CH XV 6; MTh III; Ep. IX 1, etc.) and some others¹⁴, which are either separate works that have been lost, or were never written. But if these treatises ever existed, no trace of them has remained in the later history of the Corpus. The Letters, as it is proved by a multitude of considerations, is also a work of the same author, not only because they are similar in style, but also because Proclus is used in them in the same way as elsewhere in the Corpus and, moreover, because they are not missing in any branch of the manuscript tradition.¹⁵

The Corpus Dionysiacum, known from the beginning of the sixth century, played a very ambiguous role in the history of Byzantine philosophy and theology. Doubts concerning its authenticity followed it from the very beginning until the Renaissance. Some serious doubts concerning the Corpus having been written by Dionysius, the convert of St. Paul, were expressed in the works of Lorenzo Valla, Theodore of Gaza, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Luther. The last "negative" solution of the problem of authenticity was given by independent studies of H. Koch and J. Stiglmayr at the end of the last century. The disciple of St. Paul has definitely become a follower of Proclus.¹⁶

But the first doubts in its authenticity arose by the time of the very first appearance of the Corpus. In 532/533 at a Colloquium held between the followers of Severus (Severians or moderate monophysites) and the Chalcedonian orthodoxes¹⁷, the leader of the anti-severian opposition,  

Hypatius of Ephesus, put into question the authenticity as well as the orthodoxy of these writings. Nevertheless, due primarily to the great commentaries of John of Scythopolis (composed around 530-540), and especially after the addition of those written by Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century, the authenticity of the Corpus was accepted by the majority of the authorities. Later its authority was enhanced in the eighth century by the references made to it by the great doctor of the Eastern Church, St. John Damascene. The commentaries which, following some confusion on the part of the scribes, were entirely attributed to Maximus the Confessor, always followed the text in the manuscript tradition during the Middle Ages, including the Slavonic translation. It should be remembered that one of the factors in the quick success of the Corpus was, on the one hand, the apostolic authority which it conferred to some of the tendencies characteristic to late fifth- and early sixth-century monasticism, reconciling them, on the other hand, with Episcopal authority. In the East, Theodore the Studite appealed to Dionysius in his argumentation against iconoclasm. Among theologians who commented on the CD were Michael Psellus (1018 - 1974) and George Pachymeres (1242-1310). During the hesychast controversies both St. Gregory Palamas and his opponent Barlaam of Calabria appealed to the CD.

In the West there are references to Dionysius in the works of Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria (580-607) and Moderatus, Patriarch of Jerusalem (631-634). Pope Gregory the Great, who was a friend of Eulogius, referred to Dionysius as an "ancient and venerable Father." The CD was mentioned during the monothelitic controversies on the Lateran Council (649), in the letters of Pope Martin I (Lateran, 649) and of Pope Agatho (Dogmatic letter to the Emperor Constantine, 680), during the Constantinople (680) and the Second Nicene (787) Councils. The works of Dionysius received a new life when, around 858 John Scottus Eriugena, at the request of Charles the Bald, made a translation of the Greek text which had been presented to Louis the Pious in 827 by Emperor Michael II. John Scottus composed glosses on Dionysius that became the first in the series of Western commentaries on the Corpus.

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18 See the report of the colloquium in: Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum. Strasbourg, 1914. 4-II, S. 172, 173 (the answer of Hypatius). A detailed analysis of this and also of the evidences of Severus of Antioch cf.: Rorem and Lamoreaux, John of Scythopolis, p. 9-18.


20 For the Greek text and a Latin translation of these commentaries cf.: PG, t. 4.


23 In Euang. Homily 34, 12. PL t. 76, col. 1254.

24 It should be noticed that before this time in 838 Hilduin, abbot of St. Denis, also undertook a translation of the Corpus at the request of King Louis. The immediate reason for this was that people in France believed that St. Denys the Martyr, the first bishop of Paris, was the author of the Corpus. For this translation and an edition of the text see: P.G. Théry, Etudes Dionysiennes. I. Hilduin, traducteur de Denys. II. Édition de sa traduction (Paris, 1932 –1937).

25 Anastasius the Papal Librarian made some clarifying remarks and revision of the translation in 875. After that time this translation was adopted and did not change throughout the Early Middle Ages. For the text of the commentaries of John Scottus cf: 'Joannis Scoti expositiones super hierarchiam caelestem s. Dionysii', in PL t. 122, col. 125-266. The CD was translated several times in Latin: by John Scottus Eriugena and Hilduin (as we have said) in the 9th c., by John Sarrazin in the 12th c., by Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Gallus in the 13th c., by Ambrose of Camaldolese and Marsilio Ficino in the 15th c., by Joachim Perion in the 16th c., and by Pierre Lassell and Balthasar Cordier in the 17th c. Cf. Ph. Chevallier, Dionysiaca, t. 1, pp. XV-XVI. This monumental work includes the text of all these translations.
During the twelfth century, the works of Dionysius attracted the attention of Abbot Suger of St. Denis (d. 1151) and of John Sarrazin (1140, 1165). The former was interested in this work from the point of view of symbolism of light.26

The widespread influence of the Corpus can be observed at this time. Hugh of St. Victor (d.1141)27, Richard of St. Victor (d.1173), St. Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry, Aelred of Rievaux, Alan of Lille (c.1120-1202) and Isaac of Stella (d.1169) in their works made much use of it.28 Robert Grosseteste (d.1253) carried out a new translation of the Corpus and the Scholia between 1240 and 124329. There are commentaries of Albert the Great (d.1280)30 and of St. Thomas Aquinas (who around 1261 wrote an Exposition on the Divine Names31). St. Bonaventura hailed Dionysius as "the prince of Mystics". Finally, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we have references, discussions and commentaries on the CD in the works of Master Eckhart (d.1327)32, Tauler (d.1361), Ruysbroeck (d. 1381), Nicolas of Cusa (d.1464), Dionysius Carthusianus33 (d.1471), Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499) and the Spanish Mystics Abbot Cisneros (d.1510), Francis of Osuna and John of the Cross.

The reader will excuse me for such a wearisome but still incomplete list of names, but all this complicated story cannot remain untouched in our study of the destiny of the corpus in Slavonic philosophy and theology, since the translation of it into the Church Slavonic, accomplished in the fourteenth century, must necessarily have inherited the widespread tradition of commentaries together with the text of Pseudo-Dionysius himself.

Let us come back in Byzantium. It is known that a certain Theodorus the Presbyter composed a work defending the authenticity of the Dionysian Corpus. The treatise entitled Θεοδώρου πρεσβυτέρου, ὁτι γνησία ἡ τοῦ ἄγιου Διονυσίου βιβλίος is summarized by Photius (Bibl., cod. 1; PG t. 103, col. 44-45). Long ago people identified this Theodorus with Theodorus the Monk to whom Maximus the Confessor addressed a letter (PG t. 91, col. 276ab) and also with Theodorus Rhaithuensis, the author of a short refutation of heresies (PG t. 91, 1484-1504). This view was quite widespread and shared for instance both by the composer of the 1073 year’s Izbornik (where the aforementioned passage from Maximus is found just before a selection from a treatise explicitly ascribed to Theodorus Rhaithuensis) and by the editor of the Patrologia Graeca, who referred to Theodorus Rhaithuensis in relation to Maximus’ letter and published the treatise on heresies by him at the end of the same volume.

Modern scholars made the situation even more complicated. In his monograph on the development of Christology W. Elert tries to prove that this Theodorus Rhaithuensis actually was Theodorus the bishop of Pharant and the founder of Monothelitism.34 In relation with the 1073 year’s Izbornik this hypothesis was further developed and somewhat corrected by B. Peichev.35 There is no reason to repeat the arguments here. It is sufficient to note that if it is really the case that Theodorus Rhaithuensis and the founder of monothelitism are identical, as W. Elert tries to

27He wrote the Commentaries on the Celestial Hierarchy (1115-1137), see: PL t. 175, col. 923-1134.
33Doctoris Ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani opera omnia.....Tomus quintus decimus et tomus sextus decimus: in libros s. Dionysii Areopagitae et epistolae undecim expositio. Tornaci, MDCCCII.
35Пейчев Б. Философский трактат в Симеоновом сборнике. Киев, 1983.
prove, then one can easily understand why our Theodore was so interested in establishing the CD’s authenticity. It is clear that many concepts of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus (including the famous place from the *Fourth Letter* of Ps.-Dionysius, to which Severus referred, the notion of “both human and divine action (θεανθρωπή ἐνεργεία)” as also mentioned in the *Izbornik*), if they were accepted as authoritative and correct ones, would work for his own monothelitic and monoenergetic interpretation of the nature of Christ.

Maximus the Confessor testifies (PG, t. 91, col. 136) that Theodorus of Pharant composed a treatise *On substance and nature* (περὶ σοφίας καὶ φυσεως), where he addressed the controversial problems of hypostasis, personae and the like, and that his interpretation, due to some efforts on part of patriarch Sergius, become quite widespread. This small fact is highly relevant to the present study, since in the *Izbornik* we find a peace of writings of uncertain origin on the similar subject (on the meaning of terms substance and nature), ascribed to the name of Theodorus Rhaithuensis and placed immediately after the letter of Maximus the Confessor addressed to Theodorus the Monk (from *Opuscula theologica et polemica ad Marinum* =PG, t. 91, col. 276ab), presumably as an answer to it. It is clear that the composer of the Greek protograph of the *Izbornik* considered this two Theodori identical. In order to reaffirm Maximus’ authority and superiority the composer of the *Izbornik* concludes the section with another extract from Maxumus (*Izbornik*, p. 223g-237b), that is to say, gives him the last word to summarize this exchange. This is also suggestive: if the composer had taken this text directly from the *Dialectic* of John Damascene, he would not need all this and we would expect that the name of Damascene be mentioned.

Thus, in the *Izbornik* we find an extract from the author who was quite interested in Dionysius. Moreover, a quote from the CD is also found in the *Izbornik* (p. 47v), unfortunately of no philosophic value. The name of Dionysius is mentioned twice. The first time it is spelled as ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΑ ἈΡΕΟΠΑΓΙΤΑ and the second time as ΔΙΩΝΥΣΙΟΣ. It is curious to note how the spelling of the same Greek name can differ within the same Slavonic text.

It is clear that all the sources included in the *Izbornik* (or rather its Byzantine protograph) have something to do with the monophysists. The authors selected are not contemporaries but mainly belong to the previous epoch of Byzantine theological history when the monophysitic controversy still raged. It appears as if having mastered it the Byzantine church authorities now passed their experience to a newly christianized state under their spiritual protection. The orthodoxy in Bulgaria had to be protected at that time and the main treat to it was the Bogomil heresy — the movement on which we have more to say later and again in connection with the Dionysian corpus.

In relations with the heretics the CD is mentioned around the same time in a letter of Anastasius the Papal Librarian dated by March 23, 875 (Anastasius was the same erudite who made some clarifying remarks and revision of John Scotus’ translation of the CD in Latin). It is said that Constantine the Philosopher whom Anastasius happened to meet in Rome praised the *Corpus* as a great tool in the battle with the heresy. The text of the letter is quite interesting. It is said, that Constantine “totum codicem saepe memorati et memorandi patris memoriae commendaverat”. Could this mean that he made a copy of the corpus or deposited an existent one in the library? And later on: “…et, quantum utilitatis medulla eius habeat, auditoribus commentabat, solitus erat dicere,

37 This text is anonymously used in the *Dialectics of John Damascene*.
38 Extracts from various writings of Anastasius Sinaiat, who was the major authority on this, form the bulk of the *Izbornik*. Cf. for instance the 6th chapter of his *Viae duc* (Hodegos), directed against Severus of Antioch (PG, t. 89; CChSG, t. 8).
39 No doubt that this text both in Bulgaria and in Kievan Rus’ enjoyed the highest official status. We do not know how the *Simeonov Izbornik* looked like, but judging from the Slavonic copy of it, we have to assume that it was a rich and lavishly illustrated copy of equally great original. It is also not improbable that the Greek text was compiled especially for the purpose of its consequent translation and dissemination.
quia, si sanctos, videlicet priores institutors nostros, qui hereticos quosque vix et quodammodo cum fuste decollaverunt, Dionisium contigisset habere, cum acuto illos procul dubio gladio trucidassent, innuuens profecto haec dicens, quia, quorum os laborio sius et forte tardius obstruxerunt, facilius et acutius sive velocius – ‘oxy’ quippe et acutum si gnet et velox – obmutescere coegissent”. So we conclude that the CD was at least known to the founder of Slavonic Church literature. He used to mention it in his public lectures and extremely valued as a weapon in the battle with heretics. He states that this new and more advanced tool is as effective as a sharp sword, and so on. It appears that Anastasius translates Constantine’s words from the Greek as if he uses his notes. So this phrase could be a verbatim quotation. While Constantin’s interest in Dionysius is understandable, his emphasis upon the value of the corpus as a weapon against the heretics is certainly somewhat overdone.

Generally speaking one can remember many situations when the Corpus Dionysiacum as a work of apostolic authority had played an important role in the development of orthodox theology. It is commonly believed that Dionysius made a successful attempt to harmonize Platonism and Christian doctrine in order to construct, as a result, a Christian-Platonic theological synthesis and this fact determined the role that the CD played in the history of theology and continues to play nowadays. 

Needless to say, that the problem of orthodoxy of this synthesis, which was questioned already in 533, still intrigues the minds of Dionysius' readers. Byzantine theologians spilled much ink to prove this fact. The modern orthodox authors do the same. For example, a Russian researcher of the nineteenth century, I. Smirnov, took the doctrine of Dionysius as orthodox beyond any doubt. He says:

As for the religious system of Dionysius, all mistakes and ideas that contradict the Christian doctrine are removed from it. For example, the world is considered by Dionysius as a direct creation of God, matter is not a cause and source of evil; he accepts resurrection, body for him is not a source of evil and sin in men; although in a few words, he rightly teaches about the Holy Trinity.... All these ideas are basically orthodox, despite some details that still remain of his Neoplatonism, not entirely rejected for the sake of the Christian doctrine... 

These words of apology by the well-known Russian scholar is just a repetition of constant remarks of the ancient commentators who also tired to prove that any doubts concerning the orthodoxy of the 'divine Dionysius' lack any real foundation. It is to prove this fact that such skillful and detailed commentaries, which follow the text of Dionysius in the corpus, were written. They clearly intend to demonstrate that Saint Dionysius is an orthodox Father; otherwise people would have to consider him a great heretic. Having this in mind, for example, the author of the Prologue and the commentary to the Corpus says that the reader "should not think that this divine man performs an act of impiety towards God" (PG t. 4, col.429), proclaiming that God as above everything and in this sense non-existent. According to him, the notion of divine darkness in the Mystical Theology is difficult to grasp and should be interpreted in a symbolic manner, therefore nobody has any reason to accuse Dionysius of impiety only on this basis, and so on. Wherever possible John of Scythopolis tries to maximize the Trinitarian orthodoxy of Dionysius and certainly greatly “improves” Dionysius’ Christology. It is important to understand therefore that as a document of

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42 Смирнов И. Русская литература о сочинениях с именем св. Дионисия Ареопагита, Православное обозрение. Москва, 1872. С. 869.

43 Though not always, as Rorem and Lamoreaux rightly suggest (John of Scythopolis, p. 68).
medieval culture the Corpus existed only within the framework of these commentaries, the "pure" text of Dionysius being an invention of modern times. And if you take the text alone it will not appear as straightforward and compatible with the orthodox doctrine as it is commonly believed.

### III

**CHURCH SLAVONIC TRANSLATION OF THE CORPUS DIONYSIACUM**

As an important theological document the Corpus Dionysiacum was translated and commented upon throughout the Middle Ages by Latin and Greek authors and enjoyed high esteem, not only among mystics but also among professional writers on theology and philosophy such as John Damascene, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas. In this capacity the Corpus Dionysiacum is considered a great monument of Greek and Latin Platonic Tradition.

Besides Greek and Latin manuscripts, today we have several codices from the sixth to ninth centuries that contain Syriac translations of the Corpus. From 712 - 718 an Old Armenian and from the twelfth century an Old Georgian translations of this work exist. There is a partial translation the Corpus into Arabic.

The Church Slavonic translations of the writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite, accomplished in the fourteenth century, became an event in Slavic culture. It was important not only because knowledge of this famous Byzantine theological and philosophical corpus of treatises now allowed Slavic theologians to understand a wide range of problems of traditional and contemporary Byzantine theology, but also because, thanks to the extremely rich and creative language of the Corpus itself, its translation opened new horizons for the development of Slavic theological terminology.

As we already know the translation of the Corpus from Greek into Church Slavonic has its pre-history in the earlier epoch. There are witnesses that works of the 'Great Dionysius' were considered to be an important power against heretics as early as during the Slavic mission of St. Constantine.

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44S.Petersburg's researcher G.M. Prokhorov, is quite right in pointing out this unity of the commentaries and the text as an essential feature of the CD. Cf. Prokhorov G.M. Памятники переводной и русской литературы XIV - XV веков. Л., 1987, p. 10.


46This translation was made by Stephan of Siunik in Constantinople and certainly influenced Armenian philosophic thought. For a short description of Armenian manuscript tradition the reader is referred to: Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, t. 1, col. 863.

47On this translation of Ephrem Mtsire, Abbot of a Monastery in Kastana, cf. the extensive literature of modern Georgian researchers. A special interest in the CD was provoked in Georgia by the Nutsubidze–Honigmann hypothesis, according to which Pseudo-Dionysius was Peter the Iberian (411-491), the Patriarch of Antioch of Georgian origin. Another factor of the increasing interest in the CD in Georgia was the discovery of its influence on the classic Georgian epos of Rustaveli. On this subject matter cf.: S.I. Enukashvili, ed. The Writings of Petrus Iberus (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite): Old Georgian translation of Ephrem Mtsire. Tbilisi, 1961 (in Georgian). Ницубидзе Ш. Петр Ивер и проблемы ареопагитики [Peter the Iberian and problems of the Areopagita]. Тбилиси, 1957. Honigmann E. Pierre l'Iberian et les écrits du pseudo - Denys l'Areopagite (Bruxelles, 1952). For a critical overview of this hypothesis cf.: Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, t. 1, col. 253 ff. It is interesting to note, that this hypothesis was recently re-evaluated and basically accepted by Michel van Esbroeck: 'Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honnigman’s Thesis Revisited', OCP 59 (1993), 217-227.

48About the Arabian translation of Epistula 8 see especially: W. Scott Watson, 'An Arabic Version of Epistle of Dionysius the Areopagite to Timothy', The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, 16 (1899/1900) 225-241.
and Method. Euthymius of Tarnovo also translated a part of the CD.\textsuperscript{49} One can say now that a long work of translation and adoption of the CD, which was brought to an end in the second part of the fourteenth century, reaped the harvest of at least three previous centuries of scholarship.

The second part of the fourteenth century was a crucial point in the history of Balkan countries: it was the period of heroic struggle with the Turkish invasion, the defeat and final fall of the most powerful Slavic armies, and this fact meant the desperate enslavement of the Balkan's Slavic population.

The author of translation, monk Isaiah, flourished in the time which immediately preceded this period of Balkan history, and his destiny was to witness and to describe the events of this time, namely the battle of Maritsa and the Turkish conquest of Serbia and Bulgaria which immediately followed it.

Researchers note that the language of the Introduction to the translation is strongly influenced by Russian and most of them have accepted that Monk Isaiah was the Abbot of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos, that is to say Staretz Isaiah, who was probably a very educated person and, as an Abbot, one of the influential figures in Church diplomacy of that time.\textsuperscript{50} His theological and literary works were connected with the city of Serres in Macedonia, which was one of the centres of education and culture of the region.\textsuperscript{51} We can see from the text of the Introduction that Isaiah knew and loved Greek (Byzantine) literature and language. Obviously, he used to translate Greek texts, and that is why he dared to attempt the translation of one of the most difficult (and influential) monuments of Byzantine theological and mystical thought – the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite.

According to his own words he received an official request from Theodosius, the metropolitan of the city of Serres. It was by this metropolitan that he “was encouraged” (принужден был) to undertake the difficult task of translation of this famous text. Isaiah obeyed and started to translate the CD from "the very pithy Greek into our [Slavonic] language [эльино скупого еллинского языка в наш языкъ]." Monk Isaiah says the following:\textsuperscript{52}

... although 'on the fall of the Sunday of my life', I managed to learn Greek, but very little, only to understand the pithiness of this language and the difficulty in translating from it into our language. Really, Greek language – from the very beginning and thanks to God's gift – is very expressive [недожень - artistic] and is able to contain a lot of things [пространь - rich in content]. Moreover, it was greatly improved by the long tradition of philosophising. On the contrary, our language is well created – since all God's creation is perfect – but it was not awarded [не удостоился] the same improvement as the Greek because of the lack of philosophical works of those lovers of literature [любовни слова человеческих] Therefore, though knowing this language, I myself did not dare even to touch the things that are beyond my understanding (I mean the translation from the Greek), because, according to the expression of the Scripture: 'Do not search for things that are beyond your abilities, and do not test those that are more profound than the limits of your understanding'. So, I was very afraid that I could damage the divine things, if I dared to touch upon them, or offend


\textsuperscript{50} Мощин Б. Житие старца Исайи, игумена русского монастыря на Афоне [Moshin, V. The Vita of Staretz Isaiah, the Abbot of Russian Monastery on Mount Athos], Юбилейный сборник Русского археологического общества в королевстве Югославии (Београд, 1940), т. 3, с. 125-167. Трифунович Ђ. Писац и переводилач инок Исая [Trifunovich Dh. The writer and translator Monk Isaiah]. Крушевац, 1980. Пускович М.А. 'Der Vater des Starez Isaia', Byzantische Zeitschrift 44 (1951) 461.

\textsuperscript{51} Ср.: Ангелов В. Ст. «Исай Серски», Из старат българска, русска и сръбска литература [Angelov B.St. From Old Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian literature]. София, 1967. Т. 2. С. 149, footnote 2.

\textsuperscript{52} For the text of Isaiah’s Introduction cf. the appropriate chapter in the book by B. Angelov, Из старат българска, русска и сръбска литература («Исай Серски», р. 148-161). This text is also published in: Великие Минен Чети, октябьрь, дни 1-3 [Great Monthly Reading. October, days 1-3], СПб, 1870, с. 263-266.
those things that are contained in the Old or New Scripture. But the metropolitan of the god-
saved city of Serres, Theodosius, this divine and most honoured man, encouraged me to do so. 
And I obeyed with great delight and without question this man who saw in a vision an angel, 
ordering him to receive the enlightening power of Dionysius.

The work of translation took years and was finished around 1371. This date can be inferred from 
the very words of Isaiah himself, who, in the Introduction to his translation, says that he started it in 
good days and finished it in "the most evil of all evil days" meaning by this the Turkish occupation. 
In fact, it was exactly in September 1371, after the catastrophic defeat and fall of the most powerful 
lords of Serbia, King Vukasin and his brother Despot Ioann Ugljesha in the battle of Marica, that 
the Turks started to conquer the Balkan Slavic countries. Isaiah’s description of the events which 
followed the defeat in this battle is unique in South-Balkan literature of the fourteenth century, 
since his account is the only known story concerning this historical battle told by a contemporary 
who testifies as though an eye-witness. Isaiah says that the country, its population and Christian 
culture seem to perish and the last hope is lost. It was really the most evil of all evil days. He 
continues his introduction in the following way and gives quite an impressive picture:

As I have already said I started the translation of this book of St. Dionysius in good days, when 
Churches of God and the Holy Mount flourished like Paradise, a garden in full bloom, constantly 
nourished by founts of water, but I have finished it in the most evil of all evil days, when all 
Christians of the Western countries perished in flame. Despot Ugljesha gathered together all 
Serbian and Greek armies, and those of his brother King Vukasin and of other noble dukes; and 
all these armies extended to six thousand [soldiers]. Now he moved them to Macedonia to expel 
the Turks, but he had forgotten that nobody was able to withstand the wrath of God! They did 
not oust those, but were slain and they fell, and plenty of their bones remained without burial (...) 
And after they had slain the brave warrior Ugljesha, the Ottoman Turks started to diffuse and 
spread throughout the whole country like flying birds, and they either slew by sword or took in 
slavery other Christians. Really, the dead were happier in these days than those alive...

The translation of the Corpus was a very difficult task both because of the complexity and the 
flexibility of the language of Dionysius and because of the fact that the translator had to face the 
problem of creating rather than using a similar system of philosophical categories and theological 
language in Slavonic. The translation of Isaiah is very literary but, on the other hand, following the 
Greek original almost word by word, it gives a complicated and skilful interpretation of each 
passage. At the same time it gives an impression of an outstanding philosophical work.

Before we turn to the text and consider a number of examples of Isaiah’s translation, a few 
words should be said concerning the history of further development of the manuscript tradition of 
the CD in the Slavic countries and especially in Russia.

The Ottoman occupation and the destruction of many centres of education in Balkans determined 
the further destiny of the Corpus Dionysiacum Slavicum. Fortunately approximately at the same 
time, the victory in the battle on Kulikovo-Field and the establishment of Metropolitan in Moscow 
opened the great possibilities for development of Christian culture in Russia, and the CD found its 
place in this process. In fact, these writings became very popular in Russia since the time of the 
Metropolitan Cyprian (d.1406), who is said to bring a copy of Isaiah's translation here and possibly 
was in personal acquaintance with the translator Starets Isaiah.

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54 Isaiah's Introduction: Angelov, id., p. 159-160.
55 For a general overview see: Дмитриев Л.А. Роль и значение митрополита Киприана в истории древнерусской 
The CD played an important and ambiguous role in Russian history. It was used both by heretics, e.g. Novgorod 'freethinkers'\textsuperscript{56}, and by Church and State authorities. Tsar Ivan the Terrible quoted the CD in his Letter against Kniaz' Andrew Kurbsky, a well-known educator and translator of John Damascene into Church Slavonic.\textsuperscript{57} On the other hand, the CD was constantly in the focus of interest of pro-hesychastic oriented clergy of Russian Church. This way it found its place in the realm of iconography and the philosophy of icons. According to observations of many researchers, certain ideas of the CD influenced the iconography of Sophia, Wisdom of God\textsuperscript{58}, and this influence can be traced back as far as to the time of Metropolitan Cyprian himself who probably was in personal contact with the most famous of Russian painters of that time.\textsuperscript{59}

The writings of Dionysius were included in the first great corpus of Monthly Reading [Великие Минеи Четы], arranged according to the days of memory of the saints. This edition, prepared under direction of Makary, Metropolitan of Moscow, in 1552, become standard and had then been reprinted for almost three hundreds years.\textsuperscript{60} It should be noticed here, that according to the considerations of Gelian M. Prokhorov, the text of this first printed edition of the Slavonic translation of the CD belonged to the same manuscript tradition as the Serbian codices of Isaiah's time.\textsuperscript{61}

In the above-mentioned book G.M. Prokhorov publishes a part of the manuscript of the last part of the 14th century (namely, the Church Slavonic translation of the Mystical Theology and the Ninth Letter of Dionysius together with commentaries of John of Scythopolis). This manuscript from A.F.Gilferding's collection (Gilf. # 46) of the State Public Library in S. Petersburg can (according to Prokhorov’s suggestion) be the ‘autograph’ of Isaiah himself or one of the earliest copies from it and (which is important) the scribe or translator must have followed the structure of the Greek original.\textsuperscript{62} In fact the situation (as usually happens in such cases) is more complicated. As my Novosibirsk colleague V. Itkin argues, it is quite probable that two scribes wrote the manuscript. The first of these scribes composed the first part of manuscript (namely up to the CH 3, 4, 1), while the second finished the rest of the text and had written the marginalia.\textsuperscript{63}

Generally speaking the manuscript tradition of the Corpus dionysiacum slavicum is very widespread. Almost a hundred of various manuscripts of the CD in Church Slavonic are now found, but Gilf. #46 or – it will be much safer to say\textsuperscript{64} – its protographe seems to influence almost the entire Russian manuscript tradition. Except to the above-mentioned oldest known manuscript, the most important are two manuscripts of Serbian origin from ГИМ, собрание Воскресенского новоиерусалимского монастыря (Voskr. # 75 and Voskr. # 76), manuscripts from РГБ, собрание Московской духовной академии № 144, ГИМ, собрание Уварова № 264-1 and some others. Two Slavonic manuscripts of the CD are kept in Novosibirsk (the Department of Rare Books and

\textsuperscript{56}We know this from the letter of bishop of Novgorod, Gennady, to the archbishop of Rostov, Ioasaf, in which the former begs the latter to send him some books to oppose the arguments of 'freethinkers', and lists Dionysius among the books involved in this polemics. Cf.: H. Goltz. 'Zur Traditionsgeschichte des Corpus areopagiticum slavicum', S. 142.

\textsuperscript{57}«Царево государево послание на крестопреступников его, князя Андрея Курбского с товарищи об их измене», Послания Ивана Грозного (М.-Л., 1951). Cf.: H. Goltz, id., S. 144.

\textsuperscript{58} See a number of passages from various places of the CD and the whole section in Ep. 9.


\textsuperscript{60} Великие минеи четы, собрание метрополита Макария. Под редакцией С. Палаузова. СПб., 1870. Т. 3. С. 263-786 (the last reprint).

\textsuperscript{61} On the manuscript tradition of this edition see: Прохоров Г.М. Памятники переводной и русской литературы XIV - XV веков, с.53.

\textsuperscript{62} An international team (headed by H. Goltz and G. M. Prokhorov) is now working upon an edition of this manuscript.

\textsuperscript{63} В.В. Иткин, О некоторых особенностях структуры древнейшего славянского списка корпуса сочинений Дионисия Ареопагита (К вопросу о формировании структуры памятника) – Novosibirsk, 1998 (unpublished).

\textsuperscript{64} Simply because this manuscript was quite unexpectedly discovered by A.F. Gilferding in Serbia in the nineteen century it could not possibly influence Russian tradition.
Manuscripts, State Public Scientific Library, Krasnoyarsk collection F. I.12 and F. VI.6), dated respectively to the end of the 17th and the end of the 15th centuries. Vladimir Itkin has described the latter of these manuscripts in details.65

The edition of Metropolitan Makary constitutes an important, but in no means final step in the history of the Slavonic Dionysiaca. This very difficult text continued to be copied and re-edited many times, more or less successfully. The theology of Dionysius played a great role in Russian ecclesiastical and even political controversies that made it necessary for theologians to attempt an exact understanding of the text. But they had to face at least two serious problems that made the proper understanding of the text difficult. On the one hand, the changes in the Church Slavonic made some expressions of the old translation incomprehensible and, on the other hand, careless copying made it almost impossible to distinguish the text from the commentaries. The accumulation of the mistakes as well as new interest in the CD in seventeenth century induced the monk Evfimy Chudovsky to undertake a new redaction of Isaiah's translation. This translation, still unpublished, was finished in about 1675.

The next step in the history of the Slavonic translations of Dionysius is connected with the work of the Moldavian monk, (Saint) Paisy Velichkovsky from the eighteenth century. For his translation of the CD into Church Slavonic he already used the printed Corderius’ edition of the Greek text of Dionysius and shortened most of the commentaries. Some of them he excluded completely, but at the same time added selections taken from the paraphrases by George Pachymeres (13th century) from the edition of Corderius.66

Monk Moisej made the last translation of the CD into Church Slavonic already at the beginning of the nineteenth century (and this translation was already a kind of a scholarly exercise).67 Since this time the CD has been several times translated into modern Russian.68

Finally Gelian M. Prokhorov, who, in his book on the Slavonic translation of the CD mentioned above, talked about the importance of reconstructing the whole document, that is to say the Slavonic text of Dionysius with all the commentaries added to it in the course of centuries, has begun this task, having published in 1995 in St. Petersburg the first volume of his edition of the Greek text of the CD and all the commentaries with a new Russian translation. Now the publication is complete and a second (corrected) edition with a new preface has appeared in the Aletheia Publishing house (St. Petersburg, 2003). Despite certain criticism of this new translation by the classicists69, I think the publication is a valuable tool both for researchers and more general reader and is accomplished with great care and dedication, notwithstanding many technical constrains the editor had to overcome.

65 V.V. Иткін, «Корпус сочинений Дионисия Ареопагита по списку красноярского собрания ГПНТБ СО РАН», Кнiга i література (Новосибирск, 1997), с. 107-121. Interestingly enough that this manuscript combines features typical to different groups of manuscripts and therefore was copied from several protographs.

66 Cf. The first publication: Opera sancti Dionysii Areopagitiæ cum scholie s sancti Maximi et paraphrasi Pachymerae, a Balthasare Corderio Soc. Jesus Doct. Theol. latine interpretata et notis theologicos illustrata (Antuerpiae, ex officina Plantinianæ Balthasarii Moretii, M.DC.XXIII) and reprints: Paris (1644, 1655, 1702), Lyon (1677), Cologne (1684), Venice (1755), Augsburg (1780), and finally PG, t. 3 (Paris, 1857).

67 See: G.M. Prokhorov, id, pp. 57-59.

68 In 1787 D.I. Dmitrievsky translated The Mystical Theology with some of the commentaries of Corderius and paraphrases of Pachymeres. For this work he used Corderius’ edition of the CD. There are two (unpublished) translations of The Divine Names at the beginning of the nineteenth century - see: Prokhorov, p. 59. There are as well several published modern Russian translations of the CD. The Celestial Hierarchy and The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy were published in 1786 in Moscow translated by the Hieromonach Moisej (Gumilevsky). The Mystical Theology and the Letters in translation of Gavrili Voškresenskii were published in 1825 and in 1839 in the review Ĉrhistianskoe čteniye. The Divine Names were translated and published by the Abbot Gennday (Ejkalovich) in Buenos Aires in 1957. This treatise was also published in translation of L.N. Lutkovsky (Moscow, 1990). The Mystical Theology in two different translations by L.N. Lutkovsky, on the one hand, and V.V.Bibikhin, on the other hand, was published in: Историко-философский ежегодник, 89 (Moscow, 1990, c. 221-232).

69 Cf. a review by Yu.A. Schichalin in: Museum Grareco-Latinum 2 (Moscow, 1999).
FINAL REMARKS

To conclude this short outline I shall note that, as it appears the future research could go in two directions.

First, from a general historical prospective, it will be extremely interesting to trace the ways the CD was used (and misused) in train of theological polemics. Was the Corpus really a “sharp sword” directed against the heretics as Constantine the Philosopher put it or it was rather a “double-sided knife”, a controversial peace of writings which is equally ready at hand and potentially dangerous for both camps?

Secondly, as far as the Church Slavonic translation is concerned, the endless possibilities of comparative research are open, and first of all it will be interesting to trace the ways of adaptation of Greek philosophic terminology of the CD, not only in this particular translation of it, but also in other writings of later times it had influenced.